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August 2014

30 Seconds to Mars'

Shannon Leto

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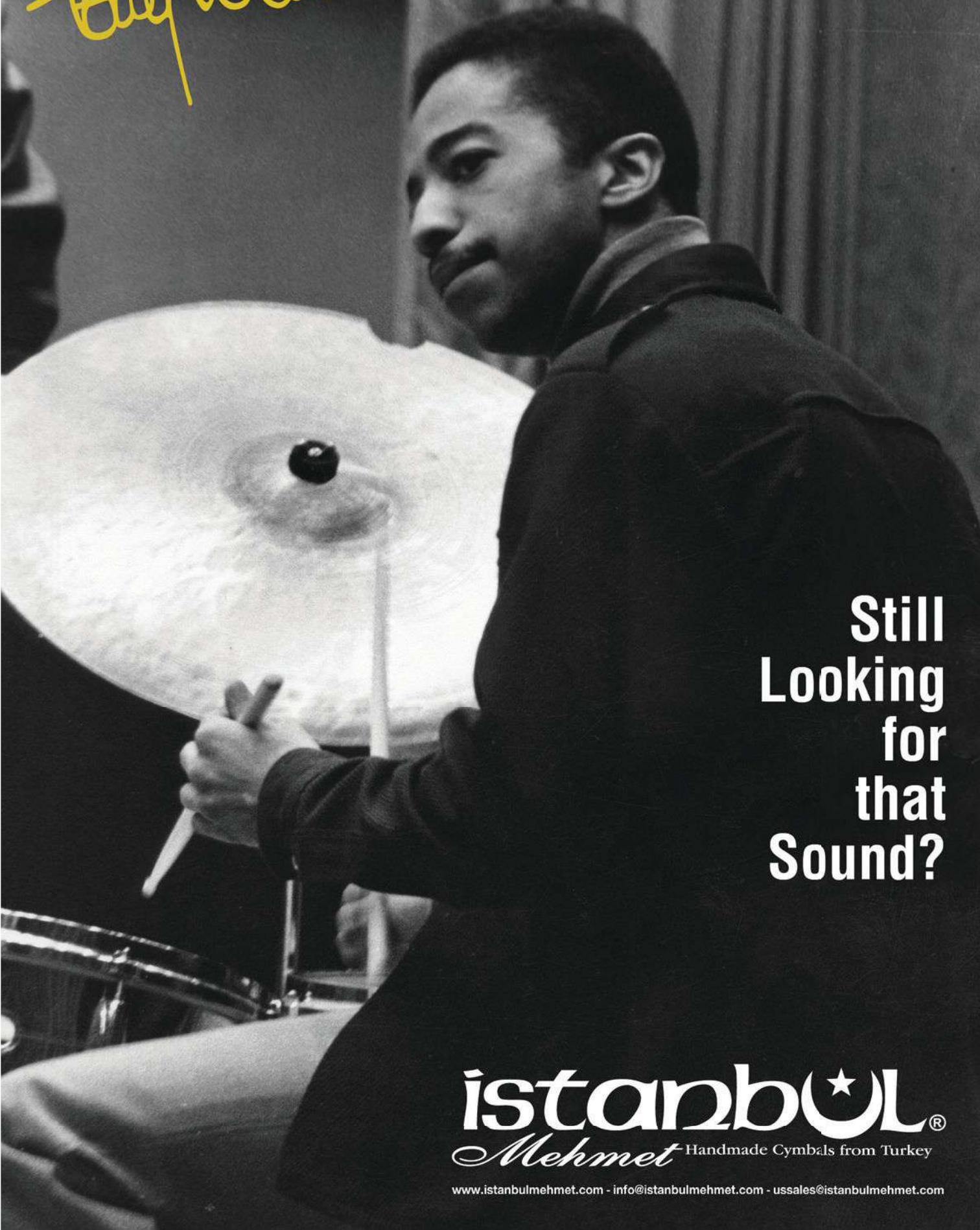
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On the Cover

48 Shannon Leto

by David Ciauro

"I learned from everybody I listened to. But when we started playing, it was just our thing. So I did *my* thing." The drummer for 30 Seconds to Mars takes the road less traveled.



Cover and contents photos by Alex Solca

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Who Are You Now?

One of my favorite things to read about in *Modern Drummer* is the early musical experiences of drummers, especially the kind of records they were into when they were young. It's always interesting to learn about the time and place that their artistic voice first began to take shape, and it's fun to imagine how much about the way they are today has to do with the environment they were brought up in, including the music they were exposed to.

Sometimes a drummer develops despite his or her environment. Take Lee Goodness, this month's What Do You Know About...? subject. Goodness, who would go on to be an important part of soul legend Curtis Mayfield's band, knew early on that he wanted to play drums. But his parents, like many, thought the prospect of having a budding drummer in the house was just too much to bear, and nixed the idea. "When I got out of high school," Lee says, "I figured it was about time I could play some drums. I wasn't at home anymore and had no one to tell me not to, so I started drumming."

In his cover story this month, Shannon Leto of 30 Seconds to Mars shares some fascinating facts about his own childhood, events that informed not only the sounds he tries to achieve on his hybrid drumset but also the career decisions he makes. And I wouldn't be at all surprised if Shannon's childhood shaped his and his band's attitude toward their many fans, who are clearly a passionate bunch. You can't manufacture that kind of loyalty, and the members of "the Echelon," as they call themselves, obviously feel that passion coming back to them from the band.

Another drummer this month who was raised in a somewhat unusual environment is Simon Collins. Simon's dad is legendary Genesis drummer Phil Collins, and you know how that can go—the expectations for the children of famous artists can be overwhelming, especially when their chosen field is the same as their mom's or dad's. If this was ever the situation for Simon, to his credit he seems not to dwell on it today, and in fact goes out of his way to express gratitude for his lot in life. "I've been playing drums since I was eight years old," he says in his interview. "When you're that age you don't have musical influences—you listen to whatever your parents have lying around, and in my case I was listening to Genesis. With all due respect, I learned from some of the best."

No artist, no matter how famous or obscure, develops in a vacuum. You—and all of the drummers who've ever been profiled in this magazine—have traveled a path unlike anyone else's, and because of that you have something unique to offer others. The trick, it would seem, is to examine where we come from with as much honesty as possible, and put those experiences, positive or negative, to good use. Because it does not go unnoticed.



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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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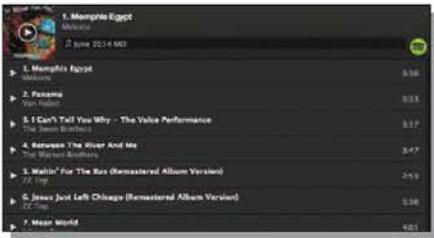
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Modern Drummer Spotify Playlists



I've been an *MD* subscriber since '92. Back then I always made it a point to check out one of the featured artists I wasn't familiar with by heading down to the local CD store and picking up a disc. These days, I can flip through the pages digitally, see videos of the equipment under review, listen to examples from the lessons, and link directly to websites for additional content. With the recent addition of Spotify playlists I now have at my fingertips the ability to explore all of the artists, music, and equipment you mention for a fully comprehensive experience. The additional value packaged into an *MD* subscription is astounding. Keep up the great work!

Brian Miller

Sandy Gennaro

Thank you so much for your article on Sandy Gennaro (April 2014). I met him in L.A. at a Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp in 2009, when Billy Amendola hosted a fantastic drum clinic. Even though I live in Chicago and Sandy was in New York, I wound up taking lessons from him whenever I visited. So a few times a year I'd hop on the Staten Island Ferry and Sandy would pick me up in his Jeep (license plate "DRUMMA") and take me to his basement, where we'd spend the next three or four



hours playing, talking, and just hanging out. I love this guy. He made me into a much better player than I was before we met. That's not the thing, though. He is just one of the funniest, most sincere guys you'd ever want to call a friend. The next time you guys put out a list of Drum Gods, let the record show that Sandy is mine.

David Sokolow

Jim Riley

I was delighted to see you feature Jim Riley on the cover of the May issue. I was a fellow percussion colleague of Jim's at the University of North Texas, and I've been overjoyed by the success he's had over the years. One thing I would like to share that is absolutely worth mentioning is how amazing he was on the timpani. In departmental recitals, he would occasionally perform these impressive solo timpani pieces where he would execute the most intricate melodies with pitch changes all over the place, leaving all of us simply amazed at how good his ears were. On top of that, he is an extremely upbeat character who was always a pleasure to be around. Congratulations, Jim!

Patrick Carmichael



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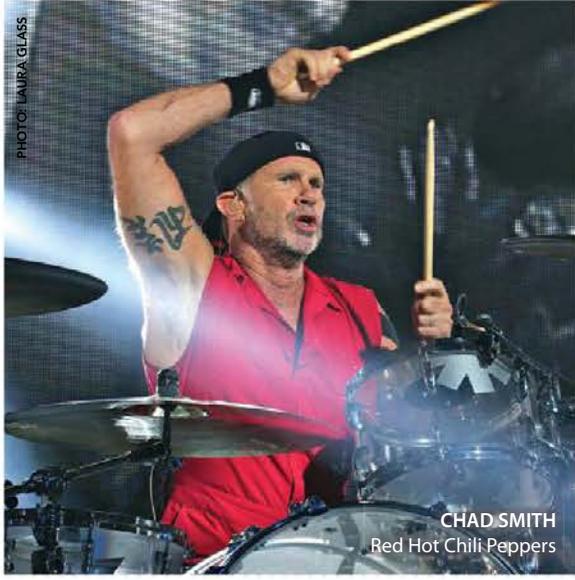


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Red Hot Chili Peppers



MIKE PORTNOY
Winery Dogs



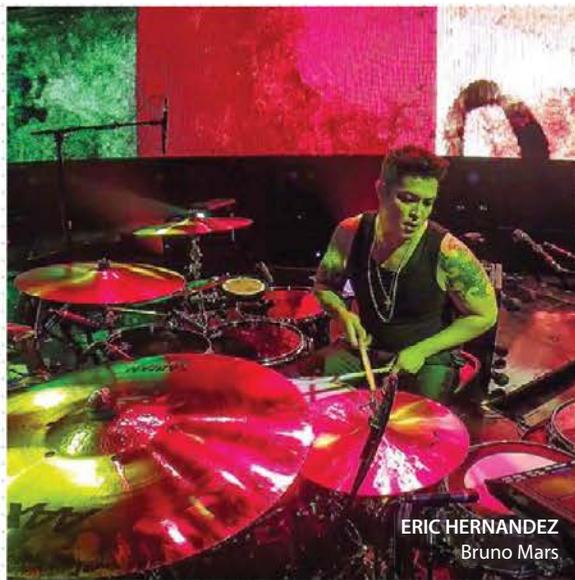
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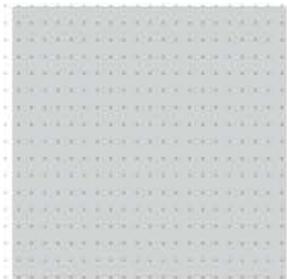
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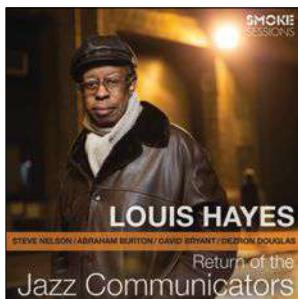
Out Now

Peter Gabriel *Back to Front: Live in London*

Simultaneously available in DVD, Blu-ray, and DVD/Blu-ray Deluxe editions, this concert, filmed at London's O2 Arena, captures Peter Gabriel's celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his landmark *So* album. To mark the event, the singer reunited his original *So* touring band from 1986/87, including drummer **Manu Katché**. "He plays drums in a way that can never be mistaken for anyone else," Gabriel says of Katché on the DVD. "Almost every night there will be some magic moments where he just stuns you."



Felice Brothers Favorite Waitress (David Estabrook) /// **O.A.R.** The Rockville LP (Chris Culos) /// **Life** Life (Jose Pasillas, Omar Hakim, Josh Freese) /// **Joe Beck** Get Me (David Rokeach) /// **Rod Stewart** Live 1976–1998 (Carmine Appice, Tony Brock, David Palmer) /// **John Escreet** Sound, Space and Structures (Tyshawn Sorey) /// **ZZ Quartet** Beyond the Lines (Adam Nussbaum) /// **Peter Himmelman** The Boat That Carries Us (Jim Keltner) /// **Natalie Merchant** Natalie Merchant (Shawn Pelton, Andrew Barr, Kenny Wollesen) /// **Seether** Isolate and Medicate (John Humphrey) /// **Judas Priest** Redeemer of Souls (Scott Travis) /// **Mastodon** Once More 'Round the Sun (Brann Dailor) /// **Eli Cook** Primitive Son (Wade Warfield, Vinny Appice, Artimus Pyle) /// **Mark Egan** About Now (Danny Gottlieb) /// **Tyler Blanton** Gotham (Nate Wood) /// **Erik Friedlander** Nighthawks (Michael Sarin) /// **Brian Grace** The Streets of San Francisco (Chad Wackerman, Josh Freese) /// **Anne Mette Iversen's Double Life** So Many Roads (Otis Brown III)



Smoke Sessions

Manhattan's Upper West Side club Smoke is a longtime favorite with jazz artists due to its great sound and intimate setting. The club has now launched its own label, Smoke Sessions, featuring quality live recordings from the venue. Drummer **Joe Farnsworth** swings hard on three of the label's four maiden titles, David Hazeltine's *For All We Know*, Vincent Herring's *The Uptown Shuffle*, and Harold Mabern's *Right on Time*. And among the label's most recent releases are dates led by the drumming legends **Jimmy Cobb** (*The Original Mob*) and **Louis Hayes** (*Return of the Jazz Communicators*). **Jeff Potter**



Lauren Vogel Weiss

2014 Jazz Education Network

Jazzers of all types gathered in Dallas this past January 8 through 11 for the fifth annual Jazz Education Network (JEN) conference. Clinicians included Peter Erskine (drumset curricula), Butch Miles (triplets), and Daniel Glass (rhythm section evolution), while artist-relations icon Lennie DiMuzio shared stories from the past. Ed Soph received a LeJENds of Jazz Education award,

and ninety-two-year-old conguero Cándido Camero was named as one of the LeJENds of Latin Jazz Keepers of the Flame. Six dozen professional, student, and community groups performed concerts, and another thirty ensembles participated in the JENerations Jazz Festival. JEN15 will be held in San Diego. For more information, go to jazzednet.org. **Lauren Vogel Weiss**

Terry Bozzio/Tom Shelley Clinic Tour



This past February and March, legendary drummer Terry Bozzio (Missing Persons, Frank Zappa) and Universal Percussion president Tom Shelley embarked on their third joint clinic tour. After covering a good chunk of the eastern U.S. last fall, this time the duo performed at venues throughout the south, including Ray Fransen's Drum Center in Kenner, Louisiana; Scott's Drum Center in Lafayette, Louisiana; 2112 Percussion in Raleigh, North Carolina; ATL Drum Collective in Atlanta; and Clark's Music Center in Jacksonville, Florida.

Shelley opened each show by demonstrating the sounds and playing techniques associated with his extensive stand-up percussion rig—a

setup that rivals Bozzio's legendary drumkit configuration for sheer size. Shelley played to a variety of musical tracks, creating a concert-like performance complete with lasers, fog machines, black lights, and other special effects. He closed his portion of the show by conducting an all-ages drum circle. He then turned the stage over to Bozzio, who created his own special effects with his drumming abilities. As the finale for each clinic, Shelley returned to the stage to join Bozzio for an extended improvisation.

"Accompanying a drummer as unique as Terry Bozzio is an honor—and a challenge—for me,"

Shelley says. "And getting young people excited about drums and percussion is very gratifying. I'm extremely happy that Universal Percussion has been able to partner with so many music retailers to bring our clinic to a wide audience. We had a great response at every stop along the way, and I'm looking forward to continuing this unique experience in the future."



Keith "Stix" McJimson (Ariana Grande) and **Darrell Robinson** (Pharrell) are playing Yamaha DTX electronic drums.



Matty Amendola is playing Gretsch drums.

Who's Playing What



Karl Brazil is using Porter & Davies' BC2 drum monitoring system on Robbie Williams' European tour.

On Tour

Carlton "Santa" Davis and **Rock Deadrick** with Ziggy Marley /// **Paul Bostaph** with Slayer /// **Alan White** with Yes /// **Ray Luzier** with Korn /// **Glen Sobel** with Alice Cooper /// **Steve Goold** with Sara Bareilles /// **Pat Mastelotto** (left) and **Tobias Ralph** with the Crimson ProjeKt



Lucas van Merwijk, **Pape Thiam**, **Moussé Pathe**, **Marco Toro**, **Gianna Tam**, **Alper Kekec**, and **Afra Mussawisade** are on tour with Drums United.



Hans Spreckenbrink



Maciej Wasilowski

Among the drummers performing at Le Festival d'été de Québec this July 3 through 13 are **George "Spanky" McCurdy** with Lady Gaga, **Clem Burke** with Blondie, **Ronnie Vannucci** with the Killers, **Jon Theodore** with Queens of the Stone Age, **Deen Castronovo** with Journey, **Gordy Knudtsen** with the Steve Miller Band, **Matt Chamberlain** with Soundgarden, **Mickey Curry** with Bryan Adams, **Francois Comtois** with Young the Giant, and **Jamie Perkins** with the Pretty Reckless.



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Must-Have Gear



Shadow Train/Lynch Mob's Jimmy D'Anda

There are two things I can't play without. The first is an 8x24 DW Woofer. It acts as an extension of the bass drum, enhancing the roundness and low-end punch. It serves a similar purpose to the Yamaha Subkick, except the DW is an acoustic wood drum [rather than a microphone] that matches the size of the bass drum. I take it with me anywhere I play, from backyard parties to arenas. I tune it a whole note down from my main kick drum. I have May mics inside the bass drum and the Woofer, so any soundman can mix and blend the two together or put one out of phase, creating a "When the Levee Breaks" sound no matter what room I'm in. Once you've used it, you will never want to play a bass drum without it.

The second piece of gear I need is my 22" Paiste 2002 crash cymbal. I've used it my entire career, and it's become a big part of my sound. Whenever I listen back to live recordings I've done with BulletBoys, George Lynch, or the late Jani Lane, the one thing that always stands out in my overall sound is the explosion of my 22" crash cymbals. Paiste makes an array of great-sounding 22s, but I prefer the 2002 series.

Back Through the Stack

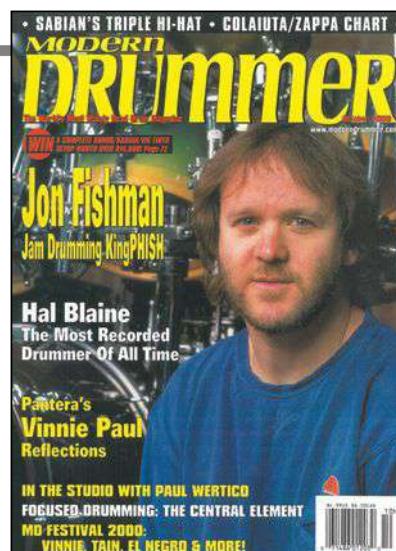
In October 2000, we asked Phish's Jon Fishman, who's highly skilled at playing complex multi-part rhythms, whether he has a process for learning beats that require independence or exotic coordination.

When I can't do something at first, I do it really slowly. I get my body used to what hits together and what hits apart and how much space there is between the things that hit apart. It's just getting used to the physical movement. Like when you learn a foreign language and you can't pronounce certain letters, it's because your facial muscles aren't used to moving in the ways necessary to make the sound come out. It's a real talent if you speak Russian and learn English to the point where you have no accent, and vice versa.

It's the same with your body. You've got to force yourself out of your comfort zone. If you do something enough it becomes second nature. Then you don't have to think about it anymore and it becomes musical.

Figuring out how to play all these parts, you have to determine

which limbs can cover what. If you have three hand-source sounds in a certain beat, you have to figure out how to make all those sounds happen—maybe use the butt end of the stick someplace. Or you have to eliminate something and have two of the sounds happen. But if you're sacrificing groove, maybe you're better off having another instrument cover an aspect of it that you shouldn't be bothering with.



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Mind Matters

by Bernie Schallehn

Band Democracy

I'm a singing drummer, and I just formed a cover band. I quit my old group because I had no say about anything—song selection, venues, or even our publicity photos. The bandleader controlled it all. I've told the members of my new band that we're going to function as a democracy. However, a musician friend told me that democracies don't work in bands. Now I feel I've made a mistake, and I'm anxious over the whole thing. What advice can you offer?

Breathe, kick back, and listen. I've got some suggestions. Although I slept through my political science class in college, I've done some research, including an informal survey on Facebook as to whether a democracy will work in a band situation. The results suggest that most feel a *complete* democracy won't work. (Keep breathing!) A couple musicians did say that their bands had been together for many years as democracies, but those successes were the exception.

Your democracy wouldn't work exactly like the government version, but it would be helpful to think of yourself as the president of your newly formed band. (Service clubs, fan clubs, and community organizations usually have a president.) You'll take on and be entrusted with certain leadership duties. Why? Since you formed this group and sing lead vocals, you will be looked at as the leader by the others, consciously or unconsciously. You'll have a band that functions as a modified democracy. Contrast this with the band you quit, which sounds very much like a dictatorship.

Start with a business meeting. Each member of your band formed a meaning in his or her mind when you announced that the group would function as a democracy, and those meanings may vary wildly. Here are the clarifications you'll need to make.

1. Equal say doesn't mean that everyone always gets his or her way. Really stress this point. Repeat it several times, similar to a mantra, so that all members understand.



2. Although I'm sure you already have your own repertoire as a lead singer, allow your bandmates to make suggestions for new songs that fit the style of your group.

3. Majority rules. You can vote on songs to be added to the master list. You can also vote on the number of practices per week, how many gigs you'd like to play each month, which venues to target and which to avoid, stage wear, and so on. If members grumble when voted down on any issue, remind them that they had a voice in the matter but they can't expect to get their way all the time.

Seek Out the Strengths

Perhaps one member has a proven track record for booking bands. Utilize that strength! Another member may have killer IT skills. That's your person to set up a website and social media pages. A third person may be proficient at musical arrangement. Capitalize on the existing talents within your group, and you'll accomplish two things. First, you'll get essential work completed by someone who excels at it. Second, your bandmates will have a sense of purpose beyond playing that contributes to the overall cohesion.

Be Prepared to Be Tested

Even though you're giving your bandmates a fair amount of democratic say in the workings of your group, at least one member is likely to test boundaries. This will usually show up as some type of annoying or unacceptable behavior. Consistently turning up late for rehearsals, shirking duties during load-in and load-out (all members should be pitching in if you're functioning as a modified democracy), being intoxicated to the point

that it negatively affects performance or is clearly visible to audience members... these are things that could test your executive power.

That's right—I said *power*. You put this band together, and you chair the business meetings, so you have leadership power. This means you have to be the one to confront the offending member. As I've said in previous columns, confrontations should always be done one on one, away from the work site (the stage or rehearsal space), and stay strictly on point. Assume a matter-of-fact demeanor, identify the offending behavior, and specify what needs to change. Avoid name-calling at all costs, and threaten expulsion from the band only if pushed to that point.

Moving Forward

If you explain in clear terms how your modified democracy will work, assume ownership of certain leadership powers, take advantage of the talents your bandmates possess, and keep relative order among the ranks, you should find your new venture starting to move in a forward direction. If each member feels like an integral part of the whole, rather than a hired hand or backup musician whose sole function is to showcase *your* talents, you've got a pretty good shot at having this project sprout wings and fly. Good luck!



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



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COLLECTOR'S CORNER



1928 Ludwig Deluxe "Black Beauty" Snare

The Care and Cleaning of a Classic

by Harry Cangany



This story started when my friend Chris Jensen asked if I knew there was a Black Beauty at a local Guitar Center. No, I didn't. And I don't bop around looking for drums so much these days. But I got in my car, went to the store, and took a look at this dirty but very nice Ludwig & Ludwig Deluxe, which we now call a Black Beauty even though that name initially referred to rival company Slingerland's engraved black-nickel-over-brass snare.

This drum is 4x15, which was a very popular size eighty years ago but hasn't been used much in more recent decades. Thinking that 15" of Ludwig's time-tested and aged brass would be a good addition to my collection, I struck a deal with the guys at the store. Of course, I also ran the idea by fellow drum historian John Aldridge, who led the rediscovery of the Deluxe, is a world-class engraver, and is the drum tech for REO Speedwagon. John said, "Get the 15."

The shell is engraved so that golden

brass is seen through the black nickel. The engraving is a twelve-leaf flower design. The hoops, strainer, butt plate, rods, and clips all started off as shiny brass and had a tinted lacquer sprayed on them. What's bad about lacquer is that it will wear and discolor over time. Lacquer is affected by oils in our fingertips, water, perspiration, and the little nicks that come along over years of careless use.

Well-intentioned people have tried to clean Ludwig Deluxe, Slingerland Black Beauty, and Leedy Elite drums using all kinds of products. Some cleaners do more harm than good, especially if they remove the lacquer coating. So what do you do when you find a drum that needs to be cleaned?

Here's what I did. I crossed brand lines and referenced old Leedy "Drum Topics" newsletters and catalogs. I found articles written by Leedy sales manager George Way that suggested the use of three-in-one oil on nickel finishes. So I went to the hardware store

and got the oil, plus some soft rags, Q-tips, and disposable gloves. I oiled all the metal parts, including inside the lugs, and wiped off the excess. Q-tips helped me get oil under the strainer, lugs, and butt plate. This really is a well-cared-for snare that's now in its eighty-seventh year.

The Deluxe was Ludwig's third most expensive drum, and quite a few were made. This particular example has ten lugs and the nearly indestructible strainer used by the company for decades. The hoops are single-flange brass with twenty clips. The drum came with gut snares, which are more common on concert drums, but it was probably a "dance" drum due to its 4" depth. In fact, Ludwig called the 4x15 the Dance Concert model.

The Ludwig Deluxe Black Beauty has some magic in it. It conjures up a time when live music was king and jazz was hot. And whoever owned this drum certainly took good enough care of it.





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Gaai

Big G Series V Neck Drumkit

by Michael Dawson

Gaai is a company founded by the Japanese-born/California-based drummer and master carpenter Masayoshi Nakamura (also known as Ga-ai, which sounds like “guy”). Always on the hunt for what he calls a “well-balanced sound,” Ga-ai started out by tweaking older drums before eventually building his own custom designs. He moved to the States in 1995, after deciding to pursue his dreams of building drums for

Pristinely cut maple-shell drums with one-of-a-kind finishes are a hallmark of Gaai’s Big G drums.

world-class players in the aftermath of a tragic earthquake that killed thousands of people in Kobe, Japan.

In the U.S., Ga-ai worked at an established independent drum company, handling special orders for many well-known artists, before branching out on his own in 2008. All Gaai drums are meticulously handcrafted from North American maple shells to produce what Ga-ai calls “the ultimate balanced sound suited for any music genre, with [a] clear, warm, and fully resonant sound.”

Gaai offers two series, “Big G” and “small g.” Big G drums are one-of-a-kind instruments featuring meticulously crafted, highly creative custom finishes. Small g drums are also top-quality handcrafted instruments, but they are available in more traditional finishes and wraps. The kit we have for review here is a Big G V Neck kit with a 15x18, 8-ply bass drum, a 13x14, 7-ply floor tom, a 7x10, 6-ply rack tom, and a 6x13, 8-ply snare. All of the drums came with a hand-cut zebra veneer/silver glass glitter wrap finish and wood hoops ornamented with a matching zebra veneer. The finish on these drums was absolutely flawless, and the matching veneer on the wood hoops really tied together the overall look. Whether or not you like the combination of the zebra veneer and the silver glass glitter wrap cut in this way, it’s hard to argue against the kit’s craftsmanship and artistic ingenuity.

Sonically, the V Neck kit put out a super-clean, warm, pure sound with a pleasing combination of high-end snap and low-end punch (thanks in part to the Remo Clear Ambassadors on the top and bottom of all the pieces). The drums sounded larger than they are and excelled in more modern playing styles like electronica, funk, fusion, and contemporary R&B. Top 40 club drummers could also take advantage of the kit’s huge sound and smaller sizes for more compact setups, and jazz players could swap out the Clear Ambassadors for coated versions for a warmer sound. The bearing edges were cut perfectly, so the tuning range was vast, and the kit recorded very well. But I wouldn’t want to keep these drums, or any of Gaai’s unique creations, locked up in a studio; they really need to be seen to be fully appreciated.

gaidrums.com





Istanbul Agop Xist Series Additions

by Colin Woodford

The description on the Istanbul Agop website for the Xist cymbals in this review states that they are “a more modern take on traditional Turkish cymbal-making.” With *modern*, the company is referring in part to the pin lathing on both sides of the cymbals. This is still done by hand, but the pattern is tighter than what the company uses in other lines. The other modern element is in

Whether you need something big and bold or small and funky, these new Xist models provide classic Turkish tones with a modern twist.

the hammering, which is handled by the cymbal-making equivalent of a sewing machine, with a craftsman controlling the strength and speed of the hits. This adds to the focus of sound and consistency for each cymbal in the Xist line. Istanbul Agop says—and we agree—that these instruments, which come in traditional or brilliant finish, still deserve to be described as handmade.

24" Ride

Weighing in at just over seven pounds, this is a beefy ride. While it could be played lightly to great effect, it was most at home in medium-loud environments where I could put some weight into it. There's a lot of metal to move, so sticks



with less heft than a 5A will have a hard time making the cymbal speak. It's a very contemporary-sounding ride, whether you're playing a consistent pattern at a medium-slow tempo or executing more intricate figures. It had enough

attack to project and enough body to sound interesting to the ear. Somewhat surprising for its size, the 24" Xist got out of the way fairly quickly when given a mighty wallop. It didn't choke or swallow itself, and the aggressive highs decayed



quickly into a low wash. This cymbal also felt good to play, giving back at least as much as I put into it.

22" Crash

This is a thin crash, but I found it to be highly playable in very different situations. When struck softly it offered a warm wash suitable for delicate passages. Then, when I really whaled on it, it had an explosion reminiscent of the amazing tones heard on classic rock and jazz records where they used one overhead mic. It's not a fast crash; it's going to decay audibly for a bar or two. Riding on it loudly and quickly will eventually get muddied as the low end builds up into a crash. The tight lathing of the 22" Xist gives it great clarity of tone, regardless of where you strike it or what you strike it with, and the cymbal recorded beautifully.

15" Hi-Hats

The trend toward larger hi-hats is a

welcome one as far as I'm concerned, but once you get up to 16", it can sometimes be difficult to play quicker flourishes and articulations. The medium-weight 15" Xist hi-hats provided a pleasant middle ground. They were bright and quick while also having a big, broad wash. They fared equally well with a big band and a heavier rock group. (I would love to try these in a thinner weight.) As an experiment, I placed small strips of tape on opposite edges of the top cymbal to dry out the sound, and a bit of the brightness was replaced by some nice grittiness. Additionally, when I played with the tip of the stick close to the bell, I got a great funk hi-hat sound, à la R&B master James Gadson.

10" Brilliant Ion Hi-Hats

These little saucers were fun as hell—loud and trashy yet extremely clear. They were designed to sound digital, like an 8-bit sample. While I think they met that

goal, they could be useful in any genre, especially as auxiliary hi-hats. Even as primary hats next to the 22" and 24" Xists, the Ions held their own in volume and offered the cohesion you'd expect from models in the same series. Because the cymbals are small, you can get a remarkably consistent attack in volume, tone, and sustain.

Conclusion

These Xist cymbals are definitely within the same family, but each is versatile enough to function very well in less homogenous setups that combine rides, crashes, hi-hats, and effects from different series. They are a welcome entry in the world of non-genre-specific modern cymbals. We encourage you to seek them out and give them a try. Just be aware that the 24" model will likely require a larger cymbal bag, like one that Istanbul Agop offers.

istanbulcymbals.com

Vic Firth Titan 5B Drumsticks

by Eric Mezzo



Vic Firth recently released the Titan, a new line of drumsticks made of carbon fiber composite material. The stick is currently being offered only as a 5B, which is one of the most popular

A carbon fiber drumstick with ridiculous durability that sounds and feels like wood? Meet the Titan.

sizes. We had the chance to play with these monsters and can confirm that they are the real deal.

The Titan feels like a cross between fiberglass and fine composite plastic. We compared a pair with its American hickory 5B counterparts. Right off the bat, the Titans felt denser, although both pairs were roughly the same weight. The stick, whose core is hollowed out up to the taper, was perfectly balanced, and the impact of hitting drums, rims, and cymbals was less noticeable than it was

with the wood 5B.

The tips retained a full, wood-like articulation after hours of use and abuse, which isn't always the case with wood sticks. In addition, the carbon composite

material is porous, so it absorbs some moisture from sweaty hands. As a result, the grip on the Titan improved the more I used the sticks.

One of the more common problems among heavy hitters, especially with snares that have die-cast hoops, is how quickly wood sticks dent and splinter near the middle from the repeated impact of rimshots. After about an hour of continuous heavy playing, the Titans didn't show a dent, and nicks at the taper from cymbal hits were minimal. Rimclicks

sounded excellent as well.

It's a shame that the Titan isn't offered in 5A or 7A sizes; hopefully additional models will be added soon. Carbon fiber sticks could also work great in marching applications, where durability is tested at the highest level. The only potential turnoff is the sticks' \$99.95 list price. That may seem unreasonable, but think about it this way: You can either pay \$50 for a twelve-pair brick of wood sticks, or you can pay the approximate \$50 street price for one pair of Titans, which will last roughly the same amount of time. If you go with the Titan, not only will you not have to worry about grabbing a fresh stick when one breaks mid-song (it won't), but you'll also free up a lot of space in your stick bag.

vicfirth.com

Percussion Kinetics

Vector G3 Bass Drum Pedal

by Michael Dawson

It's very difficult, if not impossible, to find a completely natural and relaxed body posture when you're seated behind a conventional drumset with the bass drum aimed straight toward the audience. In that position, the lower body has to twist to the left, toward the hi-hat, while the

Utilizing a patented "ortho-kinetic" system, the Vector G3 is designed so you can angle the pedal footboard to your liking for a more natural playing position.

upper body has to twist to the right in order to reach the ride cymbal and floor tom. This awkward stance puts stress on the lower back as well as the right knee and ankle. Some drummers compensate by turning their bass drums about 30 degrees to the right, while others turn their foot and play off to the right side of the bass drum pedal. The problem with the latter is that it puts strain on the pedal chain and adds resistance.

The Vector G3 pedal by Percussion Kinetics is designed to eliminate those physical and performance issues via an innovative angle-adjustable footboard and a spherical bearing that allows the chain to travel in perfect vertical alignment at all times. The heel plate can be moved 4" left to right for more or less extreme footboard angles, and the hoop clamp slides independently for even greater attachment stability. The beater holder is independent of the cam, so a perfect impact point can be achieved regardless of how you decide to angle the footboard. The spring is equipped with a ball bearing for very smooth action, and the stainless steel baseplate is super-sturdy. Most adjustments on the Vector G3 are made via drum key hex rod bolts, and a special tool with a hex wrench and drum key is included with the pedal, as is a nice zip-up fabric case with a shoulder strap.

The Vector G3 was ultra-smooth, sensitive, powerful, and fast—so much so that it took me about an hour to get acclimated to how quickly and effortlessly the felt beater was now reaching the drumhead. The one thing I was most curious to discover was whether I would notice any disconnect between the beater and my foot, being that I was now exerting force off to the side of the drum. I honestly didn't notice a thing; the pedal just felt right. I could sit more comfortably and centered at the kit, and all bass drum patterns were pretty effortless to execute (within my technical limits, of course). And at the end of a few long club gigs, I didn't feel the usual lower-back pinches or knee aches that I often incur after pounding out hundreds of quarter notes at near maximum volume. Although the Vector G3 is a bit pricey (\$268), it's built like a tank and it plays great, which I feel makes it a valuable purchase for any single-kick player. A left-foot option is also available.

percussionkinetics.com



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Earthworks

DP30/C Drum Periscope Microphone

by Butch Jones

This month we're taking a look at one of the microphones in the Earthworks DP (Drum Periscope) series, the DP30/C (\$649). This mic is specifically designed for toms, while the other family member, the DP25/C, is meant for the snare.

The DP30/C is a cardioid condenser with a frequency response of 30 Hz to 30 kHz. It has a right-angle mic head attached to a 7" gooseneck that's connected to a cylinder containing the

electronics. The capsule housing is designed to withstand a direct hit from a drumstick, and the mic can be clipped directly to the drum with an RM1 rim-mounted holder (\$149).

The electronics provide high-level, low-impedance outputs, which prevents radio frequency interference. The

Ultra-high-end clip-on condensers designed to capture pure, clean tom tones.

DP30/C is capable of handling up to 145 SPL without distorting, but you'll have to be careful in terms of how much level you're sending to your preamps. Earthworks makes an attenuator for this, the LP153 LevelPad (\$109), which has a selectable switch for 15 or 30 db pads.

Recording Test

Once I figured out how to use the RM1 mic holder, mounting the DP30/C to the tom was simple. There are two diagonal cuts on a circular ceramic piece, which is mounted on a screw hinge. This gives you the possibility of three different mounting positions. You'll have to experiment to find the best choice for your drum and configuration, but you should be able to find one that gets the mic casing parallel to but clear of the drum shell. I would have preferred to have a slot in the screw head, so that I could give it one last turn with a coin or flathead screwdriver to really lock the mic into place.

The material used in the RM1 mic holder is rubberized and keeps a firm grip on the microphone casing. The mini gooseneck is built tough and is meant to stay in place, so I had to twist it a bit harder than I expected to make adjustments.

The right-angle mic head, along with the tight cardioid pattern, allowed me to try multiple positions while recording rack toms until I found the best capture, and there weren't any phasing problems. The gooseneck also allowed me to raise the mic head farther away

from the drumhead, which was where the DP30/C picked up a better tone. I've always gotten better tom sounds when I could place the microphone 4" to 5" up and away from the center of the drum. Most clip-on mics are set up way too close for me, but the DP30/C has more flexibility, and I loved the fat sound I got out of the rack and floor toms.

These mics also have great off-axis accuracy, which increases bleed rejection and eliminates the need to add noise gates or to EQ out some of the haze that builds up from the sympathetic ring of other drums.

Because of the high-output gain of the DP30/C, I had to use the LevelPad with the 15 db switch engaged. I'm a little surprised that Earthworks didn't just knock down the output level of the mic by 15 db in the internal electronics to save users from having to buy the pad, which it seems you'll always need.

Summing Up

I really liked the sounds I was able to capture with the DP30/C, but I'm a bit stunned that the clip and pad are add-on accessories to this microphone. When I buy a gooseneck mic, I expect to get a clip holder. And if the microphone output has been purposely designed to be hot, then why not include the pad that I will probably need all the time? That said, DP series mics are available in two packages called CloseMic Kits, which include a high-impact case, LevelPad attenuators, RM1 rim-mount clips, and windscreens for each microphone. The CMK4 kit includes one DP25/C snare mic, three DP30/C tom mics, four RM1 rim mounts, four LevelPads, four windscreens, and a high impact case. The list price is \$4,299.

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GEARING UP DRUMKIT DETAILS, ON STAGE AND UP CLOSE

Interview by John Martinez • Photos by Alex Solca

Between the Buried and Me's Blake Richardson

Drums: Tama Starclassic Performer Birch/Bubinga in dark mocha burst with black nickel hardware
A. 6x14 Starphonic brass snare
B. 8x10 tom
C. 9x12 tom
D. 14x16 floor tom
E. 14x20 gong drum (all-bubinga shell)
F. 18x20 bass drum
G. 6.5x14 snare in Egyptian night burst (spare)

Cymbals: Sabian

1. 14" HHX X-Celerator hi-hats
2. 7" HHX Evolution splash
3. 18" AAX X-Plosion crash (or 19" HHX X-Treme crash)
4. 10" AA Metal splash
5. 12" HH Max Stax China Kang on top of 12" AAX O-Zone splash
6. 19" AA Metal-X crash
7. 14" HHX Groove hi-hats
8. 20" HH Raw Bell Dry ride
9. 19" AA Holy China

Heads: Remo X14 batter on main snare and Emperor X on backup with Hazy bottoms, Clear PinStripe tom batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, Controlled Sound on gong drum, and Coated Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter and logo front head

Hardware: Tama Speed Cobra double pedal with grip tape and sandbag in front of left pedal, Speed Cobra hi-hat stand, Roadpro stands, and 1st Chair throne with backrest

Sticks: Vic Firth 3A wood-tip and MSBAG2 stick bag (hanging on the snare)

In-ear monitors: Ultimate Ears 5 Pro Custom

Microphones: Sennheiser e614 overheads and on hi-hats, e903 on top of snare and e605 on bottom, e904 on toms, e901 inside bass drum and e902 outside, and e902 inside gong drum

"I ordered this kit a few months before we were scheduled to record," Richardson says, "and it came in the day before we had to track. It had factory heads and sounded great right out of the box." The inspiration for the setup stems all the way back to high school. "A friend of mine had a compilation VHS tape of drum solos that our drum instructor made him," Richardson explains. "On it, Simon Phillips had a huge white Tama kit that had Octobans and this kick drum to the right of him that he would hit with sticks. It had a guttural, primal feel to it. Years later, I got one of Mike Portnoy's DVDs, and he had the gong drum set up like a floor tom. I thought that made sense and was more practical. Instead of going with an 18" floor, I opted for a 20" gong drum. The first time I played it was when we recorded the album. Now I'll probably want to have this with every kit I get. It's unique too. It's set up sort of like timpani because it's a 20" shell with a 22" head suspended over it."

Richardson's auxiliary hi-hat is tucked below the ride cymbal and just above the bass drum. "That was the first thing I added when I took away the 8" tom and moved the 10" and 12" toms over [to the left]," Blake says. "My main hats have more bite and high

end, while the Groove Hats are warmer with a lower pitch and are permanently closed. It's cool when you do rudimental stuff [between them]. It has a neat dynamic to it, and you can tell you're playing two. The second hats are definitely positioned lower. I also try to keep my ride as low as I can. I hate having my elbows up too far. We're playing long sets, and I want to be as relaxed as possible."

Richardson's tuning preferences differ a bit in the studio versus on tour. "When we record, we try to tune the drums as low as they can possibly go without sounding dead," he says. "On tour, I enjoy tuning a little bit higher, with the bottom head up a quarter [turn] from the top."

"Drumming is all about evolving. Experiment, and don't be afraid to change your kit around. It helps with creativity and reinspires you. Adding or taking something away helps you evolve and not be stagnant."





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Seven Antonopoulos

2014 Bonzo Bash

January 23, Santa Ana, California

Story by Mike Haid
Photos by Alex Solca

The ongoing Bonzo Bash concert series celebrating the music of Led Zeppelin drummer John Bonham held sway at the Observatory in Santa Ana, California, earlier this year. The six-and-a-half-hour event was a nonstop barrage of Zeppelin music provided by tribute band the Moby Dicks, featuring multi-instrumentalist and Bonham aficionado Brian Tichy (S.U.N.).

Twenty-eight world-class drummers performed their favorite Led Zep tracks, kicking off with Tichy taking the stage in costume as the old man pictured on the iconic cover of *Led Zeppelin IV*, complete with cane and a bundle of sticks on his back. Tichy and band then launched into “Celebration Day,” firmly establishing the theme and energy level of the event from beat one. Each subsequent drummer played on the same Natal set—a replica of Bonham’s amber acrylic Ludwig rig—decked out with quintessential Bonzo accessories including timpani, Paiste cymbals and gong, and Remo black-dot heads.

There was a tangible, festive camaraderie in the air, as each drummer brought his or her own idiosyncrasies to the well-known style of the player who many music fans feel is

the greatest rock drummer of all time. From the showmanship of Tichy, Glen Sobel (Alice Cooper), Seven Antonopoulos (Channel Zero), Mike Portnoy (Winery Dogs), and Jimmy D’Anda (Shadow Train, Lynch Mob) to the rock-solid pocket grooves of Simon Wright (Geoff Tate), Stephen Perkins (Jane’s Addiction), Michael Cartellone (Lynyrd Skynyrd), Chris Frazier (Foreigner), Jason Sutter (ex-Marilyn Manson), Gene Hoglan (Dethklok, Testament), Ray Luzier (Korn), Mark Schulman (Pink), Joe Travers (ex-Zappa Plays Zappa), and John Hummel (Matt O’Ree Band), it was fascinating to see and hear how each drummer interpreted the mighty Bonzo.

The lineup also included Corky Laing (Mountain), Will Callhoun (Living Colour), Rikki Rockett (Poison), Athena (ex-Kottak), Thomas Lang (Stork), Van Romaine (Enrique Iglesias), Matt Starr (Ace Frehley), Khurt Maier (Salty Dog), Dave Lombardo (Philm), Charlie Benante (Anthrax), A.J. Pero (Adrenaline Mob), and Brandon Kachel (Barbarian Overlords), with a powerful closing performance by Cortney DeAugustine (Michael Lee Firkins), who played *and sang* the Zeppelin masterpiece “Stairway to Heaven.”



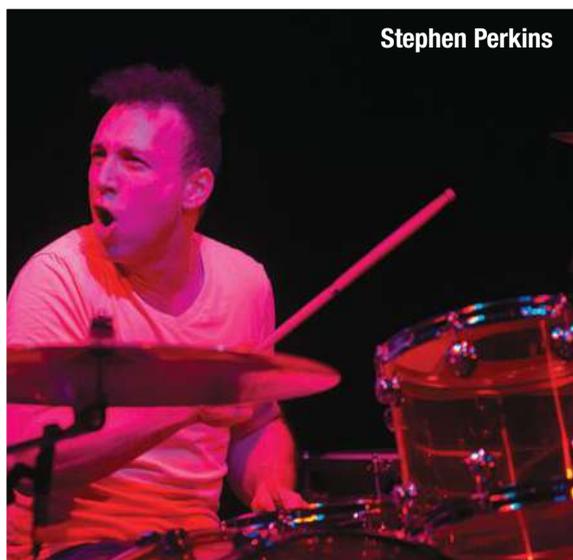
Athena



Khurt Maier



Drumming icon Carmine Appice, who earned the Bonzo Bash Legend Award last year, was on hand to help Brian Tichy present the 2014 award to Bill Ward. The legendary Black Sabbath drummer shared stories of his friendship with John Bonham dating back to their teens, relating how he was amazed by Bonzo's footwork even as a young lad.



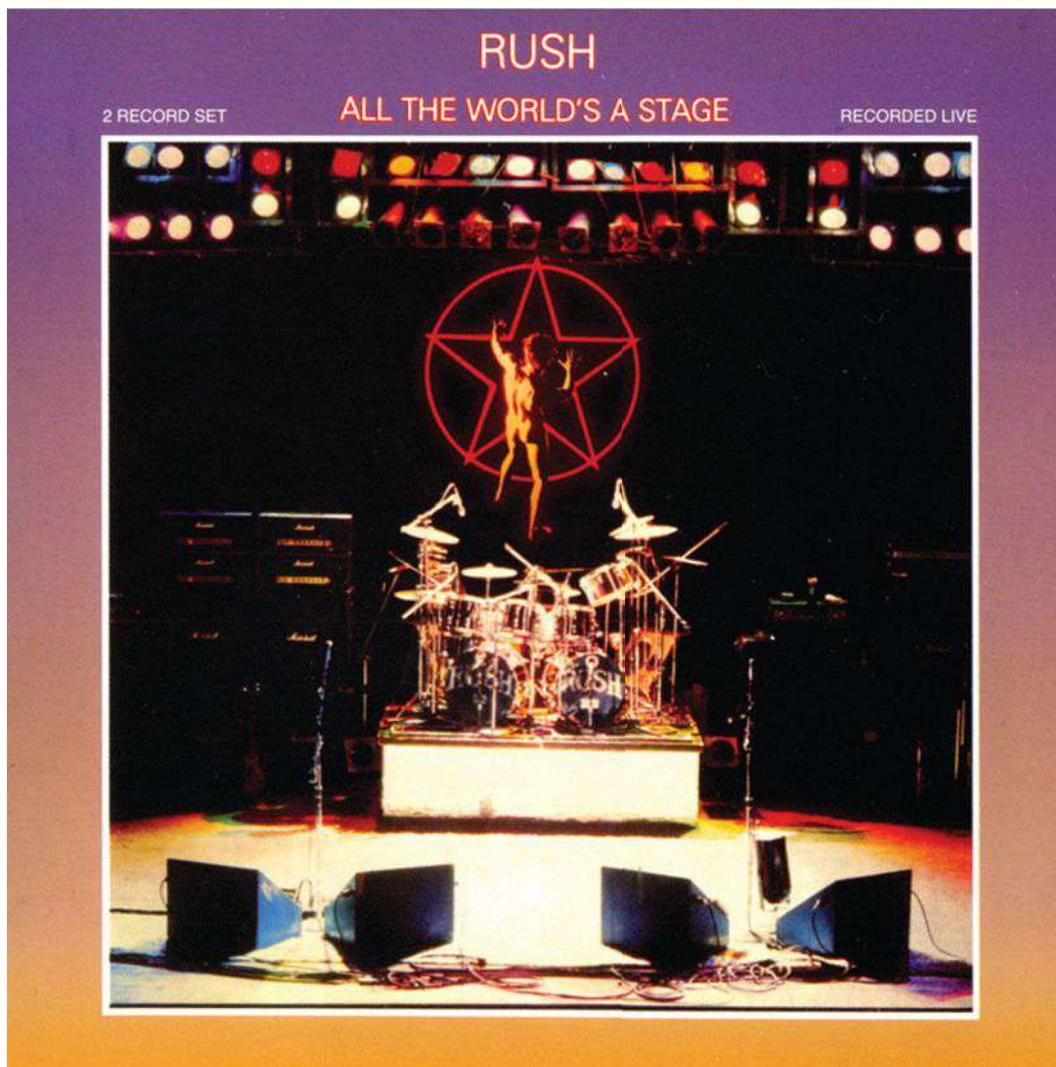
Stephen Perkins



A.J. Pero



Great Drum Covers **II**



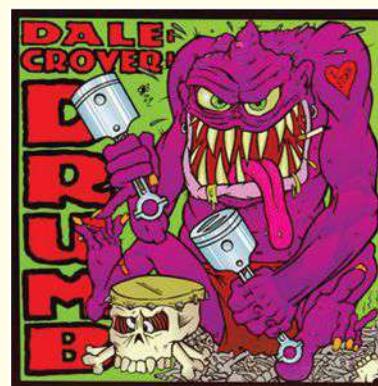
Rush
All the World's a Stage
1976



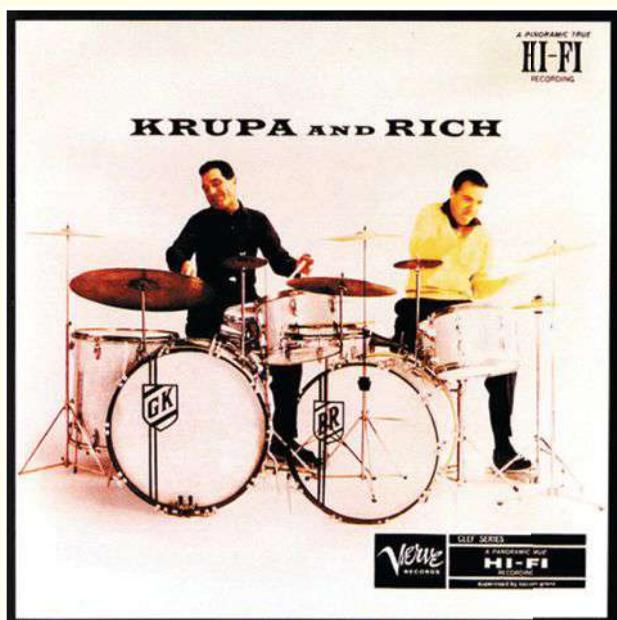
Peter Criss
Peter Criss
1978



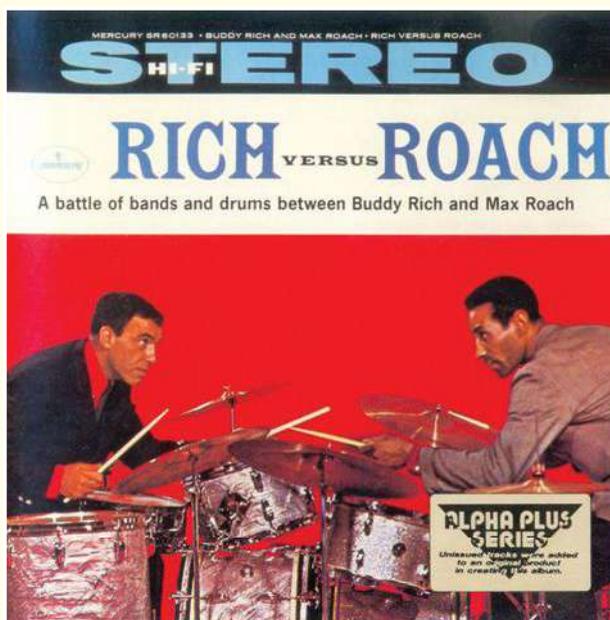
Dale Crover
Dale Crover
1992



Dale Crover
Drumb
1996

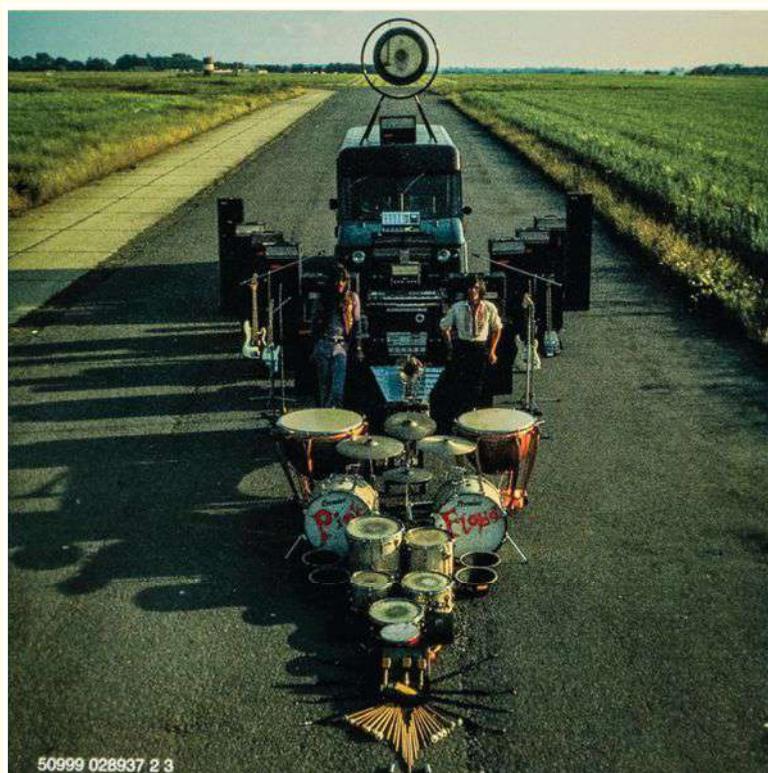


Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich
Krupa and Rich
 1956

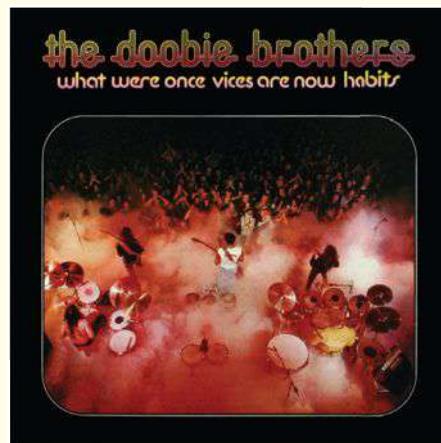


Buddy Rich and Max Roach
Rich Versus Roach
 1959

The Doobie Brothers
What Were Once Vices Are Now Habits
 1974



Pink Floyd
Ummagumma (back cover)
 1969



Prince
Sign o' the Times
 1987



Fleetwood Mac

Rumours

Any drummer looking for a clear example of what playing for the song sounds and *feels* like need look no further than this classic album.

Ask most pop fans about Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours* and you'll get an earful about heartache, freshly splintered couples trying to salve raw wounds, and kissing the past goodbye through song. But what of the heartbeat pulsing through that heartache, Mick Fleetwood's drumming? For all the praise heaped upon the time-capsule-worthy songs that Lindsey Buckingham, Christine McVie, and Stevie Nicks contributed to *Rumours*, Fleetwood's work doesn't get nearly the love it deserves—at least outside the many producers, engineers, and musicians who have for decades been chasing down the album's warm drum sound and impeccable feel. Those studio rats and musos refer to Fleetwood's playing on *Rumours* because it's a stellar example of just how integral tasteful and supportive drumming is to a great song, and how intoxicating a gorgeous groove played at just the right tempo on a fat-sounding kit can be.

"Dreams" is especially intoxicating, with

Hot Stuff

A touch of glass. *Rumours* has its fair share of conventional percussion overdubs—tambourines, shakers, toms—as well as some rather unconventional ones. Mick Fleetwood adds the sound of shattering glass on "Gold Dust Woman," which he achieved during last-minute overdubs by dropping panes of glass and recording them breaking.

Give the guitarist some. The drumming on "Second Hand News" is a team effort, as guitarist Lindsey Buckingham plays the high-pitched tom fills and a dark 8th-note rhythm with sticks on the armrest of a Naugahyde chair. Listen closely and you'll hear these overdubs percolating just below the surface.

Over the bar. Of all the great over-the-barline moments on *Rumours*, one of the best happens in the first chorus of "Dreams." Fleetwood accents the arrival of the chorus by crashing again on beat 2—just like in the intro. His "late" entrance still feels right on time, as it introduces the Mac's signature three-part harmonies and the elegant strum of Buckingham's acoustic guitar.

Fleetwood and bassist John McVie locking in and making mid-tempo magic. After Fleetwood introduces the song with a tasty snare-to-tom fill, he crashes on beat 2 and the elements of a soft-rock classic—Nicks' airy lead vocal, Christine McVie's Fender Rhodes, and Buckingham's sparse electric guitar—are assembled inside the deep bass-and-drums pocket. It's a seemingly simple concept, that "heartbeat" feel. But the Mac's founding fathers don't just deliver it, they *own* it. It's difficult to think of another rhythm section that plays it like they do.

In contrast to the carefully measured pulse he lends to "Dreams," Fleetwood on "Go Your Own Way" is all primal kick, from the tom patterns of the verses and solo section to the surging feel of the chorus, where the rattle of overdubbed percussion pushes slightly ahead of the kick-snare-hats pattern and McVie's melodic bass line. Typical of so many of his fills, Fleetwood's best licks in "Go Your Own Way" feel like happy accidents, especially the way he fills into the chorus following the guitar solo but doesn't cap it with a cymbal crash. Instead, he subtly slides into double time. But because of the deep sound of his snare, you don't necessarily realize he's got the snare going four across the bar until a measure or two has passed. (This trick is repeated again to wonderful effect in the final verse of the buoyant "You Make Loving Fun.") Mick saves his best bit for last, at the 3:09 mark: two short 16th-note snare punctuations that squeeze the song's tension just enough as Buckingham digs deep into his searing solo before the fade.

Something else that makes the drumming on *Rumours* so classic is the amount of ground Fleetwood covers while serving the rhythmic needs of the band's three distinctly unique songwriters. To the rolling strum of Buckingham's "Second Hand News" Mick brings a rigid feel and a bright snare sound that's unrepeated on the rest of the album. Here he mostly keeps it straight on the kick and snare, mixing things up with



Rumours (1977)

Second Hand News • Dreams • Never Going Back Again • Don't Stop • Go Your Own Way • Songbird • The Chain • You Make Loving Fun • I Don't Want to Know • Oh Daddy • Gold Dust Woman

Lindsey Buckingham: guitar, vocals, percussion

Mick Fleetwood: drums

John McVie: bass

Christine McVie: keyboards, vocals

Stevie Nicks: vocals

Produced by Fleetwood Mac with Richard Dashut and Ken Caillat

tastefully dropped snare beats and a simple but sweet combination of 16th notes during the snare hits and cymbal crashes at 1:59.

On Christine McVie's "Don't Stop," Fleetwood taps into his blues roots, shuffling along on the snare and hi-hats. He keeps things loose throughout, occasionally answering the "don't" and "stop" in the choruses with crashes and building through the top of the measure in the final chorus.

The drama of "The Chain," a song credited to the whole band, hinges on Fleetwood's minimalist work in the front half—first the quarter notes from the kick drum in the hollowed-out verses, then the driving feel of quarter notes on the snare against 8th notes on the kick in the chorus. At the breakdown, Fleetwood quietly builds on the snare and floor tom, before McVie's classic bass line enters and the track heads toward its raging climax. More hypnotic minimalism follows on Nicks' "Gold Dust Woman," where the boom-TOCK, boom-TOCK of Fleetwood's simple bass drum and cowbell pattern in the verses perfectly underscores the song's witchy vibe.

"I'm just a guy who gets out his own emotions through a pretty simple formula of technique," Fleetwood told *MD* in his June 2009 cover story. That "simple formula" of hypnotic grooves and idiosyncratic touches serves the songs on *Rumours* perfectly.

Patrick Berkery





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Billy Hart

Collis Davis/Shatida

Billy Hart circa 1979, a year he played on more than a dozen albums. Now in his seventies, Hart is still quite active—and still pushing boundaries.

How can I be overdue recognition," Billy Hart ponders, "when this year alone I'm on four very interesting releases, one of them my own?" Hart is responding to a recent magazine article that claimed the seventy-three-year-old musician is undervalued. "It makes me seem like I'm whining," he says. "I'm pretty loved, man! Chris Dave invited me to the mix session of his new Drumhedz record. I have extensive conversations with Justin Brown and Kendrick Scott, and Marcus Gilmore and I are very close. I'm not underappreciated—I'm just trying to keep up with what's going on."

"No one is playing quite like we are playing now. That applies to my playing as well."

musician is undervalued. "It makes me seem like I'm whining," he says. "I'm pretty loved, man! Chris Dave invited me to the mix session of his new Drumhedz record. I have

extensive conversations with Justin Brown and Kendrick Scott, and Marcus Gilmore and I are very close. I'm not underappreciated—I'm just trying to keep up with what's going on."



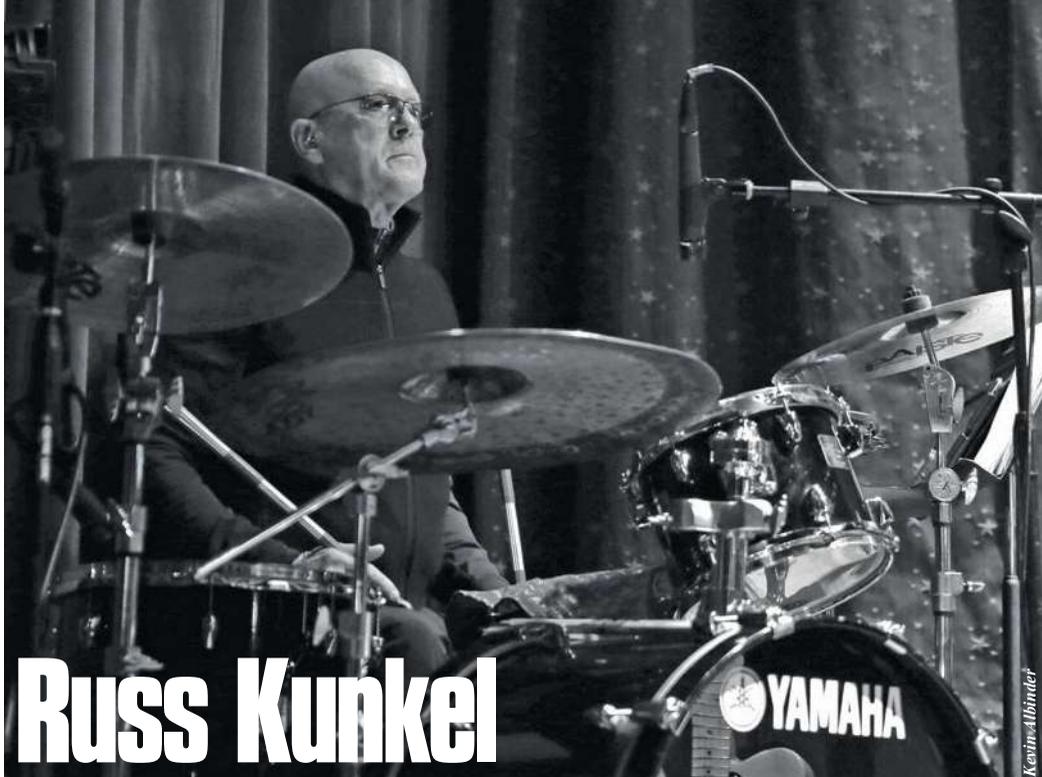
Hart's career took off in the '70s with Herbie Hancock's sextet, leading to work with Miles Davis, McCoy Tyner, Stan Getz, Mingus Dynasty, Charles Lloyd, and Joe Lovano. To date he's tracked more than 500 records, including the recent ECM recordings *All Our Reasons* and *One Is the Other* with his quartet featuring saxophonist Mark Turner, Bad Plus pianist Ethan Iverson, and bassist Ben Street.

"We've been playing together for ten years," Hart says. "We broke some new ground on the first record, and now we're continuing on this new path. No one is playing quite like we are playing now. That applies to my playing as well."

Hart's drumming signature—beautiful cymbal work locked to an airy swing feel—is the epitome of artfulness and grace, but Billy can also drive a group as hard as a Mack truck, as heard on his third record with the Cookers, *Believe*. Hart is a scholar of the drums who long ago forecast the merging of jazz and hip-hop. "A lot of modern jazz is really what Coltrane called multidirectional music," he says. "It combines Afro-Caribbean—whether it's Cuban, Brazilian, Jamaican, or Trinidadian—with this new swing vocabulary. Then Han Bennink and Tyshawn Sorey—they're futurists. Chris Dave brings that to contemporary jazz. And a lot of cats are investigating the old Moeller technique as a way of academically rationalizing what the so-called 'free' drummers did. At the same time, Marcus Gilmore, by playing with both Vijay Iyer and Gonzalo Rubalcaba, is addressing Indian and Afro-Cuban.

"It's a changing of the guard that for my generation began with Tony Williams," Hart adds. "Tony knew how important Indian music would be to the new swing by bringing in John McLaughlin, who brought in Billy Cobham playing all those odd meters that he really never did again after leaving Mahavishnu Orchestra. It all began with Tony Williams." **Ken Micallef**

The Billy Hart Quartet, from left: Ben Street, Ethan Iverson, Hart, and Mark Turner



Russ Kunkel

Kevin Abinger

confessional California rock. "It's what was needed and wanted for the music at hand."

On a recent evening at the Slipper Room in New York City, Kunkel, along with his fellow legendary session mates Lee Sklar and Waddy Wachtel, played a showcase of new songs by Welsh singer-songwriter Judith Owen. When asked what it was

Throughout the '70s and early '80s, there was no busier session man than Russ Kunkel. Known for his precision and faultless time, Kunkel appeared on a barrage of hits by Joni Mitchell, Linda Ronstadt, Warren Zevon, Stevie Nicks, and Jackson Browne. He also played on seminal albums by James Taylor and Carole King, and when the two legendary singer-songwriters co-headlined the

"I didn't consciously set out to be sensitive. It's what was needed and wanted for the music at hand."

highly successful Troubadour Reunion Tour in 2010, Kunkel was there. "I didn't consciously set out to be sensitive," Russ says of his popularity among the elite of

about this particular artist that brought together the three old friends—who worked as a recording unit so often that they became known simply as the Section—the drummer replies, "Judith is one of the most talented singer-songwriters I've ever met. She wanted to use the musicians that played on her favorite records. I'm really proud to be a part of this." **Bob Girouard**

Paul T. Riddle

The Marshall Tucker Band's Paul T. Riddle is seemingly as busy today as he was when the Southern-rock band was all over '70s FM radio with the hits "Can't You See," "Take the Highway," "Heard It in a Love Song," and "Fire on the Mountain." The drummer, who makes his home in Greenville, South Carolina, says his life is a

"As far as drummers go, I love 'em all. In fact, I don't think I ever met one I didn't like."

fulfilling combination of teaching, playing, and producing.

Riddle's work with the MTB has always been an anomaly. Though the group is known for its appropriation of multiple strains of American roots music, Riddle's personal style, marked by the intuitive placement of ghost notes and bass drum syncopations, was heavily influenced by jazz greats like Elvin Jones, Joe Morello, and Buddy Rich. Rich, while visiting South Carolina in the early '80s, invited Riddle to sit in with his orchestra. "My playing style begins with Buddy," Paul says, "but it takes a turn to folks as diverse as Sandy McKee of [soul-rock band] Cold Blood and Joel Rosenblatt of [instrumental fusion group] Spyro Gyra. As far as drummers go, I love 'em all. In fact, I don't think I ever met one I didn't like!"

Though he's still in demand as both a player and a



Modern Drummer first featured Paul T. Riddle in the May 1981 issue.

producer—among his recent projects is Americana artist Barry Waldrep's latest album, *Smoke From the Kitchen*—Riddle's main activities are now centered around his wife's ministry at Christ Church Episcopal in Greenville, where he's in charge of 150 drum and percussion students. But you can still find him out on the road with the Marshall Tucker Band throughout the year.

Bob Girouard



Elaine Bradley

Story by Ken Micallef
Photos by Alex Solca

The plan was clear for Neon Trees' new album: big sounds, big ideas, and big performances.

Neon Trees' *Pop Psychology* is what happens when a successful pop-rock band pursues a hip-hop recording approach using Peter Dinklage's *So* and Kanye West's *Yeezus* as its twin guiding lights. A joyous album complete with such feel-good songs as "Love in the 21st Century" and "Teenager in Love," the set is also a feast for drummer Elaine Bradley.

Recording an album like *Pop Psychology* is a drummer's dream. Bradley makes the most of multiple drumsets, some innovative miking

techniques, and the demand for white-knuckle performances. Stacking parts and finding new ways to play one drum at a time, Bradley ups her game from the band's previous *Picture Show* (2012) and *Habits* (2010) albums, proving that benefits can be reaped from pushing beyond your comfort zone.

"This is the biggest-sounding record we have ever made—on purpose," Neon Trees singer Tyler Glenn says. One listen to *Pop Psychology* confirms his sentiments.

MD: The new record really highlights the drum production.

Elaine: That's true. It's very beat heavy. We've always been rhythm heavy, but I think the drums are even more pronounced and clear, and the differences between the effected drums and the natural drums are pretty obvious.

MD: The drums sound treated, though I understand that's largely a case of compression, close and far miking, and sampling. What was the challenge for you?

Elaine: This has been my favorite process so far. I went into the studio with the engineers for a week and played through each song at least three times—good, clean takes with vintage Slingerland and Ludwig setups and

different miking approaches. We really experimented and had fun. We even had the small 18" bass drum from my Gretsch cocktail kit as a third bass drum, which I struck with a mallet. We approached this like a hip-hop record,

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Bradley plays a Gretsch USA Custom kit in champagne sparkle finish. It features a 6.5x14 chrome-over-brass snare, a 9x12 rack tom, 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms, and an 18x22 bass drum. Her Zildjian cymbals include 13" K Custom Dark hi-hats, a 17" A Medium Thin crash, a 20" A Medium ride, and a 19" K Custom Hybrid crash. Her Evans heads include EC2 tom batters, an HD Dry snare batter, and a GMAD kick batter. She uses Vic Firth 5A sticks, Rute 505 multirods, and T3 mallets, plus a Roland SPD-SX sample pad and BT-1 Bar Trigger Pad and an LP Rock cowbell and Soft Shake shakers.



The photos for this feature were taken during Neon Trees' appearance on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* this past April.

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Nia Lovelis

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Modern Drummer Magazine

Big Mike Clemons
Israel & New Breed

Bryan Hitt
REO Speedwagon

Cobus Potgieter
Ventura Lights

Dylan Taylor
Cute Is What We Aim For



Elaine Bradley

using different kick drum samples to enrich the sound of the beats. There were no rules.

MD: The drum sounds recall the first Phil Collins album and *So* by Peter Gabriel.

Elaine: We definitely referenced those records for special fills or ideas or effects we wanted to apply. We'd use one kit for the chorus and then change out snare drums for different sections of a song. We'd also change mics for different effects. It depended on what fit. You don't often get to do that with the drums in the studio. It's usually, "Let the drummer do his part so we can get on with it." So it was fun to be this involved from the ground up.

MD: Did you record complete drum takes, or were you sampled and a beat was created from the different elements?

Elaine: Sometimes it's a complete take from start to finish; other times we chopped up my drums and fit them into the song. It really was different from song to song. "Living in Another World" is my drums in one complete take. Just good drum sounds. "Love



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Elaine Bradley

in the 21st Century” I probably played five times. The toms are natural but then super-treated in the verse, and the snare is very compressed. In the chorus you hear both the effected and the natural drums.

MD: And you tracked drums and cymbals separately for some songs?

“The Phil Collins fills on ‘Sleeping With a Friend’ are so obvious. The drum sound had to be *huge*.”

Elaine: Yes, and it's so much harder than you think! As a drummer you're used to using all of your limbs at the same time. So when you take an arm away [to record without a ride pattern], it's so physically confusing. We even tracked toms and the snare separately a couple times. Eventually we put a pillow on the hi-hat, so I could hit it but it wouldn't go through the mics. Otherwise I would try to air drum, but the part wouldn't work. Without using my right hand the beat would almost fall apart.

MD: “Sleeping With a Friend” has a huge drum sound; it turns tribal in the breakdown, and then we hear Phil Collins-style tom fills.

Elaine: The Phil Collins fills are so obvious. The drum sound had to be *huge*. We did that one fill separately and miked the toms differently. We punched

in the verse toms, and they're also delayed. Then we did that Collins-type tom fill separately to make it sound like another huge drumkit was entering. I'm sure the verse snare sound is different from the chorus. It all helps move the song forward.

MD: In the breakdown to “Teenager in Love,” the snare sounds like rockets exploding.

Elaine: That's me striking the side of an empty metal filing cabinet with a mallet. That has two or three different kick drums as well.

MD: Which song has the most intense drum production?

Elaine: You notice it the most in “Teenager in Love,” but “First Things First” was more of a constructed beat. We built the beat up from authentic drum sounds. We recorded single drum hits to create the beat. We wanted exact sounds.

MD: What was the biggest lesson you learned from this process?

Elaine: By not really adhering to the rules, we freed ourselves up to be more creative and get more unique drum passes, while not distracting from the melodies. If anything, it made me realize that within my job as a drummer there is a certain amount of creativity that can happen in the studio that can't happen if you're just rehearsing or playing live. Studio time can be well spent if you put in the effort to record a few different passes with different ideas so you're not tied down. Being flexible and doing the extra work and trying a lot of different sounds really reaped rewards. You never know what will work when all the different drum parts are added.



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Shannon Leto





Few bands inspire as fervent a following as 30 Seconds to Mars. On the eve of what promises to be the pop-rock tour of the summer with co-headliners Linkin Park, the group's drummer shares the story of his atypical road to stardom and gives insight into his creative process.

Story by David Ciauro

Photos by Alex Solca

With more than 1.4 million Twitter followers, 10 million records sold, *hundreds* of millions of video views on YouTube, and a devoted global fan base known as “the Echelon,” the members of

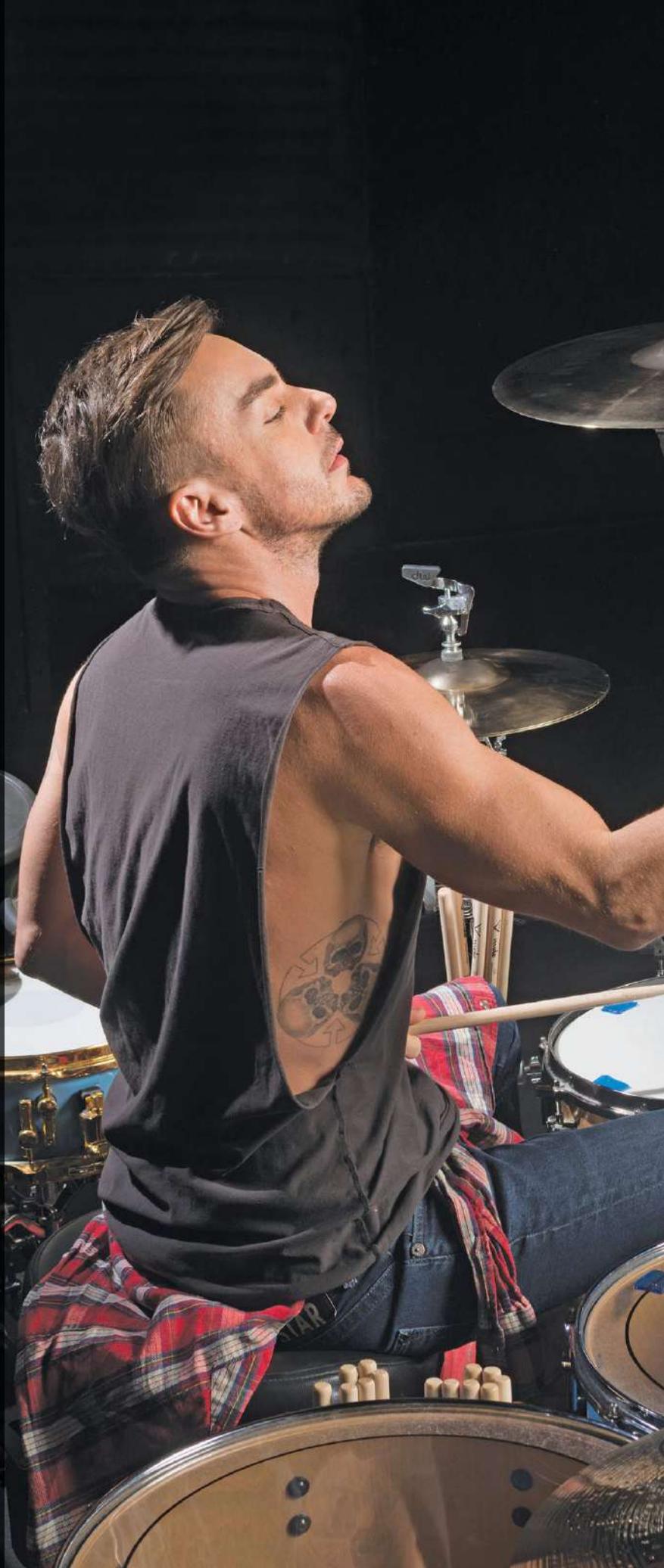
30 Seconds to Mars—drummer Shannon Leto and multi-instrumentalists Jared Leto (Shannon’s brother) and Tomo Miličević—are inarguably rock stars with a capital R. Yet it’s interesting how many musicians are unfamiliar with the band’s material, despite its massive success. Perhaps it’s the Hollywood connection; Jared Leto is a popular actor, recently an Oscar winner, and musicians, the skeptical lot that we are, tend to question the authenticity of a group with such an apparent “head start.”

But frankly that’s our insecurity talking. When pressed, most of us would admit that there is no foolproof way to achieve our childhood dreams, and certainly no shortcut to lasting success as an instrumentalist. And anyone who’s seen *Artifact*, the award-winning documentary exploring 30 Seconds to Mars’ battles with its record label, understands that there are no guarantees even after you’ve reached the top. Despite Jared’s high-visibility dramatic roles, he’s made the band a priority, putting out four fully realized albums and touring the world multiple times over the past decade. For his part, Shannon absolutely passes the dues-paying test, working endless hours to come up with ideal yet idiosyncratic parts for the group’s modern-rock anthems and throwing every ounce of his copious energy into his live performances.

Growing up in remarkably humble surroundings and struggling to discover his place in the boxed-in world he saw before him, Leto found sense and purpose in the drums. Like so many, the young musician saw an early rock ‘n’ roll model in Kiss, starting a cycle that would come full circle when Kiss producer Bob Ezrin produced 30 Seconds to Mars’ self-titled 2002 debut.

Leto spent nearly a decade away from the instrument during his teenage years, a time when most of us have the hours available for woodshedding. But his passion, desire for individuality, and deep personal connection to music never left him, and when in 1997 he and his brother started jamming for the simple pleasure of doing it, they gave birth to a group that, seventeen years later, is one of the few that can reliably achieve gold and platinum album sales and sell out arena gigs around the world.

Leto is more than the drummer for Mars; he’s fully immersed in all aspects of the band, including writing, instrumentation, programming, production, and creative direction. Often the identity of a musician is inextricably linked to the band he or she is in. In the case of 30 Seconds to Mars, the group’s character is a direct reflection of the creative vision of the Leto brothers.





MD: Creativity seems to be a natural byproduct of the environment you were raised in.

Shannon: Yeah, growing up, instead of having G.I. Joe dolls and TV, I would make instruments. My mom's friends would come over with bongos and guitars, and I would try to make instruments that mimicked those sounds.

MD: It's been reported that at a very young age, around six or seven, you may or may not have stolen the Kiss album *Destroyer* from a record store. What about that album caught your attention?

Shannon: I loved the dark vibe of the album cover, with the band on a mountaintop and the burning city behind them. Because I didn't have toys and TV, my imagination was my entertainment. I would picture myself running through that burning city and

meeting them on top of the mountain. And when I actually heard the record, I loved how it sounded. So visually and sonically I was connected to that style of music at a very early age.

MD: So how did you get into drumming?

"I'm never worried about being perfect. What I'm most concerned about is being free."

Shannon: I started by listening to records, and I had seen pictures of drummers and drumsets, so I would arrange various pots and pans and boxes and just play, play, play.

MD: Did you ever take lessons?

Shannon: I tried taking lessons, but I was impatient. I just wanted to go off on my own and do it. I did get to participate in a community jazz workshop when I was twelve or

thirteen. I got to play a real drumset, and there were obviously other musicians involved, and we got to travel around and play shows. That was really exciting. There was a connection there for me—playing live and being connected to something bigger.

The second time they were going to do it, the next season or whatever, they wanted everyone to read music, and I didn't know how. So I was nervous. The song we needed to rehearse was Yes's "Owner of a Lonely Heart." So I thought, *I know this song—I got this!* But when it was my turn to audition, the conductor guy, who I thought was my homey, my friend, throws this sheet music at me, and I took it personally:

Shannon's Setup

Drums: Sonor S02 Maple

- A. 5.5x14 bronze Artist series snare
- B. 5x13, 25-ply maple Artist series snare
- C. 8x8 tom
- D. 8x10 tom
- E. 8x12 tom
- F. 8x14 tom
- G. 16x16 floor tom
- H. 16x18 floor tom
- I. 20x20 bass drum

Cymbals: Sabian

- 1. 14" AAX X-Celerator hi-hats
- 2. 19" AAX X-Plosion crash
- 3. 20" AAX X-Plosion crash
- 4. 19" AAX X-Treme China
- 5. 21" Dry ride

Hardware: DW, including Floating

Snare Basket for 14" snare; 9000 series hi-hat stand, double pedal, and single pedal; and percussion table

Heads: Remo Clear Pinstripe tom

batters, Coated Emperor X 14" snare batter, Coated CS 13" snare batter, and clear Powerersonic bass drum batter

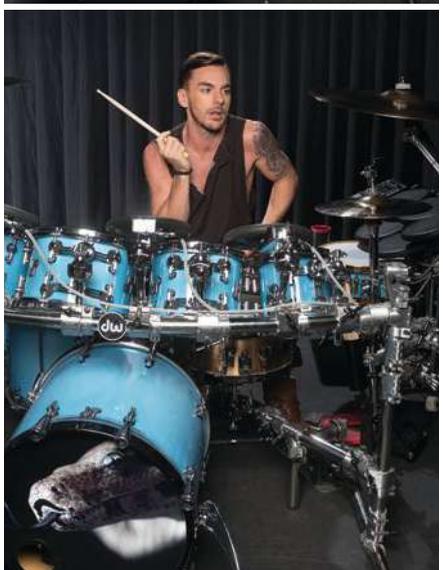
Electronics: Roland TD-12 brain, PD-8 pads, and KD-7 Kick Trigger Unit

Percussion: TreeWorks Tre35 full-size single-row chimes

Accessories: Roc-n-Soc saddle throne with base; ButtKicker with mounting plate and ButtKicker amp

Sticks: Vater Shannon Leto Signature 5A Nude model with nylon tip





Influences

Leto says he's inspired by electronic music, late-'80s R&B, old Michael Jackson, Knife Party, the Cure, Depeche Mode, Kiss, Boz Scaggs, Fleetwood Mac, Led Zeppelin, the Police, early Metallica, Iron Maiden, Pantera, Mastodon, KRS-One, Boogie Down Productions, and Eric B. and Rakim.

particular drummer.

My first musical experiences with drummers like Bonham weren't visual—I was hearing it. For example, I remember listening to *The Song Remains the Same* and hearing not only Bonham's playing but these vocalizations he was doing while he was playing, like grunting, and it seemed so real and had such passion. I felt it—the drumming, the vocals, the guitars, the organ.... In order for me to really get into any drummer or band, it had to evoke an emotional reaction in me.

MD: 30 Seconds to Mars is your first and only band, correct?

Shannon: Yup, that's it.

MD: Putting that together with the fact that the band started out as just you and your brother and that you weren't specifically trying to emulate anyone, the music you created and your drumming style are essentially your own things.

Shannon: I never really thought about it like that, but you're right—that's what happened. I learned from everybody I listened to, but when we started playing it was just *our* thing, and so I did *my* thing.

MD: When you and Jared first started jamming, was the goal to start a band, or were you just having fun playing some of your favorite songs?

Shannon: We pretty much went right away into writing songs, but we didn't really know we were writing. We followed what the other would be playing, just jamming.

MD: Was Jared singing at that point too?

Shannon: Yeah, he would be singing while playing guitar, and we would record onto a tape recorder. We weren't playing out or anything. It was just me and him in a bedroom.

MD: Your drumming style tends to have an underlying groove with a lot of accents going on that are either

Man, he knows I don't read music. I looked at it, thinking I could get by on what I remembered from hearing the song on the radio, but I got all sweaty and basically blew the audition.

MD: You actually stopped playing for a long while after that.

Shannon: Yeah, I did. I stopped playing because, at that time and age, I felt betrayed by someone I looked up to in a way.

MD: Those are formative years for musicians, and fragile ones at that. That sounds like it was a profound moment for you.

Shannon: It was, because music and drumming was my art, my life—it was

the only way I expressed myself. I took it personally at the time, so I walked away from drumming for a while.

MD: You mentioned that there was a lot of music around you while you were growing up, but was there a particular band or drummer that captivated you?

Shannon: I liked so many different styles of music, but there wasn't one main drummer that I wanted to emulate. There were the drummers from back then that everyone talks about, like Led Zeppelin's John Bonham, the Who's Keith Moon, and Stewart Copeland of the Police, who I really liked, but I mostly felt connected to music more than a

"Listening to Led Zeppelin's *The Song Remains the Same*, I was hearing not only Bonham's playing but these vocalizations he was doing while he was playing, like grunting. It seemed so real and had such passion."

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Shannon Leto

punctuating a vocal melody or following the instrumentation.

Shannon: That style formed out of a habit I had when I would listen to a song on the radio. I would keep the beat with my right foot, and then I would tap the vocal line with my left foot. Then, with my right hand, I would tap the guitar or keyboard line and have this kind of upbeat thing going with my left hand. I mean, I didn't know what I was doing.

MD: It wasn't an intentional independence exercise?

Shannon: Not at all. I was just tapping, but later on I realized it was training in a sense.

MD: It sounds as if drumming stemmed from your active imagination. You could envision how to translate what you heard to your limbs. Was it ever difficult for you to get the coordination down from what you heard in your head when you got behind the kit?

Shannon: Not really. If I could hear it, I could I play it.

MD: From the start you embraced a hybrid setup, incorporating both acoustic and electronic sounds, which is an integral part of the 30 Seconds to Mars style. When did you first get interested in electronic music?

Shannon: I remember seeing a Depeche Mode concert on a VHS tape a long time ago, and homey was hitting this panel, almost a wall that would light up when he hit it, but it also produced a sound, and I thought that was really cool. New-wave bands like Depeche Mode and the Cure were groups that I listened to among all the other music I liked, and when I was playing drums I wanted to be able to produce those types of sounds as well. So I needed to add pads and modules and samplers in order to do that.

MD: Before going in to record a new album, do you decide to focus more on the acoustic or electronic side?

Shannon: I have some ideas in my head, but ultimately it depends on the song. The songs will usually start from a vocal line, guitar line, or drum part, and we just start adding or subtracting layers. There's no formula, just what we feel is right for each song.

MD: Being that you tend to accent vocal lines or melodies, do your parts tend to evolve as the songs shift into focus?

Shannon: Well, sometimes songs start with a drumbeat, and everything comes together around that. The song "Night of the Hunter" from *This Is War* is written

around the drumbeat.

MD: How involved are you on the production side of things in the studio?

Shannon: Oh, I'm in there tweaking and geeking. I'm a mad scientist in the control room.

MD: The studio can be a weird place when it comes to drumming. You're a very physical player, but sometimes going all out in the studio doesn't translate to the best-sounding takes. What's your approach?

Shannon: Right, and that's something I learned over time. If I'm bashing, I'm choking out the tone. So I push and pull. When I'm figuring out my parts, I go for it and play really hard because I'm feeling it. I want to know that the parts feel right. Then, when I go to record them, I pull back a little to get the best-sounding take.

MD: Do you go for full takes?

Shannon: Full takes—for sure! I'm a full-take guy. I don't do parts at a time. Even nowadays, it's really hard for me if someone says, "Hey, go program this beat and we'll record real drums later." I'm like, "Nah, I got to go play it." So I set up everything and record it, and then maybe I'll program a beat off what I just played. I'm not a slave to electronics or technology. I look at it like I'm in control of the technology.

MD: Are all the songs written by just you and Jared, or is Tomo Miličević involved in the process?

Shannon: It's mainly me and Jared, but all ideas are welcome.

MD: Do you think that the sibling bond intimidates Tomo in terms of bringing ideas to the table?

Shannon: You know what, it probably does, but I think he knows how to deal with it. Any idea is a good idea, because it can spark another idea.

MD: Have you ever recorded tracks for any other projects?

Shannon: I did something called the Wondergirls in the late '90s with Scott Weiland, Ian Astbury from the Cult, Troy Van Leeuwen, and a bunch of other people. I did that for a few months, but nothing ever really happened with it, because everyone was on different labels. I was just showing up and playing. It was just a side project.

MD: It's pretty rare for someone to basically have been in only one band from the start, and it seems that the more successful the band becomes, the more focused you are on having it be the best it can be.



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SHANNON LETO
Thirty Seconds to Mars

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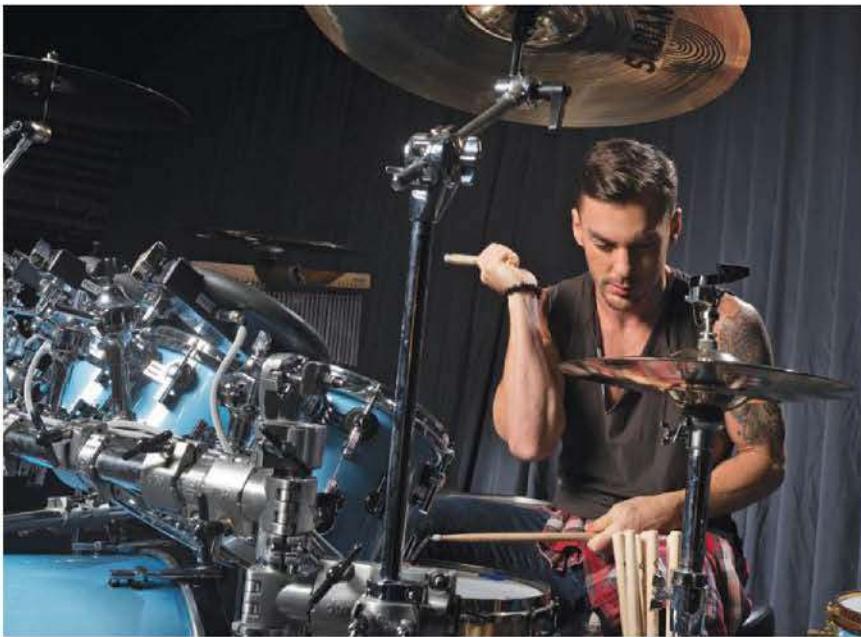
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Shannon Leto



Shannon: I am pretty fulfilled with Mars. All my energy is put into this band, and there's so much more involved for me than playing drums.

From the visuals to the live production to geeking out on new instruments to bringing back really old keyboards—there's a lot to do that keeps me busy.

MD: The band typically takes three to five years between albums. Is that due to scheduling, or do you tend to work very meticulously and conceptually from the start of each record?

Shannon: Well, we're not going to do that anymore, but it would usually take us that long to write a record, because we would go in and just trip out and massage the songs until they were done. We'd try out different Junos, all these old-school '80s synths, '80s programmed drums like Simmons, vintage guitars.... We took our time, and the record company has always allowed us to do that.

MD: It definitely comes across on your albums, because even from the band's debut, the songs always sound finished, with a lot of care and precision placed on the sounds, arrangements, and orchestrations.

Shannon: That's how we did it, and we learned a lot from that type of process. You don't always have to take that much time. Sometimes you get so precious, and perfection is kind of subjective. Nothing's perfect, and trying to be perfect is not a fun way to live. I think I've learned that imperfections are what make things really exciting and different. On our last album, *Love, Lust,*

Faith, and Dreams, there's a bunch of imperfections and mistakes, and that's what made the records.

MD: Do you mean mistakes in terms of performances?

Shannon: Yeah, but even in the sounds I was creating with the synths and all that. There were some happy mistakes, and I just left them instead of trying to fix them to make it "perfect."

MD: When you're in the kind of band that really takes its time, how do you know when to let go and leave something be?

Shannon: Well, we've done a few albums that took a long time because we were trying to make things perfect, or the best that they could possibly be. I think time is what taught us. We learned that we don't necessarily have to do that. Just growing and evolving as a band has helped us learn when to let go. It's a process. We're always pushing ourselves to try things differently, think outside the box, take risks, change, grow, and evolve. That being said, letting go is just a natural way to go about things now—not focusing so much on the minutiae but letting things breathe and be imperfect.

MD: Do producers ever say, "I think you got it," but you feel differently?

Shannon: It's always up to us. Some producers are like, "I feel that was the right one—that was it!" And if we agree, we agree. If we don't...well, I definitely tend to exhaust all ideas. I tend to exhaust everything, you know. "Let's see how this part will feel in 2/4...let's see how it will feel with four on the floor..."

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Shannon Leto

let's try an upbeat thing...how about accenting on the 3..." In my head I'm feeling it, so I want to be able to hear out loud how every way sounds.

MD: When you first started out, you were creating for yourselves. Now that you have a massive global fan base, does that put extra pressure on you when you're writing because there are expectations?

Shannon: Nah, man, there's no pressure at all. We're gonna do what we're gonna do. That's what we've always done. We've been fortunate that we created that dynamic from the beginning, and it's always been that way. Having that global family, the Echelon, has actually added to our creative process. It's given us inspiration and the freedom to express ourselves how we choose. They are really amazing.

MD: What's most important for you to convey during a performance? Are you focused on the vibe or playing the parts perfectly?

Shannon: No, no, no—I'm *never* worried about being perfect. What I'm most concerned about is being free when I'm up there, not feeling restricted, because when that happens my playing becomes stiff and it's not as fun. It's the vibe! I feed off my brother, I feed off the audience, and I just disappear into the show. Like when you're driving from your house to some place and you get there and you're like, *How did I even get here?*

MD: You use in-ear monitors live, which have incredible isolation. Do you have any ambience in your mix so you don't miss out on the audience involvement?

Shannon: I don't put the in-ears in all the way, or one's out and one's in, and we also have crowd mics. I want to protect my ears. I used to use foam earplugs when we used stage monitors, and the transition to using in-ears was actually a pain in the ass. I'm so "I wanna feel the *music*, man," so it was a process.

MD: Foam earplugs can make the kit sound better, especially the bass drum, but molded earplugs made the kick disappear.

Shannon: Yes! That's why it's important to have a great monitor guy, but also a thumper on your seat.

MD: You use a seat shaker?

Shannon: Hell, yeah! They're great.

MD: In-ears are almost a contradiction of success. It's every musician's dream

to play to large crowds that are singing every word, and then in-ears came along, and unless you have those ambient mics, it can be difficult to feed off that energy.

Shannon: With everything there's cause and effect. If you play with no protection, you'll go deaf and won't be able to hear your drums or the audience. If you're playing with in-ears, you get used to hearing the mix that way.

MD: Do you have a click in your ears?

Shannon: There's a click for some of the electronic stuff we do here and there, and the in-ears allow me to hear it clearly in the mix.

MD: Throughout the set, is there something in every song that requires a click?

Shannon: We trigger everything. Nothing is [tracked]; everything is live. Tomo has sequencers, and the [touring] bass player, Jared, and I are all triggering parts so that we don't have to play to tape. In those situations you need to have a click, and playing to a click has never bothered me. I can pull the beat back; I can push the beat. It's always been very natural for me. But most importantly, it lines everything up so that when it comes time to trigger a sample, it's in time.

MD: What do you use to trigger parts?

Shannon: Roland pads into a V-Drums module and Ableton Live.

MD: You're touring Canada and the States with Linkin Park and A.F.I.

Shannon: We've known the guys in Linkin Park for a while now, and we thought it would be an amazing idea to tour together. It just made sense.

MD: You guys have a sound unto your own. It's somewhat difficult to cross-reference 30 Seconds to Mars with other bands.

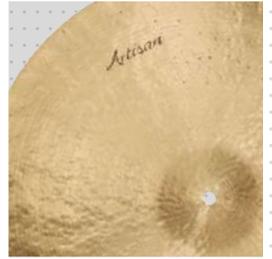
Shannon: Yeah, I think we have our own thing. But if you look at the grandiosity of both bands, we share some of the same production elements and theatrics, so it's a good tour pairing.

MD: As physical or theatrical as it may be, you guys maintain such a close relationship with the audience. It's a communal vibe.

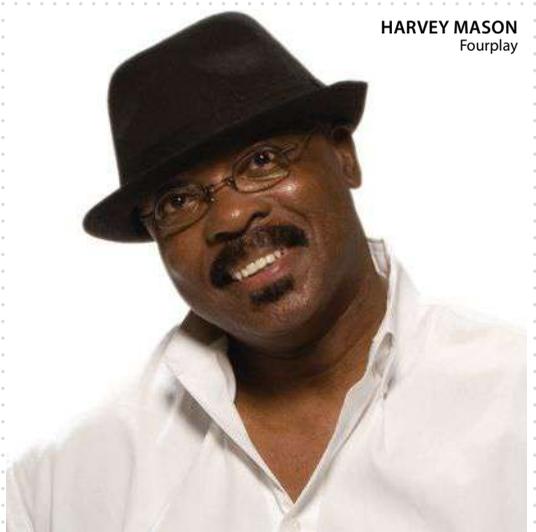
Shannon: That's it! That's 30 Seconds to Mars—it's a community. People can listen the way they want to listen. Nothing's force fed. I think our fans appreciate that. They have the freedom to be who they are and express themselves as they feel.



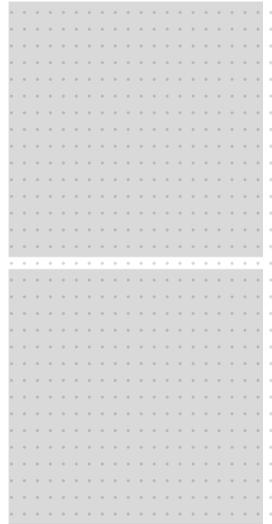
SHANNON LETO
Thirty Seconds To Mars



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INFLUENCES



Tom Coppi

Harvey Mason: The Groove Is All Around

Harvey Mason is one of the most recorded musicians in history. His precise, soul-filled drumming has knocked out fans of sophisticated groove playing for more than forty years, on such seminal albums as Herbie Hancock's *Head Hunters*, Charles Earland's *Leaving This Planet*, the Brecker Brothers' eponymous debut, Donald Byrd's *Street Lady*, Grover Washington Jr.'s *Mister Magic*, Lee Ritenour's *First Course* and *Captain Fingers*, and Chick Corea's *The Mad Hatter*. Mason's polished but always unpredictable contributions have propelled Top 40 hits by George Benson, John Legend, Beyoncé, Beck, Bill Withers, and Seal. His silken soulfulness supports a dozen albums by the platinum-selling smoothies Fourplay. And Mason has always been there when you weren't really listening, supplying the percussive pulse to film soundtracks including *The Incredible Hulk*, *Three Days of the Condor*, the *Mission: Impossible* series, and *Throw Momma From the Train*.

Mason's rhythm, his sound, his *soul* are practically part of our musical subconscious—that perfectly pointed and glossy “Mase” beat, typically elaborated with whip-cracking tom fills, inner-groove accents that create a forward-motion edge, and consummate consistency. Harvey is also a prolific composer, releasing twelve albums as a leader since 1975. And hip-hop has embraced his beats, which have been sampled by T.I., P. Diddy, Lupe Fiasco, and La Funk Mob, among others.

Mason presents his drumming and classic music anew on his latest album, *Chameleon*. Performing the title track (which he cowrote with Herbie Hancock) and other old-school Mason classics, the drummer tracked the record live with a band including trumpeter Christian Scott, bassist Ben Williams, and keyboardist Kris Bowers. *Chameleon* is Harvey Mason raw and untreated. But given Mason's profile as L.A.'s first-call smooth-jazz timekeeper, it almost didn't turn out that way. “I wanted more of today's colors,” Harvey tells *Modern Drummer*. “But we didn't add any sweetening, no synths or pads or

textures; it was all live. Chris Dunn, my producer, was adamant—he wanted me to play more free. I said, ‘I've played all of this before. I don't want to go back to those grooves.’ But eventually I got into the moment and played. I went with the feeling. The young musicians on the record really liked the rawness. They arranged the songs and put a different twist on the older music.”

And Mason's “older” beats have stood the test of time. On Lee Ritenour's 1977 album *Captain Fingers*, which crosses West Coast slickness with East Coast fusion, the guitarist creates a circuitous, almost impossible-to-follow arrangement in the title track, and Mason devours it. His

“Harvey will invert the beat and switch back and forth between the ‘&s,’ yet keep things moving and grooving—steady but loose.” —Jeff “Tain” Watts

“Dennis Chambers, Elvin Jones, Harvey Mason—they all play in a very relaxed way. The left-hand ghost-stroke thing Harvey did with Herbie Hancock on *Sunlight*? That screams *relaxation*.” —Nate Smith

slippery beat combines swooping hi-hat punctuations with popping snare accents and sparse bass drum notes. Mason grooves madly while also playing unison descending 16th-note lines with Ritenour's guitar and Anthony Jackson's bass.

Bob James' “Westchester Lady” from his 1976 album, *Three*, provides an example of Mason displacing the beat at an ideal funk tempo. A simple, sparse Rhodes piano rhythm underpinned by Will Lee's winding bass melody, “Westchester Lady” is seven minutes and thirty seconds of rare groove, delicacy, space, and attack. Mason displaces the song's beat so often and so cunningly, spreading the accents between the snare and hi-hat, that it's easy to get lost. Following funky displacement with Bernard Purdie-style hi-hat punches and his trademark descending tom fills, Mason colors “Westchester Lady” beautifully. His sly orchestration characterizes much of *Chameleon* as well, proving that Harvey has lost nothing of his flash, filigree, and fire.

At a time in the '70s when fusion drumming followed fairly straight if

complex groove patterns, Mason's working background—his first major gig was as Quincy Jones' percussionist on *The Bill Cosby Show*—enabled him to see a wider scope available beyond a strictly drum-centric approach. The preceding examples feature Mason's top-heavy proclivities: intricate hi-hat and cymbal flourishes, tom fills used more as melodic punctuation than as section setups, even bass drum patterns that occasionally change at will and stray from the bass guitar, especially in group solo sections. Perhaps clues to Harvey's approach can be found in the fact that this was an East Coast-born drummer who found success on the West Coast, no small thing

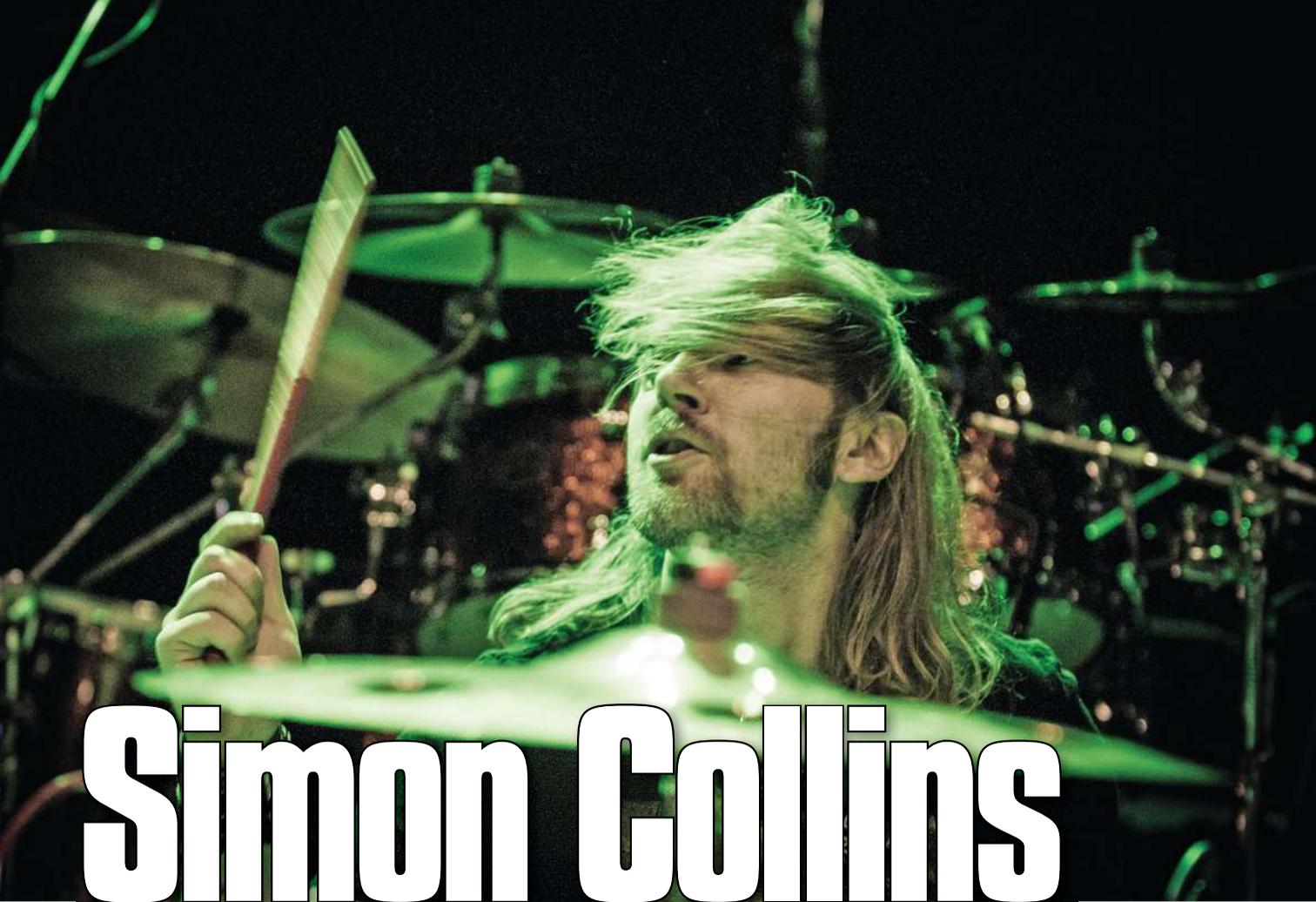
considering the different vibes that dominate the jazz played on the different sides of the country—hot, aggressive, and dense in the east, and cool, laid back, and cerebral in the west. As such, Mason brought Atlantic City—via—New York soul, jazz, and R&B to

popular records from CTI, Warner Bros., and Reprise, primarily recorded in Los Angeles with West Coast musicians.

Mason's displacement assaults undoubtedly influenced Dave Weckl's similar if more complex rhythmic spins in the '90s and similarly foreshadowed the mathematically dense drumming of Dennis Chambers, Chris Dave, and Ronald Bruner Jr. And while his early style was not as instantly recognizable as that of his studio contemporaries Steve Gadd, Peter Erskine, and Andy Newmark, Mason had an equal influence with his incredibly polished and funky tracks. Even while holding down a deep, consistent groove, the drummer illustrated arrangements with detail and depth—again, a result of his percussionist's approach. And with Herbie Hancock's *Head Hunters* album, Mason proved that pocket drumming could be as exciting as any fusion fusillades, helping to make “Chameleon” one of the most popular jazz-funk tracks of all time. The “Mase” groove remains ubiquitous to this day, same as it ever was.

Ken Micallef





Simon Collins

Yes, the legendary pop singer and mammoth drum talent Phil Collins is his father—there's no point avoiding that little fact. But this rising son does things *his* way, exploring the boundaries of the spiritual and musical with his band, Sound of Contact.

by Will Romano

What's in a name? Sometimes the oldest and simplest questions yield unexpected responses. Case in point: one Mr. Collins, a prolific songwriter, drummer, and lead vocalist/frontman who has performed such songs as "Keep It Dark" and "Easy Lover," orchestrated double-drummer showcases at various international venues, and collaborated with the likes of guitarist Steve Hackett, '80s techno-pop songsmith Howard Jones, and Genesis recording engineer/producer Nick Davis.

Sound familiar? What might surprise you is that the abovementioned artist is probably not the same Collins you immediately thought of from the clues we've given you.

Meet Simon Collins, son of the pop icon and superstar drummer Phil Collins. Yes, the thirty-seven-year-old musician's anguished vocal squalls and musings on love and loss, not to mention the deep resonance of his concert toms, are sometimes eerily similar to his father's. But it would be a cop-out—and just downright *wrong*—to reduce Collins the younger to little more than a series of genetic codes arranged in a

familiar pattern, capable of manufacturing *Face Value: The Sequel*. Simon, a right-handed player who runs his own record label, Lightyears Music, is a multitasking individual with the desire to push the boundaries of rock, bear his soul, and groove skillfully over angular rhythms.

Whereas Phil gradually claimed his iconic pop-star status after years of trolling the underground with the onetime cult band Genesis, Simon's career is operating in reverse. He has released three solo albums, including 1999's *All of Who You Are* and 2008's *U-Catastrophe*, which yielded two charting singles, and now leads the band Sound of Contact, whose conceptual debut, *Dimensionaut*, presents a sci-fi journey as a metaphor for spiritual transcendence. Clearly, Simon isn't the artist some might have expected him to be.

MD caught up with Collins, who was in Los Angeles finishing up rehearsals with Sound of Contact, "shaking the cobwebs off and getting behind the kit to play again."



MD: How often over the course of a single night's performance do you play drums with Sound of Contact?

Simon: I play the middle section of "I Am (Dimensionaut)" and "Realm of In-Organic Beings," and on "Möbius Slip" I go back and forth from the front of the stage to my kit. Actually, I'm going back and forth seven or eight times the whole show. We've created opportunities for me to do so by expanding on the songs and embellishing on certain atmospheres. It's exciting to have the double-drummer thing live too. We're playing venues now where we can actually fit two drumkits on stage. [laughs]

MD: As a youth, were you naturally drawn to singing or to playing drums?

Simon: Drumming is my first love, and I've been playing the drums since I was eight years old. My first kit, a red Tama, was a gift from my dad. When you're that age you don't have musical influences—you just listen to whatever your parents have lying around, and in my case I was listening to Genesis. Not much of a choice in that matter. [laughs] With all due respect, I learned from some of the best.

MD: In a drum clinic decades ago, Chester Thompson [Phil Collins' live foil in Genesis and on his solo gigs] told a packed house that he added a paradiddle-type pattern at the end of his longer fills. Did you pick up on similar rhythms or concepts from

watching him?

Simon: That's the first time I've ever been asked that question, actually. I've seen that specific fill, but I don't know how to articulate it. I don't read notation. I mostly pick up things by ear. I did work on double paradiddles with Chester, however. I remember being on

"On *U-Catastrophe* I was singing about things that I wasn't comfortable even discussing in public. The songs were about love and loss and hope for a brighter future."

tour with Genesis when I was young, watching them play, thinking that this was some "great gig in the sky." After the show, if there was a fill that either my dad or Chester had done that I wanted to have demonstrated, I'd ask them if they could show me how to do it. Chester used to practice syncopation

exercises on his pad before each show and would go through some techniques with me.

MD: You're in L.A. with Sound of Contact, but where's home?

Simon: I live in the U.K., just down the road from Stonehenge. Not to get too hippie on you, but it's a great place to be creative. I was in New York for Christmas with my old man and my brothers. My brother Nick, he's also a drummer—a bloody good one. It was cool for us to hang out and talk music and drumming. Knowing [Nick] wants to get into the industry, we were making sure he has the path of least resistance.

MD: The track "The Big Bang," from your 2008 solo record, *U-Catastrophe*, features a drum duet between you and your dad. Phil has been known not only for his technical prowess but also for the production value of his drum sound. How were these tracks recorded?

Simon: We recorded "The Big Bang" in two phases. I was in Vegas producing the album with Kevin Churko, and we were set up at his home studio, so things were more comfortable. First off, I wrote and arranged the song with Kevin. [Former Sound of Contact keyboardist] Dave Kerzner collaborated with us on the middle ambient section to complete the song arrangement but also to bring his unique sound design as icing on the cake. It's worth nothing that I met Dave at the rehearsals for the Genesis reunion tour in 2007, in New



York, and decided to record a cover of [Genesis's] "Keep It Dark."

I already had a very good idea of what I wanted to play drum-wise, and I had a good feeling about what my dad would play on the call-and-response sections. I also wanted to leave him room to explore and write his own parts alongside mine.

For the recording we cleared out the living room, which had a nice high ceiling and stone room sound. We recorded my drum tracks first, which in the final mix appear on the left channel. My dad is on the right. We then booked a commercial studio in Vegas for my dad's drum production, and he flew out with his Genesis touring kit and drum tech, Steve "Pudding" Jones, for a few days to help finish it off. By the time he arrived, my parts were done and there were spaces for him to respond, perform in some loose jams in the heavy primal sections, and join me in unison on specific fills. It was all done

"I wanted to do something meaningful and musically challenging with my old man. A drum 'battle' was the only way to go."

by ear and feel.

MD: So instead of collaborating with your dad on a pop tune, you decided to record a drum duet.

Simon: My dad and I have had many offers from labels to do something commercial, such as a vocal duet pop single, but I always found it a cheap idea. I wanted to do something meaningful and musically challenging with my old man. A drum "battle" was the only way to go.

MD: How do you do this song live?

Simon: We used to have stems and did it all with a click track. Now it's played live with [Sound of Contact touring

drummer] Ronen Gordon, and it sounds great.

MD: Had you ever played on stage with your dad?

Simon: I was in my early twenties and I was on tour for [the Phil Collins solo album] *Dance Into the Light*. Ricky Lawson was on that tour. He was an amazing drummer, and I miss him dearly. [Lawson passed away unexpectedly in December 2013.] It was Ricky, Luis Conte on percussion, my dad in the center of the stage, and me. We did this Afro-Cuban drum thing. It was unbelievable. I remember they sat down with me to teach me the parts.





But the first time I had ever been on stage with my dad was on my fourteenth birthday. Actually, we did a couple of different dates. I was into skateboarding at that time and I had just broken my arm. Chester was on stage when my little kit got wheeled on. I played “Easy Lover” with the band with one arm, because the other was still in a cast.

MD: Sound of Contact’s debut, *Dimensionaut*, is a prog-rock concept record. What’s the theme?

Simon: We wanted to explore a character’s journey to enlightenment and his feeling of being trapped on this planet, of living in this human condition. It took a couple months of researching cosmology and quantum mechanics or quantum theory. The leap from *U-Catastrophe* to *Dimensionaut* was an organic evolution of wanting to step outside myself, for multiple reasons, sonically and spiritually. There

have been a lot of eureka moments in my own personal spiritual path. All of this fueled me and [guitarist] Kelly Nordstrom, who’s been my right-hand man for my solo stuff.

MD: The title of your 2008 solo record, *U-Catastrophe*, must have been inspired by J.R.R. Tolkien’s concept of “the Eucatastrophe,” yes?

Simon: Big time. I don’t remember how old I was, but *The Hobbit* was the first book I wanted to read as opposed to having to read for homework, if you know what I mean. It took me away to this world. “The Eucatastrophe” is Tolkien’s description for a turn of events that ends up in the protagonist’s well-being. For me that meant turning my life around. When I was working on *U-Catastrophe*, I was going through a really dark patch. I was struggling with my demons and made it no secret. Now I’m on a path, a spiritual path, to recovery, which is really about finding my way back to myself.

U-Catastrophe was, in a way, a concept album, although I didn’t look at it that way at the time. A lot of it was written from the subconscious. I was singing about things on that album that I wasn’t comfortable even discussing in public. Those songs were about love and loss and hope for a brighter future. In fact, the closing track of *U-Catastrophe*, “Fast Forward the Future,” with [Genesis guitarist] Steve Hackett, was a precursor to the progressive, futuristic sound that Sound

of Contact has developed. In most cases, the songs appearing on *Dimensionaut* were the result of band collaborations, but some of the songs are based on real events in my life.

Right now, Matt Dorsey [guitar/bass/backing vocals] and I have a mountain of material, and we’re currently writing our new record. I want to get experimental percussion-wise on the next album. I’m in touch with different drummers. Being a solo artist is a very isolating experience, so it’s nice to have the opportunity to work with people you respect and have wanted to work with for years.

MD: Earlier you said that you were listening to and practicing Genesis songs as a young drummer. Which ones?

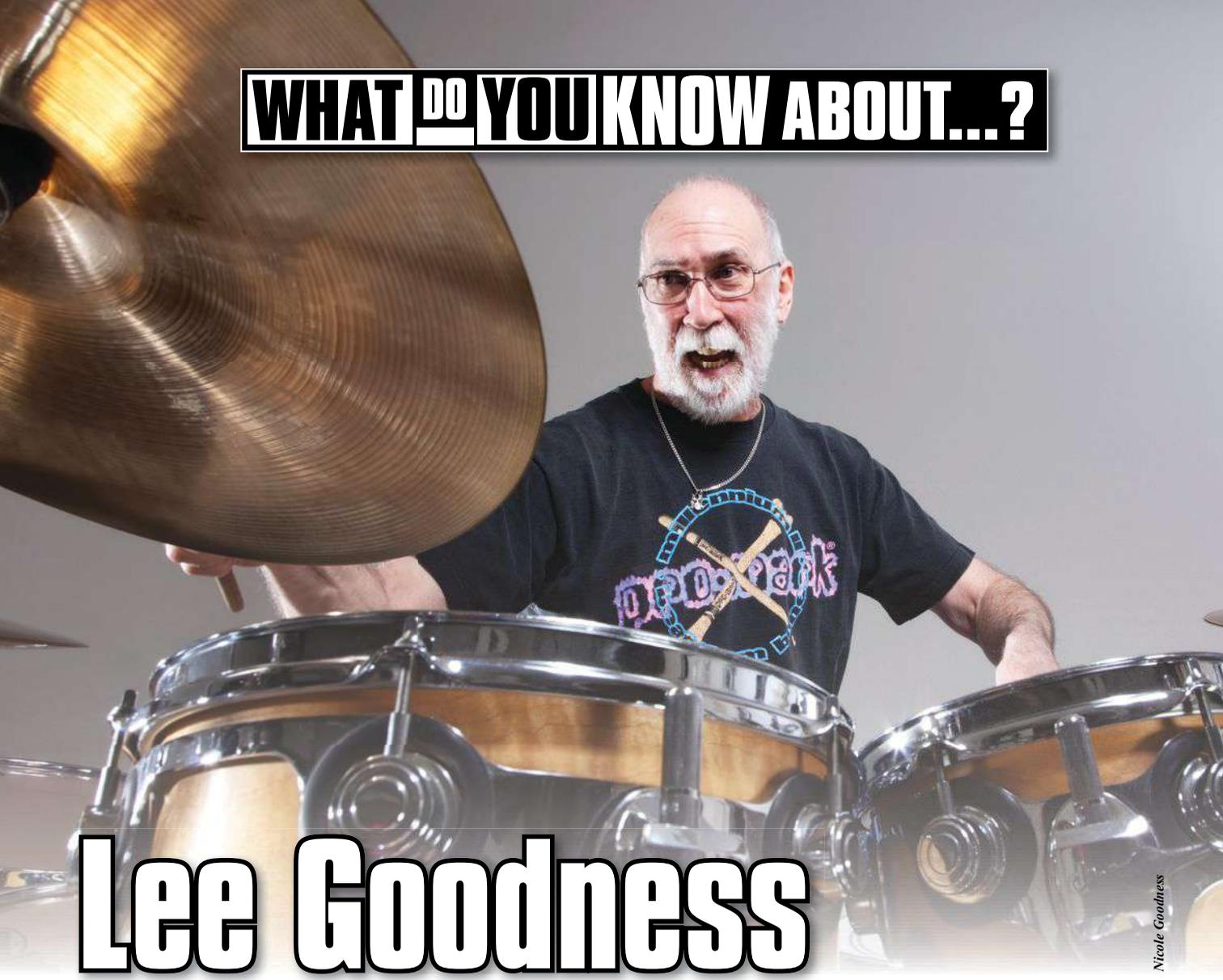
Simon: My favorite was the live album *Seconds Out*, specifically “Supper’s Ready,” the “Apocalypse in 9/8” section. I wasn’t trained. I took lessons for a couple of years and I just hated it. I was at that age, ten or eleven, where I just wanted to rock out and I didn’t want to learn jazz. It was too much discipline for my age and too much in the wrong direction. It was something that I, well, *regret* is a strong word, but it was something that could have come in useful. I remember my dad, when he performed with the Buddy Rich Orchestra, saying he was overwhelmed by the fact that he doesn’t read notation. He had to learn all of that by ear and make his own notes. I guess I’ve inherited that.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

On tour Collins plays a ddrum kit, featuring 7x8 and 7x10 concert toms; 7x10, 8x12, and 10x14 toms; 14x16 and 16x18 floor toms; and a 16x20 bass drum. His snares include a 5.5x14 Ludwig Acrolite and a 7x14 ddrum Vintone nickel-over-brass model. Simon’s assortment of Sabian cymbals includes 8” and 10” Paragon splashes, a 10” O-Zone splash, 14” Paragon hi-hats, a 16” AAX Studio crash, a 16” HHX Evolution O-Zone crash, a 17” AAX X-Plosion crash, a 20” AAX Aero crash, and a 21” HHX Raw Bell Dry ride. He uses Vater or Vic Firth sticks, Tama hardware, and a variety of Remo Clear and Coated Ambassadors for his snares, toms, and concert toms.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT...?



Nicole Goodness

Lee Goodness

Curtis Mayfield was unlike any other soul artist, and the job of servicing his timeless grooves was a unique challenge, especially during the dawn of electronic drums. The journeyman player who helped bring Mayfield's message of peace and harmony to thousands of international fans in the '80s—and who still lays it down strong today on the busy Atlanta scene—provides insight.

by Drew Schultz

It's the late 1980s, and a roaring crowd is dancing, singing, swaying, and sweating to a breakneck groove as the legendary Curtis Mayfield's voice "moves on up" into the stratosphere. Atop a syncopated bed of funk and soul, his lyrics speak of societal strife, social responsibility, and the struggle for equality. Mayfield is a beacon of light representing true change for the better, both musically and socially.

With the Impressions in the '60s, Mayfield poetically and unabashedly addressed tense race relations and inequity with a string of beautifully

arranged hits including "People Get Ready," "Keep On Pushing," and "Amen." In his solo work of the '70s, he helped define wah-wah-drenched funk music while decrying drug use and street crime with his soundtrack to the movie *Superfly*. And in the '80s, while still writing and recording prolifically, he adopted the multiracial band Ice 9 as his touring group. In the summer of 1990, Mayfield's life was permanently altered by a falling stage light, paralyzing him from the neck down and effectively ending his career as a performer. But at the aforementioned '80s show, as the

crowd soaks the music in, the singer/multi-instrumentalist and Ice 9 play like there's no tomorrow. Mayfield breaks the band down as he introduces the drummer who "plays as sweet as his name," Mr. Lee Goodness.

Today, Goodness still plays just as sweet. Since his stint with Mayfield, which included multiple tours of the U.S., Japan, and Europe, Goodness has become a staple of the Atlanta scene as an audio engineer, studio owner, and prolific player. He sat down with *Modern Drummer* to share his life story and lessons learned.

MD: You've always had certain jazz elements in your drum sound. Did you start by playing jazz?

Lee: Well, I liked jazz even before I started playing drums. But when I did start playing, it was all rock stuff. I saw the Beatles on *Ed Sullivan* and thought, *I've got to do that*. Then it was the Stones, Hendrix, Zeppelin. The harder, the better. Then, as I got better at playing, I progressed back into the jazz thing. I think I heard Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, and Weather Report all within about a week of each other. I quit the band I was in and just played fusion! It was a complete 180 as far as what I wanted to do and what I listened to.

Ice 9 was actually a fusion band when I first joined them. In order to work, our repertoire kind of devolved into Top 40 music, and we did that for a long time. But Ice 9's bass player, LeBron Scott, was Curtis Mayfield's nephew, and LeBron told him about us. So Curtis came to check us out, and I guess we passed the audition.

MD: What do you think stood out about Ice 9?

Lee: There's a funny thing that helped us. I was playing Simmons drums, because that was a real prominent sound at the time, and Curtis loved that sound. I think I had the SDS 8s, which weren't quite as versatile as some of the higher-end versions—but they worked.

MD: Based on the subtlety in Curtis's arrangements, I'm surprised to hear you say that.

Lee: It actually became a huge problem once we started touring. I didn't think they'd be dynamic enough for his music, and I was absolutely right. It was a huge pain in the ass! I had a different setup virtually every night, so I was learning how to use the different electronic kits on the fly, trying to keep

my sanity. On the next tour I had an acoustic kick drum, acoustic snare drum, and electronic toms. That was a little better, but I quickly changed to purely acoustic drums.

MD: Was Curtis particular about the drum parts?

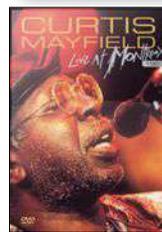
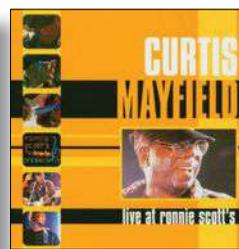
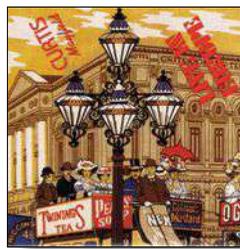
Lee: He had the concept of all the grooves from writing the tunes and performing them for years. But to me, the thing he wanted was the dynamics. Curtis was a very quiet singer—tons of emotion, but he didn't belt it out. You had to play in back of that, but you still had to *cook*. You had to have energy; you had to have feeling. There were specific drum parts that had to be there, but most of his music is based on the bass line and the percussion, not really the drums. The percussion is very prevalent.

MD: You were on the road with "Master" Henry Gibson, the percussionist who played a lot of those original parts.

Lee: Henry was just amazing. He was a big session guy in Chicago, and then he was with Curtis for years. I had to just lay it down for him. I had a solo in "Move On Up" and a couple of breaks here or there, but most of it was just staying in the pocket, keeping good time, and letting him do his thing. After the first three tours I did, he met a girl in Europe and decided to stay there.

MD: Were you trying to replicate the parts from the studio recordings?

Lee: Well, I never experienced what his drummers did in the studio on all those other cuts. But I would learn the part, and as we played the song I'd figure out where the dynamics needed to be. Let's



So Sweet, and Cool as Ice

You can check out Lee Goodness grooving with Curtis Mayfield on a number of tour documents, including the CDs *Live in Europe* and *Live at Ronnie Scott's* and the DVD *Live at Montreux 1987*.

take "Superfly." That comes on pretty strong when the song starts, then it breaks way down for Curtis's vocals and goes back up again in the transition into the chorus. It's almost like playing jazz, when you play the head and then break it down for the solos, then follow the soloist and build his solo up to a climax, and then come down for the next guy. And there was room to play within the song. You didn't have to play the same part every night. You had to keep the same feel, but there was room to improvise.

MD: How did you originally get into music?

Lee: I started on clarinet. I wanted to play drums, but my parents said, "That's too loud! Pick something else." So I said, "How about saxophone?" They said, "No, you need to start on clarinet first." So I did that and then switched to saxophone. When I got out of high school, I figured it was about time I could play some drums. I wasn't at home anymore and had no one to tell me not to, so I started drumming. I've been doing it ever since.

MD: Did you have a teacher at the time?

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Goodness plays a DW Collector's series kit including 8x8, 8x10 (not shown), and 9x12 toms; 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms; and an 18x22 bass drum. His main snare is a 6x14 DW Edge, and his auxiliary snares include a 4x14 DW Collector's series, a 6.5x14 Gretsch, and a 3.5x14 Pearl brass free-floating model. The Zildjian cymbals he chooses from include 13" K hi-hats, 13" K/Z hi-hats, 10" and 12" K splashes, a 14" A crash, a 16" K Dark crash, a 16" A crash/ride, a 20" A Heavy ride, and a 14" K Mini China. His batter heads include an Evans EQ3 on the bass drum, Evans G14 Clears on the toms, and Remo Coated Powerstroke 3s on the snares. His DW hardware includes 5000 series hi-hat and double bass drum pedals, a 4000 series single pedal for his left-foot cowbell, and 9000 series snare and cymbal stands.



Lee: No, I took lessons on clarinet and sax, but I'm actually completely self-taught on the drums. I've got really good ears, and if I hear something the first time, I usually pick it up by the time it comes around again. I've been able to survive playing gigs like that pretty much the whole time.

MD: So you flew into it by the seat of your pants.

Lee: I mean, obviously when you start off and you're in a band, everybody

rehearses and you learn the song, and then you go play gigs. But as I got older, a lot of the time you just show up and meet the people you're playing with for the first time. You just listen, jump in, and hang on!

MD: The arrangements on your album *All In* are all very jazz influenced.

Lee: When I decided to do my record, I asked my cousin Victor Acker if he would help me. A lot of the arrangements I did, and some of the

arrangements he did. I mixed the whole thing, and we coproduced it. All the drums as well as a couple of piano and sax parts were recorded here in my studio, while Victor and other musicians did their stuff in Boston.

MD: The album really showcases arrangements over chops and drum solos.

Lee: I think that's really important. You have to play the *song*. It's not always about drums, or screaming guitar. I left myself a little room; there's a little solo on the Latin piece, "Seven Steps to Heaven," and a solo drum piece at the end. I had a friend named Sean Costello that passed away unexpectedly, really way too young, and I went to his funeral. He was a great guitar player, singer-songwriter—just a really good musician. I came home, went to the studio, turned everything on, and just started to play, and that's what happened. It was kind of my way of saying goodbye to him, and that's "Blues for Sean." The other cuts are my interpretations of some of my favorite songs from over the years.

MD: What projects are you working on currently?

Lee: Right now I'm playing with a blues trio in Atlanta, Billy George and Mo' Lightnin'. I like it a lot because Billy really reminds me of Curtis as far as the raw, self-taught thing goes. He'll change where I is in a heartbeat, but the feeling is there, and it's fun. We'll open it up and play it a little more jazzy than the classic blues band would do. The songs just evolve the more we play them. We're going to start writing together very soon.

MD: Can you leave us with some final advice for up-and-coming drummers?

Lee: Well, you've got to play with the bass player and the singer. A lot of times you might want to accent a certain word or a certain inflection, and you need to set up different parts of the tune as it progresses. And of course dynamics. It's got to breathe; it's got to have life. You can't play balls to the walls all the time, especially with someone like Curtis. That was the most demanding thing for me, following his dynamics, and it was fun. I mean, if you want someone to pay attention to you, play quiet. I'm serious! [laughs]

AHEAD
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Rhythmic Displacement Essentials

Milking the Most From the Money Beats

by Rich Redmond

MUSIC KEY

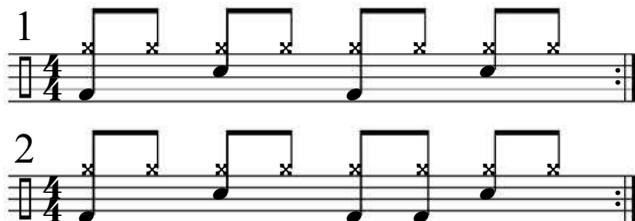
H.H. 
S.D. 
B.D. 

One of the frameworks of my drumming philosophy is mastering what I call the “money beats.” These are the five grooves that are used time and time again to make the world laugh, cry, and dance. They are the building blocks of every backbeat drummer’s musical DNA, and they always make people feel great when they’re played with confidence and authority. (You can learn more about all five of these beats in my new book/DVD package, *FUNDamentals*, which I created along with coauthor Michael Aubrecht.)

In this article we’re going to shake things up a bit and start displacing basic grooves by shifting the snare and bass drum voices by an 8th or 16th note. This is not something you want to do all the time (or at all) in a dance, pop, or rock song; it can actually be a groove killer. But it’s nice to have fun with shifting time while developing ideas for new grooves, fills, and solos. (If you play progressive rock or fusion, you can use these devices much more often without fear of getting fired!)

What follows are some basic ways to get comfortable with groove displacement. Be sure to practice with a metronome, click track, or drum loop, at all tempos and dynamic levels.

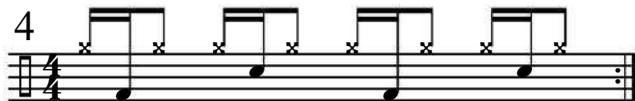
To begin, here are Money Beats #1 and #2 in standard form.



Now displace Money Beat #1 by moving the kick and snare pattern back by an 8th note so that it begins on the “&” of beat 1.



In this variation we’re displacing the kick and snare pattern by a 16th so that it begins on the “e” of beat 1.



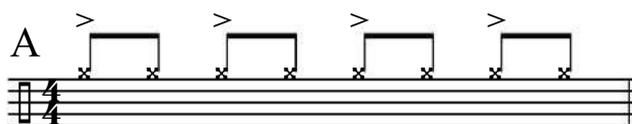
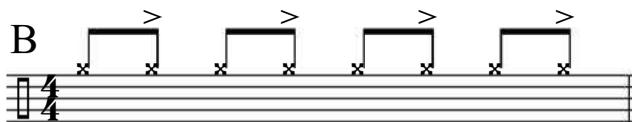
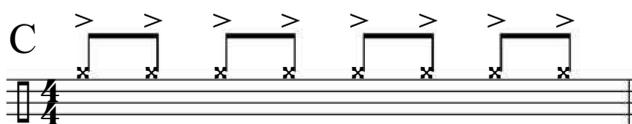
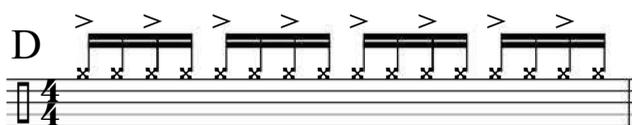
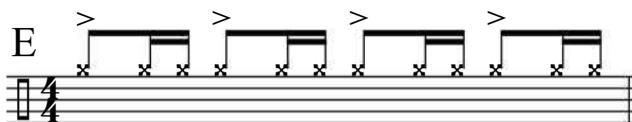
Now start the groove on the last 16th note of beat 1.



Once you have those under control, repeat the process using Money Beat #2. Examples 6–8 show what the three displaced grooves look like.



To boost the complexity a bit, experiment with different hi-hat/ride cymbal variations. Here are six to get you going. Have fun!

For a video demonstration of these beats, log on to moderndrummer.com.



Rich Redmond drums for country star Jason Aldean, is an award-winning clinician, and is an active session drummer in Nashville and Los Angeles. His recent book/DVD, *FUNDamentals of Drumming for Kids* (coauthored with Michael Aubrecht), is available through Modern Drummer Publications.



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

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

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

Now play the same thing, but drop out the inner beats. This gives you 8th-note triplets and upbeat 8th-note triplets in their pure form.

4
R L R L R L R L R L R R R R R R R R R R R R R
L R L R L R L R L L L L L L L L L L L L L L

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

Finally, let's put some isolated upbeat 8th-note triplets into a straight 8th-note context. If we play the upbeat triplets starting on the "&" of beat 1, it'll look like the following.

Or:

Here's a fun exercise where the 8th-note triplet shifts from one partial to the next until we're back where we started. We've written the exercise using simple 8th-note-triplet groupings, even when they start on the upbeats (with the exception of when the triplets overlap beats 1 and 3). Try to play smooth triplets from one upbeat to the next without micromanaging each 16th-note partial.

5
R R R R R R R R R L L L L L L L L L R R R R R R R R R L L L L L L L L L

STRICTLY TECHNIQUE

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

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

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

L L

With all of these exercises, be sure to play with a metronome and tap your foot. You should also try counting quarter notes out loud through the exercises. If you can keep your counting smooth, then you've proved that you're feeling the rhythms naturally. Once these patterns become part of your vocabulary, it'll be fun to see how they manifest themselves on the kit. Enjoy!



Bill Bachman is an international drum clinician, the author of *Stick Technique* (Modern Drummer Publications), and the founder of drumworkout.com. For more information, including how to sign up for online lessons, visit billbachman.net.



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Samba Starter

Part 2: The Suinge

by Adam Osmianski

| MUSIC KEY | |
|-----------|---------|
| T.T. | × |
| S.D. | × |
| F.T. | × |
| B.D. | × |
| H.H. | × |
| w/ foot | × |
| | Rimshot |
| | R.C. |

In the first part of this series (May 2014), we covered ways of applying samba to the drumset. We looked at a common interpretation, some traditional batucada patterns, and transcriptions of adaptations used by modern players. This month we're going to get a little deeper into batucada and some of its applications on the kit, with special emphasis on the unique feel associated with this music.

As I said last time, the feel is the most important thing in samba. Some people explain that the middle two 16th notes are being smashed together. Others have used the term "tripteenth" to explain how the phrasing lands somewhere between a 16th note and a triplet. The best way to capture samba's unique swing, which is called "suinge" in Brazil, is through a lot of repeated listening.

A repinique is a two-headed metal drum that looks similar to a 10" tom. It's cranked to the max, sounding almost like a timbale, with a dry tone. The repinique is played with a stick in one hand while the other hand plays the head like a conga or djembe. The drum makes the majority of the calls in the ensemble and does a great deal of improvising. The basic pattern for repinique looks like this:

1

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

With sticks in both hands, you can play that pattern on the snare with the snares turned off, or you can play it on your highest tom. Play the left-hand slap as a rimshot.

A typical dotted-8th/16th samba bass drum pattern could be played underneath, but since we already have that feel happening in the hands, let's try one of these two alternative patterns.

2

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

3

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

Now we're going to take a look at a very typical jazz-samba groove and tweak it to sound a bit more authentic. Here's our starting point:

4

B L R L B L R L B L R L B L R L

There's nothing wrong with that groove, but what makes it a little inauthentic is the ride cymbal pattern. The "1-&a" rhythm isn't felt so strongly in samba. (It's more closely related to the traditional jazz ride pattern.) If you simply turn the ride pattern around, so that it plays the "1-e-&" phrasing you often hear in the repinique, the groove instantly sounds more true to form.

5

B L R L B L R L B L R L B L R L

Let's look at another pattern that will help you get the suinge happening. When learning to play caixa (snare drum) in a samba band, drummers typically start with just the right hand, which plays 8th notes with accents on the downbeats. It's the second and fourth 16th notes that provide the majority of the swing. The following pattern, which the great Brazilian drummer Kiko Freitas often uses, has the steady 8th-note pulse in the right hand while the left supplies the suinge. ("B" means to play both hands together.)

6

B L R L B L R L B L R L B L R L

Try playing that pattern with sticks and brushes and with the following variations, which move the right hand between the ride, snare, and floor tom. With the right hand providing steady time, experiment with the phrasing in the left hand to find that sweet spot of the Brazilian suinge. Practice the hands by themselves at first, and then add the foot ostinatos from Examples 2 and 3.

7

B L R L B L R L B L R L B L R L

8

B L R L B L R L B L R L B L R L

Next time we'll take a look at some of the rhythms played in the top samba schools in Rio, along with ways to apply them to the kit.



Adam Osmianski is a freelance drummer from Pittsburgh, now residing in London. He's an online lecturer for West Virginia University and the author of thatdrumblog.blogspot.com. For more information, visit adamosmianski.com.



Groove Freedom

Part 2: "Funky Drummer" Permutations

by Mike Johnston

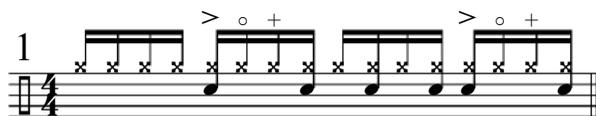
MUSIC KEY

H.H. 
 S.D. 
 B.D. 

Welcome to the second installment of articles based on my new book, *Groove Freedom*. I wrote this book for myself as much as I did for my students. There is nothing quite like the feeling of having one hundred percent freedom inside a particular groove. It's a beautiful thing to know that it's completely up to you to decide where the kick drum gets placed, where the accents show up, and what the overall feel should be.

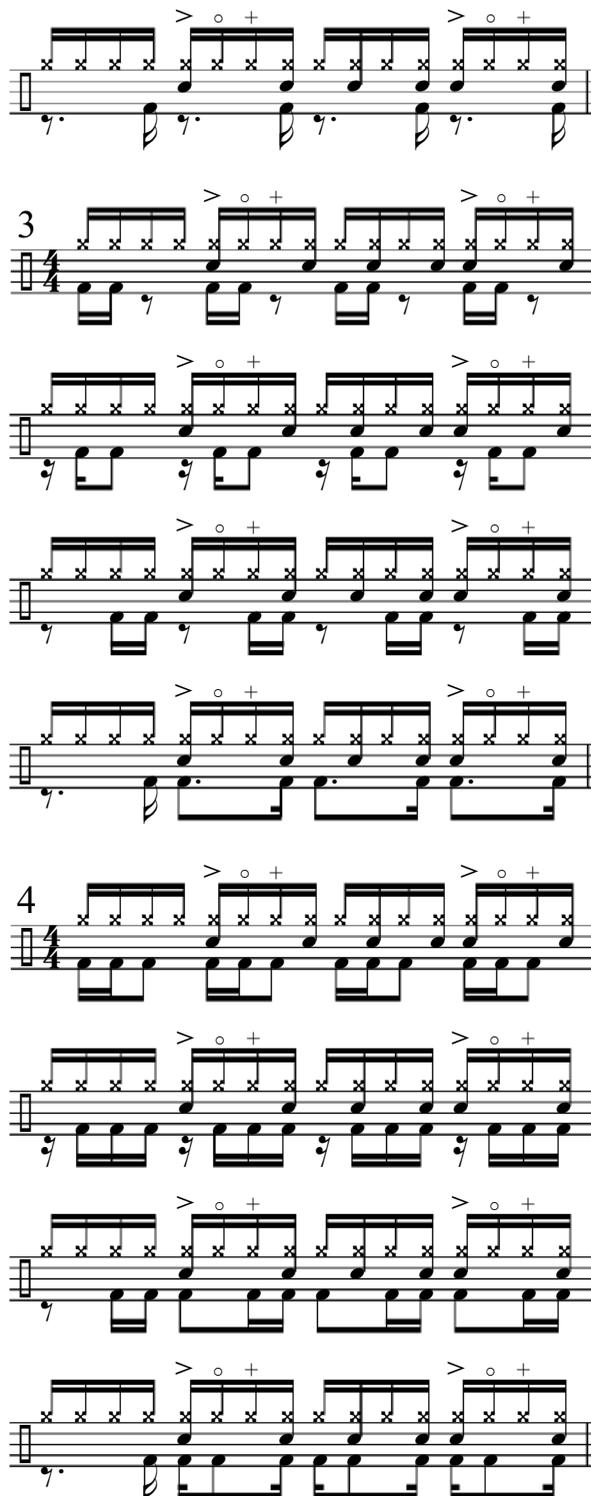
In the first lesson (June 2014), I recalled a situation where a music director wanted me to play Clyde Stubblefield's famous groove from James Brown's "Funky Drummer." He didn't want "Funky Drummer" note for note, though. Instead, he wanted a groove that was based on the tune and had a similar feel. The problem was that I knew only how to play Stubblefield's pattern verbatim. I had never truly fellowshiped with the groove; I had never spent the time it takes to work out different variations. As soon as I had to change one little thing about it, everything fell apart. I figured that since that groove—as well as my failures with it—inspired me to write my book, I'd also use "Funky Drummer" as an example of how you can develop freedom with any pattern.

The concept is simple. Start with an ostinato (repeated pattern), like the hi-hat and snare part of "Funky Drummer."



Then add the bass drum, which will go through three different permutation cycles that shift over one 16th note every measure. The second exercise will be single-note bass drum patterns starting with one measure with the kick on the downbeats, then one measure with the kick on "e," then one measure on "&," and finally one measure on "a."

The third exercise follows the same permutation pattern with two 16th notes. The fourth exercise uses three 16ths. You might be surprised by how isolating the kicks in this way will flush out your weak links within certain grooves.

The Heat Check

This section is designed to test the skills that you've built up through the permutation exercises. The Heat Check comprises ten syncopated bass drum patterns made up of downbeats, e's, &'s, and a's. If you were able to play all of the previous exercises, then you have the physical ability to execute everything that follows. The only thing standing in your way is your ability to hear the new patterns. Practice each one slowly. If that means playing it one note at a time, then do so. Practicing so slowly might sound random at first, but soon your ear will kick in and you'll be able to hear the groove in its entirety. Then you'll be able to take advantage of your well-deserved groove freedom.



Mike Johnston runs the educational website mikeslessons.com, where he offers prerecorded videos as well as real-time online lessons. He also hosts weeklong drum camps at the mikeslessons.com facility each year.



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Improve Your Timing!

Jump-Rope Exercises for Drummers

by Billy Cuthrell

Long thought of as a training tool for boxers or a playground staple at most elementary schools, jumping rope can be used by anyone who wants a terrific cardio workout. Even when done at a moderate pace, it has been shown to burn more calories in five minutes than a moderate to fast-paced one-mile jog. And it's awesome for drummers as well.

Not only is jumping rope a great compact and portable exercise tool to use for a pre-show warm up or to burn off calories and build endurance, it's also an amazingly effective way to work on your timing. I've had clients come in who have not used a jump rope in twenty-five years, and when the rope gets caught up in their feet, they blame their coordination. But it's not their coordination that's lacking as much as it is their timing. That's when I turn on the metronome and have them try to jump rope in time to the beat.

There are many types of ropes on the market, but all you really need is a sturdy version that spins easily, has decent weight, and is the right length for your height. Here are some basic jump-rope timing exercises for you to try.

Single Unders

We'll start off with single jumps where the rope spins around your body once in a full rotation. Think of every time that the rope taps the floor under your feet as your downbeats (1, 2, 3, 4). If your metronome subdivides, set it to 8th notes. The



upbeats (“&”) will click at the time the rope is above your head. Set your metronome at 75 beats per minute or lower to start. The goal is to go for as many unbroken rotations as possible. If you can jump for two minutes without losing rhythm, then speed up the metronome by ten or fifteen beats.

As you jump, your feet should stay together. Push yourself off the floor with your toes and remain on the balls of your feet. This position also works wonders for your bass drum playing, as it develops endurance and speed in your calves.

Be careful not to bring your legs too high by bending at the knees. That will throw off your timing. As you get better, you can run in place, alternate feet, or do high knees, or a combination of all three.

Double Unders

You need a firm grasp of single unders before moving to doubles. As the name implies, in double unders the rope will pass under your feet twice per jump. I've found that if you set your tempo a little slower to start, you can get into a comfortable triplet feel. If possible, set your metronome to click triplets, and start at 80 beats per minute or slower.

Think of when you jump as the downbeats (1, 2, 3, 4), and think of the two rotations as the second and third parts of a triplet (1-trip-let, 2-trip-let, 3-trip-let, 4-trip-let). The goal here is to get as many double unders in a row as you can. Timing is really at the heart of this workout.

Billy Cuthrell owns and operates the Progressive Music Center in the Raleigh, North Carolina, area. You can contact him directly at billy@raleighmusiclessons.com.



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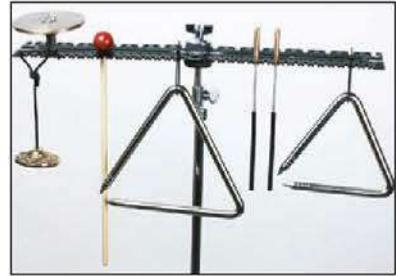
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sjcdrums.com

RBH Prestige Poplar Solid-Shell Snare Drums

Prestige poplar solid-shell snares are said to have a noticeably lower pitch and warmer tone than many steam-bent drums made from other hardwoods. Available in a range of 13" and 14" models, the snares feature solid cherry reinforcing hoops, a choice of exotic and highly figured outer veneers, and 45-degree or roundover bearing edges. Standard equipment includes RBH tube lugs, chrome-plated triple-flange hoops, Remo heads, PureSound wires, and a Trick GS007 throw-off.

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MEINL Byzance Vintage Series Pure Rides

Meinl's Byzance Vintage series Pure rides are said to sound extremely dry with little to no wash, maintaining a defined stick sound. The cymbals are hand hammered in Meinl's Turkish factory from B20 bronze and feature a raw, earthy appearance. Available in 20" and 22" sizes, Pure and Pure Light rides are recommended for multiple styles of music, on stage or in the studio.

meinlcymbals.com





GRETSCH Catalina Maple, Ash, and Club Kits

Available in three configurations and five finishes, Catalina Maple drums feature a 7-ply Gretsch-formula maple shell with 30-degree bearing edges and natural shell interiors. Bass drums include telescopic spurs and matching maple hoops. The toms and snare drum have 2.3 mm triple-flange hoops. Configurations include an 18x22 bass drum, 8x12 mounted tom, 16x16 floor tom, and 6x14 snare (\$1,199.99); a 16x20 bass drum, 7x10 and 8x12 mounted toms, a 14x14 floor tom, and a 5.5x14 snare (\$1,230.99); and an 18x22 bass drum, 7x8, 7x10, and 8x12 mounted toms, a 16x16 floor tom, and a 6x14 snare (\$1,540.99).

Catalina Ash series drums are said to produce a focused tone with a strong attack and balanced low end. Features include a new Gretsch round badge, three satin and two wrap finishes, and Remo UT Ambassador drumheads. The 6-ply ash shells are finished with 30-degree bearing edges and fitted with 2 mm triple-flange hoops. These drums come in a five-piece configuration (18x22, 7x10, 8x12, 14x16, and 5.5x14) that lists for \$1,080.99. Add-on drums are also available.

Catalina Club drums are offered in three different four-piece configurations and eight finishes. All setups come with a 14"-deep

bass drum for warm, punchy tones. Configurations include a 14x18 bass drum, 8x12 mounted tom, 14x14 floor tom, and 5x14 snare (\$1,045.99); a 14x20 bass drum, 8x12 mounted tom, 14x14 floor tom, and 5.5x14 snare (\$1,155.99); and a 14x24 bass drum, 8x12 mounted tom, 16x16 floor tom, and 6.5x14 snare (\$1,385.99).

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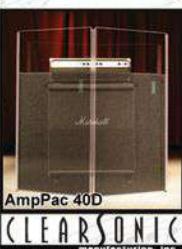
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CRITIQUE

TAKING THE REINS DRUMMER/LEADERS MAKING THEIR MARK

Mark Heaney *Origins*

The sound of one drummer indulging his appetite for big beats and big sounds—with a big payoff.

A muscular yet madly skilled player, Mark Heaney was the perfect rhythmist to support British post-punk legends Gang of Four between 2006 and 2013, bringing a distinctly modern twist to the group's brainy, passionate, and—priority number one—dance-floor-minded music. Heaney also has an ear for mood and has gone to some pretty dark and detailed destinations with his solo project Monument of Sound and the duo Time Can Kill. And he produces project-specific tracks for use in TV and film, employing his well-honed studio chops and ability to conjure unique atmospheres through timbre and rhythm. The drummer's latest solo album, *Origins*, showcases all of Heaney's tools. Most important, around here anyway, it's got gobs of ripping drums all over it. Nearly every track features multiple layers of kit work—check out "Destroyer of Worlds" and "Life Cycle" for primo examples—and Heaney is constantly tossing out fun ideas that, when paired up against other cool licks

and beats, increase the mind-blowage exponentially. Clearly, and happily, Heaney is not one of those drummer-album apologists who sublimates his urge to rip due to some misguided notion of "good taste." Bottom line: If you're a drummer, listening to this album is going to make you want to jump on whatever tubs are available and work up a cool sweat of your own. (markheaney.tumblr.com) **Adam Budofsky**



Sheila E. *Icon*

E is for energy and seemingly effortless shifts from Latin jazz to pop to dance to hip-hop to straight-up funk.



Ms. Escovedo shines on kit and percussion on her latest solo album, which tells her story through music and features tributes to musicians of the Bay Area, to her mom and dad, and to other musical greats. Sheila previews what's in store by opening with the dizzying percussion workout "Butterfly." Other percussion highlights include the dazzling timbale breaks on "Fiesta" and "Leader of the Band." On the latter, the drummer gets help from some E Family members—famed percussionists in their own right—and vocals and keys from her '80s boss, Prince. And Sheila hasn't lost her rock swagger or forgotten her late mentor George Duke, the funk/fusion master, blending such influences in the pop song "I'll Give You That" and the gospel-by-way-of-Sly Stone-flavored "Lovely Day." Elsewhere, she lays heavy into a joyous, swinging hip-hop beat on "Old Skool," and "Oakland N Da House," reminiscent of some of Meshell Ndegeocello's work, combines subtle rhythmic textures with a full-blowing Tower of Power chorus. (Stilettoflats Music)

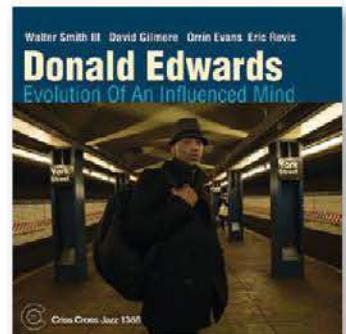
Robin Tolleson

Donald Edwards

Evolution of an Influenced Mind

As the title of his third album as a leader confirms, "evolution" is all about where its creator has been, and where he's headed.

From his stretch in the '90s as an in-demand drummer in New Orleans to his current status as a New York sideman to multiple jazz luminaries, Donald Edwards has combined the grit and urgency of classic Blue Note hard boppers with the genre-mashing diversity of modernists. Here, he applies those virtues to his own skillfully arced compositions. His drumming is precise, dazzling, and super-swinging with every groove. And the energy revs high, with the support of David Gilmore on guitar, Orrin Evans on piano, Eric Revis on bass, and Walter Smith III on tenor sax. Yes, Edwards' mind has been "influenced," but his unpredictable drumming expressions have clearly evolved to be his own. (Criss Cross Jazz) **Jeff Potter**

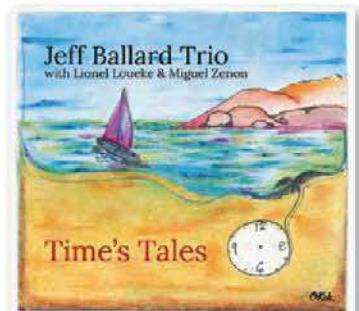


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Jeff Ballard Trio *Time's Tales*

His debut recording as a leader is everything we've come to expect from the resourceful Chick Corea/Kurt Rosenwinkel/Fly vet.

Performing with guitarist Lionel Loueke and saxophonist Miguel Zenón on *Time's Tales*, Jeff Ballard works in the globetrotting style that has become his trademark. The album draws on indigenous rhythms, odd-meter forays, and improvisation rich enough to transport the listener. Ballard,



a restless musician who never settles, is perpetually working things out, whether he's swinging DeJohnette-like on "The Man I Love," recalling an Airtó-Antonio Sanchez blend on the 9/4 "Virgin Forest," rocking like a Gadd-infused Mitch Mitchell on "Hangin' Tree," or tapping hand drums and percussion on "Dal." Can't afford to travel the globe? Let Jeff Ballard show you around. (Okeh) **Ken Micallef**

The Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra

The L.A. Treasures Project

This exuberant live outing teams Jeff Hamilton's dynamic group with the superb, swinging West Coast vocalists Barbara Morrison and Ernie Andrews.

Jeff Hamilton once again holds court as swing king, lending frictionless big air to the Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra's pulse and unleashing killer tension-springing setups for ensemble kicks. Check out "River's Invitation," where the master lays down a deep R&B groove with brushes. On the teasing "Fever," he plays it cool and then bursts volcanically, vaulting the ensemble. The CHJO comet burns fast and bright on "Jazz Party"—during the number's intense tenor duel, Hamilton stays hot on the horns' tails and then scorches during his own climactic feature breaks. Blistering! (Capri) **Jeff Potter**

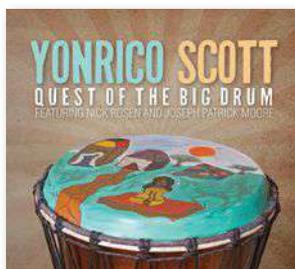


Yonrico Scott

Quest of the Big Drum

The powerhouse Southern drummer who came to prominence with the Derek Trucks Band presents a thoroughly grooving, slightly trippy set of new jams.

On his second solo release, Yonrico Scott reminds us what a force he is at the kit, creating huge old-school soul grooves and disco-funk beats that leave room for some tasty spaciness. The instrumental funk of "Can We All," with Nick Rosen's retro keys, struts like MMW's *Shack-Man*, and Scott handily keeps Joseph Patrick Moore's 6/8 "Quest" between the lines while the bassist rips. The drummer is not shy to take the mic; opener "Witching Hour" features his inviting vocal (and wicked triplet fills), and he chant/raps over a deep soul pocket on "Sound of the Drum." Later Scott finesses the snare tunefully on "The Train," and on "Time and Space" he eases his crew into a psychedelic Herbie-like vibe and delivers some ripping solo breaks. But closing number "Unidentified Flying Object" might contain the hippest drumming here, a spread-out syncopated beat that ends with an anticipated kick. (Blue Canoe) **Robin Tolleson**



Matt Slocum

Black Elk's Dream

Slocum's 2010 leader debut proved the rising jazz sideman is a formidable composer. His third outing raises the bar.

Matt Slocum cites the book *Black Elk Speaks* as the influence for his latest album. Employing sumptuous harmonies and non-

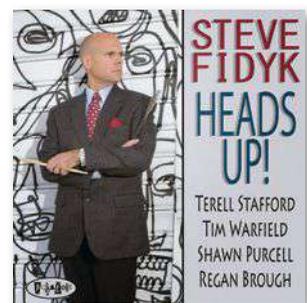


repetitive structures, Slocum's writing and playing emphasize a breathing, expressive, virtually speech-like flow of shifting meters. Shaped by the drummer's nimble touch, the quartet sound is assertive yet unforced. Tenor men Walter Smith III and Dayna Stephens alternate tracks, supported by pianist Gerald Clayton and bassist Massimo Biolcati. All are unflaggingly imaginative. Slocum excels at open-tempo pulse and color inflection and can drive commandingly when it's called for. When simplicity is key, he digs heart deep with pulsing brushes. The young drummer constantly surprises, embracing the kit as a reactive and explorative multi-percussion whole. A fresh voice. (Chandra) **Jeff Potter**

Steve Fidyk *Heads Up!*

Swing, swing, and more swing is the name of the game on the MD contributor's latest collection of expertly played straight-ahead jazz.

Steve Fidyk brings everything from understated pianissimo brush solos ("Make Someone Happy") to up-tempo burners ("Untimely") on *Heads Up!*, with brilliant articulation and a lovely cymbal sound. Fidyk can drive his four musicians like a big band, though he never overplays and keeps the dynamic volume managed at all times. On "The Flip Flopper," the drummer throws down a loose and funky groove, and "Love for Sale" contains a 7/4 solo vamp that allows him to work out on his snare with pristine technical agility. Fidyk has the rare ability to lead from the drummer's chair while also playing the supportive sideman role, resulting in a sound where the drummer gives *himself* some, anytime he wants. Fidyk happens to not be so greedy. (posi-tone.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Aaron Comess *Blues for Use*

The Spin Doctors drummer courts the prog and jam-rock crowds on his new trio release.

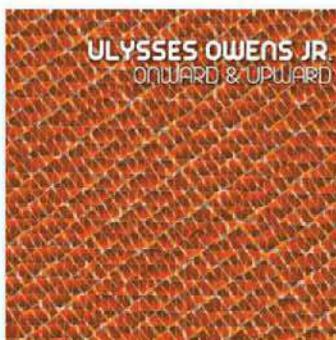
Aaron Comess sports the influences of Ginger Baker and John Bonham but also Max Roach and Elvin Jones, so he has a lot of power at his fingertips. Yet one way he consistently shapes the music is to employ quite minimal drum commentary. Take "Sunrise," where guitarist Teddy Kumpel uses slide to good effect while Comess supplies a gentle undercurrent on toms—think Jim Keltner with Bill Frisell. Comess's third album as a leader finds the drummer continuing to expand his musical palette, resulting in fresh ways to make bold statements. "Hard Ball" switches back and forth between Seattle-issue grunge and a dreamy section eerily reminiscent of the Santo & Johnny jewel "Sleep Walk." And prog-rock fans will appreciate the ease in the 7/4 groove on "Guilty Until Proven Innocent," the Zeppelin-esque 15/8 section of "Gorilla," and



the confident slamming on the psychedelic 5/4 of "Bajelirious." Comess gives a lesson in roots drumming on the title track, plays with a jazz mindset on "Moonrise," and provides beautifully big tones on "Finally," giving each part of his beats the proper weight. (aaroncomess.com) **Robin Tolleson**

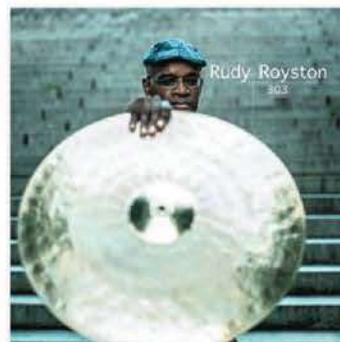
Ulysses Owens Jr.
Onward & Upward
A snapshot of a maturing drummer carving out his own niche.

Ulysses Owens Jr.'s third release as a leader is a set of modern jazz tunes showcasing hip arrangements and great group interplay. Owens, who's been a force in Christian McBride's recent groups, opens the Coltrane-ish "SST" with an Elvin-esque triplet-feel solo with dramatic cymbal crashes and loads of tension. Wayne Shorter's "Fee Fi Fo Fum" includes the drummer's beautiful over-the-barline snare rolls and playful call-and-response breaks traded with trumpeter Jason Palmer. And while Michael Jackson's "Human Nature" has now reached "not *this* again" new-standard status, Owens' backbeat and feather-light brushes hit the spot. Also dig the half-time shuffle/solo overdub "Drum Postlude" closing out the disc. Brian Blade's Fellowship project is an influence, so the music here is melodic, dark, introspective, and wide open. Keep your eye on this rising star. (ulyssesowensjr.com)
Ilya Stemkovsky



Rudy Royston 303
The hard-charging Colorado-bred drummer proves that you don't need to be from New York to swing your butt off.

On his whirlwind debut, the Bill Frisell/Ben Allison/J.D. Allen collaborator never lets up, breathing fire with a septet including guitarist Nir Felder and saxophonist Jon Irabagon. Most drummers' debuts aren't nearly as mature sounding or full of passion. And Royston's compositions, intense vehicles that showcase the entire band, are as fine as his drumming. Whether he's playing simple 8th notes on "Goodnight Kinyah," working Latin gymnastics on "Play on Words," or soloing à la Elvin on "Bownze," Rudy Royston *rules*. (Greenleaf Music) **Ken Micallef**



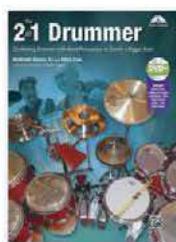
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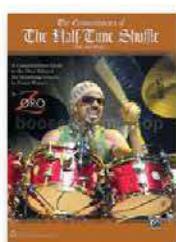
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The 2-in-1 Drummer
by Walfredo Reyes Sr. and Elliot Fine with David Stanoch and Mark Powers
You're in good hands (and feet) with the great Walfredo Reyes Sr., who has grooved with the giants of Latin, jazz, and pop. Collaborator Elliot Fine, who unfortunately passed in 2010, also enjoyed an impressive and diverse career, including forty-one years with the Minnesota Orchestra. In his early days, elder statesman Reyes honed a method of simultaneously playing hand percussion and drumset, primarily utilizing the left hand on congas and the right playing the kit with a stick. It's a kick to watch. Close your eyes and you'll hear a seamless percussion section. The book walks readers through coordination steps, progressing to a variety of grooves illuminated by helpful commentary. The accompanying DVD is packed with QuickTime videos featuring Reyes demonstrating patterns, along with bonus interviews and improvisations. Above all, the authors stress the development of right-side/left-side awareness. Even if you never adapt the two-in-one format, you'll find that this package will enhance your independence. (\$15.99, Alfred) **Jeff Potter**



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The Commandments of the Half-Time Shuffle
by Zoro
Ah, the elusive half-time shuffle, one of the holy grails of groove. Sure, maybe you can execute those shuffling triplets, but can you make it *happen*? Players who can are enshrined in a groove hall of fame. Think Purdie, Porcaro, Bonzo. Drummer Zoro—who plays a mean half-time himself—rightfully devotes an entire volume of his *Commandments* series to the seductive pattern. There is no demonstration CD included; Zoro instead defers to the classics. The book opens with an essay on the evolution of the beat, the drummers who defined it, and commentary on classic recorded examples. The author guides us from the basics to variations and extensive yet usable permutations. The final section features transcriptions from the classic recordings. This excellent book will give you the goods to get it in your limbs. But you'll have to take it from there if you want your portrait in that sacred hall. (\$19.99, Alfred) **Jeff Potter**



100 Essential Drumset Lessons

by Rick Mattingly

Veteran educator Terry O'Mahoney offers a remarkably complete overview of topics to help prepare contemporary drummers for just about any musical situation they're likely to encounter.

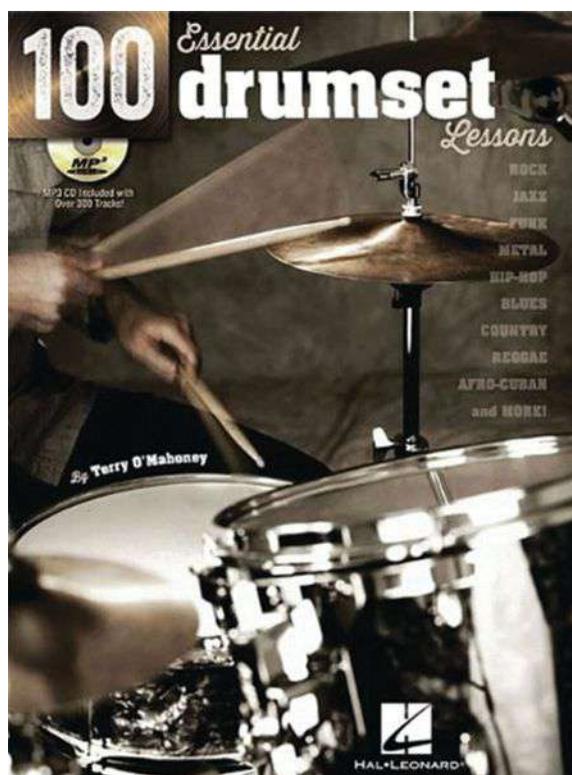
When the folks at Hal Leonard decided to expand their "100 Lessons" series of instructional guitar and keyboard books to include drumset, they contacted Terry O'Mahoney, author of the company's popular *Motivic Drumset Soloing* and *Jazz Drumming Transitions*, and gave very specific guidelines. "Each lesson had to be completely self-contained and fit on two pages," O'Mahoney says. "They also wanted the book to cover beginners to advanced players, and there had to be audio tracks."

The result is a 200-page volume with 318 audio files that cover rock, funk, metal, swing, odd-time, blues, country, hip-hop, and world drumming. One of the most impressive features is the fact that the various lessons were not constructed from a formula. Some are technical, while others are conceptual. Some involve permutations of a single idea to

develop rhythmic fluency and coordination, and others have basic, no-nonsense patterns that can be used on the gig. And where else can you find surf beats, blast beats, jazz brush patterns, prog beats, polyrhythm studies, and reggae beats in the same book, along with advice on how to transcribe rhythms and solos, how to interpret big band charts, and how to play ahead of, behind, or on the beat?

"I wanted this book to be useful to a number of different people," O'Mahoney explains. "For example, there are some drumset solos that could be used for All-State jazz auditions or for a music contest or recital. Also, I didn't want the audio to just be demonstration tracks; I wanted play-along tracks that drummers could use to try out the concepts in the book."

After Hal Leonard asked him to do *100 Essential Drumset Lessons*, O'Mahoney took nine months to compile the material. But he already had much of it written out as a result of his many years as a professor of music at St. Francis Xavier University in Canada. "A lot of the stuff," he says, "came from handouts: the jazz comping things, trading fours, and some solo ideas I had sketched out for students. Students would come in with some sort of musical issue, and I would write out an exercise to address that, or I would say,



'There are no play-alongs that I know of that deal with this issue, but I can show you what you can do.' So that came to mind when I was writing this book and creating the audio. For example, if a student comes in who needs to play 'Take Five' and wants to practice soloing in 5/4, instead of just having to practice with a metronome, here's a play-along that the student can use to practice 5/4 timekeeping or trading fours in 5/4."

The title might imply that a teacher could systematically use the book for about two years' worth of weekly instruction. Well, maybe, but *100 Essential Drumset Lessons* is probably better seen as a resource for, or an introduction to, a wide variety of styles.

"Most private teachers plot their own course," O'Mahoney says. "But then a student always shows up saying, 'I have to play this at school,' and it's something the teacher hasn't covered yet—say, 16th notes on the hi-hat or a bossa nova. So you veer off the path to cover that because the

student needs it right now. This book provides the basics of those styles. It's not meant to be a comprehensive book; it's meant to be an introduction to a variety of things. For example, is the section on blues complete? Absolutely not. Will it get you started? Sure. The title is 'Essential,' so if you need to know the core of something, this will take care of that. If you want to delve into something deeper, then you'll want to explore some other publications."

Because the music is packed tight, a lot of these two-page lessons are actually pretty in-depth. For example, between the chapters on basic funk, intermediate funk, and advanced funk, there are 124 notated patterns. There are also alternate ride/hi-hat rhythms that can be substituted for the notated patterns, which could potentially result in numerous other funk grooves.

Some of the lessons could likely be mastered by an average student in a week, and a few might be absorbed in a single day. Others, such as those covering improvised fills and soloing, are open ended and could be worked on over a much longer period of time as a drummer's technique and concept develop, and some of the technical exercises could be used as warm-ups indefinitely.



A Copy Life

What's the point of continuing to play in a cover band long after most musicians decide that "the dream" is never going to come true? Well, if you have to ask...

by Terry Conway

Why do we do it? Why do we sacrifice so much for so little?

It isn't the fame. Fame doesn't exist for the likes of us, even on a local level. It isn't the money. A good portion of the time, when you subtract the gas, tolls, and upkeep of equipment, you break even. It isn't groupies—that ship sailed many years ago. Is it respect from our musical brethren? We're the lowest rung on the industry ladder.

It's a grueling job, really. With over ninety shows a year, the workload of my cover band is brutal. We have to hump all of our own equipment, since paying a roadie would cut further into the bottom line than we can afford. We bring a complete backline setup with amps, a PA, and lighting. We all live in different parts of the tri-state area and meet at the shows. We're each responsible for our own gear, which for some of us includes part of our bulky sound system. We drive one to two hundred miles round trip for most of our shows, which wreaks havoc on our cars. We don't rehearse often because of our schedule, but it's a must—new material has to be put into the set to keep our regulars happy and the boredom at bay.

To make it fair, we found a rehearsal spot that is centrally located for all of us. The material is chosen and we try it out together. If it sounds good, it stays; if it doesn't, we cut it. So we may learn five songs for a rehearsal and do only two in a set. The time to learn the songs is nonexistent, but you do your best to get it done.

We all have regular jobs and careers. Each of us has a commitment to our employer, and, for a few of us, there's a lifetime invested in our work. We have a range of jobs, but all of us lead double lives. I know that most of the people I work with would be very surprised to learn that I can play the drums—and in fact play in a band. These questions don't really come up in the boardroom. My company is

progressive, but I feel that if my superiors knew that I did this on weekends, they might assume that I don't give a hundred percent to my job. I have a focus outside what I do for a living, and this is not the white-collar way. I must preserve that line between the two sides of my life.

We're all family men. Each of us tries very hard to find a balance that keeps our

our keyboardist does our live sound; I book the band and manage much of the interaction with club managers.... I book our stable of clubs about nine months in advance. Each band member will give me blackout dates for the following year to make sure we don't book them in error. We're lucky in that we don't have to use an agent. We did have representation once,

We get people moving and sweaty on the dance floor. We're a reason for friends to meet, and a common ground for them to have a good time and dance away their troubles.

wife and kids happy. A schedule as tough as ours can be rough on home life. We work pretty much every weekend, which leaves little time for family fun or date nights with the women we love. Four of us have small children, and we're all very involved in our kids' lives. You try to make all of the special events, but you always miss something. You try not to miss the *really* important stuff, but you can't be everywhere at once. You're well aware that your kids are going to be little only once, and that every time you miss a recital or a school play you miss a part of their lives. It's something that you can never get back. We discuss this almost as a form of therapy, or to justify our absence. It's heartbreaking at times, but the show must go on.

Sleep is a luxury. Friday is a twenty-four-hour day. I get up at 6 A.M. to go to work, often drive directly from my job to the gig, and usually don't get home until 4 A.M. I unload the car, shower the grime off me, and get into bed. It's usually 6 before I get into the rack next to my wife.

I'm punchy a good portion of my days. It's a little easier with Saturday gigs; I can sleep in until 10.

We all have our band responsibilities—our singer does the website and marketing;

but we soon learned that doing the booking on our own was necessary if we wanted to work, plus we kept the 15 percent, which we use for incidentals.

We formed an LLC and contracted the proper insurance to make us legit. Our sound system is a good one, and we're proud to be able to produce a nice, clean sound for our shows. We were able to attract a sponsor for free swag and promotional material (a German alcoholic beverage), and we designed a great logo. We devised an effective marketing approach with our brand, and we stay true to it. It's a business, after all, and we treat it as such. Branding and identity is what makes you unique. It's paramount to set you apart.

I was able to corral an endorsement deal with Peace drums and Saluda cymbals. It's a limited endorsement and I had to pay for the equipment, but I got a break based on our schedule and following. A few prominent companies have us in their stable of artists. It's a great way to get their products out in front of the listening public for a minimal investment on their end. Some of their legendary endorsers do come through town, but how is the equipment being seen the rest of the year? Through bands like ours, every weekend.

We load in and set up with the speed and precision of a NASCAR pit crew. Backline and lighting are up in thirty to forty-five minutes. After a minimal soundcheck we're ready to go. The songs we play at gigs are determined in advance—three fifty-minute sets, which we tweak on the fly to accommodate the audience. If it's a younger crowd we do more contemporary music. If the crowd is a little longer in the tooth we switch to a more classic approach. There are no breaks between songs, each of which segues into the following number. We rip through our sets and keep the breaks short. We bring our own prerecorded music to play between sets so that there's no chance of a DJ picking a song we're playing later in the night. We cover all bases.

Taking these extra steps usually goes unnoticed. In many ways, it's a thankless job. So why do we put ourselves through all of this?

Plain and simple, we love it. When we play music, we're complete humans. It makes us special—it's only the toughest of the tough who sacrifice like we do to play. We all had our brushes with fame, but at this point we know that the record contract and arena shows are never going to happen. But what are your choices? Become bitter and walk away from something that's a part of you?

When the responsibilities of life drive you down a different road from the one you once dreamed about, it becomes more and more important to remind yourself of the feeling you had when you settled in behind your first drumkit—that feeling that you found something that gives you value and purpose. I feel it every time we play a show. And I get to experience it with my buddies every weekend. We get people moving and sweaty on the dance floor, and God do I love that. We're a real memory for that patron who is seeing a cover band for the first time—a rite of passage. We're a reason for friends to meet, and a common ground for them to have a good time and dance away their troubles.

And the feeling you get when you're the one who's allowing these wonderful things to happen? It makes all of the sacrifice worthwhile.

I guess I do know that reason after all.



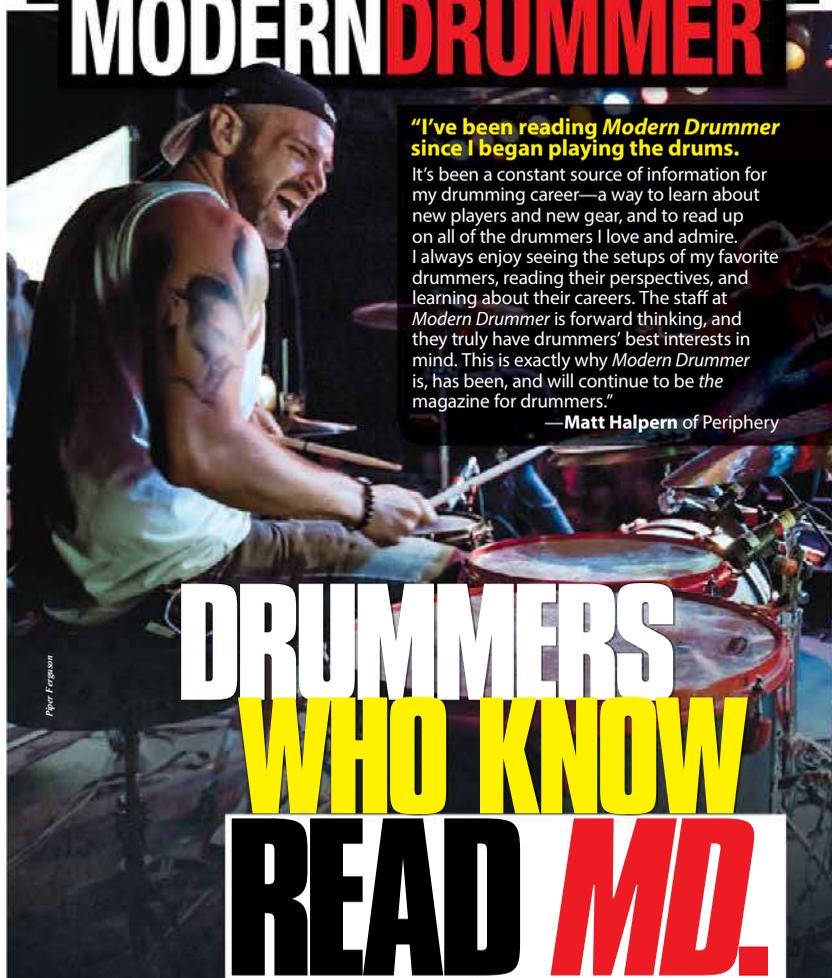
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—Matt Halpern of Periphery

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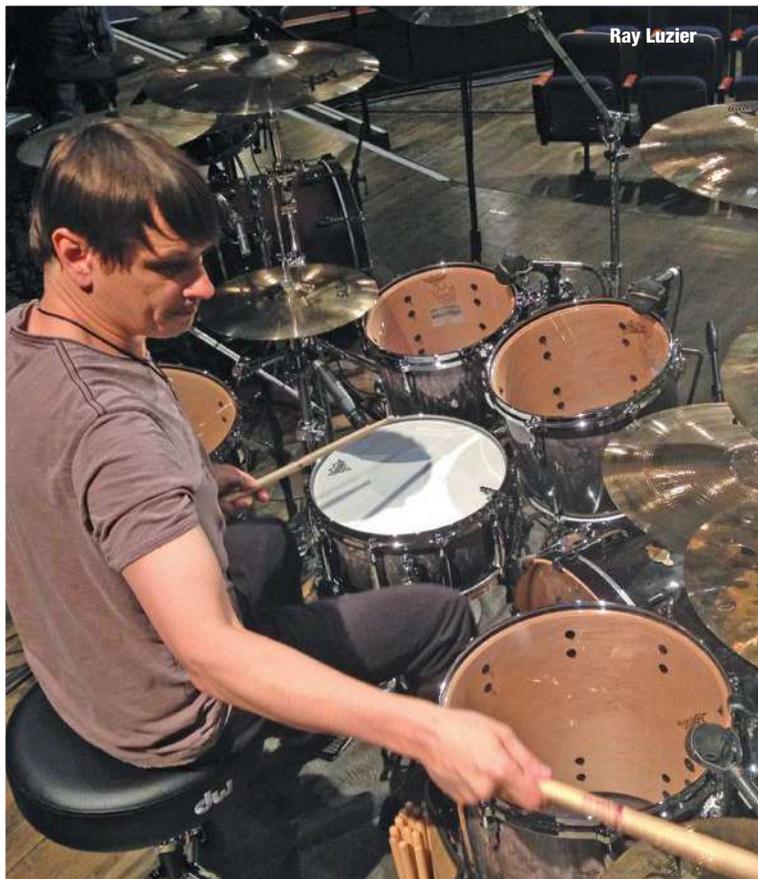
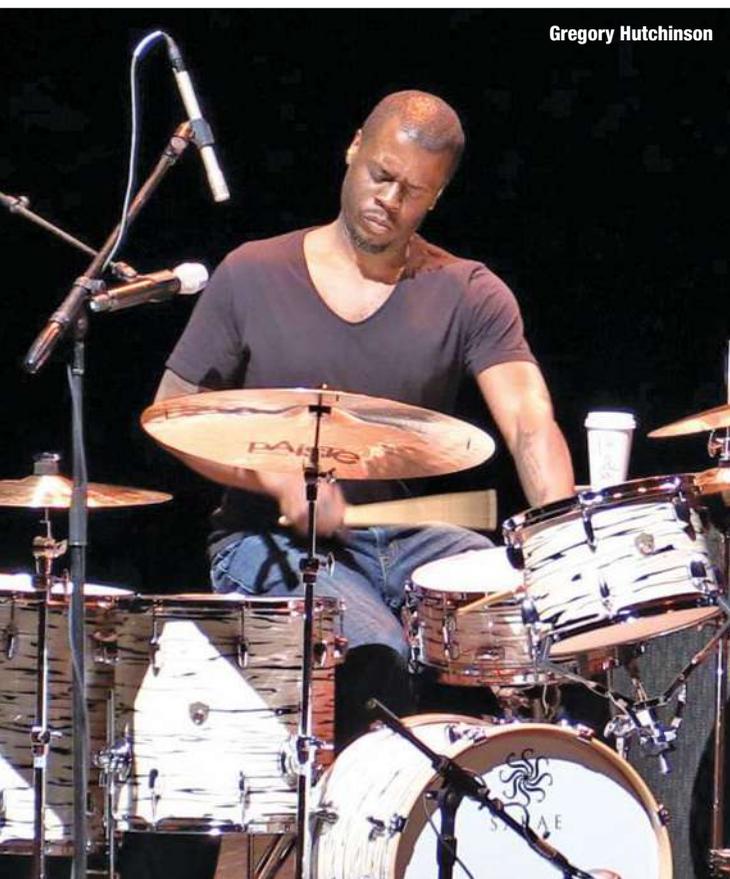
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Modern Drummer/Columbus Pro Percussion's Drum Daze 2014

On March 30, hundreds of drummers convened at the gorgeous Capitol Theater in downtown Columbus, Ohio, for a full day of clinics and product demos put on by some of the most respected names in the industry. The event kicked off with Yamaha product specialist Steve Fisher giving a rundown of some cool features in the new DTX electronic drumkits. Then modern jazz great Gregory Hutchinson took a seat behind a gorgeous-looking and gorgeous-sounding set of Sakae drums and Paiste cymbals and played some very musical solo vignettes while also dropping serious knowledge about what it takes to be a professional musician.

Next up was online educator and April 2014 *Modern Drummer* cover artist Mike Johnston. He started out playing to a slick fusion track written especially for the event before getting into one of the more informative presentations of the day, which focused on a variety of ways to expand concepts you're practicing so that they're more deeply ingrained in your musical vocabulary. Johnston concluded with a fun and exciting open solo.

Keeping the energy level high, Korn's Ray Luzier slammed through a few proggy rock tracks from the debut album by KXM, his side project with King's X's Doug Pinnick and Lynch Mob's George Lynch. Luzier also played a great open solo as well as a medley of Korn tunes. Always upbeat and engaging, he showed why he's been at the top of the modern rock mountain since first



making a name for himself with David Lee Roth in the late '90s.

Ohio-born/L.A.-based studio ace Russ Miller was the final solo clinician of the day, and his presentation ran the gamut, from an opening brush duet with a prerecorded track of saxophonist George Shelby to a blistering Brazilian fusion track to a highly musical extended solo based on the Miles Davis tune "Seven Steps to Heaven." Miller also demonstrated his smooth time feel and masterful control over a pop track, and he finished with a prerecorded trio piece with percussionist Pete Lockett and drummer Steve Smith, based on a South Indian Konnakol composition.

The final hour at Drum Daze featured big band specialist John Riley sight-reading tunes with the Ohio State University Jazz Ensemble and then breaking down his approach to interpreting drum charts. Then Hutchinson, Miller, Riley, and Columbus Pro's Jim Rupp took to the front of the stage for an impromptu brush quartet, where the drummers let loose and had fun trading fours over the Charlie Parker bebop tune "Billie's Bounce."

For video excerpts, log on to moderndrummer.com or visit *Modern Drummer's* YouTube channel.

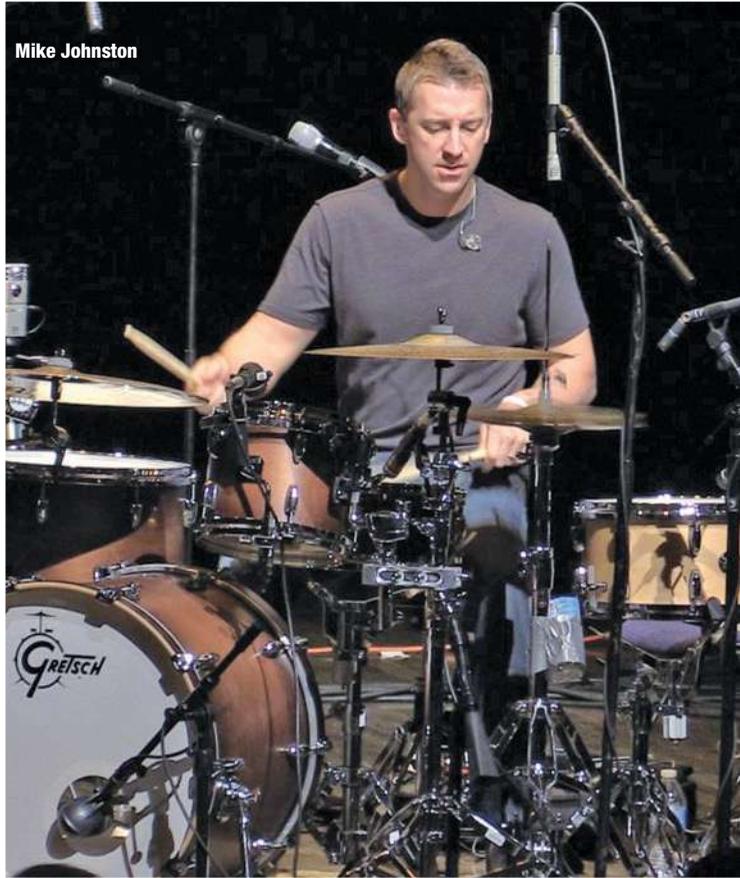
Text by Michael Dawson

Photos by Miguel Monroy

Russ Miller



Mike Johnston



John Riley



Jim Rupp, John Riley, Gregory Hutchinson, and Russ Miller





Bells and Whistles



**THE
GENUINE
JUG BAND**

The Genuine Jug Band percussion kit comes from Tony McBride of Vancouver, British Columbia. This unique contraption is arranged around a 20" 1960s Rogers bass drum and a vertically secured 14" Yamaha snare, each struck by a Ludwig Speed King pedal. Filling out the rig is a 10" Gretsch snare, Zildjian and Sabian splash cymbals, ice bells, temple blocks, tuned bulb horns, restaurant bells, cowbells, a train whistle, and a pair of custom-built back-to-back stainless steel washboards in a teak frame. Playing the kit with a series of taps, sweeps, honks, and glancing blows, McBride wears leather racing gloves that

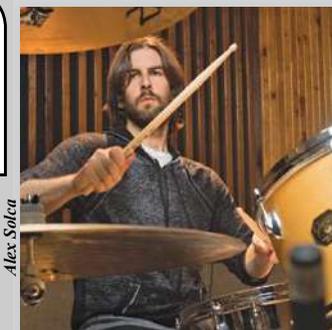
have thimbles on the fingertips and copper plumbing end caps on the thumbs, enabling ten points of contact.

Inspired by the early jazz drummer and washboard innovator Baby Dobbs, McBride aims to expand traditional washboard playing. Along those lines, the kit's builder, Douglas Fraser, designed the outfit to provide melody and counter melody in addition to percussive support. "I think we've developed what would have been the evolutionary expansion of the washboard, had it been in continuous popularity from its origins in the early nineteenth century to now," McBride says.

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



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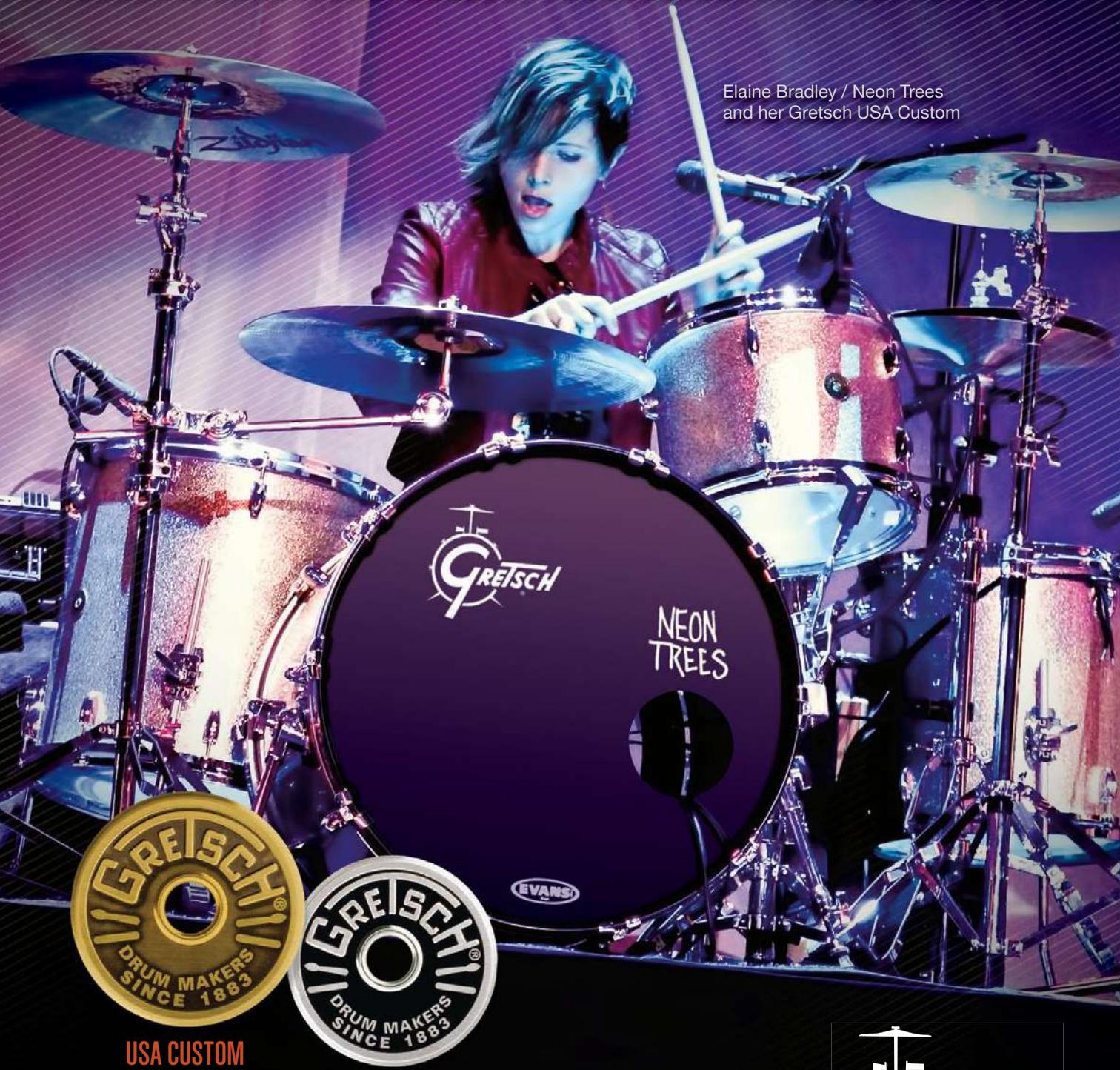
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