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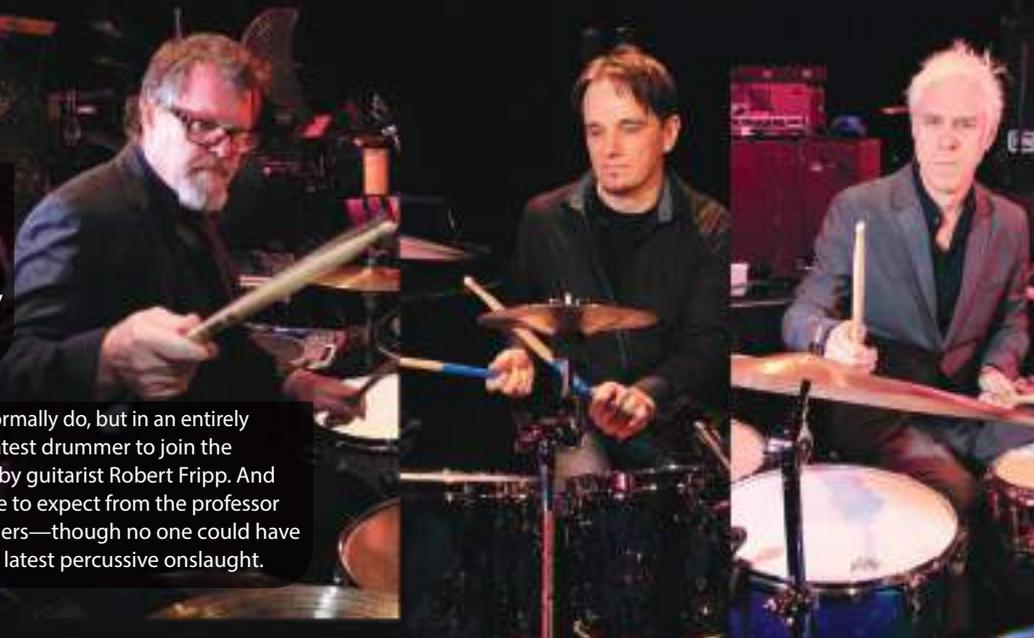
On the Cover

40 King Crimson's Pat Mastelotto, Gavin Harrison, and Bill Rieflin

by Michael Parillo

"It's doing everything that drummers normally do, but in an entirely different way." So says Bill Rieflin, the latest drummer to join the venerated progressive-rock group led by guitarist Robert Fripp. And "different" is certainly what we've come to expect from the professor and his revolving cast of musical brothers—though no one could have predicted the sheer magnitude of KC's latest percussive onslaught.

Cover and contents photos by Rahav Segev



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Quick Touring Tips

This past fall, I stepped away from my desk at *MD* and hopped on a multi-week tour that started in Philadelphia, criss-crossed the Midwest, journeyed through the Bible Belt, and then ventured back north via a few college towns along the East Coast. The venues ran the gamut from small jazz clubs to midsize rock rooms to huge multiday festivals.

The tour was self-funded, so there weren't many luxuries. We traveled with all our gear and personal belongings in an SUV, and we shared driving duties. (No Prevost bus or chauffeur for us!) Our very few days off were usually spent traveling upwards of twelve hours to the next gig. I'd be lying if I said every show was a smashing success. There were definitely a few tense nights where ticket sales were low and we left wondering why we even bothered to turn on the PA.

But the positives far outweighed the negatives, and it was a true blessing to be able to connect with people—through drumming—in a new city every day. While I'm still piecing together all that I learned during my short time on the road, here are a few quick takeaways that could help if and when you decide to take your band on tour for the first time. (Some of them also apply nicely to everyday life.)

Pack the bare minimum. When you have to lug your own gear and luggage into the venue and hotel each night, you'll quickly regret bringing that extra pair of boots and backup cymbal stands.

You'll never have enough socks and underwear. You just won't, so visit a Target or Walmart before your stock runs out.

Load up on vitamins and ibuprofen. Little sleep, long drives, and a sketchy diet will eventually catch up with you. Emergen-C and Advil were crucial for minimizing minor aches and pains and keeping my energy up come showtime.

Hydrate. I know it's cliché, but it's a challenge to get your recommended three liters of water a day with a hectic touring schedule. Just mostly keep your intake limited to evening hours, or else you'll be prolonging drives with hourly pit stops.

Exercise. Whether you go for a morning jog, do jumping jacks at rest stops, or take advantage of the hotel gym, be sure to move your body whenever you get a chance. Atrophy sets in pretty quickly when you're staring at asphalt six-plus hours a day.

Introduce yourself and say thank-you. Make friends with the doorman, the sound engineer, the bartender, and the promoter. They're the gatekeepers to a fun night for everyone.

Mind your money. As affordable as Cracker Barrel may be, those meatloaf and turkey lunches quickly add up if you're not careful.

Find your happy place. There's not a lot of personal space when you're living like a nomad. Take a walk, sit quietly in the green room for a few minutes when everyone else is hanging at the bar, or go grab a bite at a nearby diner by yourself if you're feeling the need to clear your head.

Play your heart out! Why else are you out there? It surely isn't for stale continental breakfasts and a few comped drinks. Have fun, expect the unexpected, be gracious, and don't take yourself too seriously.

Enjoy the issue!



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

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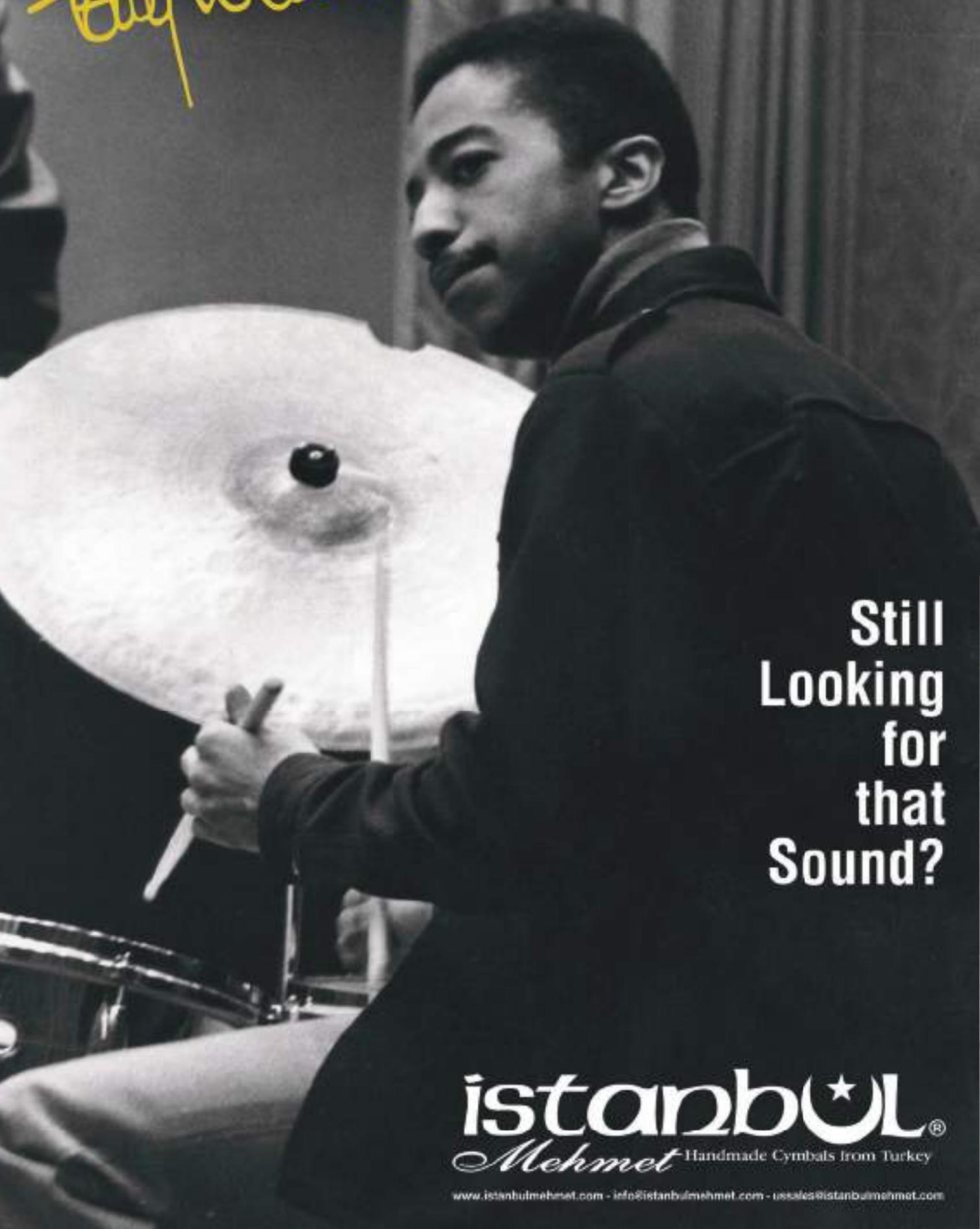
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READERS' PLATFORM

Russ Miller's Concepts Series

Thank you for running the fantastic Concepts articles written by Russ Miller. I sure hope drummers of all playing levels read and heed his insightful words. The article about preparation and the need for a solid combination of musicianship and business savvy (November 2014) was right on the money. Russ's articles are fantastic and very timely in today's world.

Also, thank you for not going with a completely digital subscription—I need to feel *Modern Drummer* in the hands!

Eric Patterson

Stanton Moore Sets His Sights on Jazz

Stanton Moore's interview (Setting Sights, September 2014) again reminds us all that learning is a never-ending pursuit. So many great musicians have graced the pages of *Modern Drummer* and shown us that no matter how many gigs you've played, no matter how many records you've played on, and no matter how incredibly mind-blowing your talent seems



to be, there is always more to learn and master. It's inspiring to hear professional, world-class drummers remind us that none of us are as good as we are going to get!

Philip Kurut

Looking to the Future

I'm an avid subscriber to *Modern Drummer* magazine and wanted to share a photo of my two-year-old grandson, Declan, jamming out on my son Adam's 1972 Ludwig Hollywood kit. He loves to play the drums, just like Dad and Gramps, and will hopefully carry on the legacy. I'll have to get him a subscription to *MD* once he learns to read. Great magazine.

Rob and Adam Sinasac



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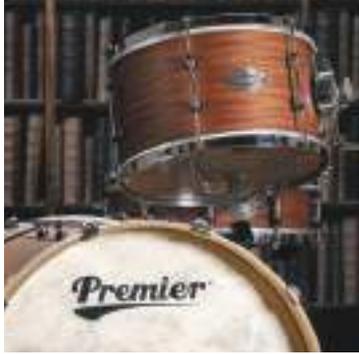
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Simple is good! As part of his Electronic Insights series, MD audio expert John Emrich walks us through how to make great drum recordings with two-mic setups.



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NEWS

Out Now

Smashing Pumpkins *Monuments to an Elegy*

According to Smashing Pumpkins leader Billy Corgan, "The songs, in demo form, had a strut, and so the suggestion was made that we ought to get someone who plays like **Tommy Lee**. Jeff Schroeder, Pumpkins guitarist, said, "Why not get the real deal?" Tommy brings the power and grace he's known for, which gives the music a vibrancy that is both immediate and unmistakable."



TV on the Radio Seeds (Jaleel Bunton) /// **Gene Clark** Two Sides to Every Story reissue (Sammy Creason) /// **Steve Hunter** Tone Poems Live (Alvino Bennett) /// **Blicher/Hemmer/Gadd** Blicher/Hemmer/Gadd (Steve Gadd) /// **Leonard Cohen** Live in Dublin (Rafael Gayol) /// **Greg Abate Quartet** Motif (Mark Walker) /// **Expansions: The Dave Liebman Group** Samsara (Alex Ritz) /// **Jonathan Kreisberg** Wave Upon Wave (Colin Stranahan) /// **Supertramp** Crime of the Century 40th Anniversary Deluxe Edition (Bob Siebenberg)



Broadway Drummer Dave Ratajczak Passes



John Fedchock

This past October, veteran Broadway drummer Dave Ratajczak passed away. Ratajczak, who was highly regarded among New York musicians for his work on shows like *City of Angels*, *Sweet Charity*, *Titanic*, *The Music Man*, and *Mary Poppins*, also made significant contributions to the jazz and pop worlds, with artists including Woody Herman, Gerry Mulligan, John Fedchock, Audra McDonald, and Debby Boone. He recorded many TV and radio jingles and played on the soundtracks to films such as *Dead Man Walking*, *Miller's Crossing*, *The Pelican Brief*, and *Brighton Beach Memoirs*.

"Dave was the real deal on many levels," says 1993 Modern Drummer Festival performer and famed jazz drummer Adam Nussbaum. "He was a kind, gentle soul, a humble and gifted musician who always served the music."

"Dave was a perfect example of how a player can be like his personality," adds Clint de Ganon of Broadway's *Beautiful*. "On and off the drums, Dave was graceful, elegant, modest, witty, and warm. He was all about kindness and integrity. Everyone loved and respected Rat. I was blessed with his friendship for over twenty-five years, and I'll never forget him."

Special thanks to Larry Lelli for providing quotes.



Who's Playing What

Shawn Drover (Megadeth), **Keith "Stix" McJimson** (Ariana Grande, Mark Ballas), **Mike Bennett** (Richie Kotzen, Sayers Club house band), **Erik Sandin** (NOFX), and **Jovan Dawkins** (the EriAm Sisters) have joined Yamaha's artist roster.

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**On
Tour**

Arejay Hale is out with Halestorm on Eric Church's Outsiders World Tour. Expect the follow-up to the band's 2012 hit album, *The Strange Case Of...*, later this year.

Taiko drumming troupe **Kodo's** One Earth Tour: *Mystery*, the second theatrical work created for the group by artistic director Tamasaburo Bando, is hitting twenty-nine venues across the U.S. and Canada between January and March.



Brian Rosenworcel is out on a U.S. tour with Guster in support of the new album *Evermotion*.



Ken Perry



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Hang Chops: The Other Social Media

by Juels Thomas

Your playing skills are the number-one asset in your drumming career. That's a given. But your ability to "hang" is a not-too-distant number two. Maybe this is a good time to make sure you're doing it right.

We've all heard the old adage "It's not what you know—it's *who* you know." But you do have to know what to say to that important who when you meet him or her. This is a part of networking called hang chops.

Hang chops are basically social skills. Everyone likes to be around witty, easygoing, engaging people. Someone who is mean, who's constantly unhappy, and who likes to disagree about everything is probably not going to get invited to dinner much. Somewhere between having nothing to say and too much to say (and not listening to anyone else), you can find the sweet spot of human interaction.

As much as there is a special camaraderie among drummers that's truly unlike any other, there is still an element of competition. And there has to be for us to survive. Sometimes people will ask me, "How did *she* get the gig—I can outplay her any day!" Maybe. Or maybe she had the exact amount of ability the band was looking for *and* she clicked with them personally. Some people are really good at socializing. Like it or not, that is part of what gets you hired for any job. Whether it's behind a desk, in retail, or on an audition, you can't walk into the interview with one-word answers and a blank expression on your face.

Employers want to choose someone who can do the job at hand but who is

also fun and easy to be with. This is especially true in the case of a working band, where you're likely to spend a lot of close-proximity time together in a van or bus. In fact, everyone you're going to need to work with in this industry—lawyers, managers, agents, club owners—feels the same way. And they're naturally going to be much more enthusiastic about promoting the career of someone they enjoy being around.

Some people make social skills look effortless. I really admire anyone who seems to have exactly the right thing to say in any situation. These communication masters come from a different planet from the one I do. But I guarantee that the first words out of their toddler mouths were not eloquent, well-thought-out sentences. No, just like the rest of us, their first words were *Mama or Dada or*, in my case, *cookie* (clearly establishing the priorities for the rest of my life). The point is that we all started with the same lack of communication skills, so we all have the same potential to get better.

It just takes practice. Did you sit down and play flawless double-stroke rolls the first day you picked up the sticks? Unless you're part alien, I bet you had to dig in and work on it for a while, right? Even Wayne Gretzky didn't wake up one morning, decide he wanted to be good at hockey, and get drafted into the NHL that afternoon. If you want to be really good at anything—basketball, cooking, networking—you have to practice.

Obviously you can go out to clubs and meet other musicians, and you definitely should. But how about your server at breakfast? You never know—his cousin might be the tour manager you've been looking for. Even if a random conversation doesn't result in a specific connection, it's good to get outside your comfort zone and exercise anyway. Pull your cart up next to someone in a grocery store and ask, "Hey, I'm attempting to bake a cake for the first time. Does it look like I'm missing anything here?" They might just simply say "Nope" and walk away. They might even

look at you like you're out of your mind. But it doesn't matter, because you're practicing. Feel free to fail in the "rehearsal space" that is the world.

Maybe you're already Mr. or Ms. Social Butterfly. That's great! If you have a natural ability to make everyone around you feel comfortable and smart and happy, you have hang chops. But it never hurts to hone your skills. Just don't overdo it. I remember, back in the day, being on a college-sponsored trip to Nashville. The administration had set up group meetings for us at record and publishing companies along Music Row. Before we got off the bus for the first meeting, the advisor said, "You have to make at least one connection this week." Okay, I thought, that would be great, and overall the experience was fantastic. But I couldn't help but feel that the method by which they had us socialize was so forced.

A real connection doesn't just happen. Timing and opportunity are essential, but so is authenticity. People can tell when you're marketing yourself as opposed to being genuine, and it's a giant turnoff. Too much self-promotion comes off as fake. You know it when someone is hanging out with you only to get something from you. We can see that person coming a mile away, and we want to run. It's very tiring to work with people who are constantly selling themselves. And it can be incredibly exhausting for those people to be "on" all the time. It's a lot of effort for little to no payoff.

People's responses to you will let you know how you're doing. Take it all in and continue to learn. Just as we pull out a pad and metronome to keep up our hand chops, sometimes we have to get off the computer and actually go and be social in person. So if your boyfriend gives you a hard time about going out again this week, just tell him, "But I'm practicing my hang chops!"



Juels Thomas is the education and events manager for Drum Workshop.



How to Hang

Don't fight the concept. Networking doesn't mean you're selling out. It means you care about your career.

Look at it like any other skill. Learn it. Practice it. And practice it some more.

Don't be a hater. Be a learner instead. Can't understand why that other guy got the gig and you didn't? Observe how well the band members jibe on a personal level.

Get real. Communicating to people that you're someone they want to hang out with means you have to *be* someone they want to hang out with. Sincerity counts.

İdris Muhammed

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Premier Modern Classic Club Drumset

The subtle vintage/retro vibe of this kit makes it look as timeless as it sounds.

Inside Premier's small factory, which is located in Lancashire in the northwest part of England, you'll find a team of artisans, led by veteran drum craftsman Keith Keough, meticulously creating shells formed in the company's own molds. Each bearing edge is sanded to perfection by hand, and almost all of the materials used to build Premier drums are sourced locally.

"What we're trying to do is to take a step back and go back to the roots of what Premier was about ninety-two years ago," marketing manager Colin Tennant says. "We want everything to be innovative but to have purpose. It's all about the sound. We want everything designed with the sound in mind." The result of this vision is a new series dubbed Modern Classic Club. We received the Bebop 20 shell pack for review, which includes an 8x12 rack tom, a 14x14 floor tom, a 14x20 bass drum, and a 5.5x14 snare.

Modern Classic Drums

Boasting an elegant yet retro look, all Modern Classic drums have ultra-thin shells that consist of a birch core with an inner ply of mahogany. According to Premier, the birch offers a "high, powerful, clean tone," while the mahogany provides a "darker, deeper, softer low end." Tennant says, "We wanted to create one of the thinnest and strongest shells possible, without the need for a support ring to hold the shell together." The final products are incredibly thin: 4.5 mm, 8-ply shells for toms, a 6 mm, 11-ply shell for the bass drum, and a 7.5 mm, 14-ply shell for the snare.

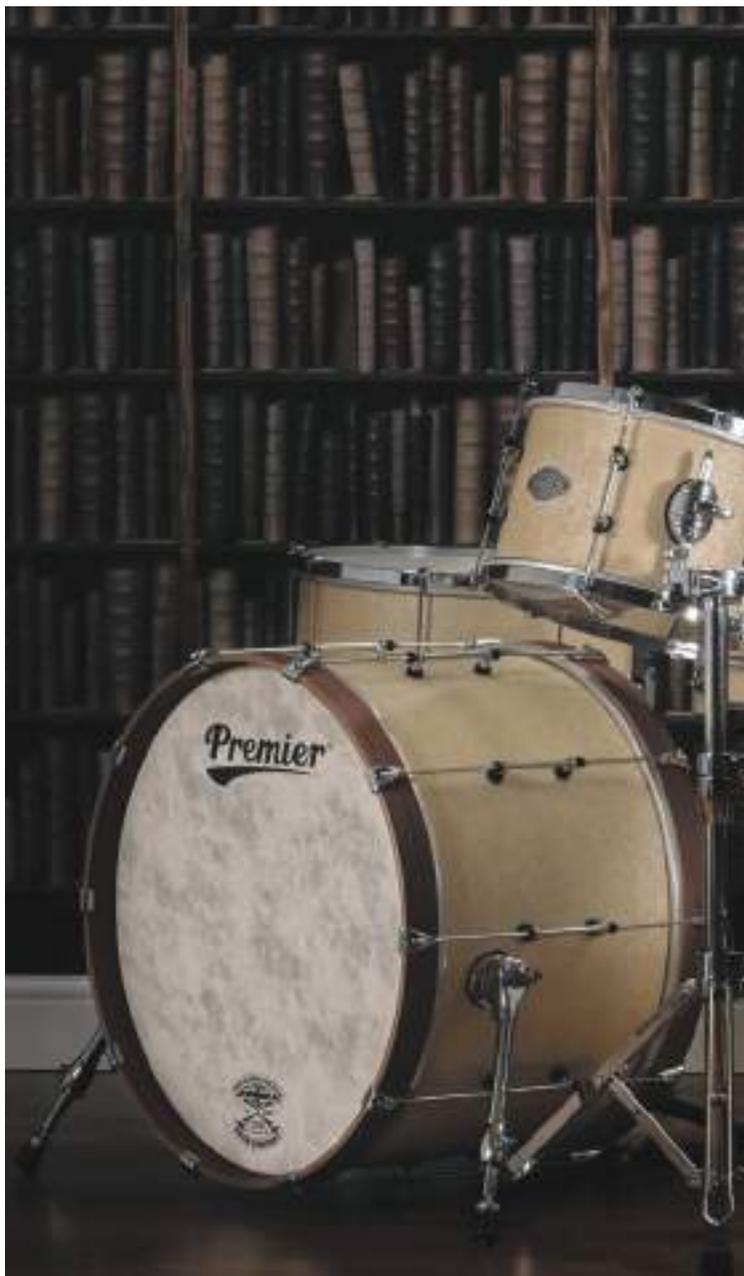
All of the Modern Classic Club shells sport a waxed, 30-degree roundover bearing edge, which is specifically designed to help soften the tone and provide a more controlled response. Each drum also comes equipped with low-mass, solid brass tube lugs and steel rolled hoops with solid bronze clips. The choice of hoops and hardware was made to provide for the maximum amount of resonance. Each set is offered with a mahogany or bird's-eye maple finish, and the bass drums come with contrasting wood hoops.

Modern Classic Tones

Sound is a matter of preference. Some people prefer more resonance, and others like a more focused, controlled tone. One of the greatest strengths we found with the Modern Classic Club was a significant amount of control over the sound. The thin, non-reinforced shells allowed for a big, warm, open tone with a nice long sustain with both heads at a medium pitch. But we were able to shorten the decay to achieve a really focused sound with a nice punch by experimenting with the tuning.

We were also pleasantly surprised by how much depth and volume we could get out of the 14x20 bass drum. It came equipped with a Remo Powerstroke 3 batter, which helped to provide a focused low-end punch with controlled sustain. Not only did this kick drum record well, but it was also perfect for live situations requiring a big bass drum sound without taking up a lot of physical space.

The 5.5x14 snare we received had a bird's-eye maple finish and was stunning to the eyes and to the ears. Its sound right out of the box was dry, with a medium amount of sustain. It wasn't too bright or too dark-sounding either; it was just right. The single-ply batter head reacted sensitively, and the Dunnett R7 quick-release strainer

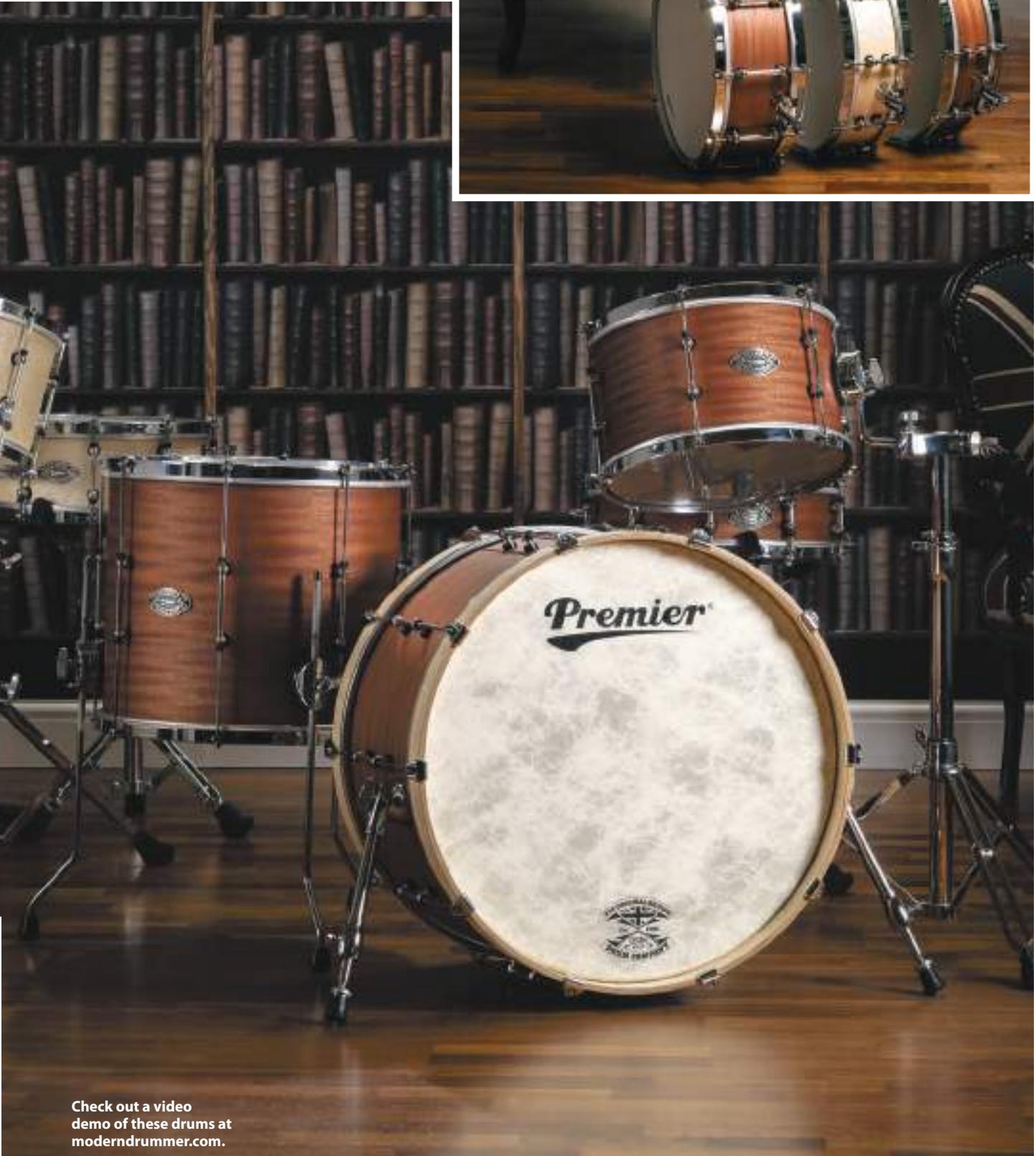


gave effortless control of the position of the throw-off (the lever swivels 180 degrees) and snare wire tension.

Conclusion

We found the simplicity and elegance of this Modern Classic Club set to be captivating. Tennant wraps up our discussion of this new series by saying, "Sometimes it's nice to get back to the simple things. It's nice to remember the concept of a drum and how it needs to resonate and still offer the control you need without being over-engineered." Amen!

Miguel Monroy



Check out a video
demo of these drums at
modern drummer.com.

Keller Magnum Series Drum Shells

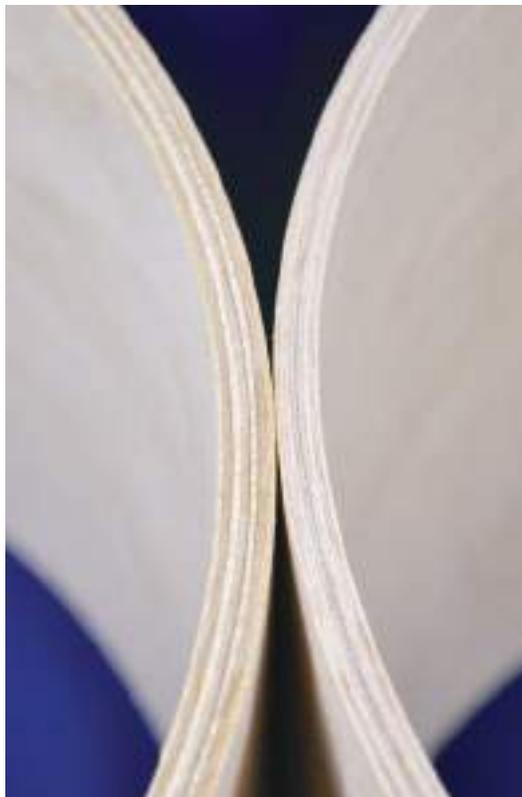
40 percent thicker plies for bigger, fuller tones.

Keller has been making custom-molded professional drum shells for nearly seventy years, and its clients include many of today's leading manufacturers and custom shops. All Keller shells are constructed using what the company calls VSS (Vibrating Sound Source) technology, and the plies are staggered during the laminating process to ensure a strong, stable, resonant cylinder that's easy to drill, rout for bearing edges, and finish. A performance chart posted on the company's website shows that VSS shells have about half a second more decay time, a higher fundamental frequency, and greater amplitude (volume) when compared with original Keller Standard shells.

VSS shells are available in all maple, all birch, Vintage Mahogany (mahogany inner and outer plies and a poplar core), Vintage Maple (maple inner and outer plies and a poplar core), and the new Magnum series, which we have for review this month. Magnum shells, as the name implies, feature 40 percent thicker veneers of premium-grade maple. Available in 5- and 7-ply configurations in 10" to 24" diameters, and in 5-, 7-, and 9-ply versions for snare drums, these shells are designed for optimal tone, increased sustain, and lower, fuller fundamental notes. The theory, as stated on the Keller website, is that "more wood and less glue...allows the warmth of the maple to really come through."

To test out the theory behind the thicker-ply Magnum series shells, we had Keller send 5-ply 8x10 and 9x13 rack toms, a 7-ply 16x16 floor tom, a 7-ply 16x22 bass drum, and a 9-ply 5.5x14 snare to our trusted drum-builder friends at MCD Percussion in Philadelphia. MCD has a lot of experience with Keller's ply shells, and the company makes its own steam-bent single-ply shells, so we knew they would have a good vantage point on how the Magnums compare with the Standard models. Plus, in our experience, MCD's edge work has been nothing short of immaculate, so we could trust that the final drums would have as pure a tone as possible. We also had the drums painted, rather than wrapped, to maximize resonance.

The first thing that the builders at MCD did was give the Magnums a "tap test" by suspending the raw shell with one finger and tapping it with the other hand. The comments I received were that "the 13" and 16" are very resonant and deep, and the 14" snare is bright. These should turn out to sound really good." We decided to add a 10" shell to the mix to see if the thicker plies in the Magnum series caused the tone to sound choked or muted.



A 7-ply Magnum shell (left) compared with an 8-ply VSS maple

I had the kit outfitted with Remo White Suede Emperor batters on the toms and snare, Clear Ambassador bottoms, and a Clear Powerstroke 3 kick batter with a Fiberskyn 3 front head. I chose to use the 2-ply Emperor heads on the snare and toms for two reasons. First, they're my first choice for contemporary applications (rock, funk, fusion, and most studio sessions), so I'm familiar with the way they perform on my regular drumsets. Second, any potential choking of the sound, due to the thicker plies used in the Magnum shells, would only be amplified when using thicker heads.

I'm happy to report that there was no lack of tone emitting from any of the finished Magnum-shell drums. In fact, the drums sounded bigger and purer than comparable pieces in my collection. The 10" tom would likely sustain a bit longer with a single-ply coated batter, but it wasn't lacking in any way. And I really liked how big and round, yet focused, it sounded with the White Suede Emperor.

The 13" tom was my and MCD's choice as the standout drum in the

bunch. It had a huge, fat tone at any tuning and sounded perfect on a modern country recording session where I needed to be as dramatic as possible with my fills. The 16" was thunderous but not too rumbly, and the 22" bass drum was ready made for a deep, punchy, hit-you-in-the-gut modern kick sound.

The 9-ply 5.5x14 snare was bright yet rich, producing a tuneful and cracking tone. I own many more snares than I care to admit, and this drum quickly rose to the top of the heap. It's a true one-size-fits-all drum that can be tuned tight for delicate ghost strokes and jazz comping, backed down to medium for powerful and wide-open backbeats, or detuned and muffled for dark, tubby tones.

When tested as a group, the Keller Magnum series drums were very easy to get in tune with one another, and each possessed an exceptional balance of attack, tone, and decay. For drummers

looking to have a custom kit made that can handle a lot of different genres, I would highly recommend suggesting that your builder check out the Magnum shells. They are super-versatile, so they can be depended on to cover the entire spectrum of tones, whether it's the fat, articulate sounds of modern rock and metal, the high-end snap of jazz and fusion, or the rich, pure voice required for recording.

Michael Dawson



The finished kit, built by MCD Percussion, sounded big, pure, and versatile.

Tama 40th Anniversary Superstar Reissue Snare

A fitting tribute to the big, bold birch tones that defined the sound of the late '70s and early '80s.



Tama released a special line of limited edition snare drums in 2014 to celebrate its fortieth anniversary. One of them is the Superstar reissue on review this month, which has a thick 8-ply, 8 mm birch shell. (Tama was the first major company to offer all-birch-shell drums, in the Superstar line in the late '70s.) This 6.5x14 drum comes fitted with the original Superstar lugs, die-cast hoops, and an upgraded Linear-Drive strainer, which is designed, according to the company, to “provide greater control of the lever adjustment arm and more precise control of the strainer’s deployment motion.”

The thick, deep birch shell allowed for a warm tone, a nice sharp attack, sensitivity, and no shortage of resonance. The drum responded beautifully during heavier gigs where controlling my volume wasn’t necessary. When I really laid into it, the sustain, fat bottom end, and strong attack really came through.

During lower-volume gigs, the Superstar projected easily, and hearing all the notes I played was never a problem. The low-end frequencies came through a bit more than I would’ve liked in these situations, but that’s exactly how this drum is meant to sound. Tuning it to a higher register didn’t

take away the pronounced bottom end, and it kept a nice attack, but tighter tunings removed a bit of the Superstar’s signature fat tone. This drum worked well within higher registers, but it totally sang in the low to middle tuning range.

The Superstar also came alive when I switched off the snares, especially in the lower range, where the resonance and fat bottom end really stood out. Tama’s 40th Anniversary limited edition snares come with a special hard-shell case (only in the U.S.) and a certificate of authenticity. The list price is \$923.06.

Roy Van Tassel

Hear this drum at modern drummer.com.

Paiste PST7 Series Cymbals

The legendary 2002 vibe on a beginner's budget.



Paiste has a new addition to its popular PST line that should interest lovers of the classic Giant Beat and 2002 series. Already consisting of the entry-level PST3, the recently redesigned PST5, and the hand-hammered PST8, the line has garnered positive attention since its inception in 2005, and has widely expanded Paiste's budget-friendly offerings.

Aside from the brass PST3 series, all of the cymbals in the PST collection share an alloy with the Alpha line, as well as with the classic 2002 and Giant Beat models. This high-copper alloy, referred to as CuSn8 by Paiste and B8 by the rest of the industry, is generally known for its use in entry-level cymbals, but Paiste has been its most prolific user for professional-level products since the launch of the original Giant Beats in the late '60s and 2002 models in the early '70s. The PST7 series that we have for review here is designed to bring some of the high-end 2002/Giant Beat tone to an entry-level price point.

Technology in Action

The introduction of the PST (Paiste Sound Technology) series in 2005 heralded a new design direction for the company's more affordable cymbals. Replacing the 302, 402, 502, and 802 lines, the PST collection has developed into a solid set of musical offerings that gives Paiste fans viable choices without pro-level pricing. The

new PST7 series differs somewhat from the PST5 and PST8, though it uses the same alloy and has a similar tone profile. The PST8, the most expensive branch of the PST series, is hand hammered and features a brilliant Reflector finish. The PST5, redesigned in 2014 to be lighter and a bit darker, is the most similar to the new PST7. Featuring hand lathing by Paiste's master craftsmen and comprising nearly twice the number of models as the PST5, the PST7 line is the closest to the classic 2002 series in terms of feel and appearance.

We're Gonna Groove

PST7s look and feel like quality cymbals that should cost more than they do. From their hand-lathed finishes to their "Hand Made in Switzerland" etching and individualized serial number, you can tell that these instruments benefit from a caring human touch in their design and construction. Upon first listen, the Thin and Light models were the most reminiscent of 2002s.

PST7 Thin and Light models are available in 14" Light hi-hats; 14", 16", and 18" Thin crashes; and a 20" Light ride. They offer more overtones, lower overall pitches, and slightly less volume potential. I preferred these models, as they had the least amount of gonginess and a less pronounced pitch in the decay.

The 20" Light ride could be crashed effectively while still maintaining a pleasant amount of stick click. Its bell was a bit weak,

as you'd expect with a lighter cymbal, but it was still usable. The 18" Thin crash was by far my favorite of the bunch, as it produced a clean, crisp voice that would blend with almost any music. The 14" Thin crash performed a bit like a large splash.

The Medium models, marked only as 14" hi-hats, 16" crash, and 20" ride, were gongier and generally higher in pitch than their lighter siblings. A 10" splash and 14" and 18" Chinas round out the Medium line and reminded me very much of most of the other Paiste splashes and Chinas I've encountered. The company has strong, easily recognizable voices among its effects cymbals that carry across its various lines, and the PST7 splash and Chinas were no exception.

The Heavy models, available in 14" hi-hats, 16" and 18" crashes, and a 20" ride, beef up the volume, raise the pitch, and lean toward the popular Alpha Boomer series, which was introduced in 2012 and sports the endorsement of Iron Maiden's Nicko McBrain. The 20" Heavy ride produced glassy, cutting stick definition without becoming shrill, and the bell was loud and strong. As with most heavy and "rock" models, these cymbals really didn't speak fully unless I hit them rather robustly.

What's in the Box?

Offered in three attractively priced box sets, the new PST7s make a great option for a beginner or student who wants to take a step up from lesser entry-level models. The sets are labeled Universal,

Session, and Rock and consist of a pair of 14" hi-hats, a 16" crash, and a 20" ride. The Universal set features Medium models, the Session pack includes a Thin crash and Light hats and ride, and the Rock set consists of Heavy sizes. An additional Effects Pack includes a 10" splash and an 18" China.

Though the three different lines within the PST7 series are very consistent unto themselves, they also share a common overall tone profile, making it feasible to mix and match as you choose from the various weights. This is a feature I expect to find in professional-level cymbals but generally not in models in this price bracket. Were I to build my own personal setup from the various offerings in the PST7 line, I would choose the 14" Heavy hi-hats, the 18" Thin crash, the 20" Light ride, and the 18" China.

Stairway to Seven

With prices low enough to raise eyebrows and famously consistent manufacturing practices, the Paiste PST7 series offers great new options for beginning and budget-minded players. Approximate street prices are \$158.99 for hi-hat pairs, \$79.99 for the 14" Thin crash and China, \$99.99 for 16" crashes, \$120.99 for 18" crashes, \$120.99 for the 18" China, \$139.99 for rides, and \$399.99 for box sets. Visit paiste.com for more information, and head to YouTube for demonstrations of the various PST7 models as they relate to each other, including how they sound against classic 2002 models.

Ben Meyer

Eccentric Systems FlatHeadz Hoops

Top-quality triple-flange rims with a bonus feature for tuning ease.



In an effort to make the tuning process easier, Eccentric Systems created FlatHeadz, which are specially designed chrome-over-steel triple-flange hoops that feature notched horizontal lines at each tension rod. These notches, which are colored black for increased visibility, are used to ensure that the drumhead is being pulled evenly around the shell.

We tested the FlatHeadz on three toms (10", 13", and 16") and a 14" snare. Before commenting on the gauge system, I should point out that these are top-quality hoops, on par with any other aftermarket triple-flange models you could find. They fit the drums perfectly, sat even and flat, and showed no sign of wear after hours of heavy use. Now, let's discuss the gauges.

I found three perks to using the FlatHeadz, as opposed to standard steel hoops. First, they allow you to swap out a drumhead and get the new one tensioned evenly, at a pitch that's close to where you had the old head tuned, without hitting the drum. To do this, simply note at which notch the old head is aligned, and then tighten the new head until it sits at the same spot. If you swap out a thicker head for a thinner one, or vice versa, the pitches are more likely to differ. But the head will be tensioned

evenly around the drum, so you'll have a good starting point for fine-tuning to the pitch you're after.

Second, FlatHeadz inspired me to explore more extreme tensions and different head combinations without getting nervous that I'd never be able to get the drum to sound good again. Just take note of where the notches are aligning on the top and bottom heads when the drum sounds good to your ears, and use those as reference points the next time you change heads or want to explore alternate tunings. As long as you know where the notches were sitting originally, you can always dial the tension back to those points and end up close to where you started.

The other advantage of FlatHeadz is that you can easily diagnose a drum that's fallen out of tune by noting which tension rods have backed out a bit. (They'll be the ones that are no longer aligned at the same notch as they were when the drum was evenly tensioned.) This application is most beneficial for use on snare drums and by drummers who play a lot of heavy rimshots, which often cause the batter head to detune over time. Prices range from \$19.99 for an 8" hoop to \$29.99 for an 18" version.

Michael Dawson

Big Fat Snare Drum Mufflers

Instant '70s fatness without turning a drum key.

Sometimes the greatest inventions are the simplest. In the case of the Big Fat Snare Drum muffling device, inventor Kris Mazzarisi wanted to be able to get a beefy '70s-style sound without having to retune or bring an extra drum to swap in for his primary medium-tuned snare. Rather than come up with a brand-new idea from scratch, he started with the time-honored method of placing a piece of an old snare batter head on top of the drum to deaden the tone, and refined it into a commercially viable solution that's reliable, effective, and easier to use than any homemade variation. Brilliant!

The BFSD comes in two sizes, 13" and 14", and two models. The Original is a solid piece of Mylar that covers the entire surface of the drum, and Steve's Donut (named after BFSD artist and Sara Bareilles drummer Steve Goold) has a 6" round cutout in the middle. Both come with a ring of black rubber around the circumference, to help keep the BFSD from bouncing off the head while you play, and a semicircle cutout near the edge so you can remove the device quickly and easily.

The Original lowers the fundamental pitch of the drum more than Steve's Donut does, but both succeed in dropping the tone down to Don Henley territory and in eliminating practically all of the overtones. Steve's Donut, because of the cutout, provides more attack and rebound, so I'd recommend it over the Original for a more familiar playing experience. The one thing to keep in mind is that the BFSD also lowers the volume of the drum, so it



might not work well for loud gigs without drum mics. If you *do* play through a full PA, give your sound engineer a heads up when you'll be using the BFSD, so he or she can accommodate for it by boosting the snare a touch in the mix. The list price for the pair is \$35, or you can purchase them individually for \$20 each.

Michael Dawson



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Drum Miking 101

Part 2: Two-Microphone Setups

by John Emrich

Last month we began this series by exploring three different ways to record a drumset with a single microphone. The distance between the mic and the drumset was our focus. This month we're adding a second microphone. We'll explore the different sounds you get by placing a stereo mic in different locations, and we'll work with two mono mics as well. Let's get started.

A simple way to capture a stereo (i.e., two-channel) image of the drumset is with a stereo microphone, which has two capsules, one for left and one for right, housed within a single case. We'll begin by placing the stereo microphone in the same positions as the mono mic in last month's article.

If you don't have a stereo mic, you can use a matched pair of mono mics, mounted with a stereo bar on a single stand. (Mics with a cardioid polar pattern are recommended.) The stereo bar allows you to keep the microphones at a consistent distance from one another as you explore different placements. For this series I'm using a Violet Flamingo Stereo mic with the capsules positioned according to the ORTF technique. ORTF stands for "Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française," and this microphone technique was started in the 1960s by audio engineers in France. If you want to mimic the method using two mono cardioid mics, space the capsules 17 centimeters apart, at a 110-degree angle.

As you record and listen back to your drums using the different two-mic setups to follow, ask yourself the following questions: Do I get a clear representation of the drumset and a good overall tone? Do I hear the attack of each instrument, and is the sound clearly defined? Are all of the drums and cymbals balanced? Do I hear a clearly defined stereo field—in other words, are the instruments of the kit spreading evenly and naturally from left to right?

Position 1: Far Front

To begin, place your two microphones (or your stereo mic) 4.5' off the ground and 10' in front of the kit, and aim them at the center of the kit. This position gives you a very good representation of the overall sound of the drumset in the room, plus a slight representation of the stereo field. As with the mono microphone in this position, you get a nice natural sound, but it lacks a bit of punch and definition. If you're trying to play fast blast beats, this placement will not provide enough definition. I prefer it for solo work that requires a natural presentation of the instrument, such as recording concert snare drum études for college auditions.

Position 2: Near Front

For the second position, move the two mics to 5' in front of the kit.



The representation of the set from here is well balanced, and you should hear a wider stereo field. There should also be a bit more definition, and the low frequencies will be more pronounced than they were with the mics 10' from the kit. With any microphone, low-frequency information will be more present as the instrument is closer to the mic; this is called the proximity effect. The tone thins out as you increase the distance. You could use some light compression and EQ to boost the lower frequencies when miking instruments from farther away. But, for now, keep the signal dry so you can really learn the differences in tone between position 1 and 2.

Position 3: Overhead and Centered Over Bass Drum Batter Head

This position allows the two microphones to "see" the entire drumset. Looking down on the kit, turn the mics clockwise a bit so that the bass drum and snare are close to the center point between the mics. (In the case of a stereo mic, the snare and kick should line up as close to the center of the mic body as possible). Turning the mics this way places the bass drum and snare in the center of the stereo field. (See the Technology Corner column on overhead placement in the March 2013 issue for more info.)

If your drumset is larger, you might need to raise the microphones so that all of the instruments are captured. In the overhead position, the two mics will give you a well-defined sound that can be mixed with other instruments fairly easily. The stereo field is wide too. The only downside to this position is that the bass drum can get lost in the mix, depending on the style of music. (You can address that problem by adding a third mic on the kick, which we'll cover in the next installment.)

The overhead setup is also an excellent position for percussion recording. Marimba, xylophone, and vibraphone solos sound

great when captured with a pair of overheads in the ORTF configuration. Just make sure you don't get the mics too close to the instrument.

Position 4: Mono Overhead and Bass Drum

The previous three positions were designed to provide varying degrees of stereo spread and natural frequency response. Our final placement, which includes two variations, is a mono setup designed to provide an accurate representation of the drumset.

Start with a single overhead mic (we're using a Sony C-48) placed in the center of the set at a height of about 6', looking straight down toward the batter side of the bass drum. That microphone will stay in place while we try two different placements on the bass drum.

The first bass drum mic placement is slightly off center and .5" from the front head. (We're using a Milab BDM-01 mic.) This position produces a full, round tone. The second position moves the microphone to the batter head; place it near the spot where the beater makes contact with the head, and angle it 45 degrees. Miking the batter side gives you more attack from the bass drum. Either placement will work well with your mono overhead. It just depends on whether you want a rounder tone (front position) or a cleaner point (batter position).



Check out a video demo of these four positions at modern drummer.com.

The four positions we've covered here are some of the more common setups for recording drums with two microphones. Which one works best for you will depend on the style of music you're playing and the type of sound you're looking to achieve. Experimenting is the key. In the next article, we'll add a third mic to our setup.

Special thanks to Omega Recording Studios and Scotty O'Toole for helping us put this series together.



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Part 2: Drumset Tuning

by Dave Ribner

Shortly after introducing the *tune-bot* electronic drum tuner in 2012, we were flooded with phone calls and emails asking how to tune different brands of drums or how to get the sounds of various well-known drummers. Analyzing thousands of drum hits in the course of developing the *tune-bot*, we gained considerable insight into drum acoustics and also discovered a useful relationship between the primary pitches of any two-headed drum that simplifies tuning. To free ourselves from answering tuning questions, we developed and posted the Tuning Calculator tool on our website, tune-bot.com. We also introduced a free Drum Tuning Calculator app for iPhone and Android platforms.

The first installment of this series (December 2014) focused on how to vary the sound of an individual drum. This article will go into how to select pitches for your entire drumset that sound good together, using the Drum Tuning Calculator. We'll also discuss snare and bass drum tuning.

Tuning Basics Review

Before we get started, let's summarize some specifics that were described in the first article. When playing, you normally hit drumheads in the center to get the fullest, most resonant sound. The dominant sound you hear is the fundamental pitch, which is produced by the batter and resonant heads vibrating in unison. The fundamental is the most important pitch and should be the first thing to consider when tuning. For a set of drums, it's the fundamental pitches that should be tuned to a musical relationship. If you want to tune your drums to specific notes, you should be adjusting the fundamental pitches, not the overtone pitch you get when you tap near the lugs.

Altogether, three pitches are involved in tuning a drum: the fundamental pitch and the lug pitches for the batter head and resonant head. Hitting the center of either head will

give you the fundamental, which is the lowest and loudest pitch of the drum. Both heads need to vibrate to produce the fundamental pitch, so make sure that neither head is muted in any way when you tune the fundamental.

Hitting near the edge will give you the lug pitch of the head you're striking. The lug pitches of the batter and resonant heads are independent of each other, and you can mute the opposite head when tuning these pitches. Muting one head will inherently mute the fundamental pitch. You can also mute the fundamental pitch when the drum is on a stand, by gently touching the center of one head and tapping near the edge.

In addition to having the desired fundamental pitch, a drum should have uniformly tuned heads in order to produce the best possible sound. This means that the batter head lug pitches should match each other, as should the resonant head lug pitches. So after you get a drum to the fundamental note you want, work on matching the lug pitches on the batter head and then the resonant head. After doing this, you may have changed the fundamental pitch. If this is the case, you will then need to readjust the tuning by uniformly tightening or loosening each of the tension screws.

For a given fundamental, there are unlimited combinations of batter and resonant head lug pitches. The relationship between the batter and resonant head lug pitches has a big influence on a drum's sound characteristics, including resonance, timbre, and attack.

Drumset Tuning

Although a drum can be tuned over a fairly wide range of fundamental pitches, the range of pitches where it opens up and produces a clear, resonant sound is limited. If the heads

are too loose, the drum will sound dead; if cranked too tightly, it will sound tinny or choked. The optimum pitch range depends mainly on the diameter of the drum, as well as the thickness of the heads and the type of shell. You'll have lower pitch ranges for large diameters, thicker heads, and lighter shells, and higher pitch ranges for smaller diameters, thinner heads, and heavier shells. You can explore the range of a drum by starting at the lowest head tension you can get without wrinkles; gradually increase the tension while listening to the drum at each setting. Table 1 shows typical pitch ranges for toms ranging in size from 8" to 16", and 14" snares.

Table 1

Tom Size (inches)	Frequency Range (Hz)	Note Range (note/octave)
8	165–235	E3–A#3
10	120–175	B3–F3
12	100–145	G#2–D3
13	85–125	F2–B2
14	75–110	D#2–A2
16	65–95	C2–F#2
18	55–75	A1–D2
Snare Size		
14	165–250	E3–B3

To tune your kit, you'll need a set of pitches that sound good together as well as individually and that fit the type of music you play or the sound you want. You also need to consider the sizes and number of drums in your setup. If you have just a few drums, you'll probably want to have a wider gap in pitch between them. For instance, if you have two toms, you might tune them to a wide interval, like a perfect fifth. With six drums or more, however, you'll usually need to tune to a smaller interval, such as major thirds, or even to a scale; otherwise some of the drums would be forced beyond their tuning range.

Although drums are percussive and not melodic instruments, it turns out that a melodic series of notes sounds great on a set of toms. If you want your drums to be evenly spaced in pitch,

use a set of pitches in uniform musical intervals. (A musical interval refers to the pitch difference between two notes. Intervals are measured in semitones, also known as half steps, which are the twelve notes used in Western musical scales. For example, the difference between C and C# is one semitone.)

Common intervals used for drums include minor thirds, major thirds, perfect fourths, and perfect fifths, which correspond to pitch differences of three, four, five, and seven semitones. (See table 2.)

To find a sequence of notes in a particular interval, start with the lower note and then advance through the twelve-note musical scale (C, C#, D, D#, E, F, F#, G, G#, A, A#, B) by the number of semitones for the interval you want to use. The numbers listed after the notes in table 1 indicate the octave. Every time you go past the note B, you're moving to the next-higher octave, starting with C. For instance, a series of perfect fourths starting at F2 (i.e., F, second octave) would be F2, A#2, D#2, G#2, and C#3.

Here's an example. Let's say you have a drumset with four toms (10", 12", 14", and 16"), and you want low-pitched floor toms and a fairly wide overall pitch range. Your largest tom is 16", so the lowest note from table 1 for that size is C2. To cover a wide pitch range, you might want to use perfect fourths as the interval between drums. This gives you, from lowest to highest for your four toms, C2, F2, A#2, and D#3. Checking table 1 again, you'll notice that these pitches are within the range for each drum, which means you'll probably be happy with the final sound.

If, on the other hand, you want lower pitches for all of the toms, you might use a smaller interval, such as major thirds. In that case, the notes for the toms would be C2, E2, G#2, and C3. If you want the drums a little higher in pitch, you could start with the 16" tom tuned to D2 and use major thirds, which would give you D2, F#2, A#2, and D3. Appropriate interval choices for a small kit with two toms are perfect fifths or a full octave, like E2 and E3.

A good alternative to uniform intervals for three drums is to use the notes of a major chord. As shown in table 2, this consists of a low note, a middle note four semitones higher, and a high note another three semitones above that. For example, you might tune a kit with 16", 13", and 12" toms to a D-major chord consisting of D2, F#2, and A2. Another popular sound is the melody from "Call to the Post," the tune played at the start of horse races. For the same four toms, "Call to the Post" would be C2, F2, A2, C3 or C#2, F#2, A#2, C#3 or D2, G2, B2, D3, depending on the pitch you want for the 16" floor tom.

Table 2

Musical Interval, Chord, or Song	Number of Semitones	Example
Minor Third	3	C, D#
Major Third	4	C, E
Perfect Fourth	5	C, F
Perfect Fifth	7	C, G
Octave	12	C, C
Major Chord	4 and 3	C, E, G
"Call to the Post"	5, 4 and 3	C, F, A, C
"In the Mood"	3 and 5	B, D, G

These intervals, chords, and songs provide numerous tuning options that work well for just about any drumset and type of sound you want. After you make a decision on the fundamentals and intervals you want to tune to, go ahead and adjust the batter and resonant heads until you get the desired notes. Then uniformly adjust the batter and resonant head lug pitches to obtain the clearest tone possible.

Tuning Calculator

The Drum Set Calculator in the tuning app can guide you in selecting appropriate fundamental pitches using a musical interval, chord, or song melody that works for the drum sizes in your kit. In addition, the calculator automates the tuning process by determining the required

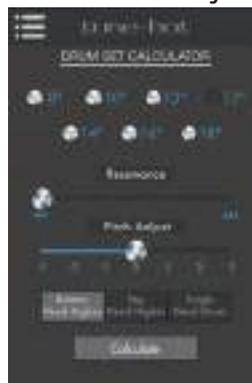


Figure 1

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batter and resonant head lug pitches that will provide the desired fundamental pitch at a variety of resonance settings. As explained in the first article, the pitch difference between the batter and resonant heads controls resonance. Figure 1 shows the Drum Set Calculator set to tune six toms with minimum resonance and with the resonant heads higher than the batters.

After you push the calculate button, you'll see the recommended fundamental pitch and the batter and resonant lug pitches for each drum (figure 2). For the six toms, the calculator recommends tuning in major thirds starting at a first-octave B (B1) for the largest tom. All you have to do is uniformly tune the batter and resonant head lug pitches to the values shown, and you'll be close to the desired fundamental pitches.

Snare Drums

Most 14" snare drums sound good with a fundamental pitch in the range of E3 to B3. Some drummers like to have the fundamental pitch of the snare follow the same interval relationship as the toms, while others prefer to tune the snare independently. It's ultimately a matter of personal preference.

A good relationship for the snare is to tune the lug pitch of the resonant head a perfect fifth higher than the batter head. This combination works well for a couple of reasons: a higher-pitch resonant head improves



sensitivity, and a lower-pitch batter head produces a fatter sound. When tuning to higher fundamental pitches (above G3), it's a good idea to keep the resonant head from exceeding a lug frequency of 400 Hz, to avoid stretching or choking. Resonant heads tend to be only 3 mil thick and can easily deform or break when over-tightened. For tunings with a higher-pitched batter head, simply reduce the interval between the heads to perfect fourths, major thirds, or even seconds. Figure 3 shows the Snare Drum Calculator screen and recommended tunings from the app.

Bass Drums

A lot of factors go into tuning a bass drum, including the type of heads, the use of cutouts in the resonant head, and the type and amount of damping. A good starting point is to tune the lug frequency of the resonant head a perfect fifth higher than that of the batter head. Some people prefer the opposite, while others like the heads to be closer in pitch. Again, this is a matter of personal preference, and some experimentation will pay off.

If you're playing jazz with a small, unmuffled bass drum, try tuning both heads close in pitch. If you're looking for a bigger rock sound, you'll want a larger drum with some damping. Figure 4 shows the Bass Drum Calculator along with recommended tunings for achieving a fundamental pitch of D1.



In the next article we'll go into tuning for different musical styles, and we'll take a look at some artist tunings.

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Rise Against's Brandon Barnes

Drums: Tama Starclassic Maple in piano black

- A. 8x14 S.L.P. G-Maple snare
- B. 9x12 tom
- C. 16x16 floor tom
- D. 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Sabian

- 1. 15" AAX X-Celerator hi-hats
- 2. 18" HHX Evolution crash (or 18" O-Zone)
- 3. 22" Paragon ride
- 4. 19" AAX Virgil Donati Saturation crash
- 5. 20" Paragon crash

Hardware: Tama Iron Cobra

Power Glide bass drum pedal with footboard shaved down to a smooth finish, Iron Cobra Lever Glide hi-hat stand, and Roadpro snare, tom, and cymbal stands with no top felts (for increased sustain)

Heads: Remo Emperor X snare batter, Coated Emperor tom and Ambassador tom bottoms

Sticks: Vic Firth Christoph

Schneider signature model, Vic Firth stick holders, Promark stick wrap

"We tried to make the drums sound real and not edit them to sound like robots playing them," Barnes says of Rise Against's 2014 album, *The Black Market*. "It's me playing, natural and loose. It's important to me to sound like a real drummer, not this robotic sound that everything has now because you put it in Pro Tools and chop it up into a million pieces. If a fill's not perfect, Jason Livermore at the Blasting Room were real involved. We found a happy medium where the drums sounded natural. It came out well."

"I try to tune the toms super-low and fat, just before they start to sound flubby. I like them on the more dead side but still with a nice tone and pitch. I find that with the way I hit, they seem to cut more when they're tuned lower."

"The fact that the snare drums are deep, they have tons of body. I tune the top head medium, not super-tight but enough where it has a nice crack and never loses that body. I crank up the bottom head quite a bit."

"Having a Coated Emperor for my kick, it has this old-school Bonham, Keith Moon sound. I grew up listening to bands from the '60s and '70s, so that's how it needs to sound in my mind. Sometimes I'll use a Coated Ambassador, if I'm feeling really bombastic."

"My setup changes constantly. I don't know if it's out of boredom, but my rack tom will be high up, more in the middle, and flat. Then

sometimes it will be a foot lower. The rack tom and snare are constantly moving around. I studied jazz for a lot of years, and if I'm playing something at home or something more straightforward, I can play traditional [grip] with a perfectly flat snare. But when I'm playing punk, my snare needs to be a little bit off to the side and slanted toward me quite a bit. That's where those heavy rimshots happen."

"[To secure the] kick drum, I went to a hardware store, bought two chains, and hooked them to the lowest lugs. Then I hook the chains to my chair, so the drum doesn't fly away. Maybe I play too hard, but this way it's anchored to me and can't go anywhere."





5

4

3

C

D

B

A

2

3

1





Mayumi Bozzio

Terry Bozzio

Last summer, drumming innovator Terry Bozzio celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his first drum lesson by performing his unique solo compositions on tour in North America and Japan. The sixty-four-years-young Bozzio, still on top of his game, attributes much of his longevity and creativity to his early education. "I'm grateful that I had good teachers in the beginning of my career who taught me the basics," he says. "If you study George Stone's *Stick Control*, Ted Reed's *Syncopation*, and Haskell Harr's *Drum Method* books, with a little imagination there's not much that you'll be confronted with that you won't be able to handle."

When *MD* spoke with Bozzio, he was traveling the States with his wife, Mayumi, and his drum tech, Ben Travers, who has the monumental task of setting up and tearing down what has been dubbed the world's largest tuned drum and percussion set. During his two-hour shows, Bozzio discussed the creative process behind each composition, which he worked out on cajon, body

"With a little imagination there's not much that you'll be confronted with that you won't be able to handle."

percussion, a Korg Wavedrum, and, of course, his famous kit.

Pieces with titles like "D Debussy," "Five Equals Seven," "Africa,"

"Five Flute Loops," and "Slow Latin" offer hints to the wide range of styles Bozzio works with, from world beats to the progressive fusion he's explored with Frank Zappa, U.K., the Brecker Brothers, and Jeff Beck. Often Bozzio weaved minimal electronics within complex layers of melodies and ostinatos, which he played on twenty-six tuned toms, fifty-six cymbals, eight bass drums, and multiple accessories—many via his arc of twenty-two foot pedals. Nothing in the arsenal is superfluous, though; each element enables the drummer to provide a specific timbre and pitch necessary for the music at hand.

"About 20 percent of what I play is written composition, while the other 80 percent is totally improvised," says Bozzio, who, on pieces like "Five Flute Loops," employed ambient loops that weren't linked to a click, giving him the freedom to stretch his ideas and manipulate the time within the composition. "I'm very happy that I can still make a living playing creative music," he adds. "There's nothing quite like a live acoustic drumming performance, and I'll continue to explore the art of drumming as long as my body and mind will allow." **Mike Haid**



Mayumi Bozzio



Mayumi Bozzio

Trigger Hippy's Steve Gorman

"You can make up a lot of ground when you don't know what you're up against," Steve Gorman says to *Modern Drummer* over brunch in downtown Nashville. Given the fact that the drummer didn't start playing until he was twenty-one years old, joined the grungy roots-rock band the Black Crowes after owning a kit for merely a month, and appeared on the group's multimillion-selling 1990 album, *Shake Your Money Maker*, just two years later, it seems that he is, in fact, at his best when the pressure is on. You can be sure it's a characteristic that comes in handy when Gorman is playing in front of thousands of fans—or manning a radio control-room microphone.

"When my daughter was in preschool," Gorman explains, "the father of one of her best friends was Nashville sports radio personality Willy Daunic. He and I would talk sports every day while we waited to pick up our kids from school. We really hit it off, and he invited me to come to the studio to be a guest of the show. We did about an hour on air, and it just felt natural. When we got done, the producer came in and said, 'That was great! How would you like to be a regular guest of the show?' And I said, 'What I would really like is my own show....'"

The request wasn't exactly out of left field, as Gorman was a broadcasting major at Western Kentucky University. When he hit

"The producer said, 'That was great—how would you like to be a regular guest?' I said, 'What I would really like is my own show.'"



Trigger Hippy, featuring the Black Crowes' Steve Gorman (second from left) and singer Joan Osborne

the road with the Crowes in 2010, he turned his show, *Steve Gorman Sports!*, into a podcast, gaining a fan in Bruce Gilbert, the head of Fox Sports Radio. Gilbert was keen on the unique "music and sports" angle, and today Steve and cohost Jeffrey Gorman (the drummer's cousin and a former NFL executive) can be heard five days a week on more than a hundred stations.

On the playing front, while the Black Crowes remain on hiatus for the foreseeable future, Gorman has been keeping his drumming skills sharp with Trigger Hippy, whose stellar lineup features Nashville session guitarist Tom Bukovac, bassist Nick Govrik (Highwater, Mike Farris), keyboardist Jackie Greene (Black Crowes, Phil Lesh), and famed singer Joan Osborne ("One of Us"). The band's self-titled debut album features a mix of solid songwriting and passionate grooves born from letting the creative process run its course in the studio, and the tracks are mixed just the way drummers like to hear them, revealing every funky nuance of what Steve is laying down. **Jim Riley**

Prairie Prince

In the mid-'70s, the San Francisco-based band the Tubes came roaring out of the gate with over-the-top live shows, blistering musicality, and an outrageously satirical take on modern culture. Toning down their outrageousness a bit helped them crack MTV and the charts in the early '80s, with hits like "Talk to Ya Later" and "She's a Beauty," but label honchos, producers, and the public largely continued to scratch their head at the group's unflagging weirdness. Longtime fans remain staunchly loyal, though, and, four decades on, the Tubes are still hitting the stage. Bringing it hard and heavy from behind a new Yamaha Club Custom kit is the man who's been there from the beginning, Charles Lempriere "Prairie" Prince.

Prince's thunderous sound is reminiscent of heavy hitters like Mitch Mitchell, John Bonham, and Ginger Baker, but the ease with which he plays the top end of his kit comes from the heart and hands of a jazz player. "Yeah, you definitely homed in on my ensemble of influences," Prairie tells *MD*. "My dad was a big band enthusiast and introduced me to guys like Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, and Louie Bellson, while my older sisters' records were my entrance into early rock 'n' roll."

"My dad introduced me to guys like Gene Krupa, while my older sisters' records were my entrance into early rock 'n' roll."



Prince long ago established a reputation for his confident swagger and prodigious chops, which have allowed him to back a diverse list of artists, from Brian Eno, Jefferson Airplane, and George Harrison to Todd Rundgren, whom the drummer accompanied on a national tour this past November. Prince informs us that their relationship goes back to even before the musical iconoclast produced the Tubes' 1979 album, *Remote Control*, and that beyond the songs, he's particularly happy with the way Rundgren is approaching that other crucial aspect of life in the music biz—travel. "The great thing about this tour is that Todd actually has a bus, which nowadays is an anomaly," Prince says, calling the three-and-a-half-week cross-country trek "a welcome change from all the one-offs, with pickup vans, cars, airports—and jet lag!" **Bob Girouard**

King Crimson's

Gavin Harrison,
Bill Rieflin, and
Pat Mastelotto



MD goes deep inside the reinvention of a prog-rock institution, which stormed stages around the country last fall with a raging new three-drummer lineup. Retrofitting four decades of genre-defining music for the seven-piece band took a lot of careful planning, but once the parts were in place, vroom!

by Michael Parillo



Tony Levin

After the show at L.A.'s Orpheum Theatre, September 30, 2014

It's almost as if the *MD* editors dreamed this one up: Let's take the progressive-rock icon King Crimson, guitarist Robert Fripp's giant roaring beast of musical mischief, and call it back into action from one of its periodic slumbers...only this time let's arm it with one, two, *three* drummers, men of great power and mystery...and let's arrange those drummers, with all their strength and dizzying sleight of hand, as the *front line* on stage, with the rest of the group on a riser behind them. Now there's a great idea!

And then, it stands before you, this version of King Crimson—the band's eighth lineup since its 1969 inception—and it's nothing short of revolutionary. Just walking into the venue, in this case the Best Buy Theater in New York City's Times Square, you get a little thrill seeing three blue-finish drumsets taking up all the real estate down front. To your left you see Pat Mastelotto's mad-scientist laboratory, a thicket of drums, trash metals, and electronics. In the middle is Bill Rieflin's classy-looking, streamlined set, with everything more or less in its traditional position; what you might not notice is the keyboard that the multi-instrumentalist will employ during the show. And to the right is Gavin Harrison's finely honed precision machine, featuring three rack toms, lots of cymbals, and sets of chimes and tube toms.

As the lights dim, a public service announcement of sorts

welcomes you to the show, part of a sold-out four-night run on the month-long Elements of King Crimson U.S. tour, and dares you to enjoy the music without capturing any of it with your digital device. The voice of Fripp, who's notoriously unbending in his refusal to allow photos or recording, leads the spoken-word bit, but all of the other band members chime in: the drummers, guitarist/singer Jakko Jakszyk, sax/flute player Mel Collins, and bassist Tony Levin. The put-the-phone-away request is rendered with good humor, and the men in the audience heed the call.

(Yes, this crowd is overwhelmingly male, with the T-shirt sizes at the merch table listed as men's small through quadruple extra-large...plus women's medium.) You haven't seen so few lit-up screens in an audience in fifteen years.

"Larks' Tongues in Aspic, Part 1" makes a riveting opener, as the drummers flirt with some quiet bell tones before everyone explodes into the crushing riff. As the set unfolds over the next two hours, the band plays an immersive, highly dynamic mixture of material drawn from its long history, including perennial



favorites like "Red," here overhauled completely by the drummers to become even more ferocious than before, and "Larks' Tongues, Part 2," plus rarities like "One More Red Nightmare" (a late-breaking addition to the tour repertoire, Mastelotto says) and "Starless." Two drum-based features add to the fun. The only Crimson period not represented is the '80s, presumably since singer/guitarist Adrian Belew is not involved. But what might have been a disappointment to some results in an especially fresh and surprising—and mind-bendingly proggy—set of material.



Ralfan Segev

The encore tonight, played after Rieflin leads the group through a short, strange, note-based improv, is "21st Century Schizoid Man," from the band's first album, *In the Court of the Crimson King*. The song whips the crowd into a frenzy, with Jakszyk howling the distorted vocal, Collins taking a soaring sax solo, and Harrison blasting off kit pyrotechnics in a brief showcase. At both ends of the tune the drummers trade fills, passing the baton among them in a display of the most thoughtfully

arranged rhythmic assault imaginable.

Mastelotto joined Crimson as part of its '90s "double trio," playing alongside Bill Bruford, and has been in all lineups since then, while it's Rieflin's first stint. (Harrison and Mastelotto anchored the short-lived 2008 version of the band.) But the three sit on equal ground. Although, roughly speaking, Mastelotto plays lots of dramatic effects, Rieflin has a big backbeat and enjoys toying slyly with its placement, and Harrison specializes in power and control, no one's role is fixed, and each does a bit of everything, including supplying a sense of melody. Meanwhile, Levin commands attention sonically and visually, holding down the bottom brilliantly under all this drumming while looking incredibly cool, with his wiry frame, wide stance, and fleet fingers. Throughout the evening, during pauses in the music, giddy audience members cry out to the band, "Thank you!"

The next morning, *MD* meets up with the drummers in Harrison's hotel room. The trio sits down to chat, with Mastelotto to our left, Rieflin in the middle, and Harrison on the right. They listen to each other carefully, and each chooses his spots to talk. The rapport among them is easy and comfortable, and the combination of these three very different guys makes a lot of sense. In many ways it's almost as though they're back on stage.



Tony Levin



Rafael Segger

MD: So how's the tour going, now that you're a couple weeks in?

Gavin: It's getting better as the nights go by. We make different mistakes every night, and I think that's part of the show. We're getting very good at the sort of liquid arrangement areas, where things can happen and you just have to recover and move on. The songs are very symbiotic, so if someone goes to a certain section, we might all follow. A lot of surprising things happen like that, but we're getting very good at recovering.

Bill: Initially we developed parts that we then had to learn to play, and we've spent a lot of time learning to play together and making sure it's working. But we're at the stage where now that we got tight it's beginning to loosen up a bit and there's more interaction and give and take. For instance, last night I can't remember which of you did something, and all of a sudden there was this big call-and-response thing in the middle of a song that had never happened before. It's just responding in the moment to what's going on around you.

Gavin: I think we're getting to third or fourth base, for the first time. First base is where you can *just* play the part. You don't play it well, but you can play it. Second base is when you can play it in time and things are starting to come together. Third base is when you're now free enough to not worry

"One of Robert Fripp's principles of the band is that the music is always new."

—Pat Mastelotto

about the articulation of what you have to play. You can start listening to the other guys and how they're playing. And fourth base is where you can play the song inside out, backwards, forwards, without even thinking. You can listen to the other guys, watch the other guys, even start thinking about abstract things.

Bill: Like laundry.

Gavin: You can think, *I'm going to play the next y'll like I'm a saxophone player.* You're not worried that you're playing in 11/8, you're not worried about the timing, you're not worried about the arrangement. This only comes together through *lots* of repetition and rehearsal and feeling comfortable with the song and the parts. You're not down in the engine room—*What do I have to play next?*—you're up on the ship, steering the boat. And you start to understand not only the other two drummers, but I can listen to Mel's solo. The first time we play some of these songs, I can't listen to Mel's solo, because I'm trying to play alternate bars of 11/8 and

17/16, or something.

MD: Seeing only one show, I'm wondering how much is precisely worked out in terms of where everybody's playing or not playing. But I guess some of that shifts in the moment.

Pat: It's both. A song like "Sailor's Tale," Bill gets the front section and Gavin gets the last section, but I join in to play the five riff while Gavin's carrying on with the six thing, so there are some things that are chunked like that specifically.

Gavin: "Starless" is like that.

Bill: Conveniently, a number of the songs are in chunks of threes, so as one strategy we just divide it up and assign different roles for different sections. Bingo—that's the easy part.

Gavin: Sometimes there's bits, like in "21st Century Schizoid Man," where three fills happen around a riff. That's ideal—Pat plays the first fill, I play the second one, Bill plays the third one. And then that whole section comes round again. When there's a four, we do a unison one, which is worked out.

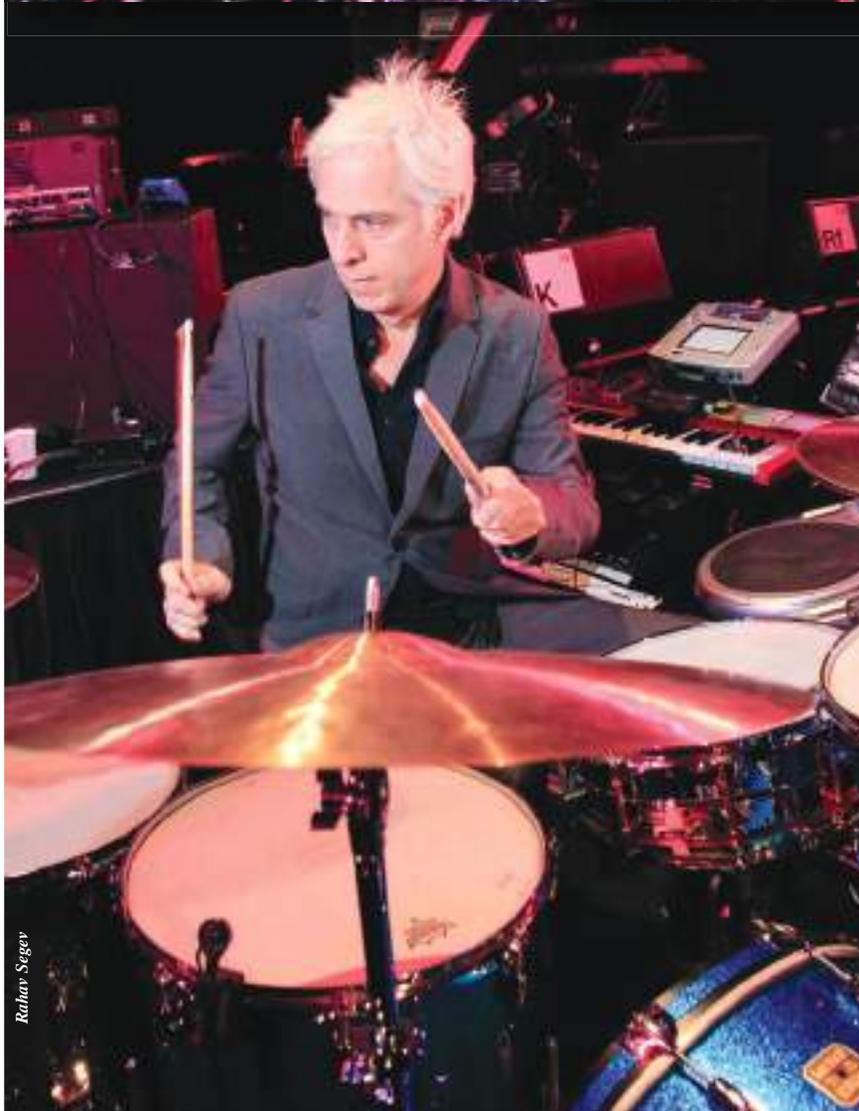
Pat: Like "One More Red Nightmare." We do a unison one at the beginning one time, and at the end another time.

Gavin: In "Vroom" we worked out some of the fills.

Pat: Displacement, echo-type things. But then, within "Vroom," there's freedom for



Ralfan Segev



Ralfan Segev

this hi-hat exchange, where I get to be the leader. But sometimes my first one goes by and you reply and then it goes the other way, because my original statement didn't get caught.

Gavin: Even though it's a very structured drum arrangement, nice improvisations happen, as well as the bits we've worked out: I'll go three 16ths this way, Bill goes one 8th this way, and Pat's gonna stay in the middle.... It's good fun.

MD: Did you work out the music at the same time, among the three of you and also with the whole band?

Gavin: The three drummers got together first. But there was a lot of listening and thinking before we even met.

Pat: Skyping and emailing.

Gavin: We were all thinking, *I wonder how we could do this*. One guy can play, none of us can play, two guys can play; Pat's got a lot of electronic sounds, and Bill's got some keyboard parts. We've got lots and lots of options, so it's more than just kind of a *large drummer*. [laughs] We got together last February in a studio and started to work on a couple of the hardest pieces, trying to really get down to the atoms of, well, who's

“The currency of King Crimson is intensity.”

—Bill Rieflin



gonna play that bass drum? Who's gonna hit the first snare drum? [all laugh] Knuckle it down to that.

Luckily, we could record it. We could listen and say, "Oh, you're playing that downbeat. Okay, I won't play the bass drum." We don't want two bass drums arriving at the same time. We did do some

really careful arranging in the first week. And then the second time we got together, we still didn't feel like we were ready to go with the band, so the three of us went into another studio and spent a week.

MD: Where was that?

Gavin: It was in Cambridge, England. And that was really good, valuable time.

Bill: This band couldn't exist in this form without us having laid that groundwork.

Pat: And the other guys did the same thing. They were off together, either just the guitar players or all four of them, sorting things out.

Bill: The interesting thing regarding what Gavin just described is that in principle it's



Rathan Segev

Crimson Kits

Mastelotto

Drums: DW Maple Standard in twisted blue finish, including 8x12 tom, 14x16 floor tom, and 14x20 bass drum, with 6x14 snare in silver broken glass, plus 18" Camco floor tom cut down by Pork Pie's Bill Detamore

Cymbals: Paiste, including 15" Signature Sound Edge hi-hats, 20" Signature Full crash, 20" Master series Dark Crisp ride, 18" 2002 Novo China, 7.5" 2002 Cup Chime, and 15" Traditionals stacked with 14" Twenty series China. By Matt Nolan: bell, Batwing gong, glass chimes, and Spinning Moon. By Hammerax: Screech/Hazard stacker, Dustbowl, Vine Chime, Bwii, and Culebra. ("On the floor," Pat says, "is a Paiste Twenty series 12" China, a 16" Hammerax Hazard, and a new prototype Paiste 12" heavy splash that I play in the air or lay across drums for certain sections; same with the Culebra.")

Electronics: Roland HPD-15 HandSonic, PD-7 satellite pad (connected to HandSonic), SPD-SX, V-Cymbal pads (connected to SPD-SX), and Expression pedal; Korg Global Wavedrum; Apple iPad (with various apps, including Flux, Beat Bots, SampleWiz, and BeatMaker 2); Mackie



Rathan Segev

1202-VLZ3 mixer; Porter & Davies BC2 tactile drum stool monitor

Heads: Evans, including G14 snare batter, G2 Clear tom and floor tom batters (Onyx on Camco floor tom), and EMAD bass drum batter

Hardware: DW hi-hat stand, 9000 double pedal, and rack hardware; Gibraltar V-Rack; Black Swamp MultiPlates

Sticks: Vic Firth extended rock Extreme stick with King Crimson Elements logo, Vic Firth mallets, Cymbow

Rieflin

Drums: Gretsch USA Custom in blue sparkle finish, including 9x13 tom, 16x16 floor tom, and 14x22 bass drum, plus 16x16 Renown series silver sparkle floor tom and 5x15 Ludwig chrome-over-brass snare

Cymbals: Paiste, including 16" Twenty series (original formula) Medium Light hi-hats, 19" Dark Energy Mark I crash, 20" Signature series Medium ride, and 20" Formula 602 Thin crash (old riveted Zildjian China, shown on floor, is stacked on 602 crash for certain songs)

Heads: Remo, including Coated Emperor snare and tom batters, Clear Ambassador snare and tom bottoms, and Coated Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter

Sticks: Regal Tip E series 5B, weighted from 50 to 54 grams per stick



Rathan Segev

Hardware: Gibraltar

Electronics: Roland HPD-15 HandSonic, Nord Lead 2 synth, Memotron rack unit (for Mellotron sounds), older Korg Kaoss KP2 pad (for processing electronics)

Harrison

Drums: Sonor SQ2 in blue tribal finish, including 7x8, 8x10, and 9x12 toms; 13x15 and 15x18 floor toms; and 15x22 bass drum, with 5x12 Protean GH Signature birch snare. Harrison also designed his 9x8, 11x8, 13x8, and 15x8 Sonor prototype tube toms.

Cymbals: Zildjian, including 14" K Constantinople hi-hats, 19" K Custom Dark crash, 17" and 19" A Thin crashes, 18" Z Custom China, 12" and 16" Oriental China Trashes, 20" K ride, 7" custom crash bell, and custom-made chimes

Heads: Remo, including Coated CS snare batter and Ambassador Snare Side, Coated Vintage Emperor tom batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, black-dot tube-tom batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, and Clear Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter



Rathan Segev

Sticks: Vic Firth Gavin Harrison signature model

Hardware: Sonor stands, Gibraltar rack, Tama Speed Cobra double bass pedal and Cobra Clutch

Electronics: Nord Drum 2 and pad, Porter & Davies BC2 tactile drum stool monitor

pretty straightforward: You take this part, you do this part, you don't do that.... But the thing is, drummers aren't used to working with other drummers. And they see the whole picture. So when something comes, you're automatically on that downbeat—you're in mid-swing and it's like, *Oh, I can't...no!*



Radian Segen

So not only are we looking to organize what we are playing, but we also have to very carefully organize what we *don't* play. And the things that we don't play are, in a way, automatic. Without thinking, your arm goes here, your foot goes there.

Pat: And it goes the other way too. It's not just the end of the fill or part you're playing—it's going into it. We all did enough recording, especially in the '80s, where we did records in pieces. So we're familiar with the idea that you're only going to play one part of the drumkit at a time. But, especially with fills, that's a weird thing when you're not playing time—it's just,

there's your fill.

Like in "Schizoid," I play the first two bars of time, but Gavin takes a fill. And Bill has the next two bars of time, but I have the fill. So I'm not launching from anything; it's a cold start.

Bill: In the studio you can warm up, and then you punch in and you're already there. But here it's like you have to go from zero to sixty instantly. And that in itself is a skill—sitting, and then *going*, and then stopping—and if it's something you're not used to, you have to practice. So it's doing everything that drummers normally do, but in an entirely different way.

MD: Pat would play a big fill and then he wouldn't be playing anymore, but suddenly Bill and Gavin would be playing. The spatial relationships between you are a powerful aspect of what you're doing together. I wish you could feel that from the audience.

Pat: I heard one guy say, "I love it when you do the Wimbledon." You hit the ball cross-court and back.

MD: Exactly. It's a physical transference of music from one place to another. And it's surprising.

Bill: On stage it's weird when you're playing it, depending on your monitoring. I'll be playing and it's loud, loud, loud, and then I stop and it's not loud anymore, and it feels *empty*.

Pat: It feels gutless sometimes.

Bill: And I think, *I just hope this is working*. Because I honestly have no idea. The urge is to just fill that space, because it shouldn't be so empty.

MD: I guess there's trust and faith involved that the sound remains full.

Pat: Yeah, we trust Ian Bond; we've got a good sound guy.

Gavin: Plus there's an awareness of the sound of our kits—three very different-sounding drumkits.

Pat: Gavin's got the higher toms, which appear in the stereo field over there [to the crowd's right]. So it made sense for me to try to get the lowest sound over here [to the crowd's left].

Taking Shape

MD: How did this lineup come to be? Was it Robert Fripp's idea?

Gavin: He just called us all up. Pretty simple.

Bill: He had a very specific vision, a seven-piece group, the drummers in front. It was *these* seven people, in this configuration. And if any one of them didn't want to do it, that would be enough to call it off.

MD: It strikes me that he chose the right people.

Pat: I didn't know who he chose. I just said, "Yeah!" And I found out later. And Bill, you told me you were the last guy he called, so you could have pulled the plug on the whole thing.

Bill: Robert says, "Yes, if any one person doesn't want to do it, then the whole thing's off. By the way, everyone's agreed to it." [all laugh]

Gavin: That's surely one of Robert's greatest skills, through the history of King Crimson—picking people. You've got to be a good casting agent, shall we say, and know what the personalities can bring to the band and what personalities to mix up.

You could easily get it wrong.

Bill: Almost like a Calder mobile—it's hanging in balance as it moves, and everything's in relationship and everything's in motion. It's dynamic, and we all influence each other.

Gavin: It needs a balance.

Bill: Yeah, certain people balance certain other people, yet it creates a whole.

MD: Was the repertoire chosen by Robert?

Gavin: Robert suggested the repertoire.

And, of course, quite a lot of the original versions have just one drummer. So you could choose to work out exactly what that part was or treat all of it with fresh ears and think of it as a new song, which is encouraged.

Pat: One of Robert's principles of the band is that the music is always new.

Bill: Regardless of when it was written.

Gavin: Which is great! You just think of it as a song. Momentarily forgetting what the original drum part was, how could we reinterpret this? A song like "Red," for instance, we completely changed the rhythmic aspect of it. The song is still the song; it's still the same arrangement. But we decided: Let's try something new. We worked a couple of days on that one. We were really scratching our head.

Bill: Gave us the biggest headache, I think. We wanted to give it a new feeling, a different kind of energy—sort of amp up the lurking menace in the piece.

Pat: Did you notice that in the verse sections there's no kick drum?

MD: I noticed what felt almost like a half-time take on it, or something that felt bigger and slower, tom heavy and more airy.

Pat: We slowed the tempo down as well.

Gavin: Little bit heavier.

Pat: Less cymbals.

Gavin: Yeah, it's tribal, isn't it?

MD: With three guys playing together, like Gavin said a minute ago, the bass drum can really clutter things up.

Pat: That's where the flams are most apparent. A flam in the snare is a little more forgiving, and it can sound like a nice Elvis slapback, something like that. But the kick drum is not pleasant to hear a flam on.

MD: Was achieving the discipline *not* to hit your bass drum at certain times one of the more challenging aspects of this?

Pat: Yeah. And finding the beats in between each other's patterns.

Gavin: Sometimes there's a little bit of a visual thing going on. In "The ConstruKction of Light," there's a part where there's four notes, and I play the first two and Pat plays the following two, because we're on the

Tony Levin Talks Drums to the Third Power

As a member of King Crimson on and off since the early '80s, Levin has been handed some tricky assignments. Presiding over the low end beneath a trio of drummers is one of his greatest tests yet.



Bill Riegfin

MD: Are there any particular challenges in playing with three kits?

Tony: Sure, it's a challenge. But the surprise has been that it's not as hard as I'd imagined it would be. The drummers worked out their approaches in such clever ways that there really isn't a clutter I need to avoid or compete with. Especially in the bass drum

area, it's surprisingly clean and easy to groove with. I'm not only grateful to them for that, but I admire how they did it—took a lot of planning, and requires a lot of restraint from each of them, yet the drumming aspect of the show still shines through as maybe the most innovative part.

MD: Could you describe what you're focusing on in terms of listening on stage?

Tony: I'm listening to the whole piece, but, like any bassist, I'm hard-wired to focus on the bass drum to be sure I'm not flammng with it.

MD: For the material from the *Thrak* album, which you played on, did you rethink your original parts to fit the new group?

Tony: I've tried to rethink all the material I'd done before, especially the pieces I've played a lot, like "Red" and "Larks' Tongues, Part 2." Trey Gunn's [touch guitar] parts, from the era I didn't play in, are "ConstruKction of Light" and "Level Five." On "ConstruKction" I try to stay very close to what he played. The reason I don't try to give it my own flavor is because that part is the core of the piece, and it's also an amazing musical adventure, maybe the best bass line ever written for our touch-style instruments.

MD: Along those lines, how have you generally crafted your parts for the tour?

Tony: I studied the songs and tried to keep what was special about the original bass parts, and there's a great deal of that! But I also tried to let myself express what I could. Fortunately we booked a lot of rehearsal periods, so sometimes I changed the instrument I'd been working on for a piece, maybe even twice.

For instance, I've been playing "Larks' Tongues 2" on the Chapman Stick for years now, and I wanted to do it on my Music Man five-string bass to get myself thinking differently. But the sound and power of the drumming gradually got me shifting away from the big, fat sound of that bass, and I dug out a vintage four-string Music Man that I'd last played on the 1980s tours and started digging into it really hard, which increases the midrange and amp crunch—actually gives less low end. And that approach ended up being the one I use on most of the set. It's a way I haven't played in a long time, so it's been fun returning to it.

MD: Could you talk a bit about what you're hearing from each guy specifically?

Tony: I'm afraid that's hard for me to do...I've got a lot to listen to. I will say this: Whatever you figure out one of the drummers is doing, just wait a minute and you'll hear that his function has completely changed. It's a revolving story that's full of surprises.

outside edges [of the stage]. There's a couple of things where all three of us suddenly play in unison—we all play this part in eleven—and then we break off.

Pat: A linear part in the eleven section.

Gavin: The first time we do it we play it on the hi-hat. And then the second time, we all reach out for a bell. Musically it sounds nice, but I know that visually it looks

good—suddenly you can see all the arms and the sticks going together.

Pat: In unison, for just a brief moment.

Bill: The fun thing is when we can combine musical value and performance value. And it's super-fun to play.

Gavin: That was one of the songs that we started with. That song and "Level Five" are probably the two hardest technical songs



to play. Our first week, that's pretty much all we got done.

Bill: I kept notes, and I know that the first two days we worked on "ConstruKction." The third and fourth day was probably "Level Five." Four days on two songs...

Pat: ...when we only had six or seven days together to look at about fifteen songs.

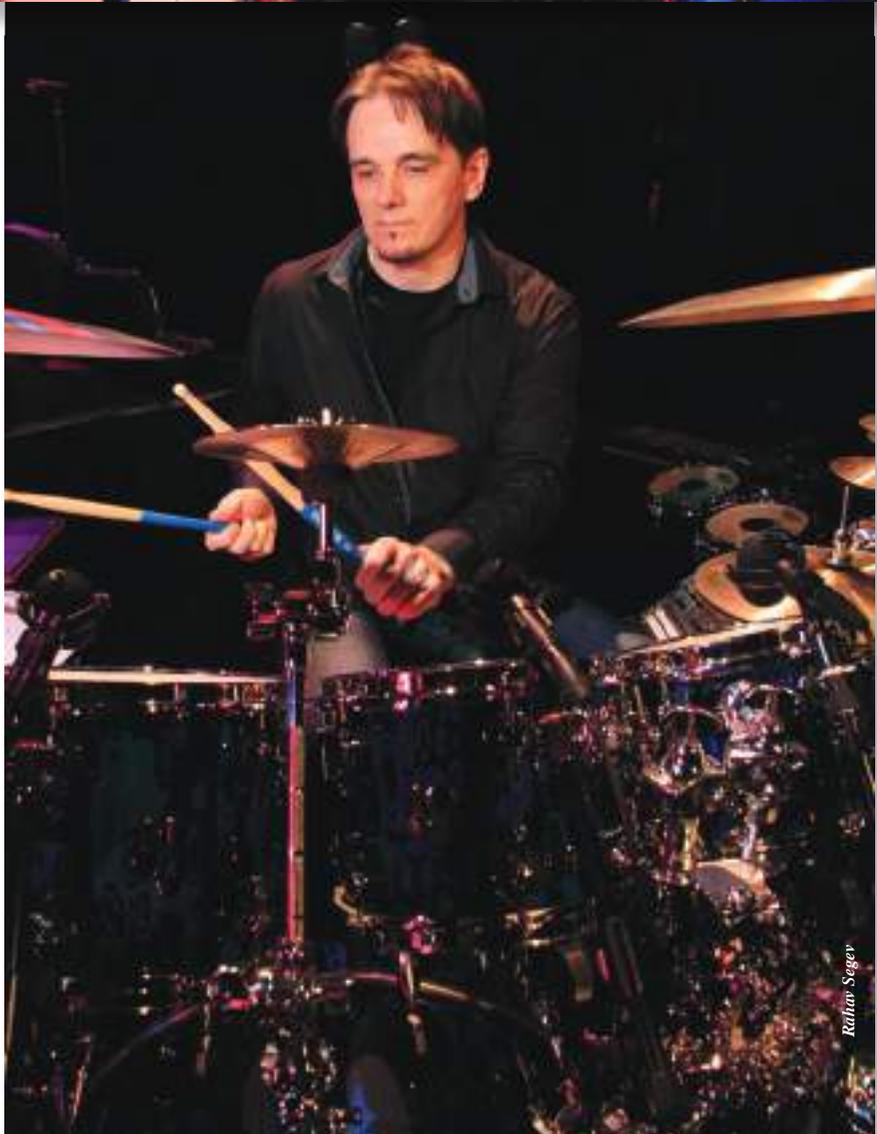
Gavin: And meanwhile I was getting Jakko to make demos, because we needed to play to something. In the case of "ConstruKction of Light" and "Level Five," DGM sent me all the multitrack files from the original sessions, so we had something to play to. Some other songs, we had Jakko play the guitar parts and Tony put some bass parts down, so when we came back for the second rehearsals, we had maybe ten pieces that we could play to. Otherwise, three drummers in a room—we were kind of singing the songs to ourselves.

Bill: "Does the chorus go longer...?"

Pat: In the rehearsals it was great that Bill plays other instruments, because we didn't have a guide track for "Starless." We started to talk about, "Okay, I'll take the ballad, Bill

"I'll go three 16ths this way, Bill goes one 8th this way, and Pat stays in the middle. It's good fun."

—Gavin Harrison



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will take the middle, Gavin will take the back part...but what are we gonna rehearse it to, to start to feel it out?" So Bill picked up the bass. Tony was there, but Tony didn't actually know the song yet, and Bill knew it.

Gavin: He did a whole bass track.

Bill: To a click track. [laughs]

Pat: It was awesome! He played the whole bass part with like one punch-in.

Bill: There was more than one punch-in.

Pat: It was *great*.

Gavin: Plus, of course, in this band famously there's some Mellotron parts, which Bill plays. Otherwise we'd need a keyboard player.

MD: Do any of you have a click track running during the show?

Pat: Sometimes. You didn't hear any count-offs, did you?

MD: I didn't. That touch was really effective.

Gavin: Yeah, it's exciting, isn't it? Suddenly...bang!

Pat: You wouldn't notice, but we don't have a monitor guy; we have little self-monitors. The house mixer, Ian, sends premixed drumkits. So even when there is a click, any of us has the choice to knock it down or turn it up.

Gavin: It's a modern miracle of monitoring. Ian uses a Midas digital desk, and we've got these Roland boxes, seven of them on stage—well, eight; Pat's using two.

Pat: One for the speaker behind me, so I can put my own electronics in the speakers, so when I'm working I don't have to do everything with headphones.

Gavin: So a knob says "Gavin," and that's my entire drumkit, premixed by Ian to my taste; in fact, he even puts some reverb on for me. Then the next one along is Bill, then Pat, and then Robert, Jakko, Tony, and Mel—in the order that we're on stage. At any point, you can just reach over and turn them up or down.

There are some bits where Robert plays whisper quiet, and you need to hear the time, so you turn him up. Other parts you might want to turn down, because it's going to blow your head off when it gets to a solo. It would be impossible to have a monitor man do that for us. It's really convenient to just kind of mess around with the mix.

Talking Drums

MD: Let's discuss the drum pieces you put together for this band.

Gavin: One of them's all electronic, which we came up with recently. It's based on a pattern of twenty-seven notes. So Pat plays 7-7-7-6 [sings].

Pat: There's a bit of a melody, because it's

Growing Up Crimson?

Our three drummers, two from the States and one from England, go back to their roots for a moment.



MD: Were you King Crimson fans growing up?

Pat: Yes. Big fan. "Cat Food" was the first thing I heard. I'd never heard anything like that. I was hooked. And then, out of sequence, I got the *Court of the Crimson King* record. I was maybe thirteen, and my folks had a car with an 8-track. I got to buy four 8-tracks that year; I got *Zeppelin I*, *Court of the Crimson King*, Simon & Garfunkel, and something else.

Bill: For me, Crimson loomed large as a young teenage listener. I probably first heard "Schizoid Man." Dan Rabinowitz played it for me when I was fifteen or sixteen, and it went on from there.

Gavin: I never liked 'em! [Pat and Bill laugh]

MD: I knew you guys weren't going to like this question.

Gavin: *Three of a Perfect Pair* was the first record I heard. I didn't know any of the previous stuff. *Three of a Perfect Pair*, *Beat*, and *Discipline*. They were the moment that I heard King Crimson.

Pat: Great records.

MD: Did those make you go back and check out the earlier stuff?

Gavin: No. [all laugh] I really didn't grow up with progressive music. I was a jazzhead.

Bill: Gavin, I wanted to ask you, to see if my theory is correct. We have two American drummers and an English drummer. The English drummer, if I understand, basically grew up listening to American music.

Gavin: Yeah.

Bill: Whereas the American drummers grew up listening to English music.

Pat: The Beatles, Dave Clark, the Who, Led Zeppelin...

Gavin: The grass is always greener. I wasn't listening to the Beatles or Led Zeppelin or any of that stuff. Not until much later. It just wasn't attractive when I was young.

MD: Were you listening to American rock, or just jazz pretty much?

Gavin: Jazz, jazz-funk.

Pat: You listened to a lot of West Coast [jazz], the stuff I hear you talk about.

Gavin: Yeah. My dad was a jazz musician, and he loved American jazz. All these favorite stars—Clifford Brown, Art Farmer, Miles Davis. So I was hearing that kind of thing. My eldest brother listened to English rock music, but it just sounded like a great big noise coming out of his bedroom.

Bill: Did you see yourself growing up to be a jazz player?

Gavin: Yeah...I mean, it's very much part of my influence.

MD: How did you get into more progressive and heavier things?

Gavin: Well, when I started to work as a professional drummer, you don't really get a choice. You don't just ring up Joe Zawinul and say, "Hey, I've just left school... how 'bout me joining Weather Report?"

Bill: "Let's kick out Omar Hakim..."

Gavin: "Why don't I ring up Earth, Wind & Fire and see if I can get the job?" You just start working. When I was leaving school, punk was happening. And I did a tour with Iggy Pop. So that beat the jazz out of me, I think. [Pat laughs] "Iggy Pop beat the jazz out of me," says Gavin Harrison. I wasn't an Iggy Pop fan at all, but when I saw him perform—man, he's got so much energy—I became a fan, watching him from the drums. *Wow, this is fantastic*. I didn't get it from the records, but it's that thing of seeing the attitude. By the end of the tour I was loving the songs. But it couldn't have been farther away from my upbringing. You just try to get jobs, and you end up playing in all sorts of situations.



on gamelan bells.

Gavin: "The Bells of Hell," that's what we're calling it at the moment. And meanwhile, Bill's playing a pattern of nine [sings three nines], which is also twenty-seven. So they're cycling at different rates. And I'm playing these sort of weird, funny electronic drums on the Nord 2 pad, and I play some of them with Pat and some of them with Bill. It's got this kind of floating thing. It's more of a link piece than a feature, so we put it in between certain songs, and it's a nice atmospheric kind of bridge.

Bill: It gives a break to the audience from all the intensity.

Pat: We kind of built it going into "Sailor's Tale." We didn't use that last night with that song, but we pitched it to overlap into "Sailor's."

Gavin: The other drum piece, the feature, "Hell Hounds of Krim"...

MD: The one where you started with four sticks each?

Gavin: Yeah. We had ideas to make a proper drum piece, rather than take, say, "B'Boom," which was already written, but for two guys. The seeds of "Hell Hounds" were done a long time ago, and we practiced it a lot when we were in Cambridge, on our second rehearsals.

Pat: Gavin had presented the idea of the first section. There's kind of four movements to it.

Gavin: Yeah, I sent the guys a little film of me playing some ideas. Rather than send out notation or audio, it's actually easier to watch someone play. Working on ideas at home, I used to write them down. But when I go back to them six, seven years later, although I can play it, I can't remember the *attitude*. So now I just film myself on a little Zoom, because quite often it's to do with a movement or a tempo or a vibe, more than the actual sticking—and sometimes I write that down as well, with all the ghost notes.

It's actually much easier to learn something by watching it, I think, because it's a very physical instrument. You can see that sometimes the guy's playing left hand on the hi-hat, and if you just heard it and you were thinking it was right hand on the hi-hat...

Bill: ...you couldn't figure out how to make it work.

MD: I think of "Cissy Strut" by the Meters when you describe that.

Gavin: There you go. When you see him play it, it all seems a lot easier.

Bill: It's funny you bring up "Cissy Strut," because when Robert asked me to do this thing I was thinking about my place within the group, with these two great players. *What am I gonna bring to the table?* And all I

could think of was James Brown and the Meters. So I actually learned "Cissy Strut" as part of my preparation for this. It's a hell of a thing.

MD: Do you use two hands on the hi-hat?

Bill: Oh, yeah. It's such an awesome thing, but, again, it's like what Gavin's describing: I wrote it all out and I can read it, but you give that to anyone to play—you need to know what the *feel* of it is, that sort of lumpy kind of thing.

Gavin: It'd be interesting to ask someone to try to play that part if they've never heard it. If they just saw it written down, it would sound pretty stiff. It's what Frank Zappa used to call "putting the eyebrows on it"—the attitude you play it with is sometimes more important than what you're actually playing.

Discipline

MD: As three drummers playing together...

Bill: ...when we do...

Pat: ...there are bits of unison...

MD: ...I was wondering whether there are any concessions that you have to make. One might be not playing the whole time.

Gavin: That's a difficult one. It's *really* hard to not play, because you're a drummer—there's a natural urge to play. It's harder than it sounds, just to sit there. You're used to playing from the beginning of the show to the end. I sit and listen for about seven, eight minutes of "Starless" before I even really start playing. But I like it! I'm a spectator.

Pat: I don't view it as a concession. It seemed weird when you said it like that. I enjoy watching. I like to play, but it's great to watch. Somebody said, because Robert's got the band dressed up a little bit, "How can you play the show in a jacket?" I don't sweat that much in this band, really. [Points to Gavin] He's got the heaviest lifting, so I'm not that sweaty at the end of the night.

Bill: Well, again, yes, it isn't a concession. The aim is to make the music work. When you have three drummers, you simply cannot play all the time. Even though you want to, you can't, for the music's sake. You put the reins on your natural enthusiasm.

MD: It did seem that when each of you wasn't playing, you were enjoying the music.

Bill: Hell, yeah. You just get to sit and listen to this great stuff.

Gavin: You get to go and see King Crimson every night. [laughs]

Bill: I actually forgot to play the other night. I was doing one of the keyboard songs, and I found myself just listening. I thought, *Oh, I should be doing something.*

MD: There are a lot of drums flying around

during the show, a lot of freedom and a lot of discipline. You explore the territory between the center of the beat and the front and the back, and there's a range of feels.

Bill: Well, the biggest danger, of course, is that it's just too much. Obviously we're drummers and we like to play, but ultimately it has to serve the needs of the music. In the moment you get carried away and you want to do things. We all have our parts, we have areas where we can improvise and have fun, but we also need to keep the global view, ears open and listening: Is this musical? Does it work? And that's a constant evaluation, for me, anyway. So yes, three drums—the danger is that it's just an onslaught. As Gav would say, a fire in a pet shop.

MD: But we do look to King Crimson for excess. Too much is relative.

Pat: What's the use of having a top if you can't go over?

MD: Exactly. It's a place where we're happy to get assaulted.

Bill: The currency of King Crimson is intensity, largely.

Pat: That's a good one. I like that. That's a pull quote right there.



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by Ken Micallef

The barriers preventing a meeting of Western popular music and Indian classical music were insurmountable for centuries. The turbulent '60s changed that. In 1966 jazz guitarist/sitarist Gabor Szabo recorded the groundbreaking *Impulse!* album *Jazz Raga*, accompanied by a rhythm section that included the legendary R&B drummer Bernard "Pretty" Purdie. In 1967 the Beatles opened side two of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* with George Harrison's "Within You Without You," a swirling orchestral piece that was inspired by the guitarist's

friendship with sitar master Ravi Shankar, and that, for many Westerners, represented the first brush with Indian instruments such as tabla and tamboura. A year later, Buddy Rich and tabla maestro Alla Rakha recorded the surprising duets album *Rich à la Rakha*, which saw the big band drummer adapting burning kit solos to the classic Indian repertoire.

The '70s brought further experiments in East/West fusion: 1971 saw the release of the Mahavishnu Orchestra's *Inner Mounting Flame*, fueled by the white-hot Indian-inspired jazz-rock of guitarist John

McLaughlin, and in 1975 sitar player Collin Walcott recorded the swirling *Cloud Dance* with the Gateway trio of John Abercrombie, Dave Holland, and Jack DeJohnette.

The following decades brought continuing musical meldings, such as filmi, bhangra, and Asian Underground, which mirrored happenings within Western culture at large. And today renowned Indian musicians such as Zakir Hussain (tabla), Anindo Chatterjee (tabla), Anoushka Shankar (sitar), and V. Selvaganesh (kanjira) work frequently with U.S. players, including



From left: Giovanni Hidalgo, Eric Harland, Zakir Hussain, and Steve Smith work out some high-level cross-cultural music on stage at the SFJazz Center, March 2013.

the drummers we speak with in this piece: Sameer Gupta, Eric Harland, Steve Smith, and Dan Weiss.

“Indian culture celebrates rhythm,” says Harland, who performs regularly with Hussain in a variety of settings; check out the recently released DVD *The SFJazz Sessions*. “Zakir has invited me to India four times to perform; the people know Indian classical music like we know pop tunes. When a musician plays a long cycle of a raga [melody] and he returns to the 1, the audience is almost ecstatic. The drummers of Indian classical music are like scientists dissecting rhythms. The knowledge required to play the music is amazing.”

“The teachings of rhythm in the Indian tradition can help one gain a deeper connection to beat cycles and time in general,” says Weiss, whose albums *Tintal Drumset Solo* and *Jhaptal Drumset Solo* present unique applications of tabla patterns to the drumset. “Along with rhythmic aspects, this music really is about sound and vibration. My teacher Pandit Samir Chatterjee taught me about tonal clarity, precision, and consistency of tone. The tabla player has to be aware of the mood, the nature of the raga, the artist’s intentions and background, and issues that go beyond the music. This manifests in my accompaniment in jazz or improvised settings. Also, this music has taught

me about discipline. Practicing now is like sleeping, eating, or any other activity that we don’t think about.”

“This meeting between East and West has been happening for a while now, as the world is becoming a smaller place,” says Smith, whose rigorous study of Konnakol (South Indian vocal percussion), bols (rhythmic syllables), and talas (rhythm patterns), as well as tabla and mridangam drumming, has resulted in the Indian-scented albums *Raga Bop Trio* and *Vital Information’s Vitalization*, as well as touring and instructional work as the first Western drummer to tour with Hussain in the group *Masters of Percussion*. (Steve also appears on the *SFJazz Sessions* DVD.) By making Indian music funky, Smith has created a path to the country’s styles that continues to extend.

“When Western musicians approach odd meters, they often think of them as groupings of four and three,” explains Gupta, who has also worked with Hussain, leads Brooklyn Raga Massive, and recorded *Namaskar*, a beautiful, atmospheric album that allies Indian instruments with his pulsating kit drumming. “When Indian musicians approach odd meters at a fundamental level, they’re thinking in groups of three and four. When you give yourself over to Indian music, it will redefine the way you make music.”

Tearing Down the Wall by Building a Vocabulary

Indian classical music is centuries old, and it once appeared impenetrable to Western ears attuned to 4/4 rhythms and European-based melodic forms. With its deep complexity and extended improvisations, Indian music practically dwarves its U.S. counterpart. But this hasn’t stopped American musicians intent on learning its concepts and applying its rhythms, beginning with Konnakol, the common denominator of all South Indian classical music; this syllabic singing is applied to, among other instruments, the mridangam, kanjira, and ghatam drums. Bols are the North Indian equivalent, related to the tabla.

“Konnakol is the South Indian classical term for spoken recitation of the rhythms,” Gupta explains. “In North Indian classical music they call it ‘reciting bols.’ Bols are the syllables or phrases. You can also capture the phrases by reciting numbers. You can count out groups of phrases like 123-12345-1234-123 in succession. Those number phrases can be a type of Konnakol. I’ve translated North Indian bols to the drums using numbers. If a mridangam player recites a composition to me, it’s easier to think of it as numbers than as literal Konnakol. Then I can translate it into a phrase to play on the drumset.”

Everyone finds his or her own way into this music. Smith's method was typically methodical for this seasoned student. "I started learning Indian rhythms at a drum camp in Germany in 2002," Steve says.

"Richie Garcia, Chad Wackerman, and I taught during the day and went to the Indian rhythm class in the evening. The teacher, Karuna Murthy, taught the basics of the South Indian Carnatic style.

"First we learned the hand-clapping patterns, called 'keeping the tala,'" Smith continues, counting using his fingers and palm-up and palm-down motions on his other hand for the numbers. "For instance, the basic eight-beat cycle—basically two bars of 4/4—is clap [beat 1], little finger [2],

"When you open your mind to different rhythmic values, as with Indian music, you can cover more territory."

—Eric Harland

ring finger [3], middle finger [4], clap [5], wave [6], clap [7], wave [8]. Then we learned the basic Konnakol syllables for a group of four notes—'ta-ka-di-mi'—reciting one syllable for each beat.

"Then we recited in double time, half time, and eventually in triplets, all the while keeping the same tala with our hands. We did the same with talas in five, seven, and nine. We also learned well-known South Indian drum compositions called korvais, so we could all play them

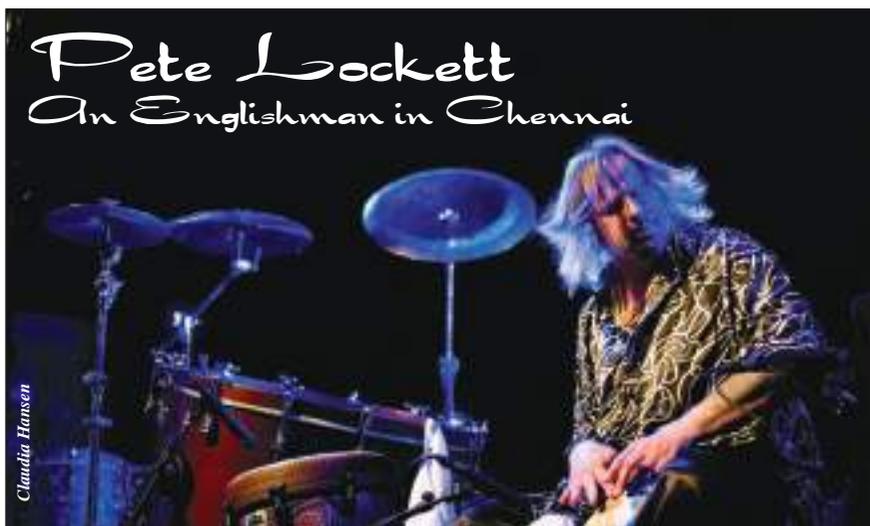
together on various percussion instruments, including drumsets, congas, djembe, or whatever we wanted. You're building a vocabulary that you can turn into very long sequences."

For Gupta, because he was trained in jazz, he had to work to move past Western concepts of time and feel, even though India is part of his ethnic heritage. His kit rhythms on *Namaskar* create flowing, subtle support to the Indian instrumentation, his drumming merging with tabla, sarangi, and Carnatic saxophone. "Coming from a jazz sensibility, one of the challenges was learning to play with Indian classical musicians and still preserve Western timekeeping," Gupta says. "It's that idea of the metronome being the final authority. Indian music is about *relative* time. It's always in motion; it breathes along with the people who are playing it. In Indian music you have to bend. The time is a little more loose and round. For instance, Indian musicians don't have 4/4; they have 16/4, which is called tinal. That is the cornerstone for the time cycle they use. There are other time cycles in seven and five, and each has its own name, but tinal is the main tala. There are sixteen beats before you repeat a phrase. That's a fundamental difference."

Where's the 1?

Does Indian music have a downbeat in the classic Western sense? "The beginning of the cycle is called sam," Gupta says. "That is the 1. But it's also the beginning of the form. The difference from 1 to 16 and back to 1 is like a circle or a time clock. The downbeat is in the hands of the improviser as far as when you deliver the downbeat explicitly. The sixteen-beat cycle can go from 30 bpm to 300 or 400 bpm over an hour-long concert."

On the trio recording *Sangam* with Charles Lloyd and Zakir Hussain, Eric Harland plays drumset and piano, and his interpretations of and improvisations with Hussain's tabla are as cosmically metaphorical as his more solo-centric work on *The SFJazz Sessions*. The drummer takes an intuitive approach to Indian rhythms, often studying with local Indian street drummers to literally learn from the ground up. "Zakir didn't want to teach me; he wanted me to stay natural," Harland says. "He felt that



British percussionist Pete Lockett is perhaps the foremost authority on playing Indian drums in a Western setting. His vast discography includes many solo recordings, as well as film soundtracks (*Moulin Rouge!*, *The Bone Collector*, *Snatch*) and touring/recording work with Björk, Peter Gabriel, Robert Plant, the Verve, and Amy Winehouse, among many others. Lockett performs on an unusual hybrid system of Mapex drums, Zildjian cymbals, and Indian drums and percussion.

"In Indian music, rhythmic modulation, subdivisions, phrase development, rhythmic illusion, improvisational structures, and beat displacement are dissected in unbelievable depth, giving the performer a much deeper understanding and control of time," Lockett says. "Take, for example, the North Indian quaida system, where the percussionist has to perform variations on a basic theme but is only allowed to use the stroke patterns and formative structure found in the basic theme. A skilled performer can create dozens and dozens of variations on the spot. The other restriction on the improvisation is that each variation has to be in two identical halves, the second of which has all the open strokes on the bass tabla [bayan] replaced with closed strokes. This is a system called thali/khali and gives rhythms and rhythmic patterns portions of time which are stressed and unstressed or empty and full."

Lockett suggests drummers begin simply when pursuing Indian music. "Start by playing a two-bar phrase on the snare drum," he says. "Then repeat it exactly on a second drum. Repeat this over and over with different phrases. It's a bit like exchanging fours with yourself but having to replicate exactly. Over time this gives you a real mental understanding of what exactly you're doing rhythmically within any improvisation. When you add this to how they subdivide and manipulate time, it can become a very serious challenge. Even in straight 4/4 this can be taken through many levels, such as quintuplets, septuplets, etc. Here they would be just as likely to use syncopation and rhythmic trickery to create suspense and release."

As with many Western drummers, Lockett found that Zakir Hussain made a great impression. Pete sought out a local tabla teacher and never looked back. "Initially the structures and techniques made it very hard to come up with any cross-fertilization," he says. "It's very hard digging into a music when you've never heard anything like it before. You have to work to hear the nuances and methods behind the performance. But it's entirely rewarding when you do."

Listeners' Guide

Any exploration of Indian music should include traditional classical recordings from both the northern and southern regions of the country, which often feature duets between a melody player and a drummer. Here are a few titles you can check out to hear how Indian and Western music have been fused beyond the strictly classical setting.

Yehudi Menuhin and Ravi Shankar West Meets East /// **Shakti** A Handful of Beauty /// **Remember Shakti** The Believer /// **Charles Lloyd** Sangam /// **Talvin Singh** OK /// **Dan Weiss** Tintal Drumset Solo, Jhaptal Drumset Solo /// **R.D. Burman** A Bollywood Legend /// **Vital Information** Vitalization /// **Pete Lockett and Amit Chatterjee** Talisman, Network of Sparks One, Network of Sparks Two /// **Béla Fleck, Zakir Hussain, and Edgar Meyer** The Melody of Rhythm /// **Trilok Gurtu and Simon Phillips** 21 Spices /// **V. Selvaganesh** Soukha /// **Steve Smith, George Brooks, and Prasanna** Raga Bop Trio /// **Sameer Gupta** Namaskar /// **Cornershop** Woman's Gotta Have It /// **Karsh Kale** Broken English /// **Tabla Beat Science** Tala Matrix /// **John McLaughlin and V. Selvaganesh** The Gateway to Rhythm (DVD) /// **Zakir Hussain** The SFJazz Sessions (DVD)

what I had was organic. But I wanted to know what it is and adapt it to my playing.

"I'm a bad transcriber," adds Harland, whose studies are reflected in his new album, *Vipassana*, the title meaning "a meditation." "I'd rather adapt the philosophy of the music. It goes deeper than what they're playing—it's the message behind it. I've adapted the rhythmic concepts, but I'm not a student of exactly what the rhythms are. I instinctively feel when they go between sections. I didn't want to put it in a different category and show off Indian rhythms. I don't do that with jazz either—I don't play literal Max Roach solos."

From Tabla to Drumset in 4,100 Easy Steps

A dedicated and exacting musician, whether studying and performing jazz or Indian classical, Dan Weiss is an American scientist of deconstructing and applying Indian rhythms. "I've developed a loose system of transferring the specific tabla repertoire I've learned to the drumset," Weiss explains. "Whatever kind of composition I adapt—there are many different types—I try to adhere to its rhythmic and tonal integrity. For instance, I might transfer a resonant stroke to the ride cymbal and a nonresonant stroke to the hi-hat foot. A low sound on the tabla transfers to the bass drum or floor tom, usually. If there's a passage in the tabla composition that's played on the right

index finger—'dha-tu-na, dha-tu-na, dha-tu-na'—I keep the integrity of that by playing the drums with only the right hand in the same motion [left to right] from snare to ride cymbal. Also, a lot of phrases reoccur in the different compositions. For instance, I'll play 'dhatre-dhetete-kataga-dighene' in the exact same way every time on the drumset. The rest is left up to experimentation and the physicality of the kit."

Over the years Weiss has slightly adjusted the angles of his drumset to enable faster, more intricate patterns. "Often I will choose counterintuitive combinations of drums/cymbals or movements for the compositions, in order to broaden my vocabulary on the drumset," he says.

Listening to Steve Smith reciting Konnakol as he plays the drumset (using his own Tala Wands instead of sticks) with Hussain, Vital Information, or the Raga Bop Trio, you're engrossed in the magic of the moment—you *get it*. Smith sings Konnakol over deep-pocket rhythms with at times exaggerated accents to highlight an odd-meter phrase or repeated rhythms known as *tihais*. *The Skyline Sessions*, Vital Information's scheduled 2015 release, will take Smith's explorations even further.

"It can be difficult to find a way to learn Indian rhythms," Smith allows. "It's still basically an oral tradition, and it's best learned from a master. Solo tabla can be very inspiring but difficult to understand, unless someone helps you decode the

rhythms. I've found that South Indian rhythms, because they are less melodic than the North Indian tabla, are easier to translate to the drumset.

"I created my own method of notation so I can catalog all the compositions that I've learned," Smith continues. "Most of the compositions have rhythms going over the barline that create interesting displacements. If you write them in Western notation, you can't see the logic of the rhythms, which led me to my hybrid notation. My version uses Western note values but no barlines. I place the rhythms on a page in a way that visually represents the concept of the piece. Sometime I recite Konnakol over a groove, and sometimes I play the rhythms note for note on the kit."

Broadening References to Points Unknown

As the world perpetually grows smaller, and differences in time, space, and cultures become increasingly transparent, we may see fusions like Pygmy water music crossed with electronic dubstep, grindcore rhythms Pro Tooled together with Bulgarian women's choirs, or jazz trumpet bred with Tuvan throat singing. But the crossroads of American beat makers and Indian percussion masters remains an incredibly busy intersection for the foreseeable future.

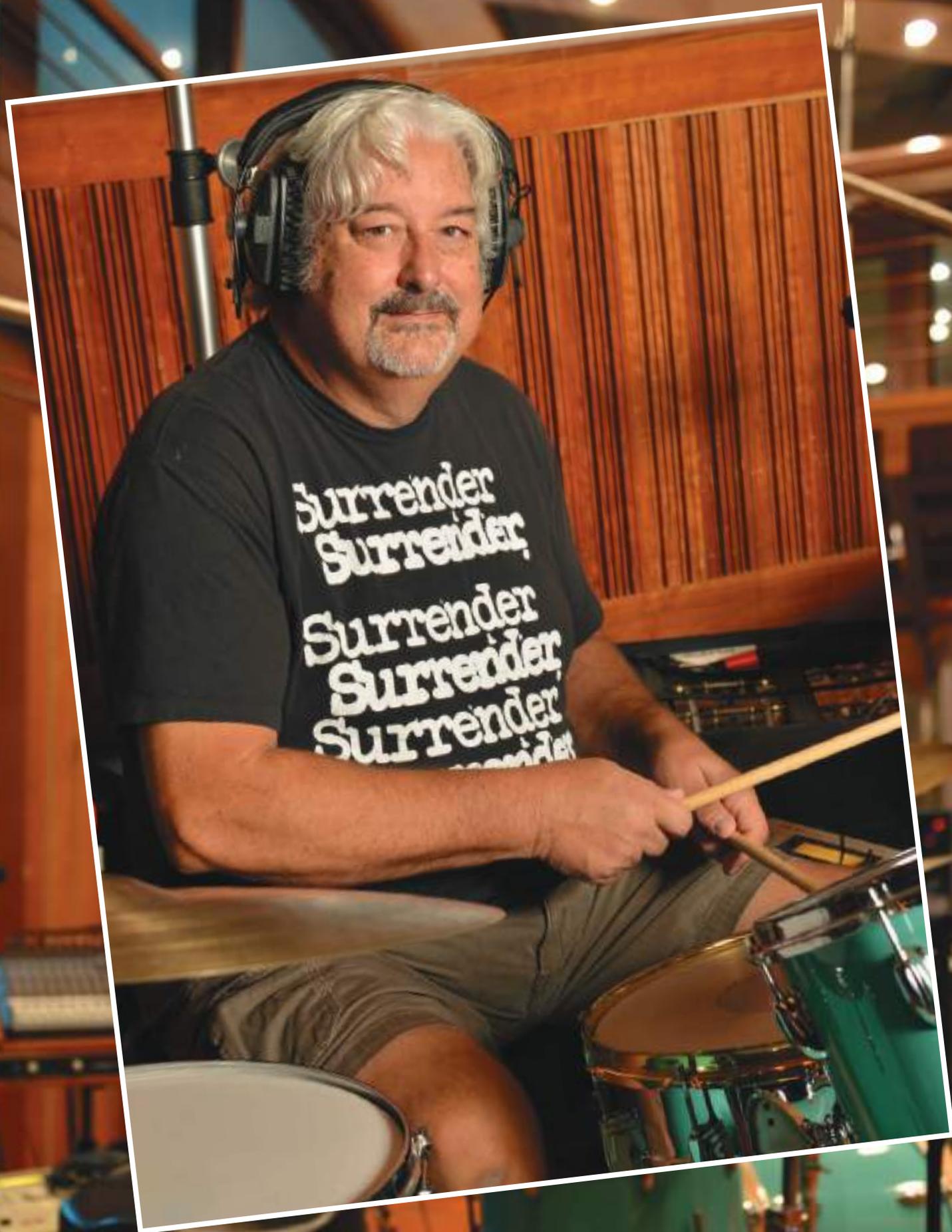
"I love playing with the Indian musicians, so I'm learning their language to communicate with them," Smith says. "I'm learning the exact rhythms and compositions so I can have the communication like I'm having with Zakir. And this gives me a lot of ideas that I can use on the drums, whether the other musicians I'm playing with, such as Mike Stern and Hiromi, know it or not. It's helped me to play long, involved phrases while accompanying people, and it helps with soloing and playing odd times, because I've learned all these rhythmic devices."

"It's given me more of a rhythmic language," Harland adds. "I can suggest more ideas, and it's given me more control. When you open your mind to different rhythmic values as with Indian music, you can cover more territory. If I'm playing a groove in four, I can think of different note permutations, but Zakir thinks of the pulse and transfers a seven or a five within each quarter-note pulse. Listening to him gave me a different way to practice. It broadened my vocabulary, so I can suggest certain things now due to my broader points of reference."

"That idea of the metronome being the final authority... Indian music is about *relative* time. It's always in motion; it breathes along with the people who are playing it. In Indian music you have to bend."

—Sameer Gupta





Greg Morrow

Jason Aldean's **Rich Redmond** sits down with the first-call Nashville drummer to trace his journey to the top of the charts.

Every one of us has favorite players who have left a lasting impression on the way we play, record, and perform. I've been particularly influenced by many of the marquee Nashville studio drummers who came before me, and none more than the great Greg Morrow.

Morrow's discography includes hits for Blake Shelton, Kenny Rogers, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Trace Adkins, Sugarland, Luke Bryan, the Dixie Chicks, and Sheryl Crow, among many others. I first learned of him in 1997, while auditioning for singer Deana Carter, whose album *Did I Shave My Legs for This?* Greg had played on the previous year. The tracks sounded different and fresh for contemporary country, with their inclusion of loops and below-the-belt playing.

Morrow's unique style was my "gateway drug" into familiarizing myself with Nashville drummers, and Greg became a mentor to me. Recently I jumped at the opportunity to discuss his amazing career.

Photos by Rick Malkin





MD: Did you come from a musical family?

Greg: No one in my family made a living playing music, but music was always there, especially gospel. My mom and her parents had a trio that sang in the Assembly of God church, and my dad and his little brother sang bass in a quartet. My grandfather on my dad's side of the family owned the first guitar I ever saw, and he would teach me chords.

MD: Your parents must be proud of how far you've come.

Greg: My mom was always extremely supportive and actually got to come to a show a few weeks back. She was always the band-practice chauffeur. My dad took a while, but before he passed in '98 he said to me that he believed I had made the best decision by coming to Nashville and that I should keep doing what I was doing. It was a great moment of resolution for me.

MD: When and why did you start playing drums?

Greg: I don't ever remember *not* playing. All my earliest memories involved beating

“I went back to Memphis and waited for the call to come for the next tour. It never came. That was a hard lesson on what it really means to be self-employed in the music business.”

on something. I've always believed the ability was a gift from God. I could always hear something, sing it in my head, and then make my hands and feet do it.

MD: Did you take any formal drum lessons?

Greg: My first teacher was Miss Rebecca Doss at the Central Academy of Music in Memphis. I'm sure she was frustrated with me. [laughs] By the time I got involved in lessons, I could already play along with records and play songs with all the right parts. When I played sticking patterns on a pad, it just didn't affect me in the same way.

MD: Did you ever get your reading together?

Greg: I'm not a great reader, but I can read. When I was in my high school band, a friend of mine, Mike Fruitticher, worked with me on reading so that I could audition for the Memphis State University band. I'd learned a snare drum piece for the state solo and ensemble competition. I picked a solo in 5/4 time and I nailed the notes, but I didn't play with any dynamics, so the judges gave me a 2 rating instead of a 1. I added the dynamics and used that same piece to audition for the Memphis State band. The director, Tom Ferguson, gave me a scholarship for \$65. That was about a third of the tuition at the time.

MD: When you moved to Nashville, were you familiar with the styles of top players like Larrie Londin, Eddie Bayers, and Lonnie Wilson?

Greg: I actually knew Larrie Londin well. I

RECORDINGS

Kim Mitchell Ain't Life Amazing /// **Shaver** Tramp on Your Street /// **Lee Ann Womack** Call Me Crazy /// **Chris Knight** A Pretty Good Guy /// **Evanscapps** Last Time /// **Dixie Chicks** Fly /// **World Famous Headliners** World Famous Headliners /// **Sonny Landreth** South of I-10 /// **Ashley Monroe** Like a Rose /// **Mac McAnally** Down by the River

used to work at a drum shop in Memphis called the Drum Stand. My closest thing to a big brother, Dave Patrick, who's a legendary figure in the drum industry and a fantastic drummer in his own right, taught me so much about drums and their construction. We did lots of custom drums for bands like Earth, Wind and Fire and Foreigner.

Larrie and Dave were great friends, and Larrie would do clinics at the store. I actually got to build a few drums for him. I believe we built the drum he used on [Steve Perry's hit] "Oh Sherrie" and the one he used in [Rodney Crowell's country supergroup] the Cherry Bombs. Larrie was a very gracious and giving man. He came to Melody Music Shop in Memphis when I was fourteen years old, and that was the first drum clinic I ever saw. He'd just signed with Pearl Drums and played a blue oyster wood-fiberglass double bass kit. I had never heard of him at that point. He played a wide-open drum solo and brought the house down. He was just ferocious.

MD: You've played with Amy Grant for years. Can you talk about your history with her?

Greg: When I lived in Memphis I was a member of the Christian rock band DeGarmo and Key. We played lots of auditoriums, theaters, and civic centers. At the time it was very edgy—meaning loud—music for the genre. Amy had three studio records out then and wanted to do a live album, so her management hired our band to back her up. We played in Tulsa and Oklahoma City to record a live album, and they ended up doing two separate albums. After that we did a tour to support these albums. Soon after, Amy proceeded to become a superstar, and DeGarmo and Key continued on with our career. Then, in 1988, her management called and asked me to play drums for her new touring band.

MD: Was this a crossroads for you?

Greg: Yes, I had to quit the band I had played in for nine years. It was everything I ever dreamed of: arenas, a tour bus, a drum tech, good money. The tour went on for eighteen months. I met lots of folks, and it changed lots of things for me. After that tour, I went back to Memphis and waited for the call to come for the next tour. It never came. That was a hard lesson on what it really means to be self-employed in the music business. It was a lesson in always being honest with yourself and about knowing your position. Believe me, it translates to studio work as well.

MD: Fast-forward twenty years...

Greg: In 2008 I got a voicemail from Amy herself. She said she'd listened to board

tapes from that tour and it sparked a feeling she hadn't had in a long time. She wanted to put that same band back together to celebrate the release of those live records we'd recorded twenty years earlier. So in 2008 we went out and did twenty-four shows, and I've stayed in her live situation since then. It's an amazing band. There's no drama, just great music and awesome gigs.

MD: Most people move to Nashville and starve for five years. You immediately started playing on hit records.

Greg: I commuted for a couple of years. I rented a room from a friend and put a phone in. If I didn't have anything going on in Memphis, I would hang out in Nashville. I never was much of a networker, but I could answer the phone if someone called.

A producer named Norbert Putnam brought me to Nashville for a few projects and was always very encouraging. He sat my wife, Pam, and me down and said very matter-of-factly, "This is something you can do." In other words, based on what he

heard in my playing, he felt I could attract steady work in Nashville. He did it in a very encouraging and fatherly way. I remember saying to him, "People actually do this all day and get paid *what?*" It was a level that I hadn't experienced before.

Another person that helped in my move to Nashville was Chad Cromwell, who recommended me to producer Scott Hendricks. Chad had played a few showcases with an artist Scott was producing, named Faith Hill, but he still needed to put a touring band together for her. Scott called me in Memphis and asked me to come to Nashville and audition. I drove down, played "Piece of My Heart" and "Take Me as I Am," and they hired me later that day.

One night after a gig Scott told me, "We love having you out here, but you *need* to be playing sessions. The way you play will work in Nashville, and I think people will enjoy it." My wife was thrilled that I finally heard what countless people had told me for years. So we purchased a house in



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Cymbals: Bosphorus

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2. 18" Traditional crash

3. 20" Traditional ride

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Morrow's alternate Zildjian K Constantinople setup includes 14" hi-hats, an 18" crash, a 19" crash/ride, and a 20" Medium Thin High ride.

Sticks: Vater 3A Lite, Power 5A, and Swing models with wood tips; Regal Tip fixed wood-handle wire brushes

Electronics: Akai MPC2000 drum machine (eight-output version); Yamaha Subkick; Beyerdynamic DT-150 headphones; Shure in-ear monitors and Beta 52A, SM7B, SM57, and KSM44A mics

Heads: Remo, including Coated Emperor or Coated CS snare batter and Hazy Ambassador bottom, Smooth White Emperor tom batters and Smooth White Ambassador bottoms, and Smooth White Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter

Hardware: DW 3000 series

Live, Morrow plays a DW Collector's series FinishPly kit in purple onyx silk, including a 5x14 or 6.5x14 snare, a 9x13 tom, a 16x16 or 16x18 floor tom, and a 16x24 bass drum, with 3000 series hardware, including a rail mount for the rack tom and a shell-mount cymbal arm.



“On the studio floor, it’s never about what I do—it’s what we do. Sometimes you do have to step up and guide things along, and how you do it makes the difference.”

Nashville, right before our daughter started kindergarten. Immediately Deana Carter’s “Strawberry Wine” and LeAnn Rimes’ “One Way Ticket” became big hits, and the door was now open. Within three or four months of moving to Nashville, I had played on two number-one songs.

MD: You’ve recorded for country acts, pop acts, singer-songwriters, and bands. Do you have an idea of why people enjoy playing with you?

Greg: People like playing with musicians who listen. The click and the grid are parts of modern music production that aren’t going away anytime soon, but the key is to negotiate peace between those aspects and the other participants on the floor. A good group of session musicians makes an artist feel comfortable. They make the music feel familiar, like putting on an old pair of shoes. Even if it all happens between 10 and 10:45 A.M., we strive to make it feel like we’ve been playing it on stage together

for five years.

On the studio floor, it’s never about what I do—it’s what we do. There are so many other musicians in the studio that have talent and heart. You have to know when to speak and when to listen. Some people want to be the chief all the time, and they aren’t usually fun to be around, though sometimes you do have to step up and guide things along. How you do it makes the difference.

MD: What’s the key to setting up a cue in the studio and playing with clicks?

Greg: I personalize my clicks for each song on the MPC2000. I use shakers and cowbells that sound like a percussionist in the band. There’s a rigid element to it, but it sounds like music and it’s fun to play to. If producers want something personalized for the song, they have to realize it takes time to do that.

Often songwriters come in with loops and we track to that. I really like the MPC because it reads MIDI beat clock, so it will drive from a Pro Tools click. I can even add parts to an existing loop with the MPC. I think it still sounds fresher than all of the canned laptop loops that are happening. Dre likes it.

MD: What’s your attitude toward getting a good studio drum sound?

Greg: You should know how to get the sound you’re hearing in your head. Know what your instrument will do. My Slingerland Studio King kit is my go-to set,

INFLUENCES

Jimi Hendrix Are You Experienced? (Mitch Mitchell) /// **Big Star** #1 Record (Jody Stephens) /// **the Rolling Stones** Hot Rocks (Charlie Watts) /// **the Beatles** 1 (Ringo Starr) /// **Van Duren** Are You Serious? (Hilly Michaels) /// **ZZ Top** Rio Grande Mud (Frank Beard) /// **Sly and the Family Stone** Greatest Hits (Greg Errico) /// **Badfinger** Straight Up (Mike Gibbins) /// **Yes** Fragile (Bill Bruford) /// **Robert Johnson** King of the Delta Blues Singers (none)

For Greg’s comments on all of these albums, see his feature on modern drummer.com.



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and it's a favorite for engineers around Nashville. It's easy to get sounds on. I don't like drums that ring too much, just a punchy fundamental with a nice decay. I use the usual assortment of tape and towels to broaden the palette without changing out the kit. I bring a range of snares that I keep tuned for specific purposes—Ringo here, Bonham there, low and gushy to high and tight. The thing is to spend a minute to cast your sounds to each tune. A change in snare or a more mellow ride cymbal can make a big difference in the overall feel of a track.

MD: You've had a passion for recording your whole life. What are your thoughts on mics, outboard gear, and recording?

Greg: I think you can get trapped in the cycle of chasing your tail and second-guessing every choice you make. I was eleven years old when I did my first session. My band had to record a track to lip-sync to for a TV show. Roland Janes engineered my band at

Greg: I do think it's a skill you need to nurture, because we'll be working on our own a lot more. I like having someone engineer me, because I like to have someone to hang out with! It just feels more like a team effort. I will say, though, that I did an album with Kim Mitchell and Joe Hardy called *Ain't Life Amazing* where we were never even in the same country, and it worked out great. It just feels like a very well-rehearsed performance.

MD: How has Nashville changed since you moved here in 1996?

Greg: There's more music happening here than anywhere else, but there's less than there was ten or twelve years ago. Rosters are smaller; there are fewer records being recorded and way fewer publishing companies and demo sessions.

MD: Lots of young musicians are moving to Nashville now instead of New York or L.A.

Greg: At great expense, many of the music schools have told students, "You're ready. You have achieved. You're certified." That just means they've finished this particular body of work. The work is just beginning when they get to wherever they're going.

MD: Is there any room for young players to do what you do?

Greg: I know there are tons of young guys that have touring gigs and think they're ready to play sessions. But copying someone else's part is a different skill set from conceiving one on your own, under the gun, with time constraints, as someone else's money is being spent. Here's the long and short of it: Instinct is so important as a session player. Experience helps you develop that instinct, and playing anyplace, anytime gives you that experience.

Folks around here have traditionally been very intuitive to BS. You can't force your way into the music business; you have to perform your way in. You have to be willing to face what you don't know

and be ready for opportunities when they come. It took a long time for me to be ready for Nashville. I moved here at thirty-eight years old.

But there's beauty in all of it. I'll do anything that I have time for. I love getting to sub for Jimmy Lester with Webb Wilder. I'll jump in the van and play West Virginia. You should never insulate yourself from experiences available to you. I've been blessed in that work has always come my way. I consider the hundred-dollar club gig as much of a blessing as the double-scale Blake Shelton gig. Faith is strong in my life—childlike faith. I try to honor my creator, and then it's easy to keep everything else in perspective. Music is temporary relief from the trials of life; it's not the be-all and end-all for anything. Music is a *piece* of life.



Sonic Studios. Every garage band in Memphis did their first demo there. We played and sang live with no monitors, and he mixed straight to mono tape. There were probably five RCA 77 mics on the whole session. It sounded amazing, and he never seemed to give it any thought.

There are certain tried-and-true things, like an SM57 will work on every guitar amp and every snare drum, on toms, on most bass drums, and even sometimes as overheads. You may get more overhead sizzle if you use condensers, and you may get more thump if you use a D112 on the kick, but knowing where to put the mic is every bit as important as what mic you use.

MD: Do you think it's important for up-and-coming drummers to be experts at Pro Tools?



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CHAUN DUPRE

The R&B and fusion vet, who's put in time with Macy Gray, Natasha Bedingfield, and Tal Wilkenfeld, says it's all about making meaningful connections—between song sections, between fellow musicians, and between past and future generations of players.

“I set up the 1 the way that I do because this is what the song means to me, but also because I want everybody in on it with me,” Chaun Dupre Horton says. “When we hit that chorus, I want them to be so doggone amped to the song, where it’s like, ‘Yo! That’s why I do what I do.’” Gigs with the likes of Macy Gray, Natasha Bedingfield, Toni Braxton, Colbie Caillat, and Tal Wilkenfeld speak to Horton’s chops as well as his dedication to the music he’s a part of. His playing is, in a word, committed.

When not on the road, Horton is active on the L.A. club scene with his own group, and these days he’s sporting a debut solo album, *The Journal*. Though the disc is completely instrumental, Horton wanted it to be a mix of soulful styles, not just a jazz fusion record. “The whole ‘wow’ factor—that’s cool, they’ll get that,” Chaun says. “But I don’t want to keep them there. This is music, this is a journey. Music comes from improvisation, so if people don’t know what I’m doing, I want to usher them into it safely. I’m going to walk them through it, so once they understand what’s going on, they can groove to it and bob their heads and be into the music and not be wowed by all the doggone notes that I’m playing. They’ll know that the notes have purpose and mean a lot to the song. It’s not aimless playing.”

Horton’s father, Chris, was an organist and choir director at the Power House Church of God in Christ, in Rochester, New York, and his mom sang in the choir. “Both were very instrumental in my musical upbringing,” Chaun says, “from letting me play when the drummer didn’t show up to taking away my playing privileges if I acted up in school.

“As a kid, being the youngest of four, I would always sit behind the drums or watch whoever was playing at the time,” Horton continues. “There was a guy named Barry Dean. He and my dad were best friends, played together all the time, and they were like the top dogs in Rochester. Barry changed a lot of lives. He had a lot of finesse and an incredible pocket.”

Playing in church, Horton learned that drumming was about serving the song. “The chops thing has its place,” he says, “but I like to get into what playing the drums is truly about. It’s like in basketball—on a great team everybody has their role, everyone plays a part. Right now a lot of drummers are interested in playing drums rather than playing music. I like Steve Gadd, Buddy Miles—these are my guys. They play it soulfully. Seeing that Steve Gadd’s from Rochester, that’s my guy. Somebody has to pick up that torch.

“You have a lot of cats that have a lot of doggone chops. It’s fun to watch, but someone like Steve Gadd or Steve Jordan or Questlove—somebody who’s laying it down like that can really mess with your emotions, and that will stay with you forever. That’s why people love their playing. It’s so organic. People are just bobbing their heads.”

After starting on drums in Rochester, Horton was inspired by many of the musicians in Philadelphia, and initially wanted to study at the University of the Arts there. Instead, he opted to take advantage of an opportunity to attend a summer program at Los Angeles Music Academy, where his playing caught the ear of percussionist Mike Shapiro, among others. Shapiro introduced himself to Horton after a student showcase event.

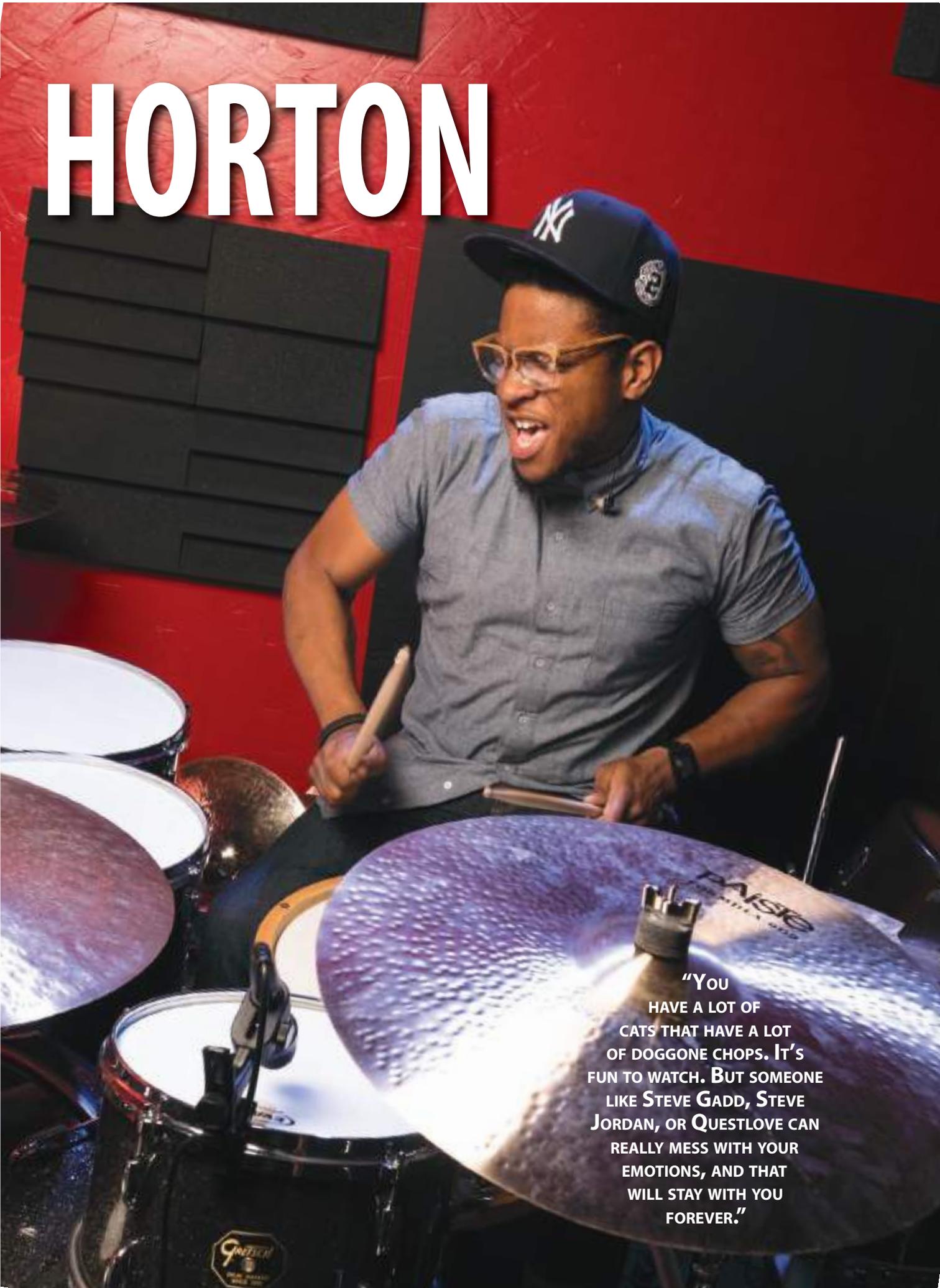
“He starts schooling me in, like, Fred Hammond, John P. Kee, Ricky Dillard,” Horton recalls. “He’s talking about choir music, and I’m like, ‘What do you know about this stuff?’ That kind of softened me up, and we were talking it up like we’d been friends for years. He finally told me, ‘Man, listen: You need to be here, and we’re going to make it real easy for you to get here.’ The next week I received a letter from the school stating that I had a full scholarship, and the week after that I got the acceptance letter.”

The connections Horton made at school led directly to playing with Macy Gray and with Tal Wilkenfeld, and indirectly to his ongoing gig with Natasha Bedingfield. Today Horton continues to find value in the connections he makes playing in L.A. jam sessions, namely at SuperSoul Mondays at Couture in Hollywood, once-a-month Saturdays at the Hotel Cafe, and Tuesday nights at the Salvage Bar. “L.A. is a dope training ground,” the drummer says. “They call it the jam-session scene, and that’s cool, but I call it school. I see a lot of cats coming up in it the same way that I did,



Story by Robin Tolleson • Photos by Alex Solca

HORTON

A man with glasses and a baseball cap is playing a drum set in a studio. He is wearing a grey short-sleeved shirt and a dark blue baseball cap with a white logo. He is holding drumsticks and looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a red wall with black acoustic panels. The drum set includes a snare drum, a tom, and a cymbal. The cymbal has the name 'PAISE' on it.

**"You
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FOREVER."**

making the same mistakes, not really getting what the night is all about. Once you do get it, though, you can catch on to the artist's vision.

"If you're able to really rock it on a night like that," Horton goes on, "you're untouchable. If you can hold down the drum chair, playing with people you don't know... This is the foundation that you need to be successful. You take what you've learned there onto the big stage, and the artist will love you forever."

The Journal grew during jam sessions with keyboardist Davy Nathan. "We have a studio, and we just go in and improv," Chaun explains. "Forty-five minutes later we've got a full song, picking sections that work, choosing this and that." After writing enough material for the album, Horton brought in bassist Eric Ingram and guitarist Michael "Fish" Herring to perform the material live. "You learn the song the way it is, the same way that we normally do with artists, and then you just play. You know the basics—cool, now play what you *feel*. That's all I want to hear. Let's have a conversation. Let's talk. Let's get real intimate.

"I didn't want *The Journal* to be viewed as a fusion album," Horton adds, "so every song on there is ultimately supposed to groove. It has some sort of hip-hop, funk influence on it. I wanted every song to feel good and to have some grit."

Horton chose to open the set with the 7/8 workout "Freedom



Walkers Evolution," a multipart composition featuring a busy main groove dripping in tasty hi-hat barks and an exciting drum break showcasing hair-raising full-set chops. "The premise of that song is to grow and to keep moving forward," Horton explains, "so even though it starts off a little slow and subtle, when you get into the track we're driving hard. I wanted it to have a train type of vibe. Once a train takes off, it's going to take a while for it to slow down—you have to slow down a couple miles prior to your destination. I wanted it to be a statement."

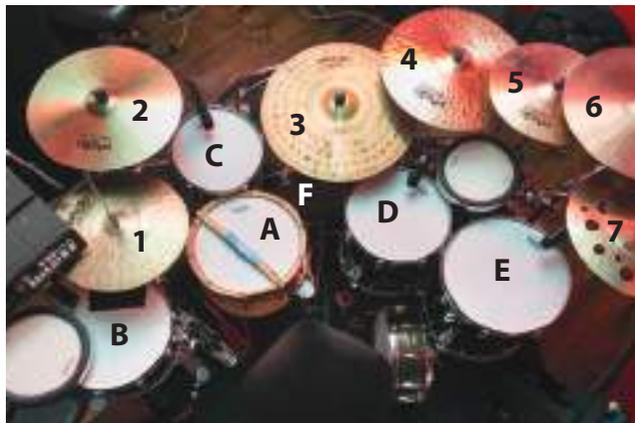
Track two, a spirited tango titled "Arts Deco," keeps up the heat. "I found my sound with that song," the drummer says. "I was like, 'All right, if this is the route that I'm taking, I want to have all of my musician friends playing with me, because I shine the brightest when I play with other people. And that song was the catalyst, because it's very subtle. It doesn't go too far out, though it starts to boil during the second half of the piano solo, when I start playing the snare drum. The water never spills over the pot, because we go right back into the chorus, but the energy is still where the piano solo left off. It's not loud and obnoxious, but it's still cooking."

Horton suggests that the most effective drumming often occurs in the connections between sections. "Cymbal swells, fills, how you build, what fills you choose to set up certain sections—that stuff means a lot," he says. "Playing fills that lead into certain sections... the old cats, man, they knew what they were doing. Leading something right into the chorus? That's heavy. So I figured, if I start off a fill like a chop fill but end it like the old jacks do, everybody will know where the 1 is going to be. Everybody can feel confident coming in on that 1. Because I lead, I drive the bus, you know what I mean? So I'm giving them a fill, and they're going to look at me like, 'Hell, yeah,' because they knew where the 1 was going to be. I'm telling you, the guitarist is going to want to jump off something because that 1 was set up so nicely."

Beyond the notes, Horton identifies strongly with artists that he considers role models, like Soulive, Lettuce, Robert Glasper, and Snarky Puppy. "We're responsible for the cats coming up under us," he says. "So whatever we're putting out there and people are signing off on, they're thinking that's the right way to go about it. We have to be careful, like: What's your purpose? People are watching you, and they want to know how to get to where you are. So we'll have to be better about explaining how, why, and what we're doing, where we're going and why we want to go there."

"Right now music is saturated with chops, speaking from a drummer's point of view. And it's dope, it's nice, but that ain't it. Do something that the old cats would be like, 'Yeah!' Because they're looking at us like, 'Are you guys going to do it? Is music going to be safe in your doggone hands? Are you going to take care of what we've shed blood, sweat, and tears for? Are you going to do it?' And this is me saying 'Hell yeah!'"

CHAUN'S SETUP



Drums: Gretsch USA Custom in twilight glass finish

- A.** 6.5x14 hand-hammered brass main snare with wood hoops
- B.** 5.5x14 or 6.5x14 matching auxiliary snare
- C.** 7x12 tom
- D.** 14x14 floor tom
- E.** 16x16 floor tom
- F.** 16x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Paiste

- 1.** 16" Twenty Masters Collection prototype hi-hats with rivets
- 2.** 18" Formula 602 Modern Essentials crash
- 3.** 22" Masters Dark Crisp or Dark ride
- 4.** 20" Masters Dark crash/ride (with rivets)
- 5.** 16" Masters Dark crash
- 6.** 20" Formula 602 Modern Essentials crash

- 7.** 10" Twenty Custom Collection splash stacked on top of 18" Masters Swish crash

Electronics: Yamaha DTX-MULTI 12 electronic percussion pad and XP100T electronic tom pads

Hardware: Gibraltar G-Class and 6711S bass drum pedals

Heads: Evans G14 Coated snare batters, G12 Coated tom batters, EMAD Heavyweight bass drum batter, and EQ pad

Sticks: Vater Session and West Side models

Percussion: Toca Conga Cajon, cajon, shakers, tambourine, "and whatever else in the vicinity makes noise"



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The Julie Ruin's Carmine Covelli

by Marian Li-Pino

The multitalented drummer with a penchant for science and technology brings us the affirmation we've been waiting for.

Carmine Covelli, drummer for Kathleen Hanna's latest project, the Julie Ruin, has some very important news for us: Drummers are smart. Smarter than everybody else.

Prior to our interview, Covelli did a quick search online to see what sort of information about drummers was available. Among other things, he found a scientific article stating that drummers have intrinsic problem-solving abilities, in addition to scoring higher on IQ tests than the general population. Covelli embodies the essence of these findings, as he is not only a musician but also a performance artist, filmmaker, science and technology aficionado, and general DIY handyman. This eclectic background makes for a broad-thinking drummer. You can hear Covelli tastefully and

dynamically utilizing his experience in theater to infuse danceable rhythm into the Julie Ruin's garage-pop tunes, while mixing in elements of his metal and punk foundation.

MD first spoke with Covelli last year, on the brink of what was to be an extensive series of national and international tours with the Julie Ruin, which Carmine—no surprise—was booking. Unfortunately, due to an ongoing battle with Lyme disease, frontwoman Hanna was forced to cancel the dates and lose some of the momentum the relatively new band had gained after the September 2013 release of its debut album, *Run Fast*. Now that the initial shock has passed, Covelli fills us in on his latest activities and plans for the future.

MD: How did you fill up your time after the cancellation of the tours?

Carmine: When I got the news, we were talking to Kathleen, and each of us felt so bad for her. Is it terrible to cancel two European tours and some really great U.S. gigs? Absolutely. I was the main person dealing with the booking agents, so seven months of a lot of emails and talking about logistics disappeared within a week. But there were still things on the books that I had. I went to Bonnaroo with my friend Bridget as part of her band called the Tender Moments. Then I went to Hamburg for an arts, music, and theater festival. I did five theater shows where I would act and drum.

Then I'm working on *People Are Detectives*, a Web comedy series that I thought of four years ago. They're twelve three-minute-long episodes I filmed with my friend Neal. I initially wrote the first eight episodes back in 2010, and we just shot them a few weeks ago in Queens and Brooklyn. We both play detectives, using the premise that we're always on a stakeout having weird metaphorical, avant-garde, abstract conversations that actual detectives would probably never have. But that's what I imagine detectives talking about when they're in a car after the eighth or twelfth hour of being on a stakeout. If you could just be a fly on the wall and listen to that—that's kind of my starting point when I write the episodes.

I also work a couple of days a week at a children's museum. My main job is to design computer-based interactive exhibits. Sometimes they're mechanical, but I mostly deal with computer stuff. Taking stuff apart, fixing it, repairing it, modifying it.

MD: You weren't kidding—you really can do a lot of things.

Carmine: That's what I'm saying! That's what drummers can do. Even if I don't know what the hell I'm doing, I bet I can figure it out. I'm really good at that stuff, and I love problem solving.

MD: Long-term, would you prefer touring and focusing on drumming, or would you rather



"I'm really good at problem solving.



Even if I don't know what the hell I'm doing, I bet I can figure it out.



That's what drummers can do."



keep busy with several activities?

Carmine: I like doing it all. Do I want to be touring more? Yes, I do. But I also want to have time at home where I can work on art, or building projects, or writing comedy shows. I think it's good to have a bunch of things to do—at least for me that's what works. To keep me interested and engaged and feeling enthusiastic about different things, I need to have different outlets.

MD: How did you become involved with all your projects?

Carmine: It's interesting, because it's hard for me to remember some of the origin stories. It's one of those things where you live in a town long enough and you meet a circle of people that overlaps with another circle of people. To me, theater and the music scene are certainly pretty different, but some of the same people who are in bands also play music for theater, and some of those same people write music for TV stuff or film. It's one of those things where if you're interested in something, you have to make it known.

For a while, when I first moved to New York, I just made myself say yes to a lot of stuff—even if I had no idea what the person was talking about. It's like, "I don't know what that is or if I'll like it, but it sounds like something I'm kind of interested in, so I'll just say yes and see what happens."

MD: It's been said that drummers are the biggest gearheads, because we're interested in how everything sounds and works. Since you're drawn to technology and taking things apart, do you feel that applies to you?

Carmine: Funnily enough, I don't care much about drum gear or guitar pedals at all. I'm more into bass stuff, I think because it's rhythmic. I mostly like writing songs on bass, and I've always been drawn to really bass-heavy bands. I find myself humming those lines in songs more than the vocal melody. I'm like, "Are other people noticing this? That without this bass line the song would not be as good?" I wonder the same thing with drums too. I think people take that for granted—going back to that article about

how great drummers are. People don't quite understand how important drum parts are.

MD: Speaking of songwriting, what is the process for the Julie Ruin? Do you jam, or does one person come up with an idea that the band builds on?

Carmine: We fully have those moments where we're all playing and goofing around and making fun of ourselves, but then some of our songs came out of those jam sessions and we can't make fun of it too much. We'll be playing something and everyone will be shifting around what they're doing and end

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

"I have a 1969 champagne sparkle Gretsch kit that I bought when I was twenty-three years old for \$700," Covelli says. "It's a 20" kick, a 13" rack, and a 16" floor. I love it. I usually bring two snares with me on tour: a 6x14 black wood DW and a 6.5x14 white marine pearl wood 1954 Ludwig. My hardware includes three Tama Roadpro straight cymbal stands, Roadpro snare stands for my snare and my rack tom, a new Pork Pie throne that I'm getting used to, and a DW 5000 kick pedal. My cymbals are 16" and 20" Zildjian A series Medium Thin crashes, a pair of 14" Zildjian hi-hats made up of a K series top and a Z series Dyno Beat bottom, and a 22" Sabian AA El Sabor ride—it's the oddball, but I've had it forever."

up in a totally different, possibly horrific place where we're like, "This sounds terrible and like a song we'd never write." But you've got to just keep going and allow yourself to be a little bit foolish, even if

you're worried that the band in the next room can hear it. To me, it's a good character element; it means you're okay in your own skin and you're confident and competent enough to know that, sure, most of it was bad, but there was a section in there that you really liked.

MD: It's important to push yourself out of your comfort zone and be comfortable in that unknown space.

Carmine: Yeah, then you know what you don't want to do. You can say that you at least did it and tried it. So, that's one way we'll write songs. Then either Kathleen or I will bring in a little looped sample that we pitched down or altered in some way. I brought in about six different loops when we were writing the album, and two or three of them became songs. "Oh Come On" has a loop from an old '60s song, "Just Like Me" by Paul Revere and the Raiders. It's this one little section from the intro that I slowed down and pitched up. It was an eight-second loop that I Frankensteined together into a thirty-second section. It was mostly just about the rhythm.

MD: How was the transition from having the summer off from the Julie Ruin to now playing a bunch of shows again?

Carmine: We're just gearing up for shows now. The summer was pretty great for me. I was building this tiny off-grid workshop cabin thing in upstate New York. That was not part of my plan until the touring got canceled, but things happen and you have to make the best of it. And the free time obviously gave me time to shoot the *Detectives* series, so I feel good with what I accomplished over the summer. I only made it to the beach once, though. Boo. But rehearsals are going well. We are shaking the rust off.

MD: Would you book the tours again?

Carmine: The week after it imploded, I had to take a break from thinking and stressing about it. At the time I didn't want to do it again, but I do enjoy it. I like working out logistics—it's the problem-solving thing. Until it gets beyond what I can handle, I'll probably continue to do it.

MD: Any last words for our fellow drummers?

Carmine: Drummers are smart. Smarter than you.

The advertisement features a central image of Aquiles Priester, a drummer with long dark hair, wearing a brown jacket and holding a large black drum head. The background is a dark blue and black pattern. In the top left corner is the Ahead Armor Cases logo, a shield with the text 'AHEAD ARMOR CASES'. To the right of the logo, the text reads 'THE NEXT LEVEL IN PROTECTION'. Below this, it says 'AHEAD ARMOR PROUDLY WELCOMES' followed by a signature 'Aquiles Priester' and 'AQUILES PRIESTER'. At the bottom left, there is a QR code and the text 'WATCH AQUILES PRIESTER SOLD >>'. At the bottom center, the website 'AHEADARMORCASES.COM' is displayed, and at the bottom right, it says 'DISTRIBUTED BY BIG BANG DISTRIBUTION | 818.727.1127'.



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Brittany Brooks

by David Jarnstrom

She's spent the past few years touring with the R&B stars CeeLo Green and Kelis. Now the drummer says she's more than ready for the next phase of her career.

Drummers for hire typically have to pound the pavement in search of the really good gigs. But every so often, a dream job falls out of the sky when it's least expected. Just ask Brittany Brooks. After spending the bulk of 2010 and 2011 on the road with CeeLo Green, the drummer was playing at her church in Los Angeles when Kelis ("Milkshake," "Rumble," "Acapella") approached her after service and inquired about a drum lesson.

"It was so casual," Brooks says over the phone from her L.A. home, where she's relaxing after a month-long U.K. run with the singer. "Kelis and I went to the same church, and I was teaching her how to play drums. One day she asks, 'Do you want to come on the road with me?' There was no audition, no musical direction given. It was just her, a DJ, and me. It was like being on vacation, because the vibe was so chill and we were in Bali and Singapore and all these exotic places. I was like, 'This is work!'"

The church has long played a serendipitous role in Brooks' career trajectory. After teaching herself a few beats on the blue Tama Rockstar kit that her parents bought her—a reward for building a solid percussive foundation in school band—the Oakland native played her first gigs at Faith Worship Center in nearby Pittsburg, California, when she was just twelve years old. There, she blossomed under the wing of fellow congregant Angel Carrillo, a Filipino percussionist who would accompany Brooks on stage and sneak her into Bay Area clubs to soak up live music and participate in jam sessions. Brittany earned the nickname

Little Sheila E and even became close with her nick-namesake's legendary family, performing at an annual birthday celebration for Shelia's father, Pete Escovedo, at Yoshi's in Oakland.

At age twenty, Brooks enrolled at Musicians Institute in Hollywood, where she honed her craft under Fred Dinkins and learned music theory and how to read and write drum charts. Outside the school she took lessons with gospel giant Chris Coleman and networked. After a year of hitting open jams in L.A., Brooks accepted an offer to join an all-female band that had a residency at the Paris casino and hotel in Las Vegas. "It was good experience," Brooks says. "But I didn't dig the scene, so I came back to L.A. and took some classes in photography and graphic design [at Cal State Northridge]. I wanted to learn another trade—diversify my skills until something popped for my drumming career."

A couple years later, Brooks was tipped off to an audition happening at her alma mater. CeeLo Green was assembling a backing band of women, called Scarlet Fever, to help promote *The Lady Killer*, his soon-to-be hit solo record. "I immediately thought, *This is my gig*," Brooks recalls. "I just had a feeling."

After making a favorable impression on the venerable L.A. talent scout Barry Squire during preliminary tryouts, Brooks was cool and confident during her official audition. While her talent and hard-hitting certitude undoubtedly set her apart from the competition, her choice of eyewear—rhinestone-trim

"Live drummers' playing can sometimes be too busy for the studio. But I can sit in the pocket all day without busting out any fills if I have to."

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Brooks plays DW drums and hardware, including an 8x13 custom Edge main snare tuned high and a 5x14 auxiliary snare tuned low. Her Zildjian cymbals include 17", 18", and 19" K crashes, a 20" K ride, a 14" Oriental China Trash, and a "luxurious" spiral cymbal. Her accessories include wind chimes and a Roland SPD-S sampling pad. Brittany uses Vater Phat Ride drumsticks.

sunglasses—may have sealed the deal. Brooks recalls how Green, an eyewear aficionado, took her aside immediately afterward: "He said, 'Hey, glasses girl, you like shades?' Then he leaned in and whispered, 'I think you just got this gig.' As I was walking out I was passing all these drummers still waiting for their turn, and I was trying not to smile, thinking to myself, *Y'all might as well just go home.*" [laughs]

Two weeks later, Brooks made her debut with Green on *The Tonight Show*. Told to clear her schedule for the next two years, the then-twenty-four-year-old drummer embarked on a whirlwind adventure, performing all over the U.S. and Europe and on nearly every major late-night show. Brooks quickly learned to steady her nerves, and her tempo, playing to massive audiences with a rigid click track blaring through her in-ears. That's not the easiest thing to do when the lights go down and the adrenaline is flowing—especially when opening for Prince at Madison Square Garden or supporting the Foo Fighters at Wembley Arena.

Brooks was initially instructed to replicate the drumming on *The Lady Killer* but was soon granted the freedom to open up the playbook. "CeeLo was like, 'Put some of you into it. Make it feel live. I want this to be a rock show.'"

It was decidedly that at the 2011 Hangout Festival in Alabama, when Green and the band were forced to arrive late due to a flight delay. The Foo Fighters, also on the bill, commandeered Scarlet Fever's gear and tried their best to entertain the restless crowd. "We ran on stage with no time to set up our tracks or get our in-ears right,"

Brooks recalls, "so CeeLo was just like, 'Let's hit it—let's just play live.' And it was the best. He'd yell out songs and stop them halfway through to go into another song. It was like a jam session, old-school rock 'n' roll style. Everybody was just having fun."

When the tour finally ended, Brooks stayed on with Scarlet Fever and hatched new projects, like DDMC ("DJ, drummer, MC"). She also studied up on Abelton software, began scheming a one-woman show with live drums atop sequenced loops—an idea that arose after multiple trips to perform alongside DJs in party-crazed Kazakhstan—and launched her own photography business. The opportunity to team up with an established artist like Kelis proved too good to pass up, however, and Brooks couldn't be happier with her current gig. "[Kelis and I] are like sisters at this point," the drummer says. "It's so comfortable."

Firmly entrenched as a live powerhouse, Brooks is now eager to amass album credits. But in a genre where there's a clear divide between touring and studio players (she's absent on *Food*, Kelis's 2014 release), it's been a challenge. "Live drummers' playing can sometimes be too busy for the studio, but feel I can do both," Brooks says. "I can sit in the pocket all day without busting out any fills if I have to. Cora Coleman-Dunham [Beyoncé, Prince] taught me the importance of being appropriate and intentional—how to play disciplined and strong, to serve the music first and foremost. I just want the beat to feel good, and I want to create a reaction. I want to give people goose bumps."



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The Lindy Beat

The Grooviest of Early Rock 'n' Roll Rhythms

by Rich Redmond

MUSIC KEY	
H.H.	✕
S.D.	●
B.D.	●

The classic rhythm we're exploring this month has weathered the test of time since first appearing in the early twentieth century. The pattern is associated with the jazz dance called the Lindy hop, which originated in Manhattan's Harlem neighborhood in the 1920s and was a very popular form of dance during the swing era of the late '30s and early '40s.

The Lindy drumbeat, which came to be one of the most common feels in early rock 'n' roll, evolved out of the swing shuffle and features strong snare accents on beat 2, the "&" of 2, and beat 4. You can hear this infectious groove everywhere from surf rock to the Foo Fighters, and it can be played straight or with a triplet-based shuffle feel. Practice the following examples using both interpretations.

The first three patterns are one bar each, but we jump into two-bar options at Example 4. Apply cymbal variations to each groove to create different feels, and experiment by applying the ride patterns to crashes, toms, rims, and cowbells. Commit to mastering the Lindy beat, and you'll be tapping into the roots of rock 'n' roll. Enjoy!

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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.

For a video demo of these beats, visit moderndrummer.com.



Tony Williams' Fives

How to Master Fast Five-Note Ride Patterns

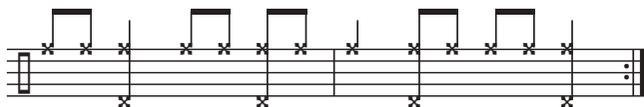
by Greg Sundel

MUSIC KEY

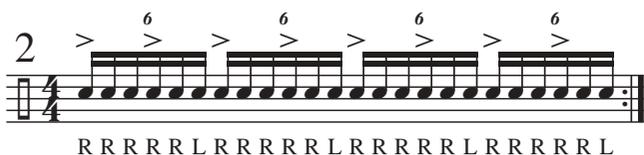
- R.C.
- S.D.
- H.H.
- w/foot

No matter what technique you use, ride patterns containing five notes in a row are tough to execute. Jazz legend Tony Williams pushed the ride pattern beyond all limits, often playing groups of five at extremely fast tempos. To attain this phrasing, I suggest using the whipping Moeller method to gain some momentum for the last two notes.

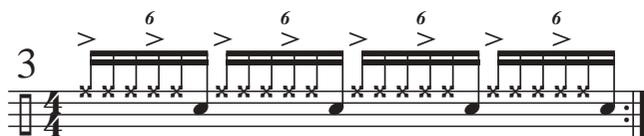
Williams varies his pattern based on the context. Here's my interpretation of one way he phrased fives on the ride cymbal within a jazz groove. Shoot for tempos between 300 and 370 bpm.



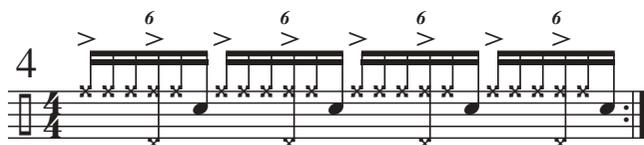
To get a feel for the Moeller whip within the fives, practice it on a snare or pad. Use 16th-note triplets, and accent the start of each triplet; those are the key points where momentum is needed. Your goal is to develop this phrasing into a reflex.



After getting a feel for the fives, move your right hand to the ride cymbal.



If you play the same pattern slowly and lightly and add the hi-hat on the offbeats, you get a cool groove that sounds great during a ballad.



Now check out some of Williams' playing with Miles Davis on the album *Miles in Berlin*, which opens with the classic tune "Milestones" at an insanely fast pace. The band starts at about 350 bpm, but Tony ramps it up to about 360 bpm after the first few measures! Here's a version of his fives for practice. Start at around 280 bpm and work your way up as you get comfortable. Good luck.



Greg Sundel has performed or recorded with Billy Corgan, Lauryn Hill, and Joshua Redman. His book *Drum Your Way* is available through his website, gregsundel.com.



Consecutive Flams

Part 3: Inverted Motion

by Bill Bachman

In the third installment of this series, we're going to modify the exercise by removing one tap from the transitions. Instead of using a flam accent to shift from one hand to the next, we'll use an inverted flam tap.

The inverted flam tap requires the Moeller whipping motion in order to transition from a low tap to a high accent. This is normally done by the wrist with an upstroke, but at faster tempos there's too little time, so we'll need to replace the wrist motion with an arm motion in order to whip the stick in a hurry. It gets even trickier when we have multiple accents, where we'll need to whip into a series of free strokes. Using the new transitions, we'll cover the variations of the exercise, first with the accented flams spaced out and then with the accented flams adjacent.

The first variation (Example 1) has a tap between the accents. The biggest challenge is getting the stick up high to attack the first accent. Since the same hand plays a low tap immediately before the accent, there's very little time to lift the stick (at most tempos). This is where the Moeller whip stroke comes in to replace the wrist motion. In what I call the Moeller upstroke or whip prep stroke, the forearm pumps up and down quickly in order to achieve the stick height necessary for the accent. It may feel a bit herky-jerky, but the upper arm and

shoulders must engage to quickly throw the forearm up and immediately back down. The little bit of work done by the upper body is what allows the hand to stay completely relaxed as the stick gets whipped to the "up" position to play the next accent.

In most applications, the Moeller whip stroke is used for isolated accents in a "whip and stop" or "whip and flop" motion, but in these exercises it's more of a "whip and dribble" action. When there are two or more accents, it's crucial to whip into a free stroke that rebounds all the way back up to the same height for the next accent.

From there, be sure that the last accent is played as a concise downstroke. Try to stop the drumstick pointing toward the head, as that will be the key to initiating a stream of grace notes and/or taps at a low stick height. The low taps should be played as a smooth and even flow of 16th notes using plenty of finger control.

As with all of the exercises in the series, it's a good idea to separate the hands and isolate each section of the exercise. Put your practice pad on a couch cushion (or any quieter surface), and then play the accents to either side on the couch, with the low taps on the pad. When the exercise is played perfectly, you should hear a consistent stream of low 16th notes being played on the pad.

1

IR L rL R IR L rL R IR L IR L rL R rL R IR L IR L rL R rL R
rL R IR L rL R IR L rL R rL R rL R IR L IR L rL R rL R IR L IR L

6

IR L IR L IR L rL R rL R rL R IR L IR L IR L rL R rL R rL R
rL R rL R rL R IR L IR L IR L rL R rL R rL R IR L IR L IR L

8

IRL IRL IRL IRL rLR rLR rLR rLR IRL IRL IRL IRL rLR rLR rLR rLR
rLR rLR rLR rLR IRL IRL IRL IRL rLR rLR rLR rLR IRL IRL IRL IRL

6

IRL IRL IRL rLR rLR rLR IRL IRL IRL rLR rLR rLR IRL IRL IRL
rLR rLR rLR IRL IRL IRL rLR rLR rLR IRL IRL IRL

A great variation for this exercise is to play a flammed diddle (also known as a cheese) on the accent. Be sure to accent both beats of the diddle and play them precisely—don't crush them.

2

1 R L r L R 1 R L r L R 1 R L 1 R L r L R r L R r L R 1 R L 1 R L r L R r L R r L R

r L R 1 R L r L R 1 R L r L R r L R r L R 1 R L 1 R L r L R r L R 1 R L 1 R L

1 R L 1 R L 1 R L 1 R L r L R r L R r L R r L R 1 R L 1 R L 1 R L 1 R L r L R r L R r L R r L R

r L R r L R r L R r L R 1 R L 1 R L 1 R L 1 R L r L R r L R r L R 1 R L 1 R L 1 R L 1 R L

1 R L 1 R L 1 R L r L R r L R r L R 1 R L 1 R L 1 R L r L R r L R r L R 1 R L 1 R L 1 R L 1 R L

r L R r L R r L R 1 R L 1 R L 1 R L r L R r L R r L R 1 R L 1 R L 1 R L 1 R L

Now take out the taps between the flams so that they're adjacent. All of the rules from before apply, but there are new challenges in flam consistency and in maintaining the strength of the accents throughout the series of flams. Since the accents are strung together, some finger control will be necessary to aid the wrists so that the accents don't decrescendo.

If the first flam in a series is played accurately, generally the rest will follow suit. So it's key to coordinate the initial accent with the series of low taps. The last accent must be played with a downstroke for the maximum accent/tap differential. Be sure to use a metronome, tap your foot, and count quarter notes out loud throughout the exercises.

3

1 R L r L R 1 R L r L R 1 R 1 R L r L r L R 1 R 1 R L r L r L R

r L R 1 R L r L R 1 R L r L r L R 1 R 1 R L r L r L R 1 R 1 R L r L r L R

1 R 1 R 1 R 1 R L r L r L r L r L R 1 R 1 R 1 R 1 R L r L r L r L R

r L r L r L r L R 1 R 1 R 1 R 1 R L r L r L r L r L R 1 R 1 R 1 R 1 R L

1 R 1 R 1 R 1 R L r L r L r L r L R 1 R 1 R 1 R 1 R L r L r L r L R

r L r L r L r L R 1 R 1 R 1 R 1 R L r L r L r L r L R 1 R 1 R 1 R 1 R L

Finally, let's add the cheese for a fun variation.

1 R L rL R 1 R L rL R 1 R 1 R L rL rL R 1 R 1 R L rL rL R
 rL R 1 R L rL R 1 R L rL rL R 1 R 1 R L rL rL R 1 R 1 R L

1 R 1 R 1 R L rL rL rL rL R 1 R 1 R 1 R L rL rL rL rL R
 rL rL rL R 1 R 1 R 1 R L rL rL rL R 1 R 1 R 1 R L

1 R 1 R 1 R 1 R L rL rL rL rL R 1 R 1 R 1 R 1 R L rL rL rL rL R
 rL rL rL rL R 1 R 1 R 1 R 1 R L rL rL rL rL R 1 R 1 R 1 R 1 R L

1 R 1 R 1 R L rL rL rL R 1 R 1 R 1 R L rL rL rL R 1 R 1 R 1 R L
 rL rL rL R 1 R 1 R 1 R L rL rL rL R 1 R 1 R 1 R L rL rL R 1 R 1 R L

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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Odd Groupings Over Samba

Combining Concepts for Creative Coordination Development

by Mike Johnston

MUSIC KEY	
S.D.	
B.D.	
H.H.	
w/foot	

What do you do when you have two things in the refrigerator or pantry that taste awesome by themselves? You put them together! You start simple, combining things like peanut butter and jelly, eggs and bacon, milk and cereal. Then you branch out as you become more comfortable. Throw a can of mixed vegetables into your chili. Put Nutella and bananas on your peanut butter sandwich. Mix tuna fish into your macaroni and cheese. Not every combination will be a home run, but experimenting is the key.

The same thing holds true with drumming. At first, you learn one subject at a time, like basic grooves. Then, a bit down the line, you learn some fills. Then you decide to work on your hand speed, so the grooves and fills get put on hold for a bit, but eventually you realize that you can mix them all together by creating 32nd-note-based beats that push your hand speed, while you play a tasty fill every eighth bar. This lesson is all about mixing together two great drumming ingredients, the samba foot ostinato and odd groupings, to create a delicious recipe for creative independence.

The samba ostinato is a one-beat loop with the bass drum on the downbeat and the "a," and the hi-hat on the "&." That pattern needs to be rock solid before you can try to play the odd groupings on top of it. I suggest first taking a little test. Get your feet going with the samba foot ostinato at 70 bpm, and then play 16th notes on the snare drum as single strokes, double strokes, single paradiddles, and inverted paradiddles. Then try alternating flams, flam taps, and syncopated accent patterns. If you feel comfortable with all of these, you're ready to start tackling the spicy meatballs of odd groupings over the samba.

The odd groupings that we'll be using in this lesson (threes, fives, and sevens) are phrased for the hands only, since the feet will be busy playing the samba ostinato. Before you start mixing the groupings, you need to be able to play each one individually. I've put each grouping in its respective time signature (3/4, 5/4, and 7/4), so you don't have to worry about the over-the-barline anticipation that occurs when you play them in 4/4.

The grouping of three is played using an RLL sticking with an accent on the R.

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

The grouping of five is played using an RLRL sticking with an accent on each R.

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

The grouping of seven is played using an RLRLRL sticking with an accent on each R.

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

Once you can play each of the odd groupings by itself over the samba, it's time to start mixing them up. Here are four options.

3-3-5-5

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

3-5-3-5

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

7-3-3-3

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

3-5-7-5

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

This final grouping takes fifteen quarter notes to cycle back to the downbeat, so I've written it as three bars of 4/4 and one bar of 3/4.

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

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

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

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

Check out a video demo of these beats at modern drummer.com.

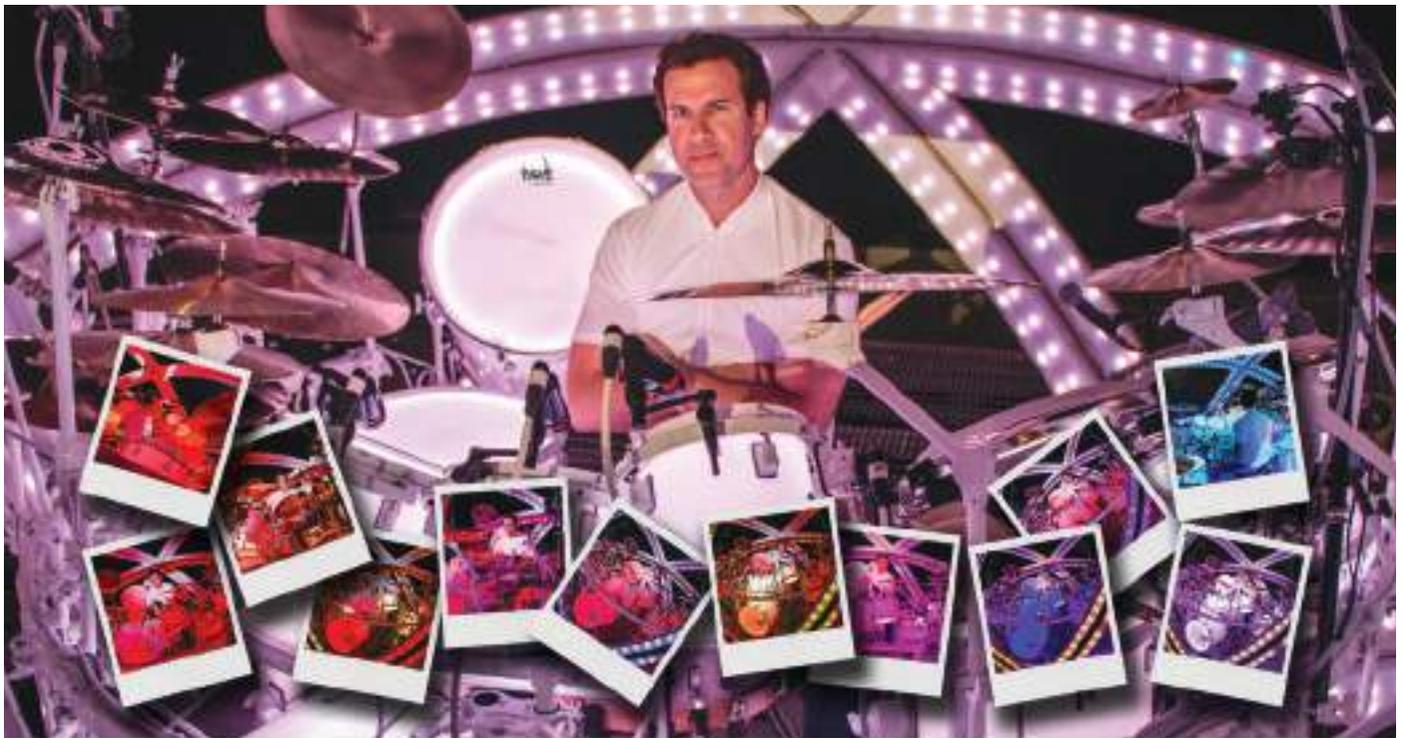
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Creating Opportunity

Five Key Components for the Working Drummer

by Russ Miller

This month's column is about creating opportunity for yourself. Our quotation by the American author H. Jackson Brown Jr. describes the idea beautifully. Many drummers ask me about opportunity. Sometimes the question is "How do you get gigs?" Or it's "How do I break in?" As we discussed in earlier columns, there's not one path to success. We can, however, work on the building blocks of developing a career in playing music.

"Opportunity dances with those already on the dance floor."

—H. Jackson Brown Jr.

I follow the adage that luck is preparation meeting opportunity. It's our job to prepare (check out my column in the November 2014 issue for more on preparation). It's also our job to create opportunity for ourselves. We can't sit around waiting for things to fall into our lap, because they rarely do. Opportunity needs certain elements to come into existence. There are some things that we have no control over, but we can create many aspects of opportunity for ourselves. And we can set opportunity in motion by recognizing its elements. Let's talk briefly about five of them.

Be Known

Something has to pull you out of the crowd of players. I got gigs with several visible artists when I was living in Miami in the early '90s. People started to say, "He's the guy who plays with so-and-so." Then Yamaha approached me, when I was twenty-one years old, to become a regional endorser. Then I became "the kid who plays with so-and-so and has a deal with Yamaha." This helped me gain notoriety in the local scene. As I reached other achievements, it would be, "He's the guy who played on that record," or "I saw him with so-and-so on tour," or "I have his book." Getting on a big gig definitely helps. (My friend Zoro wrote an entire book about this, fittingly called *The Big Gig*.) An international-level job will get you more visibility than anything else. Major recordings do this as well, even if you're not physically on the tour. (More on that later.) In a nutshell: More visibility creates more possibilities for opportunity.

Show What You Can Do

People need to have an experience with your playing; they need to be moved. Maybe this happens by playing great songs with your band at gigs, or maybe it's from an incredible solo you played on a record. You could also move people with your feel or your unique approach when they see you perform. This is where the constant development of your drumming comes into play. There has to be an experience that makes people think, *Wow, that was awesome!*

Several players have said to me, "I've done a bunch of gigs, but I don't seem to be moving forward in my career." These are the folks

that, when I see them play, it's rather uneventful. They could play an entire show, and you'd never think, *That drummer is killing it tonight!* It's not about tricks or gimmicks, although those can garner attention and buzz in the short term. It's more about getting people to experience something that touches them. We need them to come back for more than tricks.

Create Interest for Your Fans

This is where discussions of being a great musician enter the equation. You may be able to gain some visibility from a gimmick or trick. But in the long term there has to be something that keeps people interested in coming back. Creating great musical moments during gigs is one way to get them to return so they can see what happens next. If you only have tricks, you'll just have to come up with new and more amazing versions of them. And once people have seen your gimmick a few times, they'll be over it. How many times would you go see a magician if he or she did the same tricks at every show? Look at Criss Angel. He constantly has to top himself by creating bigger and more amazing illusions. But when I go to see my favorite bands, it's to hear awesome songs or to check out how they might have changed the arrangements from the last time I saw them. I don't go to see if they have the same lights as the last tour.

Getting fans to return is very important. You can't build a base if you're constantly losing old fans. I've been to many shows and left thinking, *I wouldn't pay to see that again.* That can be a disaster to an artist's career. But then there are the dedicated fans for bands like Rush, which can fill arenas without a new album to promote, or James Taylor, who tours endlessly but hasn't done a record of new songs in years.

Keeping your fans' interest is the key to having them come back again and again. Do this in your drumming, but don't rely on tricks and gimmicks. Most drumming trickery is amazing only to other drummers. But drummers aren't usually the ones who will be hiring you—other instrumentalists are. Focus on playing the best music possible.

Allow People to Experience Your Playing

In the December 2014 issue of *MD*, I wrote about the importance of documentation. The history of everything we know lives on in its documentation. If something is never documented, its lessons, influence, and inspiration are gone forever. We can log snapshots of time in our memory, but to be publicly remembered or recognized, we must be documented.

What does this mean for your drumming career? You need to have some type of pitch kit out there doing work for you when you can't be there in person. A pitch kit is a clear example of your product. People need to hear you, see you, and understand what kind of player you are. I'm not talking about making a formal press kit, although you should have one of those as well. I'm talking about creating a catalog of material that documents your playing and that works for you 24/7, all over the world.



You don't want just the people who attend your gigs to know what you can do. That total number is very small in the grand scheme of things. Plus, anyone who regularly attends your gigs already knows what you can do. You've closed that deal; you just have to keep those people coming back to your shows. What we are looking to achieve with documentation of your playing, be it videos or audio recordings found online, is to obtain *new* fans from around the globe.

Represent Yourself in the Best Way Possible

Before you dive headfirst into documentation, it's important to make sure your playing is up to the proper level. This is one thing that seems out of whack in today's drumming scene. YouTube has created a global outlet for documentation, and it's an incredible asset for all of us. But I see a lot of drummers posting things to YouTube, like practice sessions or playing along with someone else's record, that may be doing more harm than good. Remember that the whole world can see these clips. If the videos look bad, sound bad, or aren't your best work, they're still part of your pitch

kit. I encourage you to always put your best out there. You want your current and potential fans to see the best of what you can do.

Hold your documentation in high regard. Get some basic audio gear, like a decent stereo mic, to ensure that your videos sound good. And make sure you're always playing at your highest level on your recordings. A lot of artists don't like being filmed at shows because they can't control the product and it ends up being visible to many people. Documentation that looks or sounds horrible can affect your professional status, so take it seriously. It requires more effort to create high-quality documentation, but you never know what opportunities could result from them. As the advice columnist Ann Landers wrote in one of her articles, "Opportunities are usually disguised as hard work, so most people don't recognize them."

Russ Miller has played on recordings with combined sales of more than 26 million copies. His versatility has led him to work with a wide range of artists, including Ray Charles, Tina Turner, Nelly Furtado, and Andrea Bocelli. For more info, visit russmiller.com.



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The PSM 300 line of personal monitor systems features clear and precise 24-bit audio and custom mix controls. There are two offerings: an easy-to-use model designed for entry-level users (P3TR112GR) and a professional system (P3TRA215CL) with advanced features. P3TR112GR systems come with a set of SE112 sound-isolating earphones, and SE215 sound-isolating earphones are included with the P3TRA215CL.

Shure has also added three entry-level products to its line of SRH headphones. SRH144 semi-open headphones are said to deliver natural sound reproduction with extended range and enhanced high-frequency response. (List price: \$39.) The SRH145 model is said to provide deep, rich bass with a full-range sound and has a closed back for sound isolation. (List price: \$39.) SRH145m+ headphones come with a remote and mic and are compatible with Apple iOS devices. (List price: \$49.)

shure.com



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hammerax.com



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Designed with musicians in mind, the TCM9361 snap-on cover allows you to mount an iPad Air to mic stands and drum hardware. (Similar models for other tablets, including the standard-size iPad, are also available.) Each TCM9361 ships with a round mounting clamp, a 360-degree ball joint, a mounting post, and a prop-up feature for placing the iPad Air on flat surfaces. The ball joint allows for easy rotation and tilt. List price: \$69.99.

onstagestands.com

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Alpine's new compact storage system for its popular MusicSafe Pro earplugs has a wrist strap and can hold up to three sets of dB filters and three earplugs. The MusicSafe Pro is ideal for musicians and comes with three filter sets that offer different levels of sound reduction while maintaining excellent audio quality.

americanmusicandsound.com



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Model TB-XS is a set of three temple blocks designed for players who don't need a full-size set. The blocks are handcrafted in the United States using high-quality Baltic birch and New England maple components. Each block is tuned so that the set has optimum pitch contour. Included with every set is a quick-release multi-clamp to mount the blocks on any vertical stand. The set of three blocks lists for \$260, and an option that includes a stand (TB-XST) lists for \$342. The stand is also available separately for \$110.

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sugarpercussion.com



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Blending the clear, precise cut of birch with the deep, subsonic low end of bubinga, Tama has released new limited edition Starclassic Performer kits. The four-piece Rock kit comes with a 24" bass drum and has a classic one-up/two-down tom configuration. The Exotix Quilted is offered as four- and five-piece kits, and the EFX has a 20" bass drum.

New to the Silverstar line are compact four-piece jazz kits, and the Imperialstar series is now available in a seven-piece double bass configuration.

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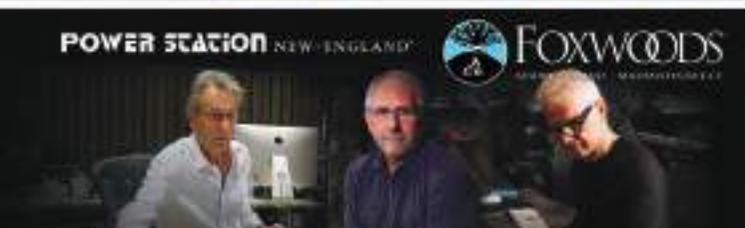
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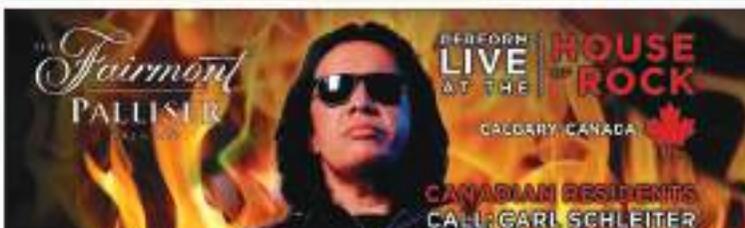
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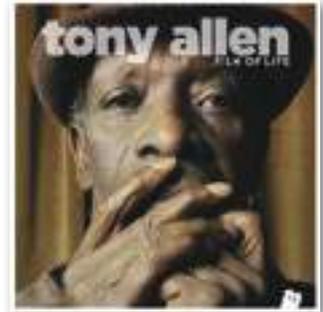
-Billy Amendola
(Modern Drummer Magazine)



Tony Allen *Film of Life*

Decades removed from his career-making years with Nigerian singer/activist Fela Kuti, a legend of funk continues his postmillennial winning streak.

Now well past age seventy, Afrobeat maestro Tony Allen is enjoying the kind of late-career success that eludes so many musicians. He's somehow at the apex of his funkiness, as his ever more relaxed touch deepens instead of loosens his groove, and he's been making regular trips to the States to perform, with *Film of Life* and its predecessor, 2009's *Secret Agent*, standing tall among his finest work. *Film of Life* brings some new vibes to the dance party, augmenting its Afrobeat horns with more modern keyboard sheen than found on the guitar-driven *Secret Agent*, and welcoming guest Damon Albarn, whose two cowriting forays with Allen add melodic freshness. Though there's a chilled-out feeling here, both in Allen's flowing rhythms and the songs they animate, a few perky numbers offer contrast. "African Man" is a good example, with a tight kick-snare-hats beat that's classic Allen, and fills that rumble around the drums in unexpected ways. (JazzVillage) **Michael Parillo**



Owen Howard *Drum Lore Vol. 2: More Lore*

Great music is born from many different motivations. This leader was inspired to record after being socked by a dreadful faux pas.

While serving as an artist-in-residence at a summer music workshop, Owen Howard presided over a composition seminar. A young student queried as to why, being a drummer, Howard was present. (Calm yourselves, *MD* readers!) Unbruised, Howard proceeded to record an album featuring compositions by famous drummers. This companion sequel volume—his sixth album as a leader—features vibrant tunes written by Joe Chambers, Victor Lewis, Paul Motian, Philly Joe Jones, and Tony Williams, as well as Owens' own impressive compositions. Delivering a tremendous drumming performance, Howard shows a strong swing, clean chops, impeccable taste, and a sophisticated melodic approach that supports and elevates song structures. Pianist Frank Carlberg, bassist Johannes Weidenmueller, and saxophonists Adam Kolker and John O'Gallagher are consummate throughout. Thank goodness that oh-so-green student shot off his mouth. (Brooklyn Jazz Underground)

Jeff Potter



Marco Minnemann *EEPS*

Yet more evidence of an uncanny ability to balance pop smarts and progressive arts.

Those looking for fuzoid lunacy and beast-mode drumming will get their fix on this brand-new solo recording—perhaps more than they bargained for, with Marco Minnemann playing all the instruments and throwing in some of his own vocals as well. The second-nature maneuvering through the odd times of "Live Ghost" sits happily alongside the mid-tempo rock/pop beats of "Obvious" in a convincing fashion, as the drummer changes his approach and kit sound to suit the material. Check out his sensitive accompaniment underneath the guitar work on "Sushi Cat Doll," before the track takes a left turn into some trashy, dotted funk. Minnemann's tasty four-on-the-floor splash fills over the ending of "The Split" and double-time rhythmic jabs on "Dead Ghost" recall his fierce Aristocrats trio project, another no-rules situation where he can blow it all out but still make it sound just right. (lazybones.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

Ali Jackson *Amalgamations*

There's always room for classic jazz in the modern era—when it's this good.

From the fedora, tie, and vest he wears on the cover of *Amalgamations*, you might assume Ali Jackson is about to drum us down jazz's memory lane—and you'd be right. Accompanied by Wynton Marsalis and Omer Avital, among others, Jackson provides old-school thrills and exacting drumming discipline. After years with the Lincoln Jazz Center Orchestra, Jackson is beautifully tone-ful, as in the suave cymbal work of "Inner Urge." He gets more from a simple brush flick than most get with a full-bore drum roll. Though this immaculate music resides dead center in the safety zone, Jackson's beautiful drumming is a lesson in swing sustainability, like Jo Jones and Gus Johnson mixing it up with the Duke. (Sunnyside)

Ken Micallef



Jimmy Cobb *The Original Mob* Louis Hayes *Return of the Jazz Communicators*

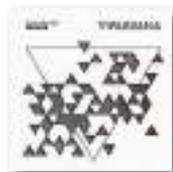
A second wave of releases from the young Smoke Sessions label gifts us with two offerings led by elder statesmen of jazz drumming.

Jimmy Cobb and Louis Hayes are undeniable architects of modern straight-ahead swing whose extensive discographies read like a jazz history lesson. Cobb cooks at a spry eighty-five, and youngster Hayes is hot at seventy-seven. Plain and simple, these gentlemen are still sounding great. As always, Cobb swings a band nice and strong, sans unnecessary clutter or flash. He's got that smooth cymbal ride, relaxed even under the up-tempo pressure of "Lickety Split," on which he also trades some fierce fours. Bassist John Webber, guitarist Peter Bernstein, and star pianist Brad Mehldau serve the classic sound with depth and ease.

Hayes' set, recorded live at the label's mothership New York club, Smoke, delivers a decidedly different sound, largely due to Steve Nelson's exhilarating vibraphone work. The mallet man expertly strikes a perfect give-and-take with pianist David Bryant, while tenor saxophonist Abraham Burton blows soulfully over the swinging team of Hayes and bassist Dezron Douglas. Hayes declares a commanding drive, then mixes things up to kick the



solists up a notch or three. And on "Soul-Leo," he serves up some of the "soul jazz" drumming that he helped trademark alongside Horace Silver. Gather 'round, young drummers, listen and learn. (Smoke Sessions) **Jeff Potter**



Eric Harland Voyager Vipassana
A collection as genre melding and resourceful as we've come to expect from this cutting-edge drummer.

Eric Harland's playing with Charles Lloyd, Zakir Hussain, Jason Moran, and many others is consistently rich and progressive. The drummer inhales and exhales organically in his accompaniment here, whether burning the open fusion of "Raghavan," exploring intricate stickings within a torrid tempo, dropping hip-hop on "VI," or dishing pointed rim explorations on "Eminence." *Vipassana* missteps about halfway through, with the overboiled rock of "Normal," but soon returns to its flowing, spiritual, soulful core. Harland maintains a missile-projecting attitude throughout the album, with one song morphing into the next, as melodies soar and his drumming grows from impassioned to fiery. (Eland Productions) **Ken Micallef**



Simon Barker Descalzo
A jazzier answers the call of the wild.

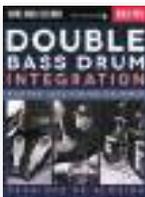
It's difficult to determine if this five-track release by Australian educator, student of traditional Korean music, and jazz stalwart Simon Barker is mind-boggling or simply ominous. Perhaps it's both. On the opener, "Little Drum Tune," two distinct patterns—one an odd-time (mostly) ostinato rhythm played on a log drum, the other a variation of such tapped out across the toms—intermingle and diverge. Limb independence, and knowing when to break with this concept, is key to the track's success, while the combined impact of compositional pacing, subtle hand gong work, and Japanese flute on "Budd March" and "Jeju Tides" is nearly overwhelming. Not for the squeamish. (Kimnara) **Will Romano**

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MULTIMEDIA

RATINGS SCALE



●●●●● **Double Bass Drum Integration**
 by Henrique De Almeida

With so many books covering double bass technique on the market, it's refreshing to come across one that keeps it simple and focuses on the most important aspects. Henrique De Almeida, who wrote this as a method book for his Berklee teaching program, has constructed an excellent intermediate/advanced workout that begins with developing a strong metric timetable with the feet before stepping into more complex drumset patterns. Duple and triple foot exercises lead to more involved triplet patterns and eventually double strokes. Things get heavy when "false triplets" and quads enter the equation. *Double Bass Drum Integration* closes with a variety of power fills and the insane "Paradoubles" étude to challenge your progress. The concise sixty-page book includes inspiring online audio clips that clearly represent the user-friendly exercises. (\$19.99, Berklee Press) **Mike Haid**

and patterns used to play the cajon. Finger rolls borrowed from darbuka, tabla, bongo, conga, and even classical guitar all make their way into this repertoire. The DVDs are also a great reference for those unfamiliar with the complex counting patterns of flamenco. With these books and DVDs, De Gregorio has created enlightening materials for the serious percussion student to shed. More than anything, the resources serve as great inspiration for your cajon studies. (€30 each, cajongd.com) **Matt Teitelman**



●●●●● **Cajón Power** by Marco Fadda

●●●●● **El Cajón Flamenco**

by Paquito González
 It's hard to be a drummer these days and not fall in love with the

cajon. This simple instrument acts as an entire percussion section, complete with a built-in throne. For the past decade, DG De Gregorio has focused on manufacturing high-quality Spanish cajons. Recently, in association with Mel Bay, the company released two instructional books with accompanying DVDs to help us make the most of these versatile instruments. *Cajón Power* and *El Cajón Flamenco* are full of exercises and charts that allow you to follow along with the included video lessons. The lion's share of the content is contained within the DVDs, where European percussion powerhouses Marco Fadda and Paquito González lead us through a variety of techniques



●●●●● **Afropop Play-Along for Drummers**
 by Maciek Schejbal

The content of this package centers on music from an album that the author, Drummers Collective instructor Maciek Schejbal, produced and mixed with the Cameroonian singer Kaïssa. Since he had access to the masters, Schejbal was able to open up the original recording sessions and remove the drum tracks to create versions for drummers to jam to. Nine songs are included, in versions with or without a click, and five of the songs come with a mix featuring reference drums.

The sixty-four-page book includes explanatory text for each song, plus a few preparatory exercises. The beats aren't easy, but the music is infectious, and the grooves, once you get a handle on them, are a ton of fun to play. "Eyoum" features a deceptive mangambeu groove that emphasizes the middle note of the triplet, while "Alea So" utilizes a Congolese rumba, called soukous, that focuses on the "e" of each beat. "Ombwa Te" is in a more familiar Afrobeat feel, "O Si Keka" has a reggae one-drop, and the funky grooves to "To Ndjé" and "Senga" emphasize the "a" of beat 1. Other styles explored are the three-over-four feel of the Cameroon genre bikutsi and the soca-like syncopation of essewe. The book also comes with lead sheets for each song, so you and your rhythm-section friends can give the tunes a try at your next jam session. If you're looking for fresh and exciting play-along material, this is some of the best. (\$25, Afro-Polka Productions) **Michael Dawson**



Idris Muhammad

by Stanton Moore



On July 29, 2014, the music world lost a giant. Even though he's not one of the most famous names in drumming, Idris Muhammad was a highly gifted and influential artist who may just be the most versatile drummer of our time. That's a bold statement, but I'm pretty confident I can back it up.

Hailing from New Orleans, Leo Morris, born on November 13, 1939, came from a family of drummers, and from a young age he absorbed the unique rhythms of his hometown. He took the bass drum syncopations that he heard in the second-line brass bands, which paraded for funerals and other functions, and combined that with the tambourine grooves of the Mardi Gras Indians. He would follow the second-line processions around New Orleans, internalizing the rhythms that he would later use to craft his uniquely personal brand of drumming. Both factions, brass bands and Mardi Gras Indians, branch out from the deep roots of African rhythms that were kept alive in the city's Congo Square via weekly cultural ceremonies.

In the 1960s, Morris moved to New

York and brought his one-of-a-kind, New Orleans-bred drumming with him. He played for the Broadway musical *Hair* and started to become an in-demand session drummer. Not long after arriving in the epicenter of the modern music scene, he decided to change his life; he cut out the bad habits he had picked up and converted to Islam. He changed his name to Idris Muhammad and continued his already blossoming career.

Idris said he had no worries about changing his name, because as soon as people heard Idris Muhammad play, they would know he was the same drummer as Leo Morris. He was right. Idris always considered himself an R&B drummer, but after being heard by trumpeter Kenny Dorham at the Five Spot in the '60s, he started to get calls to play in the jazz world as well.

Muhammad continued to pick up momentum after his conversion. Over the span of his career he recorded a string of records, many of them hits, with artists as diverse as Sam Cooke, Curtis Mayfield, Jerry Butler, Dr. Lonnie Smith, the Impressions, George Benson, Bob James, Gene Ammons,

Lou Donaldson, Grant Green, Charles Earland, Pharoah Sanders, Betty Carter, Roberta Flack, Ahmad Jamal, Joe Lovano, Greg Osby, Randy Weston, Ernest Ranglin, John Scofield, Steve Turre, George Coleman, Wil Blades, Donald Harrison Jr., Stanley Turrentine, and Freddie Hubbard.

Muhammad described many times how he came up with the open hi-hat "shoop" that has become a ubiquitous element in drumset vocabulary. While still in New Orleans, he explained, he was living next to a dry cleaner, and he would hear the sound of the pressing machines next door. Soon he started to incorporate what he'd heard into his playing.

For a while I've had the theory that some of Idris's specific stickings predated and might have indirectly influenced guys like Steve Gadd, Mike Clark, and David Garibaldi. On the Tom Scott tune "Dirty Old Man," from 1975, for instance, Gadd plays one of his signature grooves. The sticking on beat 1 of that pattern is RLRR-LRRL, played as 32nd notes. This is a sticking that Idris used all the time, especially on

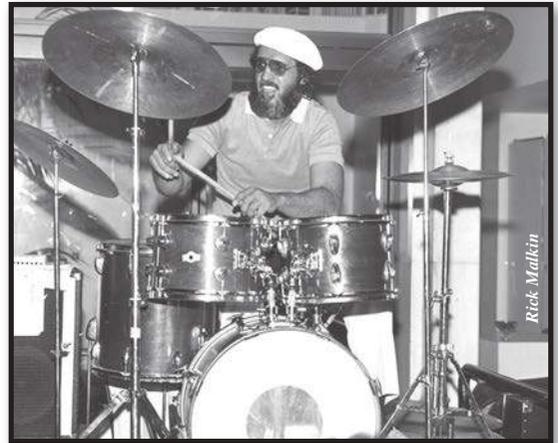
Reuben Wilson's "Hot Rod" (1969) and Grant Green's version of "Ain't It Funky Now" (1970), executing the pattern as 16th notes on beats 3 and 4.

I got to hang with Idris a bit and even play double drums with him, which was incredible. In a rare clinic I asked how he adapted some of the New Orleans Mardi Gras Indian rhythms to the drumset. He demonstrated that he got this particular sticking idea by applying the Indians' main tambourine rhythm to the hi-hat and then filling it in with the left hand. The rhythm that the same RLRR-LRRL sticking spells out with the right hand is similar to what Cubans call the *cinquillo*.

This pattern is number 33 in George Lawrence Stone's famous book *Stick Control*, but that's not how Muhammad came upon it. My theory is that Idris took what he adapted from the Mardi Gras Indians and brought it up to New York. He put it on the records he was making, Gadd and others picked up on it, and the rest is history.

On top of being a well-recorded and highly influential player, Muhammad is also one of the most sampled drummers in modern music. Adam Deitch, of Lettuce and Break Science, says, "Idris is one of the forefathers of hip-hop. His breakbeat style on Bob James' 'Nautilus' will forever be relevant. Every bar on that song has been sampled by countless artists, year after year. His funky snare rolls and ghost notes, laid-back groove, and use of space are all elements of his genius. His contribution to jazz and funk drumming will never be forgotten."

Few drummers can claim to have made such an impact in all of these fields. Some have played groove music and have been sampled in hip-hop but haven't played jazz. Lots have played jazz, maybe crossed over into some



groove, but haven't been sampled. Muhammad defies categorization. His playing is truly masterful in all genres, making him one of the most versatile drummers of all time.

If you're not yet aware of Idris's playing, do yourself a favor and check him out. After some attentive listening, I think you'll realize that he is now one of your favorite drummers.

Groove Elation

Love from some of the drummers who've admired Idris's playing over the years

Mike Clark

I considered Idris to be a top funk drummer who flirted with jazz. I was dead wrong! I was walking down the street in New York and heard and felt one of the deepest, nastiest swing beats and straight-ahead jazz grooves, which I hadn't heard since listening to Eddie Gladden. I walked in and found a guy playing a groove so thick it engulfed me immediately. It was Idris, and it was *on*. He had great hands and a fast foot, and he used 'em!

A deep swinger with intense and unique ideas, he instantly became one of my favorites. I later heard him at JazzFest in New Orleans many times. Once he was playing some real down, loose funk but stretched it way out, like Elvin and Tony at the same time, all with his NOLA sensibilities. He could play real busy or just tip, and it always swung. Thank you, Idris, forever!

David Garibaldi

Idris has been a favorite of mine for many years. Not enough can be said about this awesome player who

was blessed with a perfect sense of groove. Every time I hear him, I marvel at how great he makes the music feel. There's a YouTube clip of him from 2005, playing "Poinciana" with Ahmad Jamal—groove perfection.

Steve Smith

I didn't discover the drumming of Idris Muhammad until the John Scofield album *Groove Elation*, and when I saw that group live Idris blew me away with his funky yet ever-so-swingin' feel. The tuning of his drums was so high, especially his wide-open bass drum, and I loved that sound.

After that I got to know Idris's work with Sam Cooke and the many CTI albums he recorded. My personal favorite album that he plays on is Lou Donaldson's *Alligator Bogaloo*, which he recorded in '67, when his name was still Leo Morris. Idris is super-funky, and you can really hear why he was a first-call NYC session master: He came up with great parts for the songs and his time is near perfect—in the days before click tracks.

The fact that Idris played a lot of pop and R&B early and then moved into playing jazz with Joe Lovano, Greg Osby, and Ahmad Jamal is definitely a role model for me. Check out the track "Idris" on the Blue Note album *Friendly Fire* by Joe Lovano and Greg Osby—heavy!

Bill Stewart

I heard Idris when I was growing up in Des Moines, but only on records, before I would hear him in NYC about a decade later. By the time I was ten, in the mid-'70s, I knew who he was. I used to play along with many of those records. Some that I remember are Stanley Turrentine's *Don't Mess With Mister T.*, Willis Jackson's *Bar Wars*, and Idris's own record *Kabsha*, plus a couple of Hank Crawford records, *Help Me Make It Through the Night* and *Don't You Worry 'Bout a Thing*, where he split the drumming with Bernard Purdie, another favorite of mine.

I loved the feeling of Idris's playing. It was funky and seemed to be very relaxed, very grounded, yet it had a

forward motion to it as well. Idris is one of the great funk drummers, and one of the great swing drummers too. The way he uses the bass drum and the snare is funky when he's playing swing, and I love that. His funk playing has a looseness that I love. I think the funk and swing genres seem less separated than they might be with other drummers when you hear Idris do both. A lot of guys could do one or the other, but not both so convincingly and with such an individual approach. I also love Idris's cymbal sound. He played dark cymbals but got a very defined stick sound on the ride. You often hear the wood of the stick.

I heard Idris a few times live, and a couple of times really stick out, both at the Village Vanguard—once with George Coleman in the late '80s, and then about a decade later with Joe Lovano's trio, with Cameron Brown on bass. I sat close to the drums. Idris's groove could practically lift everyone out of their seat. You had to be there to feel the energy in the room.





Psychedelic '60s



“Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, is a large northern city of one and a half million souls,” Owen Stutt says. “But in 1971 it was almost quaint, with few places to buy drums. I wanted Ludwig and wound up dropping \$420 on the ugliest drumset I’d ever seen, and in small sizes to boot!

“Fast-forward more than forty years. After owning several kits, I found that these Jazzettes were the keepers.” (Indeed, in his 1994 book, *Guide to Vintage Drums*, John Aldridge refers to the Jazzette outfit as “Perhaps the most collectible drumset in catalog #67.”) “With years of gigging on them,” Stutt continues,

“they look almost new. They have always been cased and cared for.

“My Jazzettes are unique in that they were built in 1968 with a ‘psychedelic red’ wrap, a 14x18 bass drum, and a shell-mounted cymbal holder, all contrary to those described in catalog #71 from 1969, which says the kit is available in mahogany, natural maple, or lacquer finishes only. With Gibraltar hardware, Tama Iron Cobra 900 pedals, and Remo Fiberskyns all around, they look, play, and sound beautiful. Avedis Zildjian cymbals of the same vintage top off these oddballs to make a neat package.”

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