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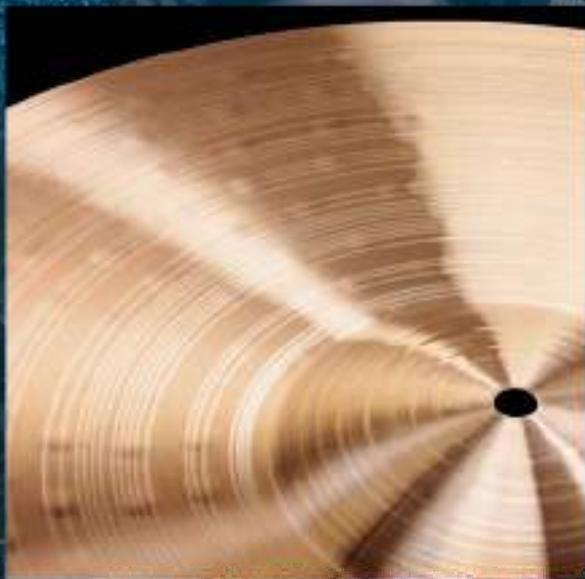


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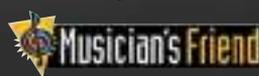
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On the State of the Music Business

Did you have a good 2014? Did you accomplish everything you wanted to? If you're an artist who's used to selling millions of albums, the answer to those questions is very likely no.

It was disturbing to read a widely reported statistic that there were only a handful of platinum-selling albums in 2014. In an age when so many artists count millions of social media followers, you might be asking yourself: How can that be—what's wrong with the music industry?

An easier question to answer might be: What's *not* wrong with the industry? Though to be fair, the record business has always had its share of critics, who in the past would often point to the greediness of major labels as a source of inequality. But I think we're *all* to blame for some of these latest problems, for reasons that range from naïveté to our own appetite for free entertainment.

For those who write and record music as a career, the digital revolution has certainly made it easier than ever to get the music produced and exposed to a wider audience. Unfortunately, the ease with which people can create and publicize a professional product leads some of us to believe that once it's out there, people are going to beat a path to our door to get it. The harsh reality is that this is just not true, because what makes the new digital tools cheap and easy for us is making them cheap and easy for everyone *else* as well. Our competition is actually greater now, not less.

We still need to practice our instruments diligently and hone in on and develop whatever we have as artists that's unique and appealing. We still need to write and produce an amazing song and keep the art itself first.

At the same time, so many of our "fans" are simply not paying to own our music. Streaming services essentially allow fans to lease art, which in and of itself is not a bad thing, except for the fact that it's only made it more likely that people opt not to pay for an actual recording. It still costs a *lot* of money to make and market a professional record, from hiring musicians and producers to paying for studio time and ad space and everything in between. Buying a record is a way to show support, respect, and appreciation for the artists we love, beyond simply clicking a mouse toward an oversaturated, never-ending playlist.

Music needs to get back to a place where it's better appreciated, and we all need to take part in that, whether we're a listener, an artist, or an industry executive. As listeners, we should be conscious of how much we're receiving from our favorite artists and how much real compensation we're giving them back. Artists, let's continue to focus on the basics—great playing, great singing, and a great song—and use technology to our advantage by creating new and unique independent marketing strategies, which will bring us appreciative and loyal fans. And record companies, don't be so greedy. Forget the next fad or financial strategy. Find real talent and nurture it.

It's really up to all of us, in every corner of the music industry, to figure out the best way to get the business back to where it once was. We need to remind ourselves that everyone who's featured in major publications like *Modern Drummer* has likely worked astonishingly hard to get here. Stay true to your art, be wise about where you put your energies, and you can end up there as well.

So enjoy this issue, and here's to a happy and productive 2015!



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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.

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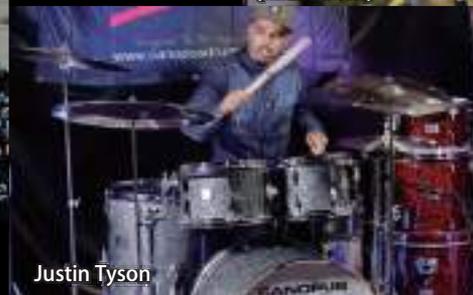
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READERS' PLATFORM

Chuck Silverman Remembered

Congratulations on your In Memoriam article on Chuck Silverman (November 2014). For the people who had the honor of knowing Chuck, there are no words to describe how amazing a human being and teacher he was. I started taking lessons with him and later did some gig subs for him, and the very first thing that impressed me was that he spoke perfect Spanish; his nickname, Palito, was in honor of Argentinian ballad singer Palito Ortega. His lessons always lasted up to three hours when they were supposed to be for one. He had so much passion for music, and not only for Latin music—he had a really deep love for jazz and funk as well, among other styles. I will need a dozen of this type of letter to describe a person like Chuck. RIP, querido Palito.

Roman Kancepolski

October Issue

From Billy Amendola's Editor's Overview to Mind Matters' "The Unglamorous Side of Giggling" to the interviews with Ian Paice and Tal Bergman, I'm having a hard time putting down the October issue. For a long time I have held Ian Paice in my own personal favorite "holy trinity" of classic hard-rock drummers, along with Bonzo and Carmine Appice. I continually go to the well of these three for inspiration. The article on Tal Bergman and his personal and musical history was interesting to read. I love his work with Joe



Bonamassa and Rock Candy Funk Party. As for "The Unglamorous Side of Giggling," my high school band teacher once said to me, as I lugged my drums into the band room for an early-morning jazz rehearsal, "It's times like this you wish you played the piccolo."

Thanks for the continued inspiration for drummers everywhere.

Dave Ferris

A Not-So-Famous Drummer

I recently read the Mind Matters article in *MD* about a club drummer who's been playing in a band about three times a month for two years and now feels "the thrill is gone" (October). This inspired me to remind myself just what I do, after thirty-six years playing the club scene, to avoid that feeling. First, I'm playing music for a living! How many people in this world get to do exactly what they want for a living? Second, the drums themselves. I love the look of them and the feel of playing them. I have *fun* playing drums. I always say, "A bad day playing drums is still a good day." Third, the lifestyle. I have the freedom to do what I want during the day—running, practicing, teaching, whatever. Fourth, our fan base. People appreciate our music, and because of their loyalty I can pay my mortgage. I appreciate them. They support us, and I'm glad I have the opportunity to practice my craft for their enjoyment. I hope that reminding yourself of these things helps when you're faced with loading in and out, late hours, and long drives.

Jeff Decker

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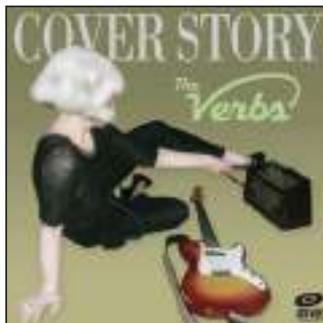
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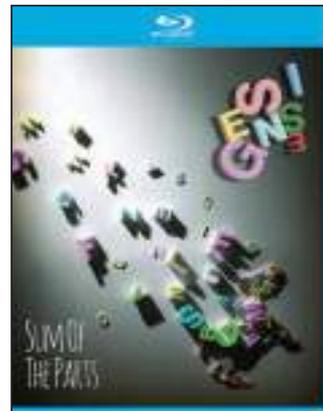


The Verbs Cover Story

The Verbs consist of drummer and producer **Steve Jordan** and singer/guitarist Meegan Voss, plus bassist Willie Weeks and guitarist Tamio Okuda. *Cover Story* is a collection of music from the '60s and '70s that the band loves, sparked unexpectedly by Howard Stern's fondness for the Verbs' version of Neil Young's "Only Love Can Break Your Heart." Among the songs in the collection is "Glad All Over" by the drummer-led Dave Clark Five. "Steve Van Zandt introduced me to Dave Clark at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony last March," Jordan says. "He asked me what drums I played on it. Amazing."

Genesis Sum of the Parts

This DVD and Blu-ray documentary comprises the BBC's 2014 *Together and Apart* documentary plus thirty minutes of previously unseen footage. The band's classic lineup of keyboardist Tony Banks, singer Peter Gabriel, guitarist Steve Hackett, bassist Mike Rutherford, and drummer **Phil Collins**, plus original guitarist Anthony Phillips, were all brought together to contribute to the project—a real treat for Genesis fans, who will also no doubt dig the rare archival footage. The release is a companion of sorts to the three-CD Genesis anthology *R-Kive* released last September.



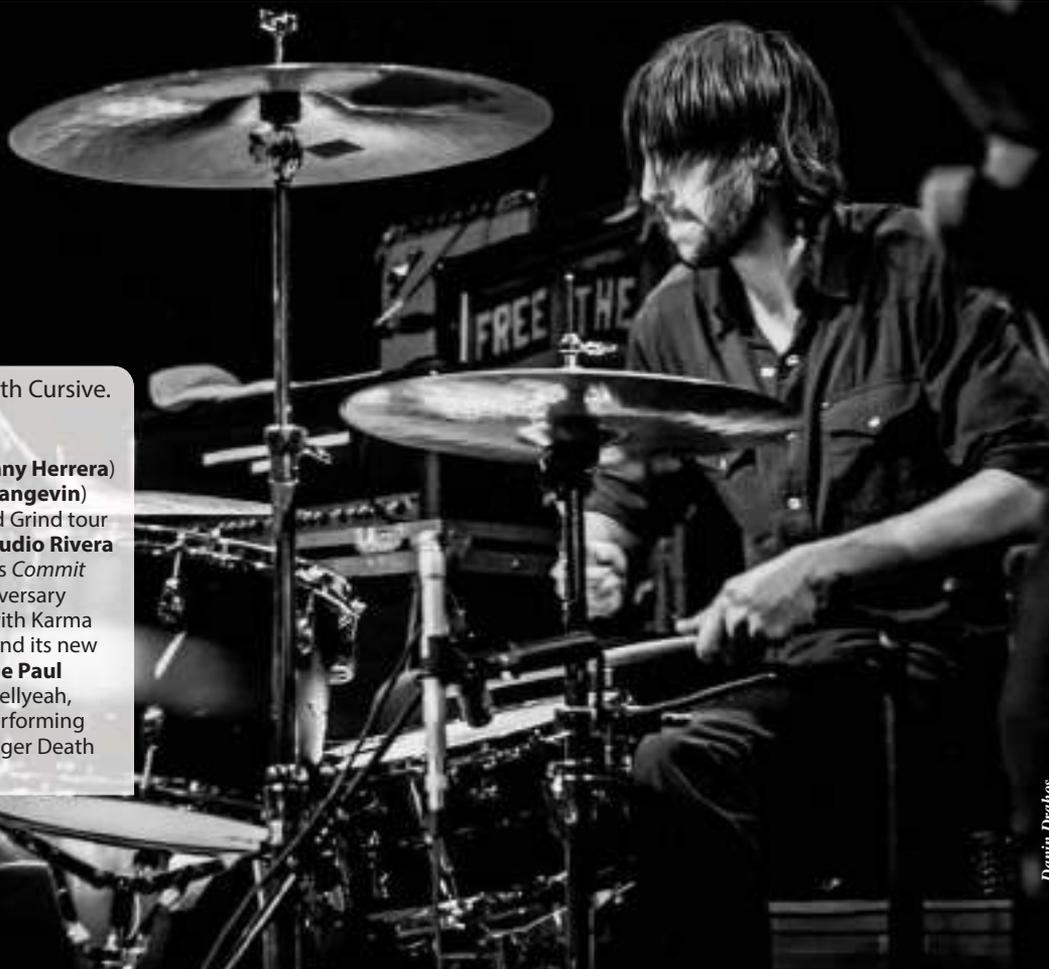
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On Tour

Cully Symington is out with Cursive.

Also on the Road

Napalm Death (featuring **Danny Herrera**) and Voivod (**Michel "Away" Langevin**) are on the Through Space and Grind tour of Canada and the U.S. /// **Claudio Rivera** is on Motion City Soundtrack's *Commit This to Memory* ten-year-anniversary tour. /// **Evan Devine** is out with Karma to Burn, which is touring behind its new album, *Arch Stanton*. /// **Vinnie Paul** is on a headlining tour with Hellyeah, which spent much of 2014 performing in support of Volbeat, Five Finger Death Punch, and Nothing More.



Zildjian Sponsors Tenth Year of Berklee Artist-in-Residence Program With Guest Artist Aaron Spears



Zildjian and the Berklee College of Music recently concluded the tenth year of the Armand Zildjian Artist in Residence Program. This year's guest Zildjian artist was Aaron Spears, who drew standing-room-only audiences during the three-day program, and, according to Berklee percussion program chairman John Ramsay, "responded to nonstop questions with patience and grace."

The series was created by the Zildjian family in recognition of late company head Armand Zildjian's efforts in the promotion of percussion music. Its purpose is to provide Berklee students an opportunity to learn from recognized drummers in a wide range of genres. Past artists in residence include Steve Smith, Peter Erskine, and Antonio Sanchez.

"Berklee has redefined the way up-and-coming musicians hone their craft, while continually raising the level of respect paid to contemporary music around the world," Zildjian CEO Craigie Zildjian says. "There's a long history of partnership between Zildjian and Berklee, and this program pays tribute to our shared commitment to education."

Who's Playing What



Harvey Mason is playing Canopus drums.



Robin DiMaggio is playing Gretsch drums.



Erik Sandin (NOFX) has joined the Yamaha artist roster.

Tobias Ralph (Adrian Belew Power Trio, right) and **Jim Black** (Alasnoaxis, Nels Cline, Dave Douglas) have joined the Hammerax artist team.



Josh Manuel (Issues, left) and **Rick Siegfried** (Requiem) are playing TRX cymbals.

Ryche Green (BulletBoys, Pink Velvet Krush) has joined the Queen City Drums artist family.

Mike Melito (independent), **Vasco Trilla** (Trilla Trio, independent), **Wayne Smith Jr.** (Sun Ra Arkestra), and **Fernando Lamas** (independent) are playing V-Classic cymbals.

Ian Matthews (Kasabian) and **Matt Helders** (Arctic Monkeys) are using Porter & Davies drum monitoring systems.



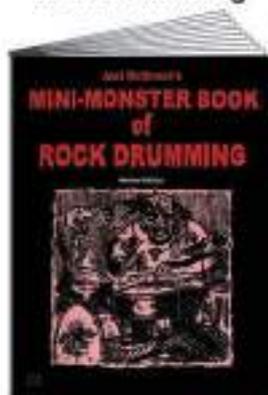
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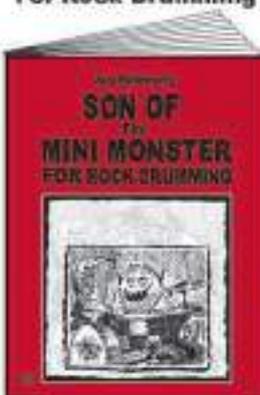
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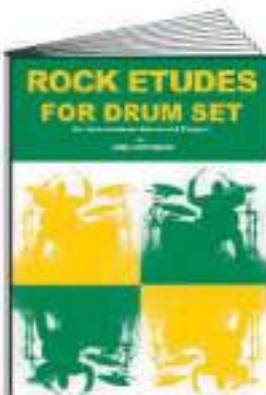
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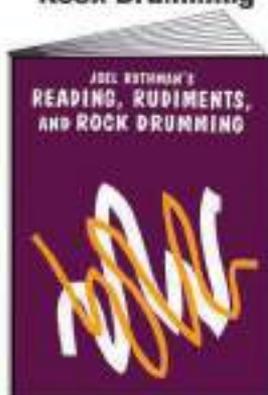
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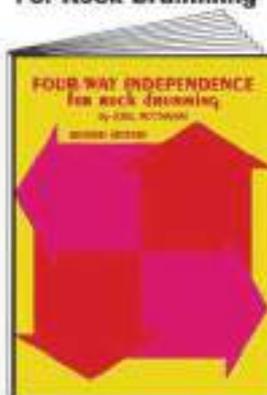
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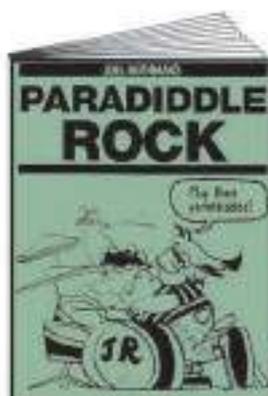
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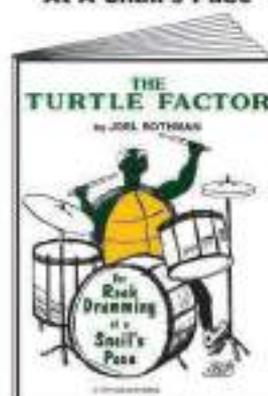
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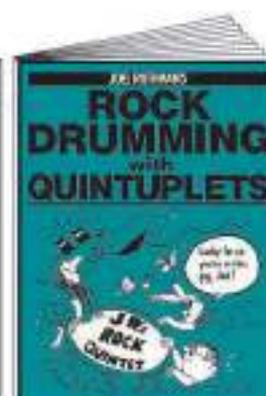
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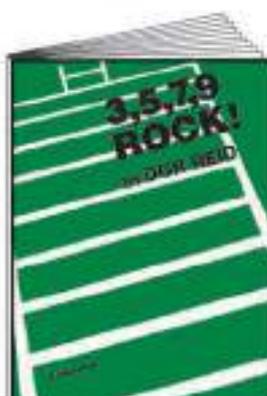
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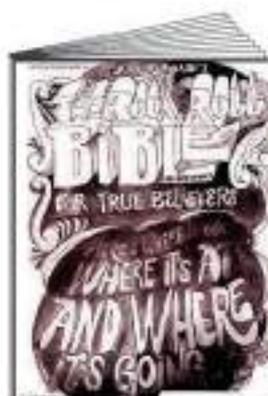
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3,5,7,9,
Rock!



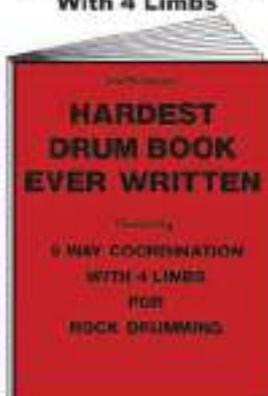
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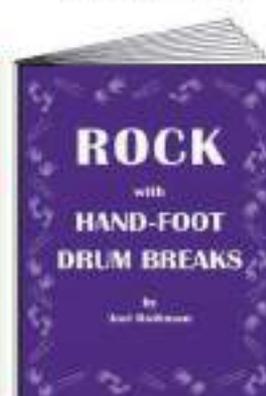
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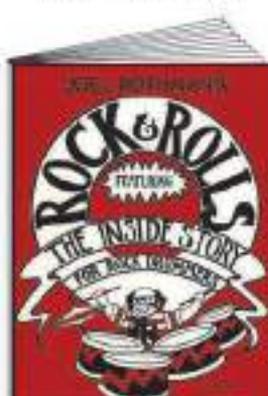
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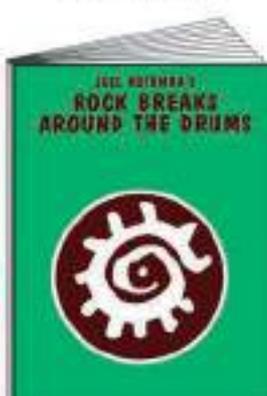
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Featuring
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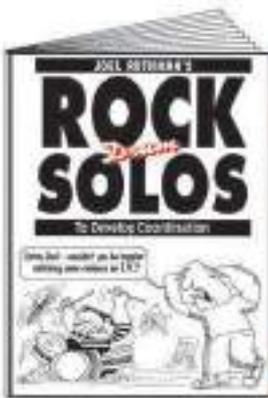
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Around
The Drums



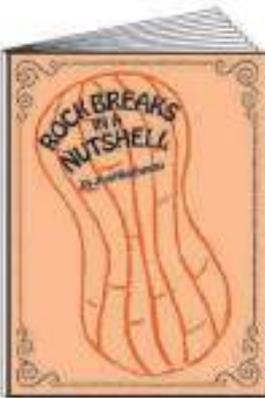
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To Develop
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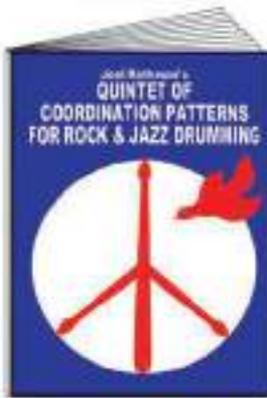
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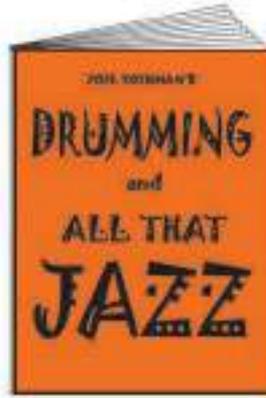
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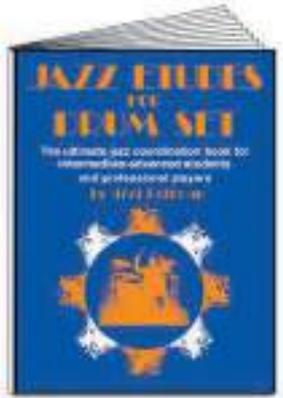
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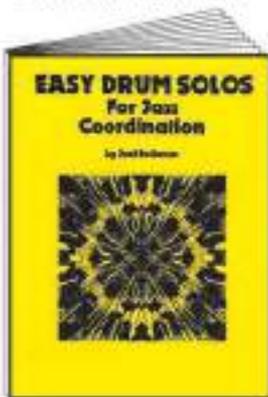
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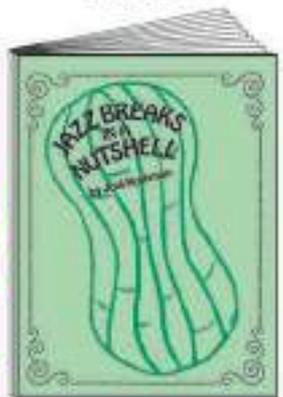
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**3,5,7,9,
Jazz!**



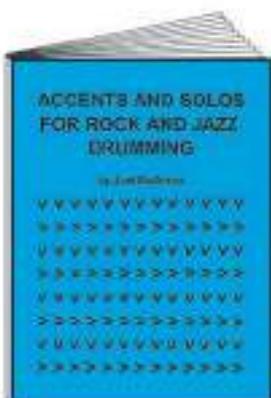
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**Jazz Breaks
In A
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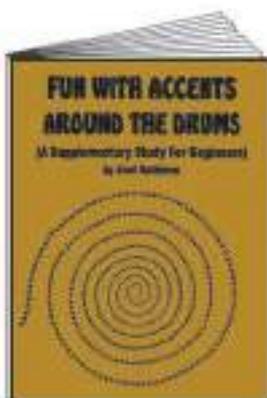
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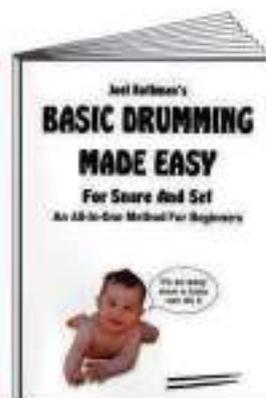
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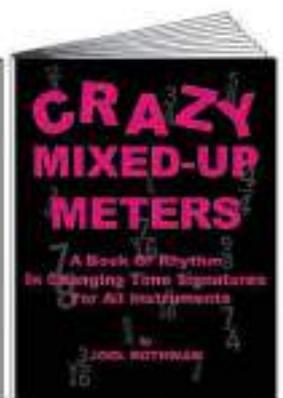
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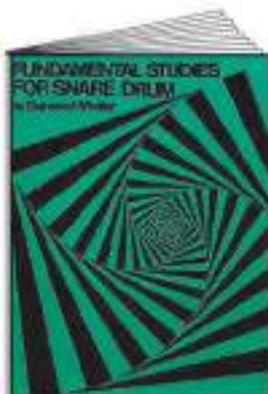
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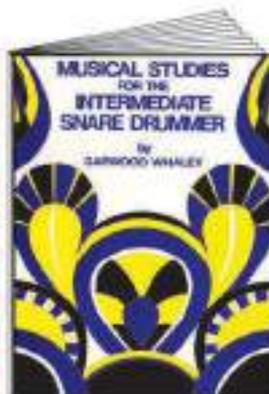
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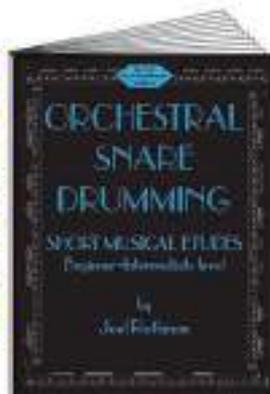
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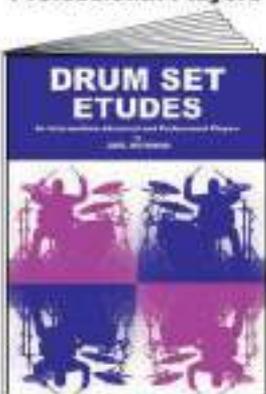
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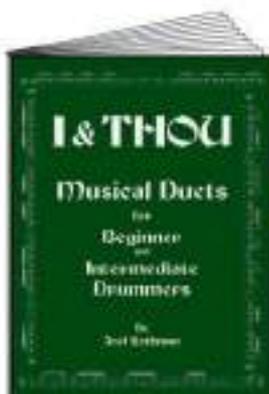
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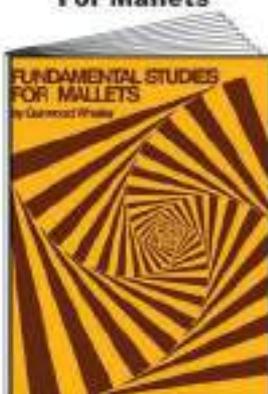
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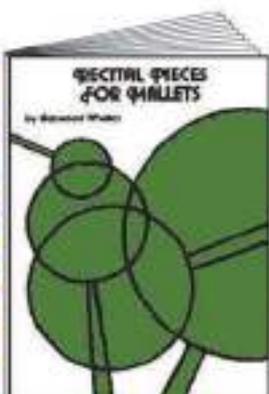
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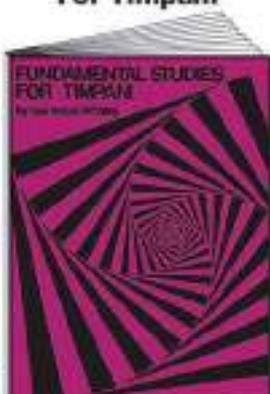
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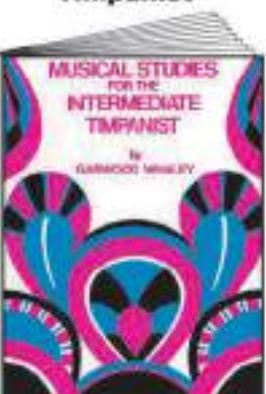
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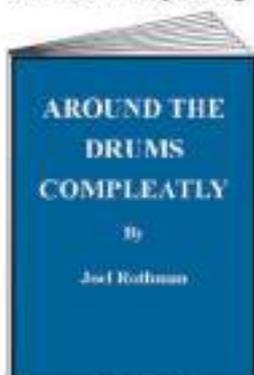


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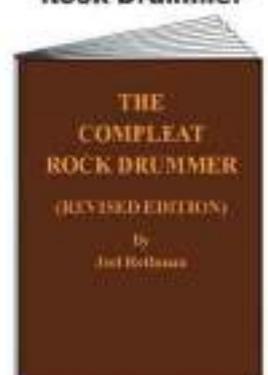
The following volumes contain hundreds of pages of material representing the most up-to-date concepts in their specific area of drumming. They are encyclopedic in scope, and a must in the personal library of any serious player. (Note - COMPLEAT is an old English spelling for the word COMPLETE).

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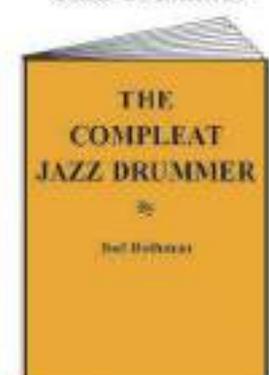
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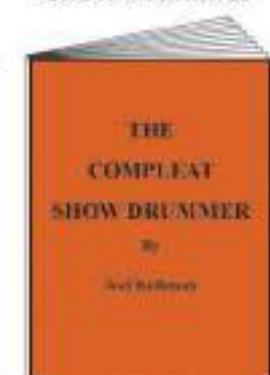
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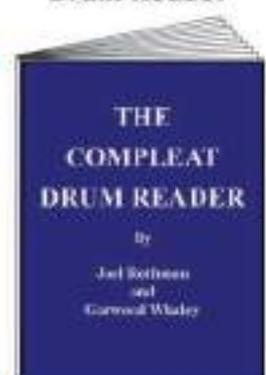
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Natal Walnut US Rock Drumset

A top-notch kit created for aggressive, deep, punchy sounds.

Natal's history and vision are worth exploring. The company's story started back in the early '60s, when the need for high-quality percussion instruments emerged out of the London music scene. Natal's popularity grew quickly, and its products eventually found their way on stage with big-time acts like Santana, Led Zeppelin, Fleetwood Mac, and the Rolling Stones. Fast-forward to 2010, when Marshall Amplification partnered with Natal to take its output to the next level. Why Marshall, you may ask? Well, it just so happens that founder Jim Marshall was a drummer. Both brands are dedicated to providing the highest-quality products available.

Consistent Components and Configurations

The concept for Natal's current lineup of drumkits is unique in that they're offered as a range, as opposed to different series. All kits have the same quality components: lugs, tom mounts, Tri-Throw snare mechanism, and heavy-duty bass drum spurs. It's the species of wood that distinguishes one range from another and sets the price. We received a walnut kit with a red-to-orange sunburst finish; the kit is also available in three other high-gloss lacquers.

This 7-ply American walnut outfit comes equipped with Remo U.S. batter heads, 2.3 mm hoops, brushed-nickel hardware and tom arms, and nylon-dipped tension rods to help the drums hold their tuning. The kit is available in multiple configurations. US Rock (\$3,599) includes a 14x24 bass drum and 9x13 and 16x16 toms. US Fusion (\$3,799) comes with an 18x22 bass drum and 8x10, 9x12, and 16x16 toms.

The Sound of American Walnut

There's no doubt that this drumset was created for players with a specific need for an aggressive, punchy, low-end-heavy sound. As stated by Natal, American walnut is "darker in tone and looks than bubinga." Regardless of how we tuned the drums, they consistently produced a deep and thunderous tone. The toms provided just enough attack and articulation to avoid muddy stick definition. When tuned high, they still had lots of low-end resonance that made the kit perfect for tom-heavy patterns that need to cut through a mix without sacrificing attack and depth.

The 14x24 walnut bass drum capitalized on the low-end frequencies of the wood but got out of the way quickly. Its shallower depth helped to provide more of a focused and controlled tone, while the large diameter offered a deep, dark punch. In a heavier rock application, we ended up putting a thin blanket inside the drum to tamp down some of the resonance. When we tested the kit in a fusion setting, we kept the kick wide open, as the extra resonance allowed us to control the sound a bit more with playing technique and head choice.

Miguel Monroy

For a video demo of this kit, visit moderndrummer.com.







Crescent Elements Series Cymbals

A more all-purpose offering.



In early 2014, Cymbal Masters, a company co-owned by the industry veterans Michael Vosbein and Bill Norman and the world-class drummers Jeff Hamilton and Stanton Moore, announced that it was moving production of all Crescent cymbals from a Turkish foundry to Sabian's factory in Meductic, Canada. The first series that Sabian produced for Crescent is called Elements, and we have it for review this month. Let's see if the cymbals retain some of that old-world flavor that Crescent has become known for since its initial launch in 2012.

What's the Difference?

For the Elements series, Crescent went for an "all purpose" sound and application, rather than the more specialized tones found in its other lines, like the thin and complex Vintage series, the bone-dry Primal series, and the signature models for Hamilton (Hammertone), Moore, and world percussionist Jamey Haddad (Haptic).

The Elements series is limited to medium-thin 14" and 15" hi-hats (\$676 and \$740), thin 16" and 18" crashes (\$450 and \$525), medium-thin 20" and 22" rides (\$600 and \$710), medium-thin 20" and 22" Distressed rides (\$600 and \$710), and a thin 22" China with rivets (\$710). The Distressed rides, with their heavily hammered and raw top surfaces, and the 22" China, which features a

partially lathed top, are the outliers in the group. All of the others feature fully lathed tops and bottoms (with wide grooves) and raw bells. Elements series models, like all of Crescent's cymbals, are hand hammered from traditional B20 bronze.

From Jazz to Rock

We tested the Elements series in a straight-ahead jazz setting with a small bebop kit, in a classic-rock scenario with big toms and a boomy 24" bass drum, and at a jam-style bar gig comprising everything from early rock 'n' roll tunes to funk/fusion standards and heavy metal classics. The models that stood out as being the most appropriate in all three situations were the 14" and 15" hi-hats. They had a clean and warm but crisp sound that was easy to control, whether for light and delicate swing feels or sloshy rock grooves. Of the two pairs, the 14" had the most universal appeal. My tastes, however, lean toward the bigger, deeper voice of the 15" hats, especially when playing washy "Rock and Roll"-type beats and incessant Tony Williams-like left-foot patterns.

The 16" and 18" crashes had clean, balanced tones with fast, flashy attack and quick decay. These were the most "Sabian sounding" of the series. (HHX crashes came to mind as I played the Elements.) The 16" had a glassy, splashy voice, which to my ears limited it to quick accents. (Timbale players would dig this crash for its

cutting power, quick response, and immediate decay.) The 18" sounded deeper, breathier, and more dramatic, yet it still spoke fast and got out of the way quickly. The raw bell on this crash worked well for quick bursts of color too.

The one effects cymbal in the Elements series is the 22" China, which comes with twenty rivets installed. This cymbal provided a classic Mel Lewis/Dave Tough Swish Knocker sound and would work very well as an alternate ride with a big band or a hard-hitting blues group. The rivets helped to tamp down the sustain while adding a rattlesnake-type tone to ride patterns and making accents jump out with an aggressive punch of white noise. This China may have too much sizzle for some players' tastes, but you could always remove a few rivets to bring out more sustain and tone.

The 20" and 22" rides were washy but balanced, with smooth and even sustain and clean, sparkling articulation. The 20" also doubled well as a large crash. When played with big, boomy Bonham-like drums, my preferred Elements configuration included the 15" hi-hats, 18" crash, 20" ride (used as a crash), and 22" ride. The larger, washier sounds of these models complemented the bombastic,

open-tuned kit very nicely.

For drier, more articulate options, Crescent offers Distressed rides, which have a raw top surface and a lathed bottom. The 20" version had a fairly muted sustain that felt best suited for modern jazz and fusion drumming (à la Jojo Mayer), which often require pinpoint accuracy and controlled wash. The 20" Distressed also worked well as a tight left-side ride in a bebop setting when contrasted with the wider, more open tone of the lathed 22" model.

The 22" Distressed ride was my favorite of the group. It was very dry and articulate, but it also had a pleasingly dark sustain. It could be crashed effectively, and the bell sound was rich and musical. I liked pairing this ride with the 20" lathed model, which doubled as a crash and a washy ride. The two cymbals worked very nicely, when completed with either pair of hi-hats, in all three of our testing scenarios, from tight bebop to bombastic classic rock to a soup-to-nuts bar band.

Michael Dawson

Listen to these cymbals at moderndrummer.com.

Pork Pie Wood Over Brass Snare Drums

Expand your sound palette with these versatile maple/hickory-meets-metal hybrids.

Shells made of varying combinations of maple, poplar, gum, mahogany, and other woods have been a major part of drum construction throughout history, and in recent years the word *hybrid* has been used by various manufacturers for shells that combine wood with synthetic materials like acrylic and metal. Pork Pie's Bill Detamore, however, had a notion more than twenty years ago about covering a brass snare shell with eight plies of wood on either side, and these drums have finally been realized in what the company is calling Wood Over Brass (WOB for short) snares.

Pork Pie sent two 7x14 WOB snares for this review, maple over brass and hickory over brass. The shells, which are made by Carrera in the U.K., comprise sixteen plies of either maple or hickory with a single middle ply of brass. Both drums are outfitted with Pork Pie's signature lugs and hardware.

I spent the most time with the maple-over-brass drum, as it had more range. The underlying honk of the brass seemed to mellow out the typical brightness of the maple. Lower tunings brought out a full, earthy sound with appealing overtones. Medium tunings maintained plenty of body while still having a lot of cut for louder situations, making rimshots easily heard when competing with loud guitar rigs. This drum really shined with a large funk band when tuned up medium-high and muffled with a single Moongel.



The hickory-over-brass model presented a sound palette that would be new to most. Hickory drums are a fair shade drier than those made from birch. To my ear, this snare was ideal in low tunings. It was the deep drum you want for a roots-rock or alt-country recording session. Medium and high tunings also felt great in rock and jazz contexts. The drum was particularly nice for brushes when cranked up, and I could envision it being ideal for orchestral work with a different set of snares. The only downside was that with sixteen plies of hickory, its sound was so dry that in large

rooms it could get buried in the mix.

Both WOB snare drums came finished with a light satin oil, but they can be ordered in any Pork Pie finish for an extra charge. These models are less costly than most comparable "hybrid" snares on the market, with a suggested retail price of \$850. The drums are in production and are available through Pork Pie retailers, but only about sixty have been released thus far. Go seek out some WOB—you won't be disappointed.

Stephen Bidwell

Hear these drums at moderndrummer.com.

Studio Lab Percussion Drumtacs

A smart and effective tone-control alternative to sticky dampener pads and tape.

Drumtacs are reusable, tacky dampener pads designed to control overtones on drums, cymbals, or percussion instruments like cowbells and blocks. What distinguishes these 1" round discs from their competitors is that they feature a non-tacky foam-rubber top, so they won't stick to anything that comes in contact with them (drumsticks, fingers, cases), other than the heads to which they're applied. They also don't leave behind residue when removed, and they won't melt when exposed to extreme temperatures, like the baking heat of a car trunk during the peak of summer.

We tested Drumtacs on the batter and resonant heads of a few different snares and toms, and they did a great job of removing just enough high frequencies without killing the natural resonance. The company suggests also using the pads on the underside of cymbals to darken and mellow out the tone. When placed near the edge of a few different rides that ranged in weight and timbre from thin and trashy to heavy and pingy, a single Drumtac eliminated almost all of the sustain, similar to what you'd get if you placed several strips of gaffer's tape across the bow of the cymbal. Yet the Drumtac is small enough that it won't create unresponsive dead spots, like those you get when you use tape. My favorite application for the Drumtac was on the underside of a cymbal, near the bell. This placement eliminated just enough wash on thinner rides to allow for more articulate yet still open-sounding patterns.



If Drumtacs become dirty, they'll lose tackiness. But all you need to do is clean the underside with some rubbing alcohol and let the pad dry, and then it'll be good as new. A four-pack of Drumtacs sells for \$20 on drumtacs.com.

Michael Dawson

Logjam Prolog Stomper

Turn foot stomps into chest-thumping kicks with this simple handmade device.

Logjam was founded in 2008 by British guitarist Howard Bragen in an effort to provide accompaniment instruments that amplify foot stomps into bass-drum-like tones. The lineup includes three models—the original Logarhythm, the compact Travelog, and, on review this month, the Prolog. The Logarhythm and Travelog comprise a contoured piece of wood outfitted with a .25" output jack that allows amplification via a guitar cord, so they can be heard through a PA system or bass guitar rig. The Prolog features a right-foot-shaped footboard that you rest your heel on for more consistent toe stomps.

The best drum/percussion application for the Prolog is as a replacement for an acoustic kick on gigs where you'd typically use a hybrid setup of hand drums and drumset components. When I gig with my acoustic band, my setup consists of a bass drum, a snare, hi-hat and crash/ride cymbals, and various percussion instruments (djembe, pandeiro, shakers, and congas). With the Prolog, I'm able to play the same grooves as I would with my regular rig, with the added bonus of a more compact setup, due to the Prolog replacing the kick drum. The only downside is that you need to either carry an amplifier with a lot of bass response or wire the stomper into the PA. You also can't really execute fast doubles on the Prolog. But for basic four-on-the-floor and other "money beats," it's a nice no-fuss,



convincing-sounding bass drum alternative. The Prolog sells for around \$150, depending on the currency exchange rate.

Michael Dawson



There is NO such thing as TOO DARK

Finding your dark place without the guilt...

Natal's new Walnut Originals is a mix of sensual tonal depth and arousing beauty. The depth of the 6-ply 100% walnut shells allows for full sonic saturation but retains the projection of brighter woods. The natural walnut or deep true sunburst are accentuated by brushed nickel sun lugs, 2.3mm hoops, and Natal tom mounts.

*Shown in US Rock
configuration
in Deep Sunburst*

PHOTOS BY HEATHER TOUCHTON

Contact your local dealer for availability on this limited run kit.

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NATAL
DRUMS BY *Marshall*

Interview by John Martinez • Photos by Alex Solca

Katy Perry's Adam Marcello

Drums: Q Drum Co. smoke acrylic with LED lights

- A. 6.5x14 copper snare with riveted seam
- B. 8x12 tom
- C. 16x16 floor tom
- D. 16x22 bass drum
- E. 6.5x14 Ludwig Black Beauty snare (backup)

Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1. 14" hi-hats (K Mastersound top, Z Dyno Beat bottom)
- 2. 16" K EFX crash
- 3. 20" Crash of Doom
- 4. 22" K Custom ride
- 5. 20" K Dark crash
- 6. 20" A Custom EFX crash

Heads: Remo Coated Powerstroke 3 snare batter and Hazy Ambassador bottom, Clear Emperor tom batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, and Clear Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter with pillow and rolled towel for muffling

Hardware: DW 9000 series pedals (main bass drum pedal has Vater hard felt beater), two-leg hi-hat stand, double tom stand (with modified top for pads), cymbal stands, and throne

Sticks: Vater Powerhouse sticks, Wire Tap brushes, and T7 mallets; Anthology leather stick bag

In-ear monitors: JH Audio JH13 Pro Custom

Electronics: Korg Wavedrum with Boss AB-2 foot switch; Roland SPD-SX sampling pad, PD-8 pads, and KD-7 kick triggers (second trigger is located past floor tom on a double pedal)

"Katy Perry wanted lights, so we went with the acrylic kit," Marcello says of his setup on Perry's Prismatic World Tour. "The lights are DMX controlled from front-of-house. The light director has control of all lights, and they change throughout the show. They're RGB, so they change to whatever color you want."

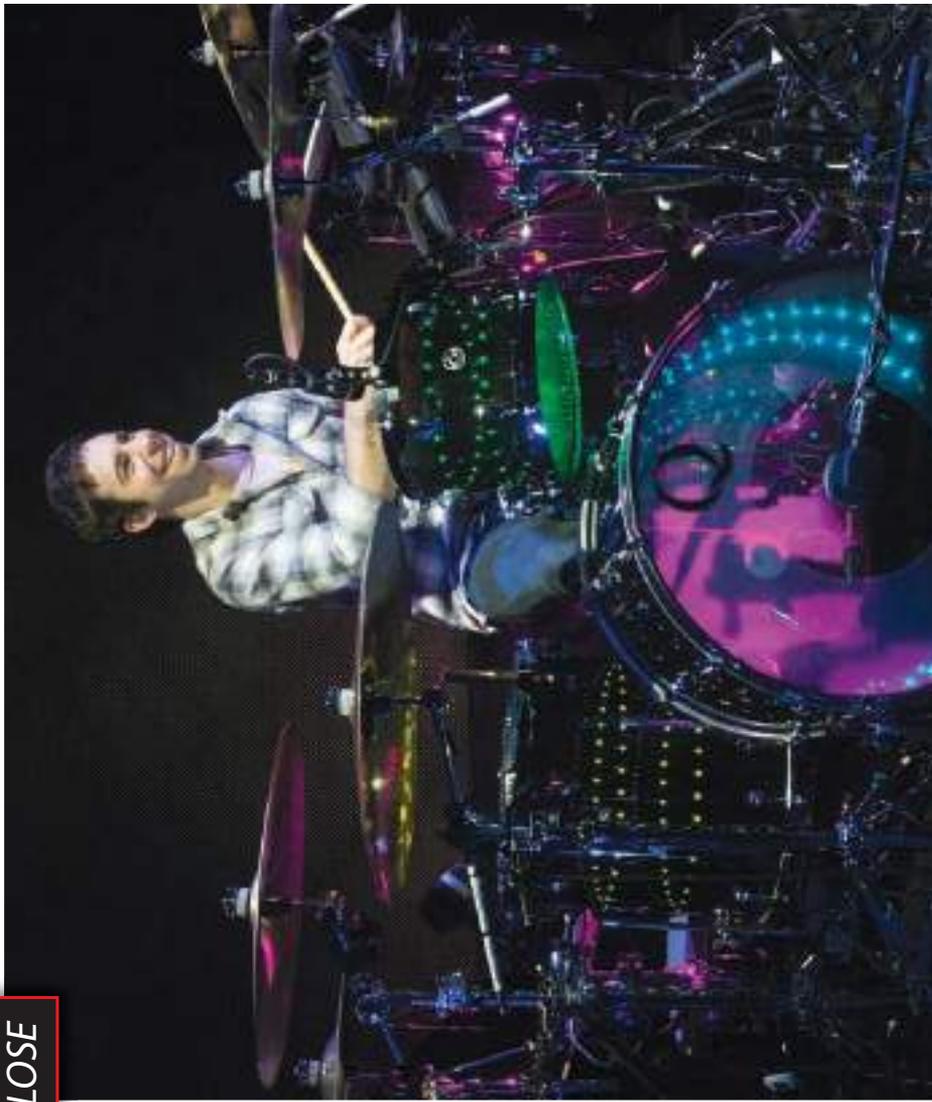
"My electronics are running through Main Stage, which is a program we run all our samples out of, and apTrigga is the sample bank of all my stuff for the record. We're running Ableton Live for tracks that are controlled by the SPD-SX. I use it to [trigger] some samples for the show, but mainly it's just a controller for the tracks."

"There's a song called 'Legendary Lovers' that has a sixteen-bar tabla solo. The Wavedrum is the perfect electronic percussion instrument [to play that part]. It has a real head, a pressure sensor, a bunch of different pickups, and triggers mounted in it. I used to have it tucked away and would slide it out for that song. In rehearsal, Katy said, 'You gotta stand up and take the solo—we gotta get the lights on you!' I have one beat to put the sticks down, stand up, turn it on, and play. It's pretty hectic, but I haven't missed it yet."

"I cut off the top of a double-tom holder and shoved it in the back of the stand so I could place the four Roland pads evenly."

There's a lot of linear programming going on, so the pads change sounds, and having the four grouped like this made a lot of sense to me. On songs like 'Roar' and 'Walking on Air,' there are so many samples, so I needed a tight grouping. Programming the sounds to change makes it so I don't have thirty pads up there."

"We're also triggering the kick and snare through the microphones and back into Main Stage. There's no pickup trigger on the drums. I set the threshold to open up when I need it. The song 'E.T.' is like an alien spaceship firing a missile, and that's the snare drum. I want to hear that sound, but mixed in with the live kit. It's a lot of live acoustic drums mixed with cool sounds from the record. It's a nice hybrid."





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Chad Smith

It's apt that Chad Smith is driving along the Pacific Coast Highway in California as he catches us up on his recent activities. Smith recently returned to the West Coast after four years in New York City, and he's excited to get back into the studio with his quintessentially L.A. band the Red Hot Chili Peppers. "We've been writing since April," Smith tells us, "and we're about ready to record." Although the band has worked with producer Rick Rubin on every one of its studio albums since 1991's *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*, at the time of this interview Chad revealed that the producer role for the upcoming release had not yet been officially filled.

Before heading west, Smith collaborated with virtuoso pianist Jon Batiste and eminent bassist/producer Bill Laswell for a studio album called *The Process*. The project was initially conceived by director Jay Bulger (*Beware of Mr. Baker*) as a soundtrack for a musical film about a post-apocalyptic Detroit. "Jay was the Svengali of this project, the one who got everybody together," Smith explains. "He would give weird, random suggestions to describe a musical landscape—'Play something like the Meters, but sloshing around with rain boots'—then we'd interpret his suggestions and just improvise and jam."

Smith's grooves, which intimate African rhythms, avant-funk, jazz, and hip-hop, serve as foundations and guides for the compositions, while Laswell's vintage sonic flair makes the tracks sound as if they'd been unearthed from a time capsule buried in George Clinton's backyard during Parliament-Funkadelic's infancy.

"Bill did a great job arranging everything in postproduction, turning our jams into song structures," Chad says. "A lot of it was drum led, because the musical changes [often occur] when my patterns change."

Laswell's role as producer extended to inviting a slew of guest musicians to his New Jersey studio, including Tunde Adebimpe (TV on the Radio), Killah Priest (Wu-Tang Clan), Garrison Hawk, Toshinori Kondo, Peter Apfelbaum, and Dominic James, to add sonic textures and vocals to round out each composition. "I found the whole process fun, challenging, and risky," Smith says. "When you're put in a room with two dudes and you're just going for it, you have to be a good listener—and that's the most important thing to me as a musician."

Speaking of listening skills, when time allows, Smith hosts an online interview series for Music Radar called *In Conversation*. Recently he sat down with Bulger and legendary Cream/Blind Faith drummer Ginger Baker for a perhaps not-so-unexpectedly awkward discussion. "It was rough," Chad allows, "but I expect that it could have gone worse. What was more unexpected was how well he played when I saw his band at the Iridium. He's an old dude, and fragile. But he did his Ginger Baker thing, man—I was impressed."

This year, in addition to the new RHCP album, Smith will be tracking drums for the new recording by keyboardist Ed Roth, a bandmate in the Bombastic Meatbats. **David Ciauro**

The New Orleans Suspects' Willie Green

"Mean" Willie Green's artful grooving mesmerized fans of the New Orleans institution the Neville Brothers for over thirty years, during which time Green likewise elevated music by Dr. John, Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, Edie Brickell, and Elvis Costello. The latest representation of the drummer's prowess is the album *Ouroboros* by his band the New Orleans Suspects, whose tracks like "Get Back What You Given," "Magdalena," and Green's own "Yo Flambeaux!" yet again prove his place among the great lineage of Big Easy musicians. All the more reason to be surprised to learn about his drumming roots. "When I got with the Neville's I wasn't into the Meters," Green says. "I was into rock. I wasn't listening to [the Meters'] Zig Modeliste or [legendary New Orleans drummer] Earl Palmer—I was listening to guys like Led Zeppelin's John Bonham, Deep Purple's Ian Paice, and Grand Funk Railroad's Don Brewer!"

Green was born and raised in Shreveport, Louisiana, just outside New Orleans. His early "training" included hammering out rhythms on boxes or the side of a car, as he didn't have a drumset. "I didn't have a school or a teacher either," Willie recalls. "But I would just hear things and go play them. My love of music and drums comes from my late grandmother and God. Everything I've become I owe to them."

The New Orleans Suspects are seasoned vets who came together in 2009 as an off-night pickup band, but they quickly



morphed into a hot entity. *Ouroboros*, the group's third disc, was recorded live at Rhythm Shack Studio in New Orleans and brings to mind some of the city's greatest bands, like the Meters and the Radiators, but also Little Feat, Tower of Power, and the Band. Drummers should pay attention to the interplay between Green and bassist Reggie Scanlan. "I have a lot of freedom to create in this band," Green says, "and I love playing with Reggie."

Watching Green at the kit, it's hard not to notice the way that he practically dances on his bass drum and hi-hat pedals. We asked where this approach came from. "When I was with the Neville's," Willie explains, "playing songs like 'Hey Pocky Way,' I used to rock, or as you say, dance, with the groove. I hit hard, but I don't pull up high. It's a powerful impact." **Bob Girouard**

Neal Smith

Known for his blistering attack on hits like "School's Out," "I'm Eighteen," and "Billion Dollar Babies" by Alice Cooper, with whom he played between 1967 and 1974, Neal Smith has since expanded his skills to include producing and composing. In 2011 he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame along with the rest of the "shock rock" band (lead singer Vincent Furnier legally adopted the group's name for his own solo career in the mid-'70s) and appeared on three songs on the singer's album *Welcome 2 My Nightmare*. Last year he released the third installment of his KillSmith series, *KillSmith and the Greenfire Empire*, which he's currently using as the jumping-off point of an ambitious concert/film/stage presentation.

"The story begins in tranquil, Walt Disney-esque environs," Smith explains, "while on the other side of the world a poor boy is born in the jungles of South America. He becomes a bully with no friends and sets out to explore the world around him. He discovers a tablet that was used as a sacrificial drug by his ancestors. Through a snake called a bushmaster whose venom is mixed into the drug, one can travel to the future or past. As you might guess, trouble ensues as individuals battle over its



acquisition. There will also be a thirty-page booklet of illustrations and song lyrics to accompany the CD. My short-term goal is to produce some videos and see if we can find an audience."

About his recent involvement with his old Cooper bandmates, Smith says, "It was great. For ten years I'd been trying to do something with the original crew, including producer Bob Ezrin, but everybody was so busy. Initially, since we were all scattered across the country, I needed workable demos along with click tracks. So Bob and Alice brought some outside players in and recorded demos with rough vocals. I had those to work with and just elaborated on the drum parts from there."

Smith chuckles when asked about a running gag between him and the Who's Keith Moon about who had the most drums on stage. "That's kind of an urban legend that Alice started," Neal says. "But yes, I was surely influenced by Keith, and by Ginger Baker, especially in terms of playing double bass. Cozy Powell and Mitch Mitchell as well. And my mom loved big band swing, so my first idol was Gene Krupa, and of course Buddy Rich. Later on, with the surf sound of the '60s it was guys like Sandy Nelson and Dennis Wilson." And for all you Alice Cooper fans who ever wondered what became of the iconic mascot snake named Kachina, Smith says, "We lost her on the *School's Out* tour—but she's forever memorialized in my naming my record company after her!" **Bob Girouard**

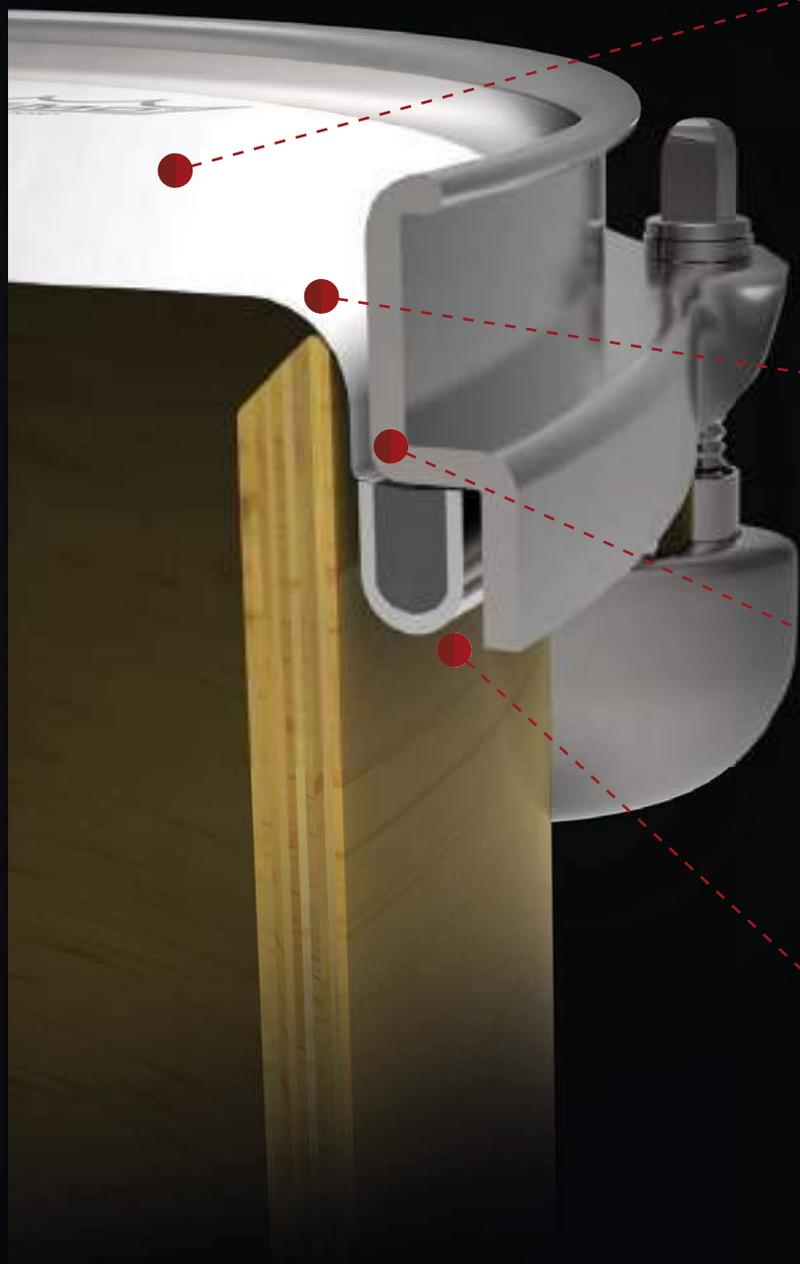


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Matt Garstka

The drummer with Animals as Leaders has gone about as deeply into the art as one man can, and he loves nothing more than sharing what he's discovered. Here's to the explorers!

Extrême progressive rock demands more from drummers today than ever before—more muscle, more technique, and more determination and understanding to play the music and make it their own. Often requiring drummers to track their contributions to a master recording set to either a click or preprogrammed drums, the prog overlords (disguised as producers, guitarists, bassists, and keyboard players) use us as tools to fulfill their mad metric fantasies. Their brand of rock views drummers as dream merchants, as man-machines to be challenged and confounded. Today's timekeeper is expected to master exceedingly complex patterns, making music out of blitzkrieg notes often beat mapped

in Pro Tools, created in Superior Drummer, or sonically affected to intimate unidentifiable sources, only increasing the complexity and intensity of these manic arrangements.

One person who's more than able to complete such twenty-first-century tasks is Los Angeles transplant and Animals as Leaders drummer Matt Garstka, who hails from Westfield, Massachusetts. Revered by a legion of fans yet still enthusiastically underground, Animals as Leaders, from Washington, D.C., takes its cues from such prog stalwarts as King Crimson, Rush, and Meshuggah, then realigns and meshes the eclectic sounds within a turbulent sea of odd meters, cross-rhythms, savage turnarounds,



Story by Ken Micallef
Photos by Alex Solca

confusing time cuts, and overboard, otherworldly arrangements.

The band, which also includes guitarists Tosin Abasi and Javier Reyes, has counted among its ranks such master drummers as Matt Halpern (2009) and Navene Koperweis (2009–2012), but Garstka's approach is very different, and the results are surprising. Benefitting from expert programming skills, profound technical and interpretive abilities, and unusual visualization techniques, Garstka brings together various disciplines in his highly motivated and creative playing.

AAL's latest album, *The Joy of Motion*, is evidence of Garstka's growing mastery. From the skull-cracking patterns and yawning

guitar chasms of opener "Cascade" to the slip-sliding metric profundity of "Lippincott," the majestically flowing head crunch of "Mind-Spun," the string-slapping funk of "Physical Education," and the hyper-explosive rhythms of "Tooth and Claw" and "The Woven Web," Garstka acquits himself like the gifted musician he is. Perhaps most important, beyond the complex patterns, Garstka grooves—*hard*. With his Tama drums and Meinl cymbals his only friends amid an onslaught of layered melodies and spasmodically jerking rhythms, Matt comes up for air only long enough to re-submerge himself, holding nothing back in AAL's ominous brew.



MD: You're remarkably relaxed when you play. How do you stay that way while playing such extreme music?

Matt: For me it's all about starting slow and building a solid foundation. A lot of this music is really difficult at first. I want to feel the music wherever I am playing it. To make it feel natural while learning the music, I slow down the beat rather than trying to maintain the tempo or play it a thousand times to become comfortable with the tempo. I want to feel natural playing the song as soon as possible, which means slowing it down. By doing that I'm feeling it, I'm grooving with it, and then I can free up some of the CPU part of my brain to think about dynamics, accuracy, groove, feel, or different embellishments or orchestrations. The more I do that, the more I'm building a

strong foundation of groove, and I'm relaxed and comfortable. Then it's effortless when I speed it up.

MD: How do you slow down a track? There are so many parts in some of these songs.

Matt: Some parts don't require slowing down if it's a similar groove to something else. Like "Air Chrysalis" or "The Future That Awaited Me"—both of those are based around a half-time shuffle or a 6/8. I've played enough of those that it was second nature. But in the breakdown to "The Woven Web," or all of "Mind-Spun," "Lippincott," or "Kascade," those are more difficult songs that I slowed down by playing to the guitar stems with a program called Amazing Slow Downer.

MD: This style of extreme prog is very intense, but it doesn't often groove. Yet you

always make it groove.

Matt: That's one of the things that make Animals as Leaders different. Their music is not as rigid as a typical metal band's. There's more leeway and incentive to groove. But the weird time signatures and the cuts—like going from playing three bars of 4/4 into a bar of 7/8—are hard; they can feel and sound unnatural. The challenge is to make it all feel natural. I really had to have a solid understanding of what was happening with all the time cuts and time signatures. Only after really ingraining all of that on a crazy level was I able to free myself from counting and get more into feeling the groove and delivering the parts rather than just playing them.

MD: So a lot of repetition?

Matt: Yes. That was another challenging

"I practiced eight hours a day during my first two years at Berklee. Some people criticized me: 'You're just beating a dead horse. You're not learning anything new.' I'm so glad I didn't listen to them."



aspect. First it was understanding the parts, then it was about the individual arrangements. All these crazy AABA, CDAB forms—getting all that ingrained.

LEARNING WITH LEADERS

MD: What was your process?

Matt: For the older material I wrote some charts, but for *The Joy of Motion* it was all by ear. Programming all the drums before recording them was a challenge. They're used to working with Superior Drummer—that's how they like to audition the part. I could have played it for them myself, but they wanted to hear what a recorded version would sound like.

MD: You must be a great programmer.

Matt: I've been working with Superior Drummer for a while, and that was one of the most challenging aspects of this, programming every note, including ghost notes. And trying to program the songs at the right velocity, when, for instance, you have 8th notes and the quarters are accented—getting the notes accented accurately to where it sounds natural. But it helped me to ultimately be aware of every note. I really had to question the validity of every note I played on the record.

MD: The demand for you to program the drums first almost sounds like a whim.

Matt: It was a battle getting them to record real drums, because they are so comfortable with Superior Drummer. But it's actually more cost-efficient. When you already have the drums programmed, the band can take its time and they don't have to hire an engineer or a studio. I'm glad I did it—but I don't want to do it again! And I don't think we'll work that way again.

MD: Did you record drums to their tracks? Did you punch in parts as well?

Matt: I recorded to their two eight-string guitar tracks. Synth bass too. I played to their final rhythm tracks, which they were able to record because they had my programmed drums. We definitely punched in some drums, but I recorded the twelve songs in four and a half days, so there wasn't a lot of time for punching in. But some parts I wanted perfect, with less quantizing to my drums. I prefer that the quantizing be minimal, and there was less of it than on past AAL albums. It was more organic. But a bit of groove was lost with the quantizing on a couple songs.

MD: When creating a part with AAL, how do you decide what to follow, synth bass

or guitars?

Matt: I follow the music as a whole. I try to hear the parts all at once. It's easier in this case, because the ideas are pretty solidified and coming from one or two people. I think a drummer's job is to accentuate the phrase and glue the music together. Pick which notes are most important, accent those, then glue it all together.

MD: Which track from *The Joy of Motion* was the hardest to master? To a listener they sound equally difficult.

Matt: The most challenging track was "Mind-Spun," because it's so techy and subdivided, but I'm not hitting every subdivision. There's a lot of upbeats on the 16th notes, and missing downbeats, which makes it challenging because I have to subdivide in my head. And there's a couple parts that I wrote on the computer for "Mind-Spun." I programmed it before playing it, thinking, *This'll sound sick*. I was just following my ear, which is one benefit to Superior Drummer—it's based off your ear and what you know you're playing on the drums or what it's sounding like. I wrote the part for "Mind-Spun" before trying to play it. Then, when I tried to play it, I thought, *What have I done! I've set myself up*

for destruction. But with some time I got the part; it just took a lot of slowing it down and feeling natural with it. That particular part was in 11/8, 13/8, 11/8, 10/8, back to back.

MD: Are you displacing beats as well as playing odd meters on the album?

Matt: I wouldn't call it a displacement, just a part that sounds odd. A funny little tail on this animal! [laughs]

MD: Can you break down the two tracks you played for our online video?

Matt: The main groove in "The Future That Awaited Me" is a triplet groove that resembles a half-time shuffle in the way it's swung and the backbeat on 3. The backbeats ground the groove, and the kicks with cymbals on "a" lift the groove. I fill in the rest with ghost notes and cymbal work.

For the "Nephele" intro, the feels switch from half time in triplets to backbeats on 2 and 4. Kicks are accenting guitar chugs. I tried to keep the patterns and phrasing of the fills simple but strong, even though they are subdivided in sextuplets/16th-note triplets.

FROM BERKLEE TO AFRICA AND BACK AGAIN

MD: You attended Berklee College of Music from 2007 to 2011. What was your focus?

Influences

Dave Weckl Synergy, Master Plan, Perpetual Motion (Dave Weckl) // **Allan Holdsworth** Secrets (Vinnie Colaiuta, Chad Wackerman) // **Tony Williams** Life Time (Tony Williams) // **Chick Corea Elektric Band II** Paint the World (Gary Novak) // **Dafnis Prieto** About the Monks (Dafnis Prieto) // **Billy Cobham** Rudiments: The Billy Cobham Anthology (Billy Cobham) // **Chick Corea** My Spanish Heart (Steve Gadd) // **David Lee Roth** DLR Band (Ray Luzier) // **Tony Grey** Chasing Shadows (Chris Dave, Ronald Bruner Jr., Martin Valihora) // **Tower of Power** What Is Hip? The Tower of Power Anthology (David Garibaldi, Russ McKinnon, Herman Matthews, David Bartlett, Mick Mestek)

Matt: I was a performance major, but I only received a diploma because I didn't do the liberal arts courses. During Berklee I went on the road with a hip-hop/reggae band from Senegal, Gokh-Bi System. They mix contemporary hip-hop with traditional Senegalese music.

MD: What was that experience like?

Matt: It was incredible. They embody music—it's just in them. The band's name means "neighborhood system." My mentor, bassist Jo Sallins, had visited Africa and met them in Senegal. He recommended me for a one-off fill-in gig. Jo later told me they said, "Man, we need a guy who can really play drums," and he said, "Trust me." Once I played with them they told Jo, "He's great!" That one gig led to more work with them,

and that's how it's been with most of the opportunities I've had. Somebody else doesn't show up and I get the call, and then I'm the new guy. That's a good lesson to drummers: Don't miss your gig.

MD: Were you playing Tony Allen-style Afrobeat rhythms with them?

Matt: It was a mix of soca, bembé, reggae, and hip-hop. I'd learned bembé and other African rhythms, but music is about the ear. I think it's important to learn the traditional rhythms, but from that you create new ideas. I don't try to put it into a box before I even play it.

MD: So is Animals as Leaders your second professional gig?

Matt: No, definitely not my second gig. I've been gigging since I was twelve years old,

Matt's Setup

Drums: Tama Bubinga Elite series in mocha burst finish

- A. 6.5x14 Starclassic brass snare
- B. 6x8 tom
- C. 7x10 Hyper-Drive tom
- D. 8x12 Hyper-Drive tom
- E. 12x14 floor tom
- F. 14x16 floor tom
- G. 16x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Meinl

- 1. 14" Byzance Vintage Sand Hats
- 2. 18" Byzance Jazz Extra Thin crash
- 3. 6" Byzance Traditional splash
- 4. 18" Symphonic crash
- 5. 22" Byzance Extra Dry Thin ride
- 6. Custom 18" Byzance Extra Dry crash with holes stacked on custom 16" Byzance Extra Dry China with holes
- 7. 20" Byzance Traditional China



Heads: Remo, including Coated Powerstroke 77 snare batter and Clear Ambassador snare-side, Coated Vintage Emperor tom batters

and Clear Ambassador bottoms, and Coated Powerstroke 4 bass drum batter and Coated Emperor or Ambassador front head

Sticks: Vic Firth American Classic 55A and Tomas Haake SHAA signature models

Go to moderndrummer.com to watch Matt demonstrate his parts from the Animals as Leaders tracks "The Future That Awaited Me" and "Nephele."



with my dad [Greg Garstka] and Jo Sallins and other local Massachusetts musicians. Nothing on the level of Animals, but I've played reggae music, rock with guitarist Desiree Bassett, punk for a couple years. I paid my dues in club bands and bar bands all over New England. I've played rock, punk, reggae, Latin, country, and metal, and in a trio with my dad and Jo Sallins.

I've been lucky enough to make a living doing this since I was twelve. I never worked another job. Avoiding having to work another job was a big motivator for me. And I've been teaching drums since I was fourteen at my dad's music store [Performance Music] and privately. I also recorded the album *Defense Mechanisms* with French bassist Louis de Mieulle. I'm really proud of that. His music is the perfect meld of improvisatory jazz and classical counterpoint. Those dualities are there with polyrhythms as well.

TEACHING TYKES, VISUALIZING VISTAS

MD: What was your teaching method at fourteen?

Matt: I was teaching kids my age. I've been taking lessons since I was eight. I started playing drums in my dad's store, and he saw

some potential and I started taking lessons. I've gone through *Stick Control*, *The Drummer's Bible*, *The Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming*, and all the grooves and rudiments. Sometimes I taught people older than me. From seventeen to entering college I taught thirty- to forty-year-olds. Like Mike Johnston said, "We're all at a different point in the journey."

MD: Did you play in school bands as well?

Matt: I did, but it wasn't a huge help. By then I was already ahead of the curve. Working with my dad got me into visualizing what I would play rather than playing this beat to that type of music. My dad taught me to be more creative and to visualize ideas, like "trudging through a grassy knoll with the wind at our backs." At first I didn't understand. But that's what

happens when you listen to music. It takes you somewhere else.

MD: So your dad would present a song to you and then tell you to visualize an idea from which to create your drumming?

Matt: Yes. For instance, if I thought of trudging through a grassy knoll, the trudging was the floor tom and the bass drum. The color of the grassy knoll, green, would be the cymbals. That would give the green texture and invoke that thought. At first I didn't understand, and I sucked at it. *Why can't I just play the beat that I want to play?* Over time, what he was saying clicked, but it took time.

MD: That must have helped your overall interpretive skills.

Matt: Oh, yeah, and I still do that. Often it's the harmonies that spark that way

"Often when practicing I'll start out like I'm playing a drum solo, then if I hit a trouble spot I'll stop and specifically practice what is giving me trouble. I'll fill in the pothole, and the next time I travel that road it'll be smooth."

Matt Garstka

of thinking; the drums can do that too. It's not an attribute exclusive to harmonic instruments.

MD: Did anything else happen during your formative years that helped propel or drive you?

Matt: There's no sacred secret, unfortunately. It's all these pixels that make the big picture. All these different aspects: the visualization, learning the beats for the various styles, the coordination, the feel and groove aspects, the aspect of being professional and being reliable, the aspect of being an artist and choosing who to

work with, the aspect of being a scientist where you're analyzing and dissecting and trying to create much like a chemist would, the time management of practice—all these aspects that come together into one discipline. It's many things, and I was lucky enough to be around it so much that I learned many of these aspects early on.

THE REAL MATT GARSTKA

MD: At your site, theRealMattGarstka.com, your videos and lessons give as much weight to ghost notes as to the other elements of a beat. Many drummers look at

ghost notes as almost an aftereffect of the main beat, not central to it. But you give every part of a rhythm equal weight.

Matt: I think that approach to ghost notes is becoming more standard. It's a powerful effect. I think of it like a shaker giving a 16th-note subdivision to the beat. The ghost notes give you that effect. They're not doing that exactly, but they are filling in. Where there's a bass drum in the bar, your left hand can rest. Where there's a hi-hat in the groove, your left hand could probably rest. But anytime between that, your left hand can subdivide, playing ghost notes on the snare drum. Part of the allure is the challenge of making ghost notes sound really steady, as if they're a shaker, yet it's a very syncopated rhythm. Ghost notes can act as a counter-rhythm to the [main] beat, almost like a mirror image of the main phrase. Yes, it can be an afterthought, but it can also be a forethought, an anticipation.

MD: You programmed the ghost notes with AAL using Superior Drummer?

Matt: Yes, I did. I don't say that it's equal, though. There's a line of division. What can you take out first [to make the beat stronger]? Probably the ghost notes. Snare hits that aren't on the backbeat, after that. Then you could remove bass drum notes that are anticipating the snare drum. There's a hierarchy of what's most important [to stress]. Ghost notes do fall on the lower end of importance. You just need to know how to build the part, what comes first and is most important, and that's typically the pulse, which is usually assigned to the right hand.

MD: Are your drum fills predetermined or improvised?

Matt: Ninety percent of the time they're improvised. That's a bit of fun for me. I'm still playing to the phrase. The fill isn't separate for me. It's the fill that preps the transition, like a conductor would. Or it accentuates the ending of a part. I have a lot of fun trying out different sticking patterns while adhering to the phrase.

MD: Your list of influential records contains primarily old-school guys: Steve Gadd, Tony Williams, David Garibaldi, Dave Weckl, along with Dafnis Prieto and Ronald Bruner.

Matt: They gave me the most! I like their musicality. With all those guys you get dynamics and clarity while retaining good feel, groove, spontaneity, and the organization of planned parts. They are so full of music. If I can get ten hours of music in ten minutes, I will do it, and with those drummers that's what I get.

MD: When playing solos, are you thinking

The advertisement features a central image of drummer Aquiles Priester holding a large, black, circular drum case with the Ahead Armor Cases logo. The background is a dark, textured blue with a red border at the top and bottom. Text elements include: 'AHEAD ARMOR CASES' in a stylized logo at the top left; 'THE NEXT LEVEL IN PROTECTION' in large, bold, white and red letters at the top right; 'AHEAD ARMOR PROUDLY WELCOMES' in white text above a signature; 'AQUILES PRIESTER' in white text below the signature; 'WATCH AQUILES PRIESTER SOLO >>' in white text at the bottom left; a QR code below the text; and 'AHEADARMORCASES.COM' and 'DISTRIBUTED BY BIG BANG DISTRIBUTION | 818.727.1127' in white text at the bottom.



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Matt Garstka

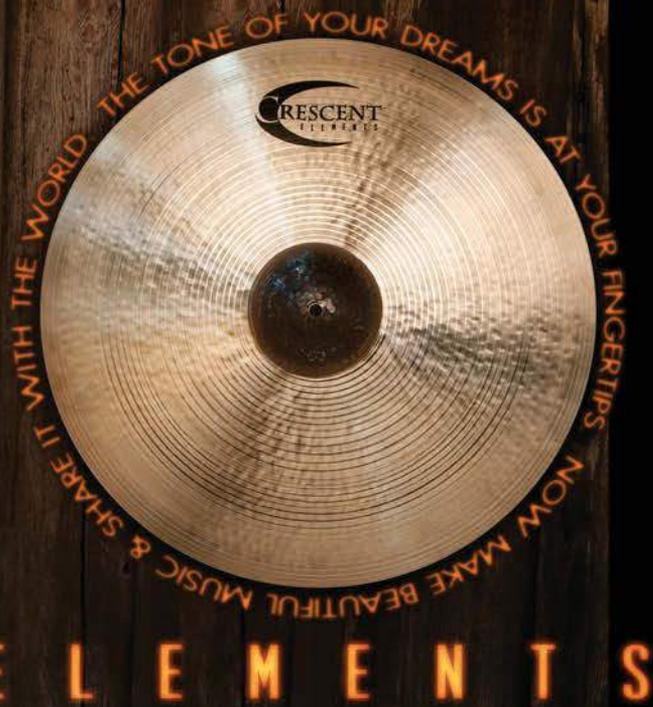
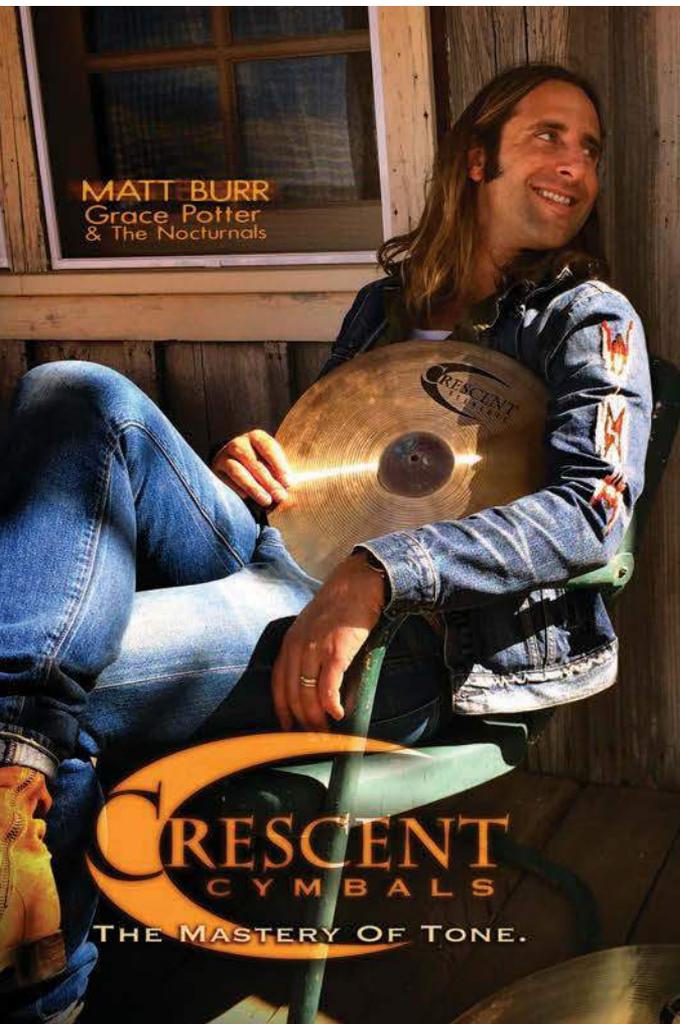
of the form or playing free?

Matt: I think of a solo as a journey, taking an idea and transforming it. If I'm soloing to a vamp, I'm playing around that phrase and twisting it in as many ways as possible, bending the listener's ear and altering the perception of time. It depends on the situation. If I'm at [Los Angeles club] the Baked Potato, I'll stick to the song form, unless it's a vamp. The majority of my solos are over a vamp. If it's just me alone, then it's wherever my mind takes me. Often when practicing I'll start out like I'm playing a drum solo, then if I hit a trouble spot I'll stop and specifically practice what is giving me trouble. I look as that like I'm traveling on this road and I've hit a pothole. I won't just keep going. I'll stop and fill in the pothole. The next time I travel that road it'll be smooth.

FLIP, FLOP, AND FLY!

MD: How else do you practice?

Matt: I like to balance my practice: about half technical focus and the other half playing creatively—the fun part. But the line is getting blurred more and more. I'm feeling more musical now than in the past. Technically, I have this thing I call the Universal Function. It's a coordination



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Matt Garstka

routine, but it's very applicable to music. Often, coordination routines are not applicable to anything unless you're playing Afro-Cuban. But I've devised a typical right-hand pattern, with rudiments between bass drum and snare. Really homing in on the kick/snare relationship, playing rudiments that are useful, like inverted doubles or inverted paradiddles or inverted paradiddle-diddles, and combinations of those or groups of five and groups of seven. Or I do typical broken-up and accented 16th-note patterns between the snare and bass drum. It's a system—different right-hand patterns and different kick/snare patterns. It's like Gary Chester's *New Breed*. Taking patterns and flipping them.

MD: What do you mean by flipping them?

Matt: It could be playing a pattern backwards, starting it in a different place in the bar, playing it with different orchestration around the kit, displacing it, or adding a note to the phrase. There are endless ways to flip a pattern. You're creating new ways to improvise with patterns you know well.

MD: I've read on your website that you practice polyrhythms over a 4/4 beat to master them. Why do that?

Matt: I do that because music is usually subdivided in groups of two or three—16th

notes, triplets, 8th notes, 16th-note triplets.... I use that as the rate, in 4/4 common time. That allows me to play over the beat and open up my phrasing so I'm not limited by the barlines.

MD: There's an older video online of you playing with other drummers at Berklee. You play with such articulation and strength; it's seamless. What tips can you give for strength and articulation?

Matt: Practice slowly. That is much like zooming in on something. Naturally, after you zoom in and work on it, when you zoom out it will sound more defined, articulate, and graphic. People focus a lot on the exact sticking, but it's more important *how* you're doing it, and what you're thinking about. Whatever you're practicing, do it slowly and clearly. Begin slowly, and as you play faster there will be more music in your playing.

MD: Did you go through a period of practicing many hours a day?

Matt: Oh, yeah, for sure. When I was fourteen I practiced four hours a day. At sixteen I practiced six hours a day. The summer before attending Berklee I prepared by doing marathon practice sessions, eight hours a day. I would wake up at six o'clock to practice my forty essential rudiments before school, practice on the

bus to school, practice at lunch. I was obsessive. But I was also trying to make good use of the time. I practiced eight hours a day during my first two years at Berklee. Some people criticized me: "Man, you're going to hurt yourself." But I was good. I did yoga, and if my left hand hurt I worked with my right hand. Some guys said, "You're just beating a dead horse. You're not learning anything new." I never believed that. To this day I'm so glad I didn't listen to them.

MD: How did you tend to organize those practice sessions?

Matt: If I went in there without a plan I could go two hours strong. But I needed a plan to go longer. I would do an hour of double bass work, an hour with *Syncopation* working on jazz patterns, an hour of classical reading or marching snare drum, then big band reading. Afro-Cuban stuff, an hour of pure chops, an hour of simple groove pocket. I have lots of lists from over the years, some from working with my teacher Bob Gullotti. I practiced on pad and drumset. Many times we're forced to practice on a pad. Maybe visualize the kit as you play the pad.

MD: How else have you used visualization?

Matt: I would visualize myself playing at events too, like playing at the Modern

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Matt Garstka

Drummer Festival or at PASIC or at the Guitar Center Drum-Off competition, as a guest. I've envisioned myself playing at the Meinl Drum Festival. I can't tell you how many times I've envisioned myself playing with Chick Corea. Thousands of times. It helps me so that when that opportunity comes I'll be prepared and it won't be so intimidating. It's a motivator.

MD: All of this speaks to your high level of motivation. Where does that come from?

Matt: I want to take over the world! [laughs] I just want to be better than Vinnie

[Colaiuta]! [laughs] Being the best for the best's sake will not last. What lasts is passion and love for the craft. And being able to see it in many different ways. I see drumming as an art, as a sport, as an escape, as a source of knowledge, as a science. There are so many different things that I get from it. The love for it propels me forward, and I try to put that in my practice.

Seeing it in these different ways keeps it interesting. It's not like going to the gym for eight hours a day. You're doing this thing that has so many intricate parts that there

are so many ways you can be entertained. Groove is one aspect, then the technical side, then the sport side, like attaining speed. If it interests you, it's easier to fixate and focus. Often it relates—it's like life. It can tell me things about myself or how I'm feeling. It's like a source of knowledge. I can meditate on the drums. I can space out. Or I can be really focused.

MD: In one of your blogs on your site you write that "an interesting phrase often has a twist. Before you can throw in the twist you must establish the basis for the twist."

Matt: The phrase is a riddle! I compare it to a movie or a play. The characters and the setting are established first. Then they can throw in the plot twist. I think of a drumming phrase in the same way. You establish the time and the feel, then you can play with the phrasing. I also think of a phrase as a smaller version of an arrangement. Like if you were to take a simple rhythm and make that A. Then you modify it and that is B, then modify it again to C. You apply any song structure to those three versions and it will sound as a phrase, another way of looking at it.

MD: In one of your online lessons, you talk about achieving "maximum output with minimum input."

Matt: That pertains to the phrase "It ain't what you got, it's what you do with it." Something crucial is taking one idea and developing it in a variety of ways. You can have a hundred ideas, but you want to take the listener on a journey. You do that by developing that idea.

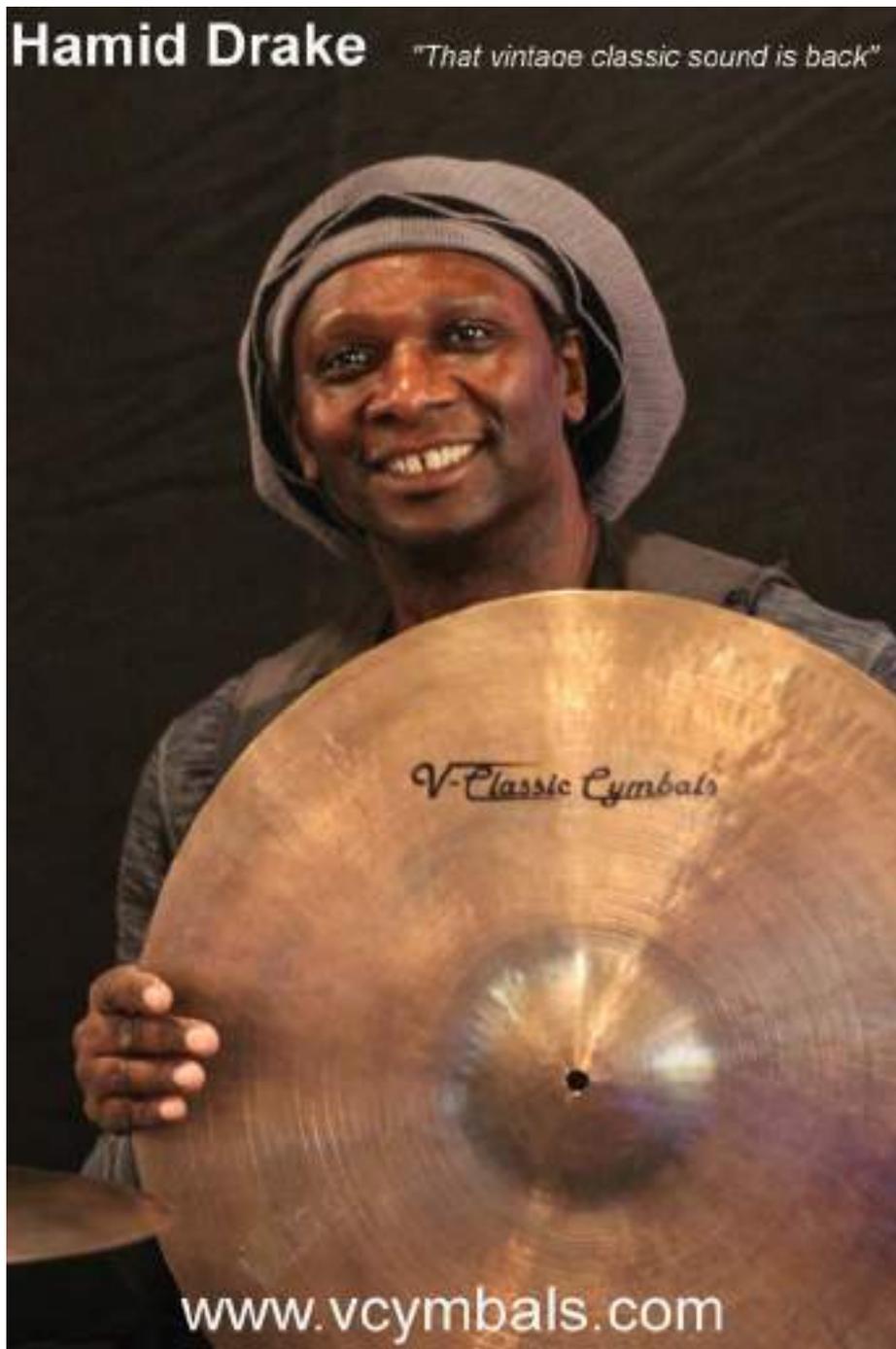
FUTURE TENSE

MD: You've been working on solo material. Where are you with that?

Matt: I've written a few songs—a rap song, odd-metered guitar songs, reggae songs. I like the idea of a cohesive album, and I'm trying to figure out my sound and concept. I'm playing all the instruments, including keyboard, bass, and guitar, but mostly programmed piano and bass.

MD: You're unlike a lot of drummers in the progressive world in that you know the history, not just metal.

Matt: That's sad to me. In the metal scene they're diehard fans of metal. Often they know everything on the metal front but they don't know enough of the history. That's why there's so much [imitates burning double bass pattern], but there's not a lot of vocabulary in there. But that's why I love Vinnie [Colaiuta] and Dave [Weckl] and [David] Garibaldi: They're really saying something. Yeah, I love those guys.



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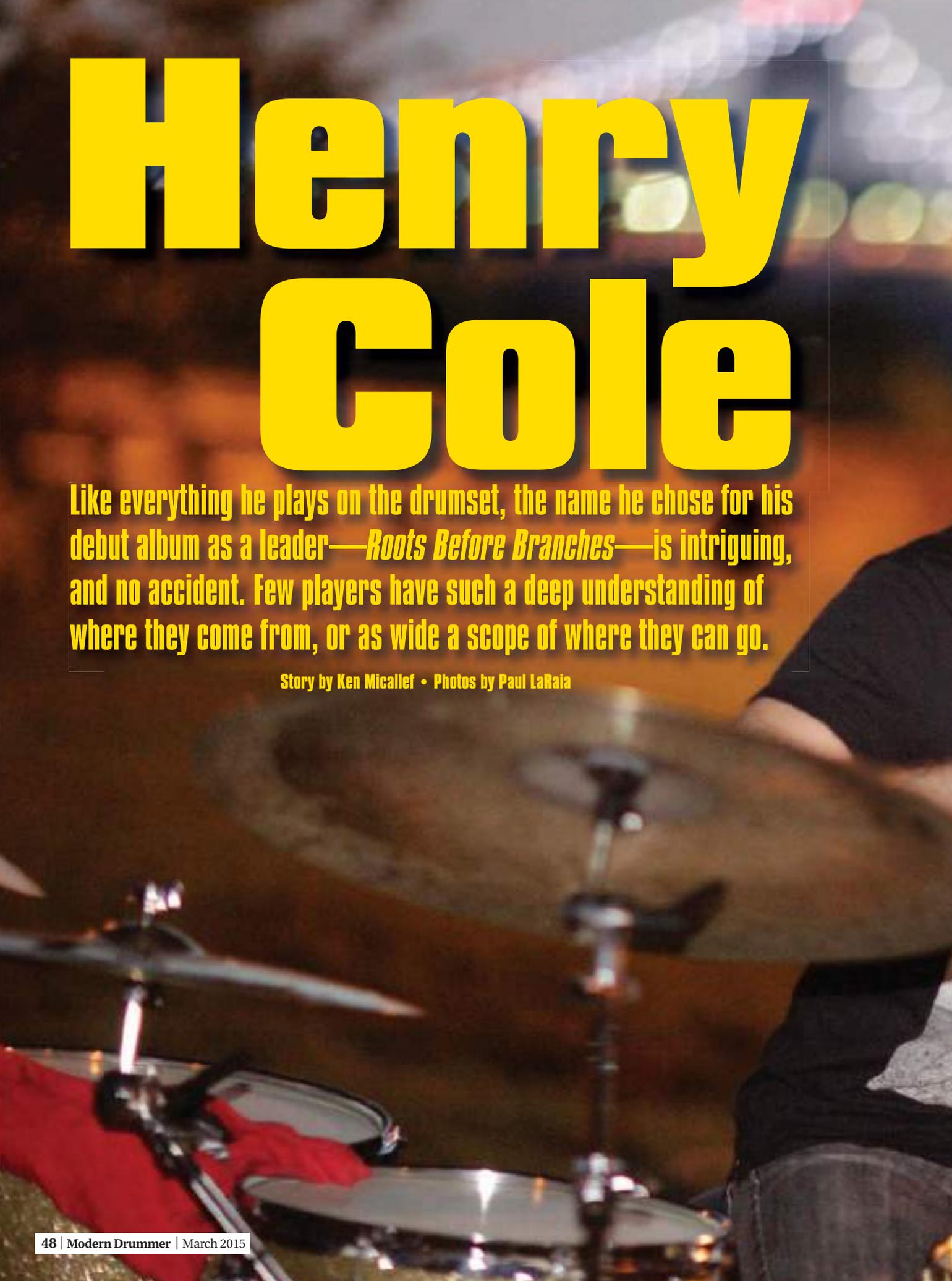
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Henry Cole

Like everything he plays on the drumset, the name he chose for his debut album as a leader—*Roots Before Branches*—is intriguing, and no accident. Few players have such a deep understanding of where they come from, or as wide a scope of where they can go.

Story by Ken Micallef • Photos by Paul LaRaia



Ever since Chano Pozo arrived from Cuba in 1944 to work with Dizzy Gillespie, Latin American percussionists have enriched and propelled American jazz. Pozo was the first “Latin jazz” percussionist to energize swing rhythms with Afro-Caribbean punctuations. He was eventually followed by Mongo Santamaria, Armando Peraza, and Desi Arnaz. Later, New York-born (of Puerto Rican heritage) percussionist and drummer Willie Bobo found massive mid-’60s success with his album *Spanish Grease*, planting the seeds for Latin rock. Brazilian drummers Dom Um Romão and Robertinho Silva brought the Rio pulse during the bossa nova and fusion eras of the ’60s and ’70s, respectively. The Latin jazz trend has continued to the present day, with drummers as diverse as Ignacio Berroa, Horacio “El Negro” Hernandez, Antonio Sanchez, and Dafnis Prieto stretching the fabric of jazz with deep knowledge and serious innovation. The latest drummer/percussionist to join the party is Puerto Rican-born Henry Cole.

At a recent performance by pianist Fabian Almazan’s trio at New York City’s Village Vanguard, Cole played like the wind and the water, constantly morphing and blending his rhythms to support Almazan’s intense compositions. Cole took on so many shapes that he seemed like a hybrid voodoo conjurer: swinging feverishly, pumping the Puerto Rican plena, driving subtle samba topped with popping timbale-like accents. There was no dual sense of a drummer and his technique supporting the music; this playing was raw and primal, as if Cole had studied multiple techniques and then thrown them all away. His rhythms were passionate, propulsive, sweaty, and sensitive. And he never once looked at a chart.

On Henry Cole and the Afrobeat Collective’s *Roots Before Branches*, the drummer spreads the net even wider, stylizing plena to burn beats through folk, funk, techno, and Afrobeat filters. Since arriving in 2006, Cole has become one of New York’s busiest musicians, working with figures like Eric Reed, Miguel Zenón, and Adam Rogers, to name a few. But Cole’s biggest break is as the newest member of vibraphonist Gary Burton’s group.

“Chick Corea called me to be in his trio after he heard me on the Ninety Miles tour,” Cole explains, referring to the Latin-jazz project featuring vibraphonist Stefon Harris, saxophonist David Sánchez, and trumpeter Christian Scott. “The rehearsals were scheduled for the same day Hurricane Sandy hit, so the sessions were canceled. When Gary Burton needed a drummer, Chick recommended me. The audition was Gary seeing me playing with Miguel Zenón on YouTube. Then Gary called me to tour. We began rehearsals the same day of the first gig.”

Cole was schooled on orchestral percussion at the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music and on jazz at Berklee in Boston, and he studied with drummer John Riley at the Manhattan School of Music. These days the education found in the clubs of New York City and Europe is studying and listening to Henry Cole.

MD: You play many hybrid rhythms within as many different styles. What, for instance, is the rhythm you play on “Snails in the Creek” from Alfredo Rodriguez’s *The Invasion Parade*?

Henry: That groove doesn’t have a specific name, but I’m playing off the percussionist’s bata rhythms. Instead of trying to play a pattern on top of the percussionists, I’m playing something that complements their rhythm and hopefully makes it one rhythm.

MD: On “Awakening” from Miguel Zenón’s *Awake* album, you play patterns that are basically free.

Henry: When playing free I sometimes use a “layers” approach. So, for example, if one

“The Puerto Rican musician represents the guy who can play all the styles. That’s who I am: a drummer from Puerto Rico who can play different styles.”

musician is playing in two and I’m playing in three on top of his two, it will sound free. That comes naturally to me. The other day I was playing a drum solo in a recording session. Nate Wood was the engineer. He asked, “Are you thinking in sevens?” And I was. But the saxophonist, Ben Wendel, thought I was playing free. So with free music you can approach it as playing totally free, reacting to what you hear, or you can play in layers. You can

play inside—just be present.

MD: What is your approach to incorporating Western technique and folkloric rhythms?

Henry: I love technique, but I take the Bruce Lee approach. He studied all the martial arts and created one of his own. He studied many religions, but he came to his own conclusions. He studied bodybuilding and American boxing to be a better fighter,

not just better at one style. He conveyed his message by becoming an actor and a director. He died at thirty-two, but he created the standard for action movies. He went from learning one style to mastering many. That’s what I want to do.

MD: Generally your snare drum has more of a timbale sound; it’s dry and crisp.

Henry: I play lots of rimshots. My tuning is very specific and never changes. When I got my first DW drums in 2006, I tuned each

drum for a sound, then I took that to the piano to find the closest note. So when I go on tour now I tune each drum with the pitch pipe to those original notes. That’s my reference.

My snare tuning approach is like the sound of a djembe; I want the snare drum to create a conversational sound. I also use a second snare drum tuned lower, not so much for the two-snare approach, but because it lets me play Billy Higgins–style comping. It’s meaty.

MD: The fours you trade with Eric Reed on “Evidence,” from his album *The Baddest Monk*, are unique for the sound of the drums and the notes played. What was your approach there?

Henry: Coming from Puerto Rico, I was insecure as a drummer in this traditional jazz role. Teachers will say, “You are not playing the ride correctly.” As a student it can be very frustrating. Being Puerto Rican opened one door, but then people branded me as a Latin drummer. I always felt insecure. I always wondered: *Am I swinging?* That feeling of insecurity was there until I started transcribing conga and quinto rumba players. That language is always

RECORDINGS

Henry Cole and the Afrobeat Collective Roots Before Branches /// **Miguel Zenón** Identities Are Changeable, Esta Plena /// **Alfredo Rodriguez** The Invasion Parade /// **Eric Reed** The Baddest Monk /// **La PVC** Olvidate del Resto /// **Fabian Almazan** Rhizome





high and low sounds. At the same time I transcribed Philly Joe Jones and Roy Haynes, just their comping, which is also high and low sounds—snare and bass drum.

Eventually I had two pages of the rumba guys and two pages of the swing drummers, both playing high and low sounds. Some of these are the same phrases! The only thing I had to do was change the rumba transcription to the swing feel. Then I was free. I was playing from my soul. Of course, you learn the subtleties of the language of the musicians around you. When you relate to things outside your experience, then the differences are not so apparent.

MD: With Eric Reed you're expressing swing and your Puerto Rican culture right down the middle.

Henry: I adapt the Latin language with a swing feel—jazz comping and the ride cymbal. So I'm free of pretending I'm someone who I am not.

MD: Is Miguel Zenón's "Qué Será de Puerto Rico," from *Esta Plena*, a salsa pattern?

Henry: This is plena music. The drumset is playing off the plena rhythm, but it's not a plena pattern. There's usually no drumset in plena music. I didn't want to play a pattern that gets in the middle of everything. I am passionate about folkloric and ethnic rhythms, so I learned the plena language. Plena is played on the quinto, and, again,



Henry's Setup

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- F. 14x18 bass drum
- G. 14x20 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian

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- 5. 22" Bounce ride (or 20" prototype)

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Percussion: LP cowbells, tambourines, claws, Micro Snare, cajon pedal, Americana series cajon, and claws

Accessories: Promark Cymbal Sizzler

it's comprised of two main sounds. So I'm breaking up the plena rhythm between my snare and bass drum.

MD: How else have you brought Afro-Cuban or ethnic percussion to the drumset?

Henry: There isn't a strong drumset tradition in Puerto Rico. And the guys who played there when I was young were Dave Weckl or Will Kennedy, fusion drummers. I started hanging with the percussionists, like Giovanni Hidalgo, who is my hero, and Tony Carrillo, who played with Eddie Palmieri. Giovanni is the perfect combination of technique and language in balance. I played behind Giovanni many times, once playing a cowbell behind his solo for ten minutes, and he played nothing but language. Not technique, but language. So by the time Giovanni played his first roll, the audience was already on their feet. He can talk to the people—he understands their language.

You have to "habla," or talk. When the bandleader yells "Habla!" it means talk to the audience. The very *root* of the drums is to communicate. The drumset is a vehicle. Drum technique needs a phrase; it needs a context. I'm trying to create that balance, because I've seen so many great drummers who have great technique but sound really bad in a musical situation. You have to balance technique with your musical instincts, your ears, and your personality. In San Juan the only way to make a living as a musician is to play with everyone. You have to tune the drums for rock, jazz, and salsa. Eventually I could bring elements of each style to the other gigs.

MD: Is plena the dominant rhythm of Puerto Rico?

Henry: Yes, and bomba—two traditional musics. The Puerto Rican musician represents the guy who can play all the styles. Historically, we played for the soldiers, for the locals, for the slaves, for the people from Spain who wanted to hear paso dobles. That's who I am: a drummer from Puerto Rico who can play different styles.

MD: What was your focus at the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music?

"Danilo Pérez changed my drumming. He made me play in the moment."

Henry: At the conservatory, [pianist] Danilo Pérez changed my drumming to sound less like Dave Weckl and more like Roy Haynes. He influenced everyone who played with him, including Brian Blade and Antonio Sanchez. Instead of playing from muscle memory, Danilo made me play in the moment. Like in an echoey hall, you don't play with sticks—you play with brushes. It exposes your rhythmic abilities. He would say, "You play well, but you need more colors." Maybe a stick and a brush, or a brush and a mallet.

MD: What was your focus with John Riley at the Manhattan School of Music?

Henry: John was the real-time Wikipedia. If I didn't know something, John knew how to teach it. I would bring in transcriptions of Philly Joe Jones and Roy Haynes, and John would give me ideas of how to approach them. Or we would go over music that I was going to play with Miguel Zenón. Then I began subbing for Antonio Sanchez on his gig with Miguel.

MD: Why do you prefer to memorize charts rather than read on the gig?

Henry: The only way you are going to survive and bring something to the music with these New York cats is to memorize the music. I learned at the conservatory: You go measure by measure, page by page. I'm doing that with Gary Burton's music now. I want to bring my five-star best.

MD: How do you teach your students?

Henry: I take something that looks intricate and I break it down. We transcribe it, learn the language, play the technique. They're being exposed to the information, then they write their own ideas.

MD: Do jazz drummers come to you to learn Latin styles?

Henry: Yes, but more and more they say I play "open." That comes from a very disciplined and rooted place. So, for

example, we might take an Art Blakey phrase. Instead of playing it traditionally, we'll orchestrate it. So what you're doing is traditional, but you orchestrate it in a different way. So then it's open.

MD: What one experience had the biggest impact on your drumming?

Henry: I toured with Quincy Jones' small group in 2013. I practiced a lot for that gig, but playing with Giovanni when I was younger really made the biggest difference. After that, living in New York changes you.

MD: *Roots Before Branches* is progressive, it's organic, it's street, tribal, folk, acoustic, and electric.

Henry: This is all my experience. But it's not a jazz record. All my friends—Miguel Zenón, David Sánchez, Adam Rogers—are on the record, as well as two Puerto Rican percussionists.

MD: What influenced *Roots Before Branches*?

Henry: Fela Kuti and the Africa '70 with Ginger Baker, *Live!* It's rock, jazz, funk. It changed my mind. This is it! That's why I call it the Afrobeat Collective.

MD: What were the most challenging drum grooves on the album?

Henry: "Trabajala" was challenging. It's an Afrobeat groove. I'm trying the Tony Allen approach—percussion played through the drumset with language from the bomba tradition. Afrobeat is not a pattern. It's a style. "Solo Dos Veces" is straight Afrobeat, a hybrid between being open and being in the groove.

MD: What are you currently practicing and focusing on?

Henry: I take a holistic approach to being a musician. When I practice I don't play stuff that is more complicated. I play simply with a better sound. I eat better and exercise, so when I play the same things I will sound better with more projection. If you're more conscious of who you are as a person, you will sound better on your instrument. I practice from nine to six every day. I expose myself to many musicians, from Thomas Pridgen to Deantoni Parks to Steve Smith. I've been listening to Bob Marley and the Wailers for months. It's perfect music, perfect balance. I like Einstein, Newton. Greatness follows a similar path. Or Bruce Lee—he was great. He could do 500 punches with one hand.

INFLUENCES

Giovanni Hidalgo, Candido Camero, Carlos "Patato" Valdes The Conga Kings (Giovanni Hidalgo, Candido Camero, Carlos "Patato" Valdes) /// **Eddie Palmieri** Palo Pá Rumba (Charlie Cotto, Giovanni Hidalgo, Eladio Pérez) /// **Robi Draco Rosa** Vagabundo (Carla Azar, Geoff Dugmore) /// **Los Van Van** Volume III (Jose Luis Quintana aka Changuito) /// **David Sánchez** Melaza (Antonio Sanchez) /// **Kenny Garrett** Trilogy (Brian Blade) /// **Duke Ellington and John Coltrane** Duke Ellington and John Coltrane (Elvin Jones, Sam Woodyard) /// **Pancho Quinto** En el Solar la Cueva del Humo (Pancho Quinto) /// **Bob Marley and the Wailers** Songs of Freedom box set (Carlton Barrett) /// **Fela Kuti and the Africa '70 With Ginger Baker** Live! (Tony Allen, Ginger Baker)



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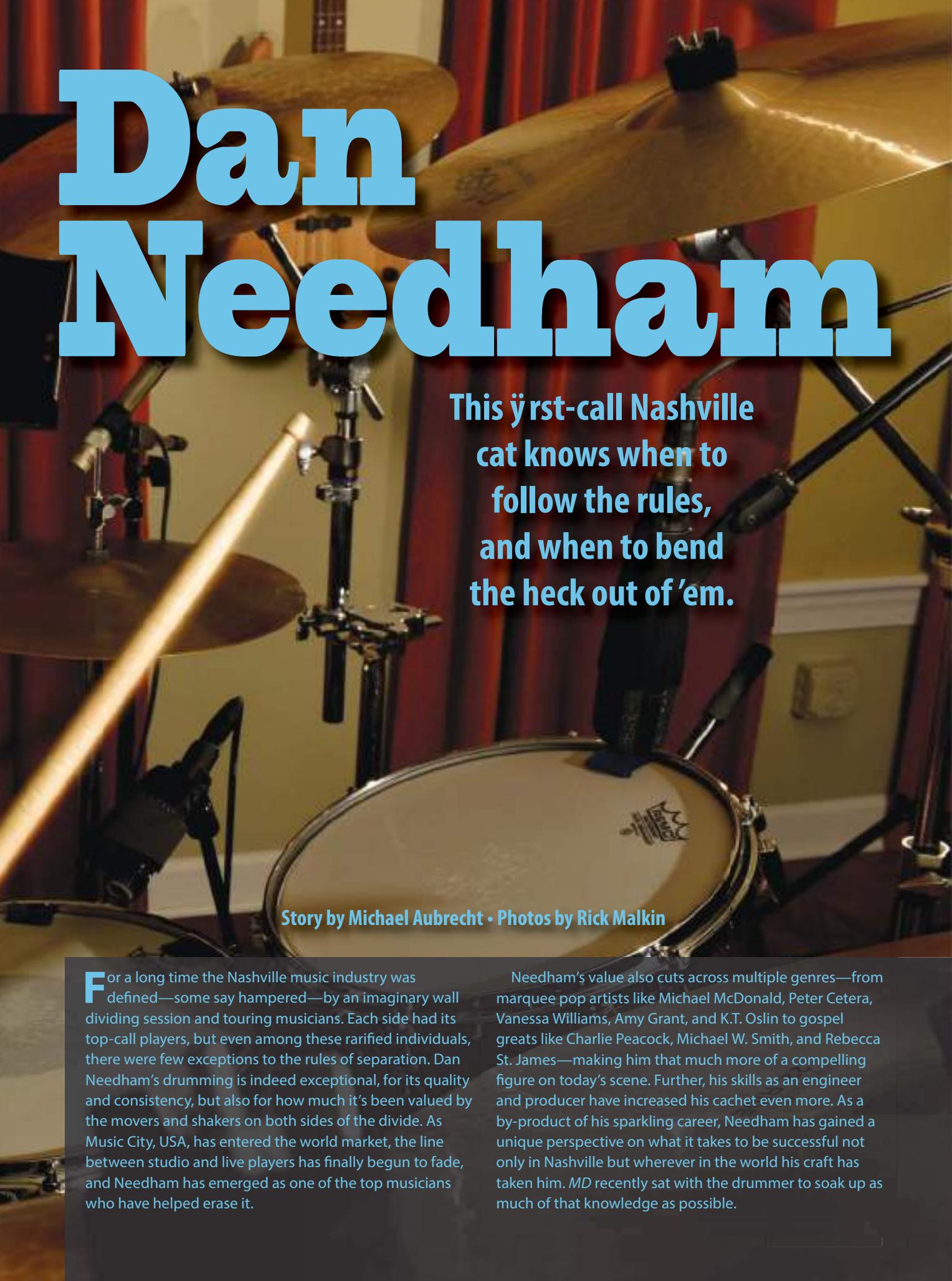


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Dan Needham

This first-call Nashville cat knows when to follow the rules, and when to bend the heck out of 'em.

Story by Michael Aubrecht • Photos by Rick Malkin

For a long time the Nashville music industry was defined—some say hampered—by an imaginary wall dividing session and touring musicians. Each side had its top-call players, but even among these rarified individuals, there were few exceptions to the rules of separation. Dan Needham's drumming is indeed exceptional, for its quality and consistency, but also for how much it's been valued by the movers and shakers on both sides of the divide. As Music City, USA, has entered the world market, the line between studio and live players has finally begun to fade, and Needham has emerged as one of the top musicians who have helped erase it.

Needham's value also cuts across multiple genres—from marquee pop artists like Michael McDonald, Peter Cetera, Vanessa Williams, Amy Grant, and K.T. Oslin to gospel greats like Charlie Peacock, Michael W. Smith, and Rebecca St. James—making him that much more of a compelling figure on today's scene. Further, his skills as an engineer and producer have increased his cachet even more. As a by-product of his sparkling career, Needham has gained a unique perspective on what it takes to be successful not only in Nashville but wherever in the world his craft has taken him. *MD* recently sat with the drummer to soak up as much of that knowledge as possible.



It was fun and perfect for my age. I learned what it meant to perform and make it through the entire set without crying.

MD: Was your father a big influence on you as a player?

Dan: Obviously both of my parents influenced me, and with my dad being a drummer, it was no surprise that I showed an interest in the instrument. That said, he took a unique approach and gave me the space to learn. If I was struggling with a particular concept, he would demonstrate the

parts up in my room and her banging on the ceiling below while yelling, "That's the wrong chord!" My parents were, and still are, very supportive, but as musicians they are not afraid to be blunt about my performance or attitude. That nurturing honesty has always enabled me to maintain a balanced perspective no matter what is going on.

Both my parents also reinforced the idea that it's not just about the drums—it's about how the drums fit into the music. I really think that is one of the major things that has connected me to Nashville, because it is truly a songwriter's town. The emphasis on the song is everywhere. The rules my parents instilled in me way back then still apply today: Listen to the other musicians, don't worry about standing out, focus on the song, emphasize the artist. They were great teachers and wonderful musicians, and my dad still gigs to this very day. They taught me to think like a musician first and a drummer second.

MD: As you got older, what path did you take toward furthering your education and pursuing music as a vocation?

Dan: When I was fourteen or fifteen I joined a Christian rock group from Syracuse, and that had a lot of influence on me. Ironically, when they were getting ready to leave

MD: You've recently returned to the States from an international tour.

Dan: Yes, I've been traveling quite a bit lately, to some interesting places like Ireland, Jakarta, and Tokyo. I just finished working with Peter Cetera, and I'm continuing to tour extensively with Michael McDonald. It's always an amazing experience when I get to play music abroad. Over the last few years the interest in the styles of music that I play has grown tremendously. Seeing what's going on musically in places like Indonesia and the Philippines is exciting, and I think China is going to be the next big scene. There's a lot of money over there, and they're willing to invest in established artists. A lot of them are taking advantage of that opportunity.

MD: What led to your becoming a drummer?

Dan: I come from a musical family. My father is a drummer, and my mother played accordion. We were from a little town in upstate New York called Newark Valley. My folks had a Top 40 band while I was growing up, and they introduced me to music at a very young age. I was always tapping along to records, and my mother had the foresight to sign me up for private lessons. At around six or seven years old, I started learning the instrument, and I continued to study it all the way through high school. My first professional gig happened when I was around eleven years old. I was in a little band called the Rushanskis with two accordions and drums, and we got paid to do little society gigs. We played polka music, ethnic tunes, some Latin and jazz stuff. It was in New York, so the music was very Eastern European influenced.

proper technique and offer guidance. His decision to get me a drum teacher outside of the house expanded my horizons a bit.

In a lot of ways, though, my mother influenced me more. Her chordal and song knowledge taught me to think musically and not just focus on the drums. Thanks to her I played a little guitar and keyboards too. I vividly remember practicing guitar



Drums: Yamaha Maple Custom Absolute in burgundy sparkle finish
A. 6.5x14 Ludwig Supraphonic LM402 snare*
B. 10x12 (or 11x13) tom
C. 16x16 floor tom
D. 16x24 bass drum

***Alternate snares:** 7x13 Yamaha Akira Jimbo, 5x14 or 6.5x14 Ludwig Black Beauty, 6.5x14 Yamaha Paul Leim, 5x15 Yamaha John "JR" Robinson, 5x14 Ludwig mid-'60s Acrolite, 6.5x14 Yamaha Birch Custom, 6.5x14 Brady Jarrah Ply, 6.5x14 DrumCraft Aluminum, 5x12 Yamaha Musashi Oak

Cymbals: Paiste

1. 15" early-'60s Zildjian (or 16" Paiste Twenty or 15" Paiste 602 Modern Essentials) hi-hats
2. 17" Signature Dark Energy crash
3. 18" Formula 602 Modern Essentials crash
4. 22" Formula 602 Modern Essentials ride
5. 20" Formula 602 Modern Essentials crash

Sticks: Vic Firth Extreme 5A sticks

Heads: Remo Coated CS snare batter, Coated Ambassador tom batters, and Renaissance Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter

town and move to Nashville, I remember thinking that I would never want to move there. I went on to college with the intention of possibly pursuing music, but my parents wanted me to have something to fall back on. I went to a bible college in Minneapolis for a couple years, and then I transferred to [Nashville's] Belmont University.

I had transferred as a music major but later realized that a degree in music wasn't as important to my career as developing great musical relationships. I changed my degree but still pursued all the musical opportunities that the school had to offer. To this day I work with fellow Belmont grads. My degree ended up being in finance. I used to joke that it enabled me to figure out how much money I

wasn't going to make as a musician. [laughs]

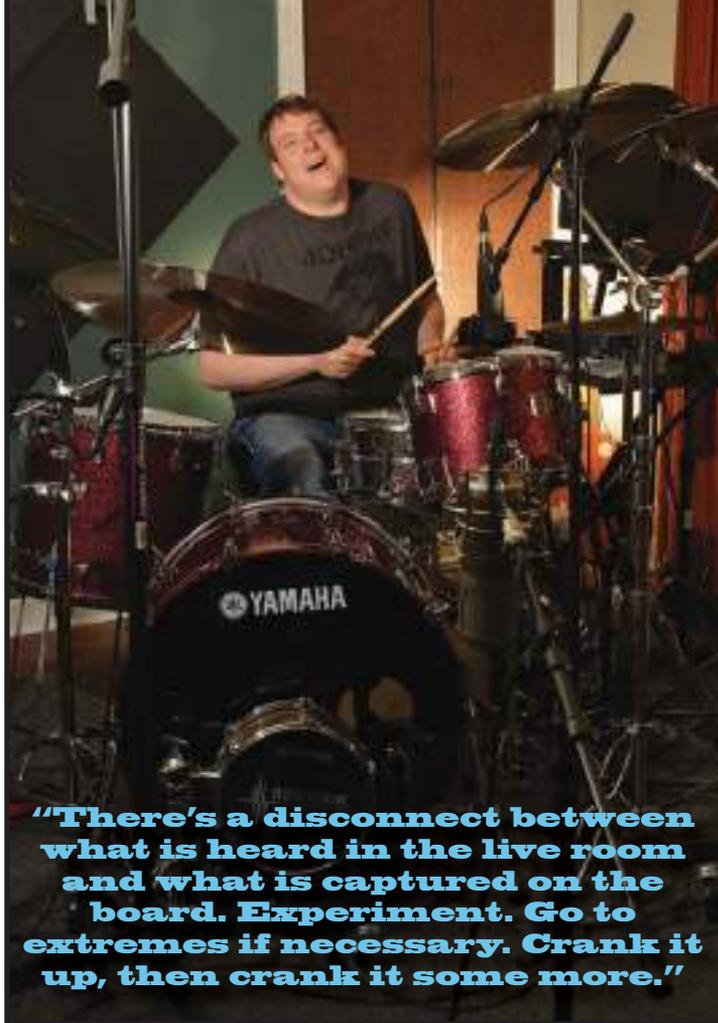
MD: Did you play in the worship band at your church?

Dan: Absolutely. From very early on I was playing in church. Two or three times a week I was performing at youth group or during the regular services. Church music in a lot of denominations gives the opportunity for young musicians to develop and hone their craft in practical ways while being in a safe environment.

We had a really robust music program, and it was a totally invaluable experience just in terms of playing live and working with other musicians. The skill set of chart reading and developing the discipline of dynamics was also instilled in me there. Playing in a church in many cases is by your own free will. It's an expression of faith. When you take money out of the equation, it becomes so much bigger. Church drumming was huge and steered me in some directions that led me down the path to where I am today.

MD: Tell us how a finance graduate with a "respectable degree" became a professional musician.

Dan: I've found from speaking to other musicians that my story is a bit different from most. Most guys look back to a single jumping-off point. I built my career slowly,



"There's a disconnect between what is heard in the live room and what is captured on the board. Experiment. Go to extremes if necessary. Crank it up, then crank it some more."

from sessions to the stage. I've only been touring hardcore for the last few years—up until then it was all studio work. I graduated from college in 1993, and by 1996 I had established enough clientele to go full time into session work.

I didn't do that on my own. There were a few guys who were very instrumental in getting me connected to the business. About a semester after I graduated from Belmont, they held a gospel showcase there. My college roommate was a drummer and needed a sub for the gig. I did the job, and one of the other bands had this amazing bass player named Brent Milligan. He really dug what I was doing and happened to be working with Charlie Peacock at the time. Out of nowhere, from that connection, I get a call from Charlie, whose music I had loved listening to growing up. Needless to say, I leaped at the opportunity to work with him. That turned

out to be a real blessing.

Around the same time, Brent recommended me to a bassist named Tommy Sims, an iconic Nashville player who's worked with everybody from Sheryl Crow to Bruce Springsteen. He helped write "Change the World" for Eric Clapton, and he's also an amazing producer. When he called I couldn't believe it. Tommy took me under his wing, and for the next ten years or so I played on everything that he was doing. In retrospect, I feel that period was my real education. I got a degree from Belmont, but my musical training came from working with Tommy. Getting established in the session scene is not an easy task, and he was always very patient with me as I was learning the ropes. He knew how to emphasize what I was doing right and steer me to change what I was doing wrong. We're still together as a touring rhythm section,

and he's out on the road with me with Michael McDonald.

MD: Session drummers have to possess an extensive skill set, whether it's preparation, playing to a click, or getting along with a demanding producer. Was there a big learning curve when you entered the studio, and if so, what kinds of challenges did you experience?

Dan: I entered the session scene during a transitional period. This was the mid-'90s, so you had the early signs of digital recording and Pro Tools. The concept of playing to a loop suddenly became a big idea. Clicks had been around but were not nearly as critical as they are now. You could play around a click and people wouldn't notice. Not today. When a loop was added to the mix, you just had to know how to play along to it.

When I first came on the scene you would show up to a session with a rack of

Influences

Stevie Wonder Songs in the Key of Life (Stevie Wonder, Raymond Pounds, Greg Brown) /// **Toto** The Seventh One (Jeff Porcaro) /// **The Chick Corea Elektric Band** The Chick Corea Elektric Band (Dave Weckl) /// **The Police** Synchronicity (Stewart Copeland) /// **the Beatles** Abbey Road (Ringo Starr) /// **Michael Jackson** Off the Wall (John "JR" Robinson) /// **The Beach Boys** Pet Sounds (Hal Blaine, Dennis Wilson, Jim Gordon, Nick Martinis, Ritchie Frost)



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Dan Needham

gear, a trunk full of percussion, and your drumkit. Oftentimes I would show up, program a loop, play the drums, and then overdub percussion. It was a methodical, three-step process. The nice thing about working with Tommy on all those big-name artists' sessions was that we could really spend the time required to find the right drum sound. Sometimes we would spend an entire day experimenting with different configurations in different rooms.

Nowadays you can't do that. Time is money and you have to be quick. For a Nashville demo session, we shoot to have six songs completed in three hours. The budgets have shrunk immensely. That said, the home-studio scene is offering ways to do economic experimentation and making the postproduction process more efficient.

MD: Being a top-call player in Music City is an amazing accomplishment. What does it mean to be a Nashville drummer in 2015?

Dan: Thank you. I must be paying off the right people. [laughs] There are a couple things that are indicative of Nashville musicians as a whole. First off, Nashville, unlike some other music-based cities, thrives on the concept of authenticity. It's all about real players, playing real music, on real instruments, in a real studio environment. Obviously technology exists to enhance that, but the main objective in Nashville is to be true to the sound. People appreciate honesty and are willing to forgo technology if it compromises the music.

The second thing is that, unlike a lot of the other towns that I've been in, this is a songwriting community. The song is king here. Everything else is in support of that. All of the sweating musicians that are cramped in these studios are pursuing the goal of creating the next hit record together, the key word being *together*. Egos are generally checked at the door. The scene doesn't seem so big. Everybody knows each other, and there is a competitive spirit, but in a positive way. The mutual respect between Nashville musicians is evident, and we're all cheering for each other. It's definitely not a cutthroat philosophy.

The vibe today is different from the old days, and there are so many genres being explored here. Sonically, Nashville is constantly expanding and is much less corporate. That gives us more freedom. My

Recordings

Michael McDonald Blue Obsession /// **the Neville Brothers** Valence Street /// **Charlie Peacock** Everything That's on My Mind /// **Israel & New Breed** Real /// **Dave Barnes** Chasing Mississippi /// **Leogun** By the Reins

philosophy in the studio nowadays really comes down to one thing: If it sounds good, do it. I don't care if that means miking up a Tinkertoy; do whatever it takes to create a good sound.

I do all kinds of crazy things with gaff tape and towels that looks awful but sounds amazing. I love the "What if we try this?" sessions. Many artists really appreciate that and encourage their musicians to explore the possibilities. If they believe you are personally invested in their music, they will call you back.

MD: How do your roles as a session drummer and a touring drummer complement one another?

Dan: I'm grateful to be able to play on recordings and also do live performances. Spending too much time in the recording environment can make you frazzled. Going out and performing live gives you a different perspective of delivering music to the people. In the session world you record a song and never see it again. In a live setting you get immediate feedback from the audience.

MD: You've played on so many recordings and done a variety of shows with artists of different genres. What technical differences exist for you between studio and live drumming?

Dan: This past year I experienced the collision of both worlds. We were doing a tour with Michael McDonald, and during that time I purchased a GoPro camera. We did thirty days out, and every night I set up that camera at a different spot on the stage. I shot every show. At the same time we had a sixty-track recording studio built right into the SSL console out front. Later I got a recording of the performance, mixed the songs myself, and created these videos from all the different positions I'd captured with the GoPro.

When I went back and watched them, I was shocked. Being in a studio environment, everything is clean and produced. Seeing and hearing it recorded live made me realize all the issues that sound engineers have to deal with. I could not believe the challenge that exists with cymbals bleeding into vocal mics. How do you deal with that? My perspective changed, because I realized considerations that do not exist in the studio are mandatory in a live setting. That revelation changed how I now select cymbals for a particular venue.

In the studio, anything goes. I will do whatever it takes to make the sound happen, no matter how unsightly or unorthodox. On stage, appearance matters. You can't go all out. You need a good, solid

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Dan Needham

set of drums that are tuned right and can project and translate to the room you're playing in. Tuning is also different. We tend to tune the toms a little higher than we would in the studio. I have great techs on these tours, but I'm also a hands-on guy, so I'm always tweaking. That goes for the studio and the stage. Every leg of every tour with Michael McDonald it seems that I'm changing something out just to make it more interesting and force me to think differently. A double hi-hat setup comes and goes. I sometimes use a 10" snare mounted right above my bass drum, where you would typically mount a cowbell. I love the effect that I can use it as an alternate snare or a timbale.

MD: What tips do you have for finding a great drum sound?

Dan: In the studio, anything goes, so don't be afraid. I do weird things all the time. On the session for the Israel Houghton album *The Power of One*, we were going for a classic reggae sound. I put together this odd kit made up of a kick drum, a timbale in place of a snare, a 10" snare for a tom, a crash, and a hat. We cranked the heads up, and it sounded awesome. It looked ridiculous, but it sounded amazing and added a bit of authenticity to the track.

One trap that I see newer session guys falling into is the tendency to focus all of their energies on making their kit sound acoustically amazing in the big room. The key is to understand the recording process and proper miking. I did a session today that many drummers would have walked into and said, "That kit sounds like crap." It was covered in gaff tape and towels. Yet when you walk into the control room and listen to the recording, it sounds amazing. There's a disconnect between what is heard in the live room and what is captured on the board. Experiment. Go to extremes if necessary. Crank it up, then crank it some more. The result on the playback might surprise you. I've detuned a snare drum down to the point of it being offensive, yet when you listen to it on the mic it's sublime.

MD: Budding musicians flock to Nashville every year in search of that dream gig. How can you make a living as a session drummer in Nashville today?

Dan: Beyond the obvious requirement of top-level musicianship, there is a broader perspective that I like to consider. One of the biggest things is communicating what you can deliver. When someone hires you to do a session, they want you to think about things that they're not thinking about. You're supposed to invest yourself in the process with the hope that you're going to

add something that they haven't even considered that will take their music to the next level. In order to do that you have to do your homework.

I recommend digesting an insane amount of music. Become well versed in all genres and styles. Break it down, understand it, and be prepared to play anything. When you hear the demo for a song you're about to record, there should be multiple bells going off in your head on how you could approach it. Be ready to go in several directions, utilizing all of these influences. That's where the unexpected magic happens.

Most importantly, always understand your role. That may be my biggest asset. My number-one job is to serve the song. The producer is often trying to play the drums through me. I become the conduit between the producer and the sound that the artist wants. So it makes sense that the more tools I have at my disposal, the better I can be at translating, and perhaps even enhancing, the artist's vision. I've been very fortunate to have played with some of the best in the business, and I look forward to helping them fulfill their visions for many years to come.



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Greg Saunier

Courtesy of the artist

For Deerhoof's latest album, the band's drummer says he was trying to express nothing short of pre-apocalyptic sonic abandon.

Deerhoof's 2014 studio album, *La Isla Bonita*, was intended to be a highly extravagant effort, inspired by the Top 40 dance music of the late 1980s and early '90s. For a time, it seemed, artists such as Madonna and Janet Jackson could do no wrong, and the music industry was riding high, unaware of the seismic shifts in lifestyle and popular tastes the digital revolution would soon bring.

"The title was meant to be sarcastic," drummer and cofounder Greg Saunier says from his home in Brooklyn. "This record is really about experiencing a pre-apocalyptic feeling of partying your life away while your culture crumbles."

The party came crashing down when it was apparent that the band's basement demos could be just as compelling as any lavish production. Basking in sonic abandon, Deerhoof recorded off-kilter hybrids of noise pop and art-rock, such as "Doom," "Last Fad," and "Exit Only." "All of the tracks, except the vocals, were done live with no separation," Saunier says, claiming that he thinks in terms of "gestures," not "time," when pummeling his two-piece kit.

Despite the album's overall rawness, *La Isla Bonita* contains elements of subtle complexity. For example, the opener, "Paradise Girls," began its life as a cover version of Janet Jackson's "What Have You Done for Me Lately" but morphed into something else entirely, via a 6/4 rhythm that

resembles the ubiquitous "Funky Drummer" breakbeat. In addition, "Big House Waltz" was a technical challenge for Saunier, demanding intense focus. "That drum part was based on a rhythm that was created by Satomi [Matsuzaki, bassist/vocalist/drummer] with an iPhone app," Greg says. "It was simple to play if you took away the woodblock pattern, but it would have helped if I had a third arm."

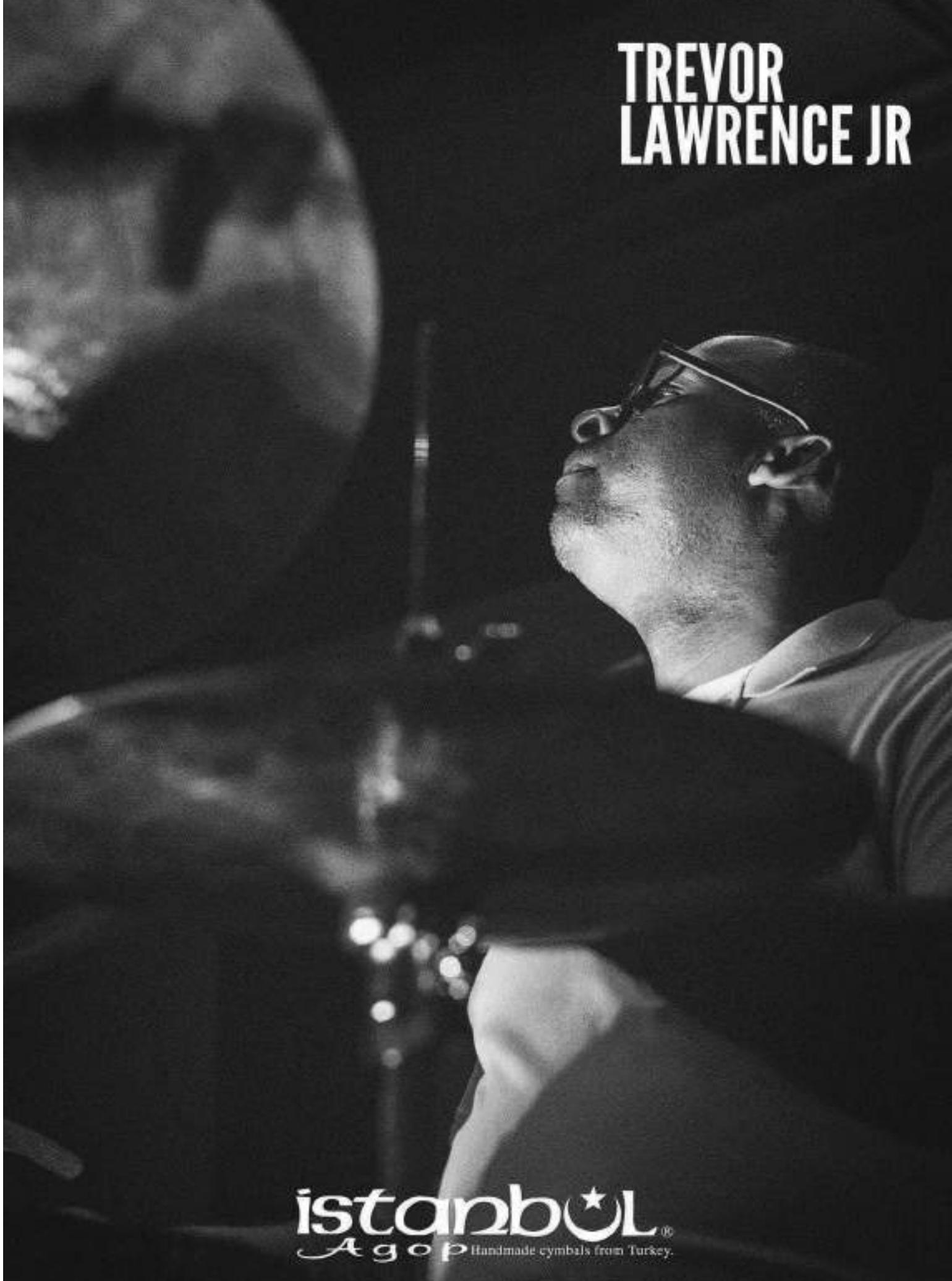
Established as a power duo in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1994 by Saunier and guitarist Rob Fisk, Deerhoof evolved into a trio with the arrival of Matsuzaki, and became a highly influential indie act whose impact can be heard in the music of the Flaming Lips and St. Vincent, among others. When Fisk quit in the early 2000s, the remaining band members found themselves at a crossroads. "I think I looked at the shape of the world," Saunier says, "and thought, *What am I doing? I play in a rock band. It feels so pointless.* The sound of the band was really formed with that mood of desperation."

The lineup was rejuvenated with the addition of guitarist John Dieterich (second guitarist Ed Rodriguez joined in 2008, replacing Chris Cohen), and Deerhoof has continued on its inimitable musical path with the likes of 2011's *Deerhoof vs. Evil* and 2012's *Breakup Song*. "Maybe there's no point [to what we do]," Saunier says, "but we're still here doing it. We treat each record as if it's our last. It turns into a celebration." **Will Romano**

QUIET ON THE SET

In an effort to temper the volume generated by cymbals and make it easier for lead singer Satomi Matsuzaki's vocals to be heard, Saunier performs with a combination of the quietest cymbals he's been able to find: a 24" Dream Bliss ride ("It has a small bell and a long sustain") and hi-hats made up of a broken 18" Istanbul Agop flat ride on top and the bottom half of a pair of Sick Hats, a Sabian prototype never put into production, underneath.





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Anika Nilles

by Mike Haid

While some endlessly bemoan “YouTube drum culture,” players like this German upstart pay no mind. They’re just too busy, making the most of the medium and empowering the masses with fresh ideas.

Anika Nilles’s adventurous, hook-filled instrumental compositions provide a perfect platform for her drumming, which is defined by deadly accurate chops, deep grooves, a natural feel for every genre she explores, and a playful approach to rhythmic illusion. It’s easy to see why this German musician has quickly become an international drumming celebrity: The copious twists in her music grab our attention—and hold it for the long haul.

Nilles cites the late, great Toto drummer Jeff Porcaro among her main influences. “In my teens I listened to a lot of Toto and tried to figure out what Jeff was doing,” she says. “I’m a big fan of his feel, time, and musical sense.

“My teachers influenced me a lot as well,” adds the drummer, who developed her skills at the Popakademie in Mannheim, Germany. Nilles is quick to acknowledge the instructors who profoundly affected her playing, including Udo Dahmen, Jost Nickel, and especially Claus Hessler, an expert in the Moeller technique and the author of the well-received tutorials *Open Handed Playing, Vol. 1 and 2*, and *Daily Drumset Workout*. “Most of my education comes from studying privately with Claus,” Anika says. “His technique is flawless. I’ve learned a lot from him.”

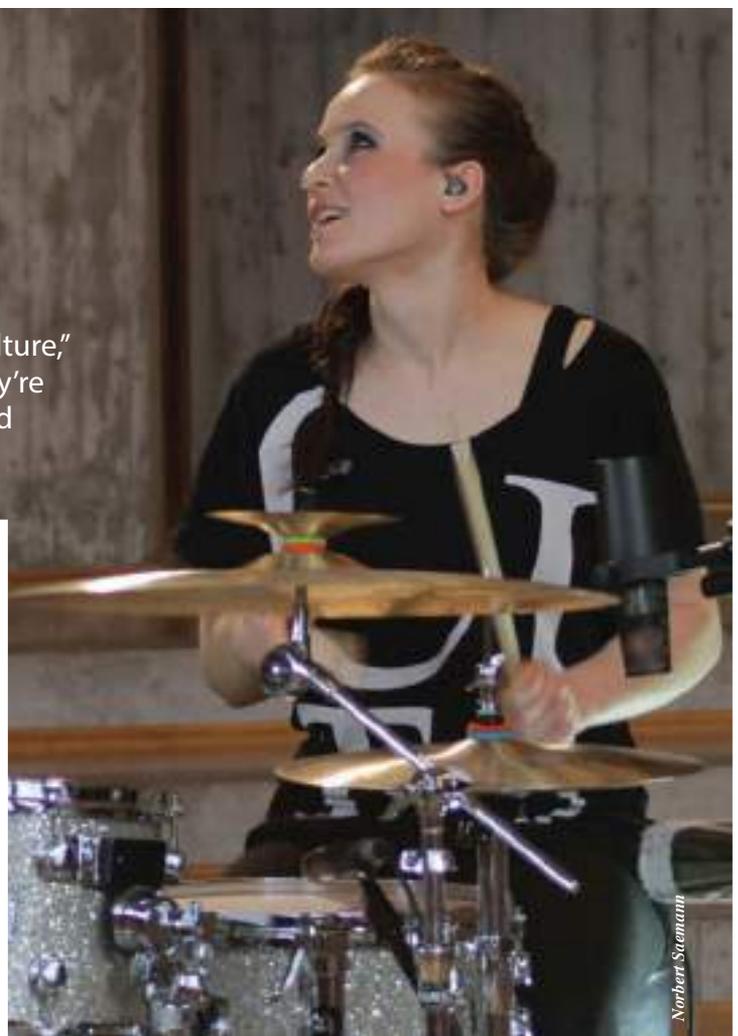
Nilles actually learned a bit about the drums before she ever set foot in a music school. “My father taught me the first grooves I ever played,” she recalls. “I remember when I asked him about the groove for Michael Jackson’s ‘Man in the Mirror.’ He showed me the basic pattern, and it made my day.”

One of the most noticeable and impressive attributes of Nilles’s drumming is a fluid, relaxed technique. The consummate student credits several instructionals for helping to shape her knowledge and skills. “There are some books I’ve worked with, including *Syncopation* by Ted Reed, *The New Breed* by Gary Chester, and some of the Gary Chaffee stuff,” she says, “and I’ve watched lots of DVDs and all the YouTube stuff out there, though there are some DVDs that particularly influenced me. I’ve watched Jojo Mayer’s *Secret Weapons for the Modern Drummer* many, many times, for instance. Also, Aaron Spears’ *Beyond the Chops* and Stanton Moore’s *Groove Alchemy* are great.”

Another standout characteristic of Nilles’s playing is a creative

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Nilles plays a Mapex Black Panther Black Widow drumkit composed of a 5x14 snare, 7x10 and 8x12 toms, a 12x14 floor tom, and an 18x20 bass drum. Her Meinl cymbals include 14" Byzance Vintage Pure hi-hats, a 20" Byzance Jazz Extra Thin ride (used as a crash), a 6" Byzance splash on top of a 14" Generation X Filter China, a 12" Byzance splash above a 22" Byzance Vintage Pure ride, an 18" Byzance Pure crash, and an 18" Byzance Vintage Trash crash above an 18" Byzance Jazz Extra Thin crash. She uses Aquarian Response 2 Clear drumheads, Vic Firth 55A sticks, Ahead cases, SlapKlatz damper gel, Tuner Fish lug locks, and a Meinl Russ Miller Artist series cowbell.



Norbert Schemann

approach to incorporating quintuplets, sextuplets, and various combinations of other odd groupings over straight 4/4 time. Like Porcupine Tree/King Crimson drummer Gavin Harrison, Nilles creates rhythmic illusions that provide a unique twist to the music. Take the song “Alter Ego.” Nilles explains her part beginning at the 1:45 mark: “This pattern is a combination of groups of five, seven, and three with dynamics and kicks included. I’ve practiced a lot of this stuff. That’s the way musical playing works for me. But, most importantly, I’m not into playing ‘licks.’ Mainly I choose the fill-ins intuitively from the [perspective] of what fits a certain part of the song the best.”

Another revealing example of Nilles’s adventurous process is found in her video “Queenz.” “This song is different,” Anika explains. “Everything is played in quintuplets in common time. I’m a big fan of common time. All the other instruments are playing straight quintuplets. The verse is played as a linear groove pattern. The chorus is a bit strange to listen to, because on the ride cymbal I’m playing a pattern of four over quintuplets, which may be a little confusing for the listener. While playing, I feel and listen to the backbeat on the snare and kick. This song was written after I figured out what I could do with quintuplets on the practice pad, and then I applied it to the drumkit. Also, there’s a part in the beginning in which I play an illusion of a shuffle groove. It’s a groove built on a group of three over quintuplets.”

Nilles’s well-produced videos capture the nuances of her advanced technique—as well as her youthful fashion flair, creating mass appeal with a likable persona within the instrumental realm. But it’s her feel that drives it home. And who are her favorite groove players? “For me, there is Stanton Moore, Adam Deitch, Steve Jordan, Benny Greb, and Questlove,” Anika says. “All of them give me energy and new ideas for my own performances.”



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by Jayson Brinkworth

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w/foot	

This article is a follow-up to the one I wrote for the July 2014 issue, which focused on simple exercises to get you more balanced at the drumkit. In my years of teaching and playing, I've found that it's important to work with all four limbs in order to feel solid and stable while drumming. Even though the hi-hat foot is often the weakest limb and we may not use it extensively in actual playing situations, I always incorporate exercises into my practice routine that utilize it. Being off-balance affects dynamics, tempo, and much more.

The following system is made up of four hi-hat foot and bass drum exercises and eight hand exercises. The foot exercises lead with the hi-hat and use combinations of 16th-note bass drum figures. The hand exercises comprise stickings borrowed from page five of the classic George Lawrence Stone book *Stick Control* and can be played on the snare or on two different sound sources (ride and snare, floor tom and rack tom, etc.). You can also use many other hand patterns from *Stick Control* over these foot patterns for further practice and to develop ideas for solos.

Here are the foot patterns.

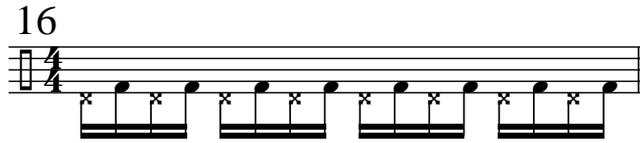
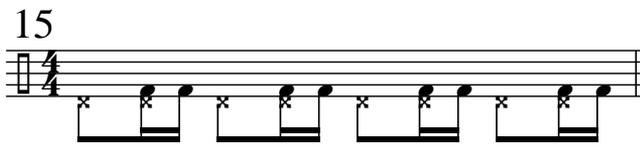
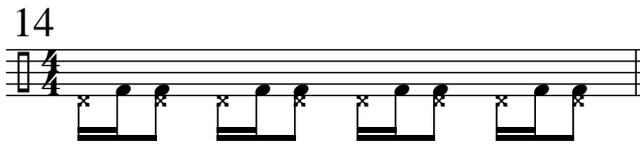
And here are the hand patterns.

As you start to apply the hand patterns over the foot patterns, be patient and practice at a very controlled tempo and dynamic. Remember: The goal is to develop control and balance, not speed.

Once you can play the hand and foot patterns together comfortably, practice combining them with some transitions. Here are a few suggestions for how to do this:

1. Pick a foot pattern and run through the eight hand patterns in succession.
2. Pick a hand pattern and run through the four foot patterns in succession.
3. Play the hi-hat part on a second bass drum or double pedal.

Another option is to change the hi-hat foot to 8th notes instead of quarter notes. Here's what that looks like:



With those additional foot patterns, you could practice transitioning from the version with quarter notes on the hi-hat to the version with 8th notes. For instance, pick a hand pattern and a foot pattern and change the hi-hat from quarters to 8ths every other measure.

Again, be sure to work through the exercises slowly, and be very patient. You'll know you're improving when you feel that your core (abdomen) is strong and stationary as you play.

Jayson Brinkworth is a freelance drummer, educator, and clinician in Canada. For more info, visit jaysonbrinkworth.com.



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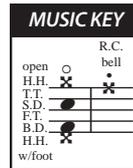
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Progressive Independence: Rock Revisited

A Step-by-Step Method for Building Creative Coordination

by Miguel Monroy

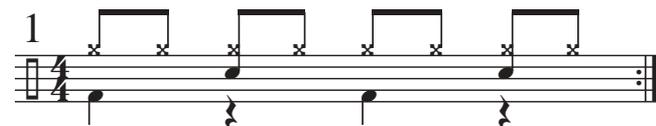


Fifteen years ago, the founder of *Modern Drummer*, Ron Spagnardi, published a book devoted to developing independence for rock and funk drumming. This book, *Progressive Independence: Rock*, has served as a great resource for me over the years, as both a student and an educator of drums and percussion. In this article I'll walk you through some of the ways that I've used the book, including ideas for expanding on some of the written exercises.

The exercises should be practiced in sequential order. Once you master the first one, proceed to the next, and so on. As you work through the patterns, think about how you can apply these same practice methods to other grooves as well.

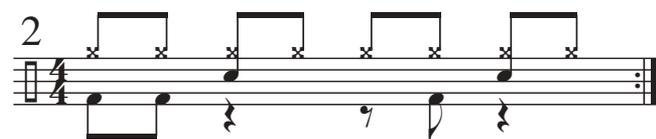
Basic Rock Groove

The first exercise is the most basic rock groove of them all. Be sure to focus on keeping the snare perfectly lined up with the hi-hat on beats 2 and 4. Don't fool yourself—this basic groove is worth practicing every single day, and it's not so easy to keep it firmly locked in the pocket for five minutes at a time.



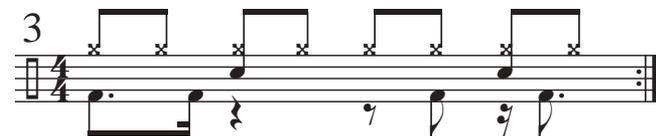
8th Notes on the Bass Drum

To increase the independence difficulty, we'll add 8th notes to the bass drum part. Be sure that the bass drum lines up perfectly with the hi-hat. Again, this can be harder than it looks.

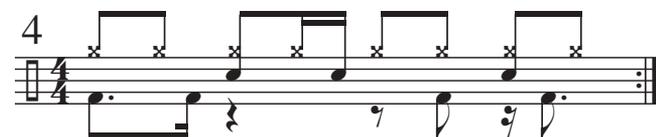


16th Notes With the Bass Drum and Snare

Now we're going to incorporate 16th notes by moving the second bass drum hit over to the "a" of beat 1 and by adding a bass drum note directly after the second snare hit (on the "e" of beat 4).



After you're comfortable with that, spice things up a little by adding a snare hit on the "a" of beat 2.

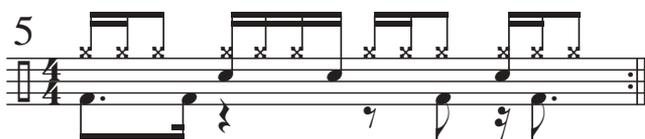


Left-Hand Challenge 1

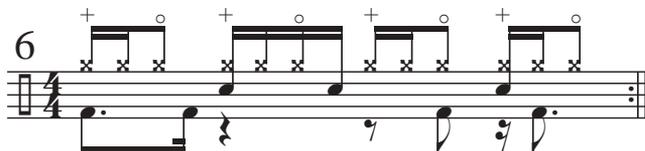
Before you explore more syncopated beats, go back and play all the exercises with your weak hand leading on the hi-hat. Why? Because in order to have complete creative freedom on the kit, it's a good idea to focus on playing with the same comfort level and control with either hand leading. (Look to great drummers like Simon Phillips, Mike Mangini, and Ilan Rubin as examples.)

16th-Note Hi-Hat Variation 1

The next ingredient in our recipe of independence includes being able to play the same bass drum and snare patterns as before with different patterns on the hi-hat. Here's a variation using two 16th notes and an 8th note.

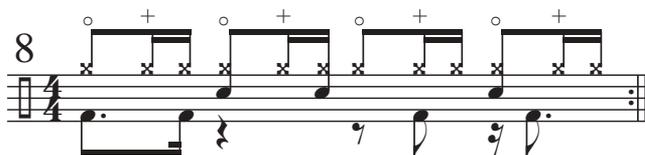
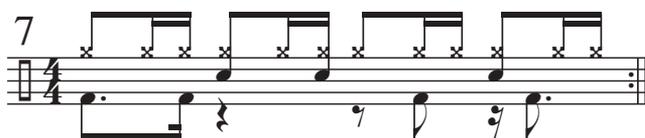


Once you feel comfortable with that, try opening the hi-hat on the "&" of each beat.



16th-Note Hi-Hat Variation 2

Now play the hi-hat pattern in reverse over the same bass and snare beat. As before, focus on locking into the groove. Then add an open hi-hat on every downbeat.



Four-Way Coordination

The next step of independence development involves several parts. The first thing we'll do is play hi-hat variations on the ride cymbal while chomping the hats with our foot on each quarter note. This may be difficult at first, so be sure to start out slowly and use a metronome to help you lock in with the ride.

9A

9B

After that's comfortable, alter the hi-hat pattern so that it's chomping on the "&" of each beat.

10A

10B

Lastly, play the bell of the ride cymbal in the same places where you were previously opening the hi-hat. At this point you have several things happening at once: You're chomping the hi-hat with your foot on the "&" of every beat, you're playing compound patterns on the ride while orchestrating on the bell and body of the cymbal, and you're laying down syncopated grooves between the snare and bass drum that use 8th and 16th notes. See how far the pattern has progressed from a simple rock beat to a more complex and demanding groove? Don't forget to keep everything locked in the pocket as the patterns get more complex.

11A

11B

Left-Hand Challenge 2

Now that you're comfortable playing syncopated four-way grooves, it's time to be humbled yet again. Go back to Example 5 and practice through the exercises with the opposite hand leading on the hi-hat and ride. (You'll have to move your ride to the hi-hat side of the kit, so you don't need to reach all the way across your body to play it.)

Once you've mastered all of the exercises in this article, apply the same concepts to the remainder of the patterns in *Progressive Independence: Rock*, and come up with some of your own ride/hi-hat variations.

For a video demo of the exercises in this lesson, log on to modern drummer.com.



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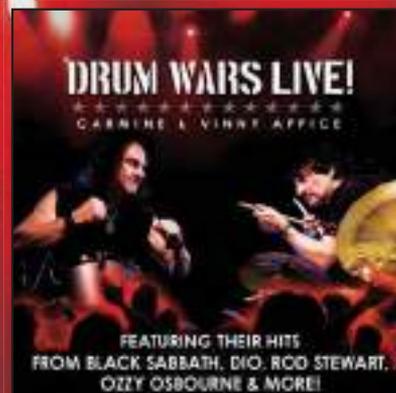


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Diamonds in the Ruff

Part 1: The Mighty Three-Stroke

by Matt Starr

MUSIC KEY

S.D.

B.D.

H.H.

w/foot

The first thing I learned when I started taking drum lessons was the three-stroke ruff. I was shown a few ways of playing it, with different accents and stickings, but it wasn't until I heard Cream drummer Ginger Baker play "Sunshine of Your Love" that I really understood how to utilize this powerful rudiment.

My intention for these next two articles is to provide a way to understand, practice, and perfect three- and four-stroke ruffs using a teaching tool I've found helpful. It's called the Echo Method, and it pairs the figure—in this case the three-stroke ruff—with a master rhythm. For this lesson the master rhythm is the 16th-note roll. That means that the ruff is to be played as 16th notes, and the sticking should be consistent with that of a 16th-note roll. So, starting with the right hand, all of the 8th notes (1-&-2-&-3-&-4-&) will be played with the right hand, and all of the other notes (each "e" and "a") will be played with the left. This is great preparation for real-world execution of the ruff as part of a fill, where you'll need to land back into a groove without having your hands crossed up by an awkward sticking.

An endless number of fills and patterns can be derived from the three-stroke ruff. These exercises will help you discover many of them by pairing them with the 16th-note roll. Be sure to use full, open strokes. I recommend practicing with a metronome clicking 8th notes at 60 bpm (or quarter note equals 120, if your metronome doesn't allow you to subdivide the beat into 8ths). This may seem ridiculously slow if you're a more advanced player, but try it. Really dig in, and focus on making the rhythms groove.

1

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

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

3

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

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

4

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

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

To emphasize the pulse with the feet, try adding quarters or 8th notes on the hi-hat or bass drum.

5

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

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

6

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

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

7

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

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

Now displace each three-note combination forward by a 16th note, while making sure to adhere to the sticking of the master rhythm. Example 1 would now look like this:

8

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

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

And Exercise 7 would look like this:

9

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

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

Keep displacing the examples until you're back where you started. Then experiment with orchestration and substitutions. For instance, replace each rest in Examples 1-7 with a tom hit (use the floor tom or rack tom, depending on which feels most natural), and then repeat the displacement process. You can also replace each rest with a kick drum, or a kick/crash hit, and repeat the displacement process. By the end of all this practice, you will have covered a lot of ground and played a ton of licks that you can start using for fills.

To hear the three-stroke ruff in action, check out "Mississippi Queen" and "Never in My Life" by Mountain (Corky Laing), "Sunshine of Your Love" by Cream (Ginger Baker), "Hell Raiser" by the Sweet (Mick Tucker), "Invaders of the Heart" by Cheap Trick (Bun E. Carlos), "I Love It Loud" by Kiss (Eric Carr), "Let's Go" by the Cars (David Robinson), "Stand Up and Shout" by Dio (Vinny Appice), and "No One Knows" by Queens of the Stone Age (Dave Grohl).

Matt Starr is the drummer for legendary hard-rock guitarist Ace Frehley. For more info, visit mattstarrmusic.com.



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Grooving on the Snare

Six Beats That Break From the Kick/Snare/Hat Cliché

by Greg Sundel

MUSIC KEY	
C.C.	*
H.H.	x
S.D.	o
B.D.	o
H.H.	x
w/foot	o
Ghost note	o

The first grooves that most of us learn are variations of countless rock, R&B, and pop recordings that feature the bass drum on beats 1 and 3, the snare on beats 2 and 4, and the ride or hi-hat chugging steady 8th notes. While those patterns are essential pieces of the puzzle in becoming a functioning drummer, players throughout history have also kept time in very creative ways utilizing just a bass drum and snare. In this article I'll transcribe four of my favorite snare-based grooves from classic recordings and share two of my own variations that work great in many musical situations.

You can use any sticking that works for you with the rhythms transcribed here. A single-stroke roll will work for all of them, but some drummers prefer to use their dominant hand for the accents, like with "Hey Pocky A-Way," which sounds great played with a RLLRLLRL sticking.

Song: "Orange Blossom Special"

Artist: Johnny Cash

Drums: W.S. Holland

The train beat is a standard groove for country music and has been used to great effect by drummers in many other genres. Try playing the transcription below with straight and shuffle feels. Also listen to the way W.S. Holland adds 16th-note triplets during the harmonica solo on the *At Folsom Prison* version of the song.

Song: "Hey Pocky A-Way"

Artist: The Meters

Drums: Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste

When it comes to snare grooves based on New Orleans second-line drumming, Zigaboo Modeliste is the master. For this pattern, which emphasizes the "3" side of the 3-2 clave pattern, try lightly buzzing each stroke, buzzing just the unaccented notes, and playing double strokes on the accents. Also try swinging the beat by phrasing the 16ths somewhere in the cracks between straight and shuffled.

Song: "Poor Tom"

Artist: Led Zeppelin

Drums: John Bonham

John Bonham was heavily influenced by American music, whether it was jazz, country, rock, or R&B. For this song he infused the traditional train beat with the New Orleans second-line approach to create a very cool sound. Note the heavier and more syncopated bass drum part.

Song: "How Many More Times"

Artist: Led Zeppelin

Drums: John Bonham

This track from Led Zeppelin's first album features an incredible snare-based groove. Try playing the grace notes at the beginning as double strokes (RRLL) to create a fuller, bigger sound.

These last two examples are my own variations on patterns by Zigaboo Modeliste and John Bonham. I use them when I'm asked to play a New Orleans-style tune. Here's a groove that falls within Zig's rhythmic matrix.

I use patterns like the following when I want to add a backbeat to a song that has a second-line feel. I usually throw this in at the end of a solo section or when the song is building to a climax.

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.



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Rudimental Clave With Inverted Stickings

Musical Exercises for Developing the Whip-and-Stop Technique

by Bill Bachman

This month we have a fun and challenging exercise that will do wonders for your Moeller-style whip-and-stop technique. The exercise uses the son clave rhythm as the accent pattern, with inverted stickings underneath it. The term *inverted*, in this instance, is borrowed from the inverted flam tap, and it basically means that the taps precede the accent. We're going to add flams, diddles, cheeses, and singles to the basic pattern for some fun rudimental variations.

As far as technique is concerned, the Moeller whip-and-stop motion will be the key. Since there's always a tap immediately before the accent, there's very little time for the wrist to perform an upstroke, especially as the tempo gets faster. In order to relieve the wrists, we'll replace the wrist motion with an arm motion. When you play the last tap before the accent, your forearm will quickly lift (leaving the relaxed hand and stick drooping down) and then quickly throw down to pass the hand and stick (leaving them pointing up), which whips the hand and stick toward the drum. This is the essence of the Moeller whip stroke, and it's how we're creating stick height for these exercises without employing the wrist. In fact, any engagement of the wrist muscles will slow down or completely kill the whip stroke.

The faster the up/down motion of the forearm, the less time it takes to generate the whipped accent stroke. And the farther up and down the arm moves, the bigger (and consequently louder)

the whipped accent will be. Sometimes it will feel like an aggressive "herky-jerk" motion, requiring some work in the upper arms and shoulders to keep the hands relaxed. At fast tempos, it's more of an effect where the forearm throws down and the palm of the hand bumps the back of the stick down to seesaw the front of the stick higher. Since this technique is geared toward faster tempos, practice the exercises with mainly the fingers playing the taps, even at slower tempos.

The downstroke accent should stop as low to the drumhead and as quickly as possible. Think about making the downstrokes point down as you play on top of the stick at a steeper angle, where the thumb is higher than the bead. Not only should you use the back fingers to pull the stick into the palm to create the downstroke, but you should also use the thumb to push down on the front of the stick. By using American grip, with the thumb a bit more on the top than on the side, and by having no gap between the thumb and first finger, you can stop the stick quickly and with less tension. Stopping the stick quickly and low to the drum sets you up to initiate low, light taps. It's challenging enough to get big accents in a hurry, so don't lessen the dynamic contrast by playing the taps too high/loud.

Now that we've covered the technique, let's take a look at the basic exercise:

1

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

Now add flams.

2

I R L L r L R R I R L L L r L R I R L L L r L R R R I R L L r L R R R R I R L r L R R R

Next, drop the flams and add diddles on the accents. When you accent diddles, both beats should be stressed. (Here's where your free stroke/downstroke alley-oop finger control comes into play.) Avoid pressing down into the drum or attacking the diddles too hard. That will only cause you to crush the spacing between the notes, and it will leave the fingers with almost no opportunity to accent the second beat of the diddle.

3

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

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

The Collapsing Concept

Crushing Roll Rudiments to Create Contemporary Swing and Solo Ideas

by Steve Fidyk

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

The late, great author and educator Jim Chapin gave me this exercise in a lesson a number of years ago. It deals with the seven-stroke roll and Jim's concept of collapsing the rudiment to create a six-note grouping. In our meetings, Chapin would encourage me to be creative with each rudimental idea and to come up with beat patterns and solo ideas that were my own.

Many of the patterns included in this article, which are based on the collapsing concept, can be heard in the styles of great drummers like Elvin Jones, Jeff "Tain" Watts, Ralph Peterson, Cindy Blackman, Bill Stewart, and Keith Carlock. Let's have a look at how Jim broke down the seven-stroke roll and then apply each idea to the drumset.

The first roll rudiment Jim shared with me was a seven-stroke roll that starts with a tap and has all of the notes equidistant.

1 >

R L L R R L L

Now let's try Jim's collapsing concept by turning the third note of the seven-stroke roll in Example 1 into a grace note that hits right before the fourth note. When you do that, the roll becomes a paradiddle-diddle with a flam on the first right-hand diddle.

2

R L I R R L L

Chapin then had me flatten the flam, so that it became a perfect unison rather than a grace note, and separate the hands by moving the right to the ride cymbal.

3

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

The next idea combines Jim's seven-stroke roll variation (Example 1) and the paradiddle-diddle flam figure (Example 2) within a four-measure phrase.

4

R L L R R L L R L L R R L L R L I R R L L R L L R L L R L L

Once you have control of the sticking pattern and can feel the four-measure phrase correctly, separate your hands onto the ride cymbal and snare drum.

5

The next idea illustrates a 4:6 polyrhythm and how to use that to modulate to a new tempo. To nail the modulation, think of the quarter-note rhythms played with the hi-hat in the first three measures as becoming quarter-note triplets in the new tempo. (The pulse of the hi-hat rhythm should remain consistent during the transition.)

6

R L I R R L L R L I R R L L R L L R L L R L L R L L

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Six side:

You can also experiment with triplet and 16th-note subdivisions. Switching from 8th notes to triplets to 16ths provides the illusion that each phrase is speeding up. Practice these exercises with a metronome to help you maintain a consistent quarter-note pulse throughout.

7A

R L 1 R R L L R L 1 R R L L R L 1 R R L L

R L 1 R R L L R L 1 R R L L R L 1 R R L L R L 1 R R L L

7B

8

R L 1 R R L L R L 1 R R L L R L 1 R R

L L R L 1 R R L L R L 1 R R L L R L 1 R R L L

Now let's switch over to collapsing a six-stroke roll and voicing it around the kit.

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9 >

R L L R R L

Six-stroke roll collapsed:

R L I R R L

Shapes for phrase creation:

R L I R R L R L I R R L

R L I R R L R L I R R L

You can also collapse the nine-stroke roll in a few different ways. Have fun and be sure to come up with some of your own applications of Chapin's collapsing concept.

Nine-stroke roll:

10 >

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

Nine-stroke roll with one collapsed position:

11 >

R L I R R L L R R L R r L L R R L L

Nine-stroke roll with two collapsed positions:

12 >

R L I R R L I R R L R r L L R r L L

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



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CONCEPTS

Time Keeps You Humble

When You Think You Know It All, Think Again

by Russ Miller

You've probably seen this month's quote by the English novelist Thomas Hardy, which is sometimes shortened to "time changes everything." I have a slight adjustment to it: Time changes *approach*. Your approach to all aspects of life

more mature in their playing. Rather, I'm saying that it was the time these different drummers had spent understanding the craft of their instrument that led to their different approaches to the situation.

After a bit of probing into the players

"Time changes everything except something within us which is always surprised by change."

—Thomas Hardy

changes with time. This month's discussion is about remaining humble in your playing, attitude, and career.

I was recently on tour in the United States and Asia. Between shows, I did some master classes at universities and a few music stores. During classes like this, I usually have several attendees come up and play with a minus-drums track, and then I comment on the performance. Often I'll demonstrate certain ideas back to them.

At the university events, the students came up and played what was asked. They took direction, asked questions, and went back to their seats. At two of the music store events, attendees walked up to the drums and began to adjust everything from the seat height to the cymbal positions. One person even started retuning the kit! That was when I busted out my "you're sitting in, not moving in" speech.

The music store drummers played very aggressively. They played much more than what was asked and added several busy fills. And they didn't particularly like getting constructive comments about what had just transpired.

This struck me as interesting. Why didn't the university students take this approach? They were much better players overall, so they could've had bigger egos. Also, the school students were much younger in age. These playing demonstrations quickly reminded me that time changes approach.

When I say time, I don't mean age. If that were the case, the older drummers at the music stores would have been far

at the music stores, I discovered that they didn't take lessons, couldn't read music, and had learned by watching videos and playing with other drummers. I'm not saying their playing was completely wrong, but there was a certain arrogance to their "dig me" display. A lot of drummers these days seem to have a similar attitude.

Of course, there's not just one way to do something. I know great musicians who never took lessons and can't read music, and I also know PhDs of music who can't play a nice-feeling groove or keep solid time. My comments here are more in relation to what happens to your attitude and approach when you start to gain information about the craft of drumming.

With Understanding Comes Humility

I believe you need to present your playing in a humble way. If not, you'll end up with a lot of drumming and not a lot of music making. At each of my master classes, I emphasized the difference between a great drummer and a great musician who plays drums. The latter is the one who works the most, whether it's making records, doing TV shows, recording soundtracks and commercials, playing musicals, or touring.

Early in your playing career, there are more obvious things to learn. In the beginning of study, you need to figure out how to hold the sticks correctly, use the proper movements, read music, keep basic time, and so on. These things are easy to recognize when they're not done correctly. The longer you play music, the



more parts of the puzzle you acquire, and the things that are missing become much less obvious. Slightly wavering subdivisions, tone inconsistency, lack of dynamic control...these are issues that aren't as blatant, but they're no less important. Being able to recognize the missing pieces in your puzzle is the key. This is why mature players often say that the more they learn, the less they know. It's these little areas of development that make the difference between good and great. I have two sayings written on the front of my lesson notebook in regard to this, which I'd like to share.

Ignorance Is the Prime Ingredient of Arrogance

I don't know how many times I've seen less-experienced players have serious egos. I think this comes from two things. First, it stems from ignorance about what they don't know. Once you begin to understand how much information is out there, as well as the diligence required to attain it, thoughts that you know everything start to subside. Secondly, when less-experienced musicians see the big pieces of their playing puzzle coming together, they often start to think, *I'm really getting this*. They're correct: They're mastering the big, obvious things. But that just means it's time to get down to the real business of discovering what it takes to become a great player.

With experienced players, ego can manifest itself slightly differently, in an "I should get more respect" attitude. Here's where ignorance plays into the scenario: You might think things about yourself that not everybody else does. And not everybody can know everything about you. Proper marketing, documentation of your playing, and visibility all play a role in the things that people know about you. (See my previous articles for more on those topics.) But there are problems with the "don't you know who I am?" mentality. If you were that big a deal, people *would*

already know about you. It's always best to assume that the listener or observer knows nothing about your history. You need to win over your audience every time you play.

Humility Is a By-Product of True Wisdom

This saying is similar to the first one but with a few unique elements. When you understand the difficulty in gaining higher execution levels and knowledge within a certain field, you stand in reverence of it. Also, there's a realization of the fact that when you think you know everything, you stop reaching for more information. There are a lot of players who haven't progressed in their craft because they stopped searching for new ideas years ago.

Humility in your playing also stems from gaining musical wisdom. As you grow as a player, you become more articulate and make more mature decisions. This may be interpreted as slowing down, but that's not necessarily the case. To mature players, it's not always about playing less. It's just a different musical understanding and delivery.

Everyone needs to take a litmus test of his or her playing periodically. Spend an hour or two reviewing videos or audio recordings from a few periods in your past. Do you see a difference in your approach to something in your playing between then and now? Is there a step up in overall ability? Are you seeing and hearing your short-term musical goals being met, or are you at least moving toward meeting them? Are you progressing toward your long-term goals? What new things do you see that you can be working on next?

Keep a running tab of what you need to improve, and create a list of things you'd like to start doing. When I hear a great performance on a recording, I take a second to write down in my lesson notebook a few notes about what I liked. Keeping a long list of things you *can't* do is a great way to stay humble.

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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Yamaha Drums

A production move to China, streamlined acoustic offerings, and the hybrid electronic/acoustic philosophy.

by John Martinez

Burbank, a sunny Southern California city located northwest of downtown Los Angeles, is home to more than 130,000 residents, plus the Walt Disney Company, NBC, Warner Music Group, and one of two Yamaha Drums offices (the second is in Buena Park, southeast of downtown L.A.). We recently visited Yamaha Artist Services Burbank (YASB) to meet up with drum designer/artist support representative Daryl Anderson, drum marketing manager Steve Fisher, and assistant drum marketing manager Joel Tetzlaff to discuss some of the recent changes at the company and to learn where Yamaha Drums is headed with its products in 2015 and beyond. But first, let's go back to the beginning.

A Brief History

In 1967, Yamaha started making drums in its corporate headquarters in Hamamatsu, Japan. Innovative drum designs that originated at the original factory include 100 percent birch shells, staggered diagonal seams, and the Air-Seal System, which involves an airbag being placed inside a shell and inflated at high pressure to create a perfectly round drum.

In the late '70s, right around the time that Yamaha developed the YD-9000 series (its first mass-produced all-birch drumset line, which would later become known as Recording Custom) and started to introduce more models, it became clear that the company didn't have enough space in Hamamatsu to keep up with the output demands. That's when Takashi "Hagi" Hagiwara, a Yamaha drum designer of that era, discovered and contracted another percussion manufacturer in Osaka, Japan, to build Yamaha drums.

The recent economic recession had an impact on Yamaha, and the company posed a challenge to itself: How do we take advantage of this time to build for the future? In order to survive and move forward, the company decided to go back to a Yamaha-owned and -operated facility instead of continuing to outsource manufacturing. "Now we're making our own drums right from the source," Anderson says. "The new factory is a couple of hours outside of Shanghai in Xiaoshan, China."

China Bound

About five years ago, Yamaha built a new 31,000-square-meter, two-story space (that's the size of about six football fields), with the first floor used mainly for the production of wind instruments. Seizing the opportunity to build drums in the same facility, the company moved drum production from Osaka to Xiaoshan. Then Yamaha, Tetzlaff says, "invested heavily in new infrastructure: tools, machines, molds for every diameter of drum shell, computer-operated bearing-edge cutter.... This was probably the single largest investment Yamaha had made in drums and percussion in recent history." Most of the machinery is Japanese, and even the lacquers still come from the Japanese manufacturers Yamaha has worked with for years. The company also implemented quality-control measures to test hardware and wood supplies before they hit the factory floor.



From left: Daryl Anderson, Steve Fisher, and Joel Tetzlaff

The Xiaoshan factory includes a water treatment facility that makes Yamaha Drums more environmentally friendly than ever before. The company received ISO 14001 certificates for environmental production, and the Chinese government uses the factory as a benchmark for other manufacturers.

With Yamaha Drums' move being looked at under a microscope by the industry and by artists, the company wanted to address any concerns by making sure the new models were a home run. The Live Custom line was the first to premiere out of the new facility. It's the second generation of the Oak Custom series and features a thicker 100 percent oak shell. Soon to follow was the Absolute Hybrid Maple. "We were setting ourselves up with all our resources to take drums and drumming to that next level that nobody else can get to," Fisher says. "We're actually going to be leaping forward." Yamaha's current lineup of acoustic drums includes PHX, Absolute Hybrid Maple, Live Custom, Stage Custom Birch, and GigMaker.

From the Top Down

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The Yamaha showroom in Burbank, California

Alex Solca

that produces high-end instruments, including flagship drumset PHX (“Phoenix”), which launched in January 2008. The company broke new ground with this series, with an 11-ply hybrid shell (jatoba core insulated by kapur and flanked with maple), the Hook lug, aluminum die-cast hoops, and the YESS II mounting system, which features rubber bushings made from the same material used to cushion boats when bumping into harbor docks. All PHX drums have 30-degree bearing edges, but each drum type features a different profile; the bass drum has the sharpest outside cut, to increase attack, while the diameter of the shell provides the low end. Some of these innovations have now trickled down into other series, including the Absolute Hybrid Maple, which features a blend of maple and wenge; the latter is an African hardwood that the company says helps activate the sound of the maple. Having similar characteristics to jatoba, a very expensive and limited resource used in PHX drums, wenge is a good substitute.

Advances in design are not restricted to the

Yamaha Music Craft facility. YASB is used not only for artist services but also for research and development. It’s equipped with backline gear for artist support, plus a shop to fabricate prototype drums and hardware, a spray booth for experimental finishes, and other rooms for assembly, buffing, and sound tests. “We build prototypes here in the shop, take them into the showroom, and invite artists over to play them and give us their honest feedback,” Anderson says.

Yamaha also often conducts blind sound tests where different prototype drums with uniform finishes are placed side by side. Artists evaluate the prototypes based purely on sound. Together, Yamaha’s team

and artists weed out what’s not working for them and identify what is. “That’s how the Live Custom and Absolute Hybrid Maple were created,” Anderson says. When diverse players, like Nashville great Paul Leim and Dave McClain from Machine Head, say the same things, then the flag goes up. Says Leim, “When the team went to work on PHX, we tested a lot, and I knew they were on to something incredible. Now they have done it again. Blind testing, I chose Absolute Hybrid Maple.”

Research results gathered at YASB are shared with the main offices in Japan. The drum team in Burbank acts as a liaison between the artist community and company personnel, and great care

is taken to clearly communicate the results of each evaluation to make sure nothing is lost in translation. “It’s about the sound,” Tetzlaff says. “Artists have been key to the development of our sounds through the last forty-eight years, and having the output of a factory that can actually build something to those specifications consistently is key.”



PHX kit with MULTI12 and DTX pad

Alex Solca

The Hybrid Theory

After our tour of YASB, we made our way across town to the Buena Park headquarters, where the primary objective is sales and marketing for the United States. This location also provides the backline for large festivals. Our visit to the showroom featured a deeper look at the company's DTX series of electronic drums, which includes DTX400, 502, 700, and 900 series kits and the DTX-MULTI12 percussion pad.

As far back as the mid-'80s, Yamaha offered electronic pads and a module. At that time, no one in the drum industry had a complete electronic drumset by today's standards. "Hybrid" sets, which combined the acoustic and the electronic, started back then, because there were no electronic hi-hats or cymbals available. Drummers had to incorporate acoustic and electronic components because it was necessary.

"The hybrid set is the continuation of the evolution of the drumset," Fisher says, and Yamaha is making adjustments to its electronic offerings to make it easier for acoustic drummers to incorporate DTX components. For instance, the DTX502 module has a space in the middle of the back panel to allow users to mount it up against a hi-hat or cymbal stand without any cables getting in the way.

Another key design is that all of the modules from the DTX502 up are able to import samples from a computer, iPhone, or iPad. The intention was to make the process as user-friendly as possible. And with a street price of \$269, the 502 module is super-affordable, allowing acoustic drummers to create a hybrid setup with the addition of a few pads or triggers, without breaking the bank. To help mix electronic and acoustic sounds, Yamaha also developed DTXLive Sound Solutions, which are drummer-designed audio setups for use in rehearsal or on stage.

In developing the new DTX pads, which feature a Textured Cellular Silicone (TCS) head, the intention was to have no abrupt change in feel when you move between a traditional Mylar drumhead on an acoustic drum to the silicone head used on the electronics. With a lot of R&D, the Japanese design team for DTX, along with input from key artists who came to YASB, found the most natural feel by combining a firmer snare pad with tom pads that have a little more give. The company also focused on getting the right feel for the DTX-MULTI12 so users could play it with sticks or fingertips and experience accurate triggering. "Our artists are a key part of our development

process," Fisher reiterates. "Not only for our acoustic drums but also electronic drums." DTX artist and Korn drummer Ray Luzier confirms this, saying, "I was blown away by the response of the new DTX pads. The pads are a great, durable addition to my setup for all of the extensive touring that Korn does."

Backing Yamaha's "one brand" focus between acoustic and electronic drums, Anderson leaves us with this: "We're trying

to help music progress, not just build better drums. When the style of drumming evolves, we're trying to keep our finger on the pulse and talking with our artists. That's how we progressed from the Recording Custom in the '80s to the Maple Custom in the '90s. The first time oak drums were seen in the market was with our Oak Custom. When we're talking about DTX and the incorporation of electronics, that's the next generation—that's where we are today."



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Stanbridge

Empyrean Todd Sucherman Signature Snare Drum

by Bob Campbell

In 2011, master drum craftsman Pete Stanbridge and Styx drummer Todd Sucherman got together to produce not only a premier snare drum but also an ultimate drum experience. The 6.5x14 Empyrean segment-shell drum is .3125" thick and handcrafted from rare exotic woods. There are sections of figured amboyna burl surrounding a band of afzelia burl, framed nicely by African blackwood pinstripes. The drum also features African blackwood and bubinga hoops. The modified Dunnett throw-off has a matching amboyna burl handle and two inset Swarovski crystals. All of the hardware is twenty-four-karat-gold-plated, including the ten Stanbridge brass tube lugs, tension rods, throw-off, butt plate, and air vent.

The drum features Sucherman's signature in gold foil on the outside of the shell, and there's a paper tag on the inside with the serial number, date, and handwritten signatures by Sucherman and Stanbridge. The Empyrean comes in a high-gloss finish that brings out the natural beauty of the amazing-looking figured woods. The case is handmade from black walnut and lined with foam and velvet.

Both Sucherman and Stanbridge responded by email to my questions. I placed my order realizing that considerable time would pass before delivery. I know that Stanbridge is a perfectionist, and he wasn't going to use the word *empyrean*, which means "derived from heaven," lightly. In the time that elapsed, I received numerous emails from him that included pictures of the drum in various states of assembly and construction. I vastly underestimated how much work went into the making of the Empyrean—almost a hundred pieces of hardwood were selected, cut, and lathed. In March 2014, my drum was completed and shipped to Sucherman to be signed, tuned, and tested personally. Shortly afterward, the drum arrived.

The Empyrean was breathtaking. It seemed like a museum piece or fine furniture. However, the intention was never to just let it sit on a shelf. This was a drum, and therefore it needed to be played. Each Empyrean comes with two sets of wood hoops, one meant for presentation and the other for hitting to your heart's delight. (The spare is fitted into the lid of the case.)

Inside a small inset compartment in the case were some cool surprises, including a pair of Todd Sucherman Promark signature drumsticks and a number of tools and accessories made from exotic hardwoods (lug wrench, drum key, clock, pen, keychain, and even a corkscrew). There were also copies



of Sucherman's popular *Methods & Mechanics* videos and Styx CDs, all of which were signed by Todd, and there was a booklet of pictures chronicling the building of my Empyrean: "EMP 001."

One of the cool surprises was a thumb drive containing several videos from Sucherman's Austin studio. The first started off, "Hi, Bob! Todd Sucherman, of

course, here in my studio with your drum, the very first Stanbridge/Sucherman Empyrean—number one! I'm about to sign the badge, put it in there, tune it up, and get this drum to you immediately." The Empyrean package also entitles the owner to two tickets and after-show passes to a Styx concert.

So, does the Empyrean sound as good as it looks? Absolutely! The bubinga/blackwood hoop produces very warm but articulate rimshots and rimclicks. I love the sensitivity of the drum from the outer edge to the center; the center isn't dead or boxy sounding and packs a nice punch. When I bear into this drum with some force, it projects well and doesn't choke. It has a very pleasant, unique set of overtones that aren't overwhelming, with a long, timpani-like decay. These overtones are what separates the Empyrean sound from that of any other snare.

I've experimented with relatively low, medium, and high tunings to see how well the drum performs. It sounds wonderful however I tune it, as each tension brings out a slightly different character. I prefer low and medium tunings, mainly because a high tuning chokes off too many overtones for my taste. A great sampling of the Empyrean, played by Sucherman, can be heard on "Manic Depression," the opening cut from his instructional video *Methods & Mechanics II*. List price: \$4,975.





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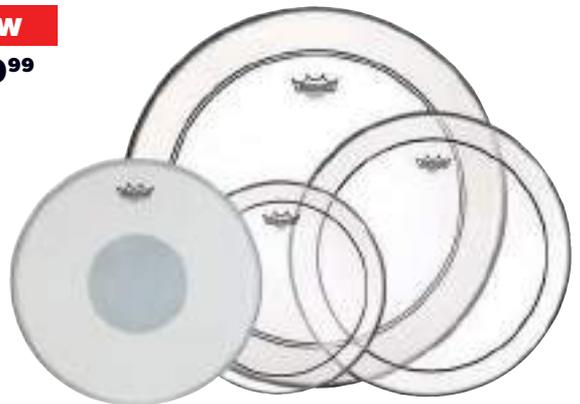


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New finishes for Freestyle II djembes include Spirit and Thinker. The green, yellow, and red used on the Spirit are based on the colors of the Rastafarian movement, while the Thinker features two shades of red and burnished gold that's inspired by traditional African designs. Both Freestyle II drums are available with mechanical or rope tuning systems and come in 9", 12", and 14" sizes with synthetic heads and protective rubber bottoms.

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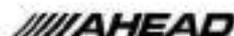
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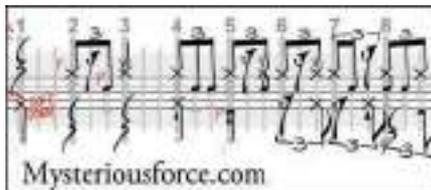


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Blicher/Hemmer/Gadd *Blicher/Hemmer/Gadd*
The soul remains the same—and so do the sparks.
Steve Gadd keeps up the heat.

From the first eight bars, **Steve Gadd** defines this set, opening with a “simple” bouncing, N’awlins-infused beat. Sax and Hammond B-3 add to the vamp in a similarly restrained manner, and we’re off into a straight-to-the-point good-time set of soul-jazz sparked with shades of R&B and blues. The live disc culls highlights from a Scandinavian tour featuring Gadd as special guest with saxophonist/flautist Michael Blicher and organist Dan Hemmer, members of the popular Danish band Astro Buddha Agogo (gotta love that name) who solo with a premium on brevity, soul, and good sound. Gadd foremost plays the role of grooving supporter but also gets dazzling spotlight moments. On the appropriately titled “New Orleans,” he lays down a hip half-time feel in three, then launches into his signature greasy street beats in a killer eleventh-hour solo that leaves the crowd whooping for more. (Proper Note) **Jeff Potter**



Flying Colors *Second Nature*
More epic rock from this truly super group of well-traveled prog and fusion greats.

The term *supergroup* is tossed around too liberally, but when names like these get together, you should take notice. Featuring Deep Purple/Dixie Dregs guitarist Steve Morse, Dregs bassist

Dave LaRue, Transatlantic keyboardist Neal Morse, and Alpha Rev singer Casey McPherson, Flying Colors isn’t out to reinvent the prog-rock wheel on its sophomore offering. But with the ever-more-song-oriented **Mike Portnoy** in the catcher’s position, the

music succeeds at least partially because it doesn’t have to handle a barrage of technical curveballs. Sure, the two multi-section tracks that bookend the disc are full of notes and chops, but tunes like the mid-tempo, spacious groover “Bombs Away” are all about a drummer taking his time, throwing in just the right fills at just the right time, and keeping the grooves and hooks uncompromised. “Lost Without You” sounds almost disarmingly poppy before Portnoy forgoes his hi-hat and tom pattern to bring things to a simmer. And check out the power ballad rolling underneath the choir that ends “Peaceful Harbor.” Also noteworthy is the fact that *Second Nature* features one of Portnoy’s best kit sounds on record. (Mascot Label Group) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



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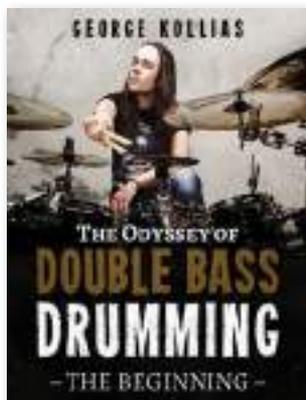
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MULTIMEDIA



The Odyssey of Double Bass Drumming, Part 1: The Beginning

by George Kollias

Nile's George Kollias is a beast of a double bass drummer, and his first book on the subject—available from Modu, the in-house publishing branch of the international, Germany-based Modern Music School—proves to be a definitive statement. Sure, the topic has been covered well

before, but *The Beginning* is merely the first installment of a trilogy on double bass by Kollias, and at almost 200 pages it establishes the groundwork for students to get closer to their metal heroes. The book touches on Kollias's concepts regarding beater angle and seat height before quickly moving on to fun but challenging exercises from 8th-note patterns to 32nd-note variations. Each chapter also has examples to help build reading skills, with notated snare lines that are designed to act as a melody of sorts. The sturdy ring binding is welcome, as is a download code for play-along tracks and videos that the author will update. Even this beginner's tome gets demanding rather quickly, so it'll be interesting to see just who

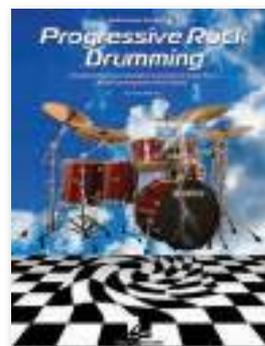
the next two advanced volumes will be aimed at. (€34,90, modu-publishing.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Progressive Rock Drumming

by Dan Maske

If you're seeking drum transcriptions of "Close to the Edge," look elsewhere. Dan Maske's book avoids dissecting famous performances by the forefathers, instead jumping right into the deep end of progressive-rock drumming concepts so readers can work up their own style. Briefly addressing useful topics like odd meters, linear playing, and offbeat China cymbal hits, Maske quickly gets into song forms, providing original material with three different drum approaches for the same music. This gets advanced right away, and it's not as if the first interpretation is easier than the last, so your chops should probably already be together before you grapple with these tunes. A download code for online audio is included, as is the author's written analysis of the structure of each drum part. Blank drum staves above other instruments are added toward the end, so you can write out your ideas. (\$19.99, Hal Leonard) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



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Ray Luzier's *Double Bass Drum Techniques*

by Mike Haid

Its lessons first came to light a decade ago, in the form of a highly regarded instructional DVD. Now a print companion has arrived to challenge our feet even more. *MD* goes right to the source to learn how to squeeze the most from the book.

Ray Luzier's evolution from self-taught Pennsylvania farm boy to internationally revered rock star was significantly aided by time spent as a student *and* instructor at the famed Musicians Institute in Los Angeles. Luzier has enjoyed an impressive career, featuring seven years (and counting) with the nu-metal institution Korn and blistering extracurricular projects like the modern power trio KXM, with singer/bassist dUg Pinnick (King's X) and guitarist George Lynch (Dokken, Lynch Mob). Luzier has also kept a foot in education, via regular clinic appearances as well as his self-titled DVD, released in 2005 as part of the Hal Leonard/Musicians Institute Private Lessons series. Now Ray has expanded on the lessons from the DVD with a method book that, like the original video, guides us through a bevy of rudiment-based hand techniques and double bass grooves, patterns, and fills. Taken together, these workouts are designed to help beginning and intermediate drummers build a foundation of well-balanced, rock-oriented chops, and to challenge and inspire players at every level.

Double Bass Drum Techniques begins with warm-up exercises that Luzier still uses before hitting the stage with Korn. "I've always loved practicing drum corps routines to develop clean, well-executed rudiments," Ray says. "This does so much to help strengthen your drumset playing. The more technique you can develop and understand on snare drum, the better and cleaner your playing will become on your entire kit."

Luzier tells *MD* that his motivation to produce this educational package was to share the concepts he's developed over the years that have helped make him a more well-rounded player, including his experiences teaching at Musicians Institute. "I had to write a lot of curriculum for [the school's percussion wing]," he says, "which forced me to come up with all kinds of creative ideas for practicing on the kit. Working on proper technique and learning rudiments and accents should be a *huge* part of your practice routine. When you see me playing with Korn, KXM, or whoever, it looks like I'm killing everything in sight, but I'm actually quite relaxed and holding my sticks very loosely. I have a practice pad backstage, and every night before a show I'll warm up with flams, flam taps, Swiss triplets, paradiddles, etc., and then do mild stretches to get the blood flowing for the brutality that I'm about to put my body through."

Luzier's suggestion on how to best absorb the material is to ease

into it: "Start your metronome speed at 70 bpm and work on the accent exercises. Pay close attention to your wrists, stick heights, etc., then slowly increase the tempo. My theory has always been to learn things slowly and really break them down to understand what you're doing with every limb. The speed will come later.

"Too many up-and-coming drummers try to take on too much too quickly," Luzier continues, "which results in muddy, non-powerful playing with fragmented ideas. When you don't

articulate every note, your playing will sound sloppy. Once you fully absorb the technique, work on developing a solid feel. Eventually your drumming will become a smooth and powerful musical expression of your emotions."

While the warm-up, accent, and double-stroke exercises are intended for all skill levels, the "Pyramid of Pain," a brutal chops-building endurance exercise designed to strengthen double-stroke technique, will challenge even the most advanced players. "Some people tell me that the ostinatos and the Pyramid of Pain exercises are the most difficult," Luzier says. "Some say that the first few pages are the hardest because they've never played accents properly. So there's a little bit of hand and foot development all throughout the book that will challenge the beginner as well as the advanced player, depending on how far along you are in your abilities."

The book's double bass exercises go far to help drummers develop a balance of strength and technique between the hands and feet. Luzier's approach is to work on the hands while keeping the feet constant to develop an "autopilot" foundation, which serves to help build speed and power to mirror or provide counterpoint to what the hands are doing. Most of the foot exercises are either 16th-note- or triplet-based patterns that work well in conjunction with the stickings presented earlier in the book. Luzier's challenging hand-foot-combination patterns lay a foundation for you to explore an endless variety of your own ideas. In the online-accessible video examples, Ray and fellow David Lee Roth Band alumni Billy Sheehan (bass) and Toshi Hiketa (guitar) demonstrate a number of the exercises in a band setting.

"I still use most of these exercises on a daily basis," Luzier says. "I'm always trying to push myself to make them more challenging. It's too easy to practice things we already know, so try to practice the exercises that are the most difficult, then at the end have fun and shred!"



Whiplash

And you thought *your* teachers were tough. A hot new independent film shines a light on big band drumming while examining the line between perfectionism and abuse.

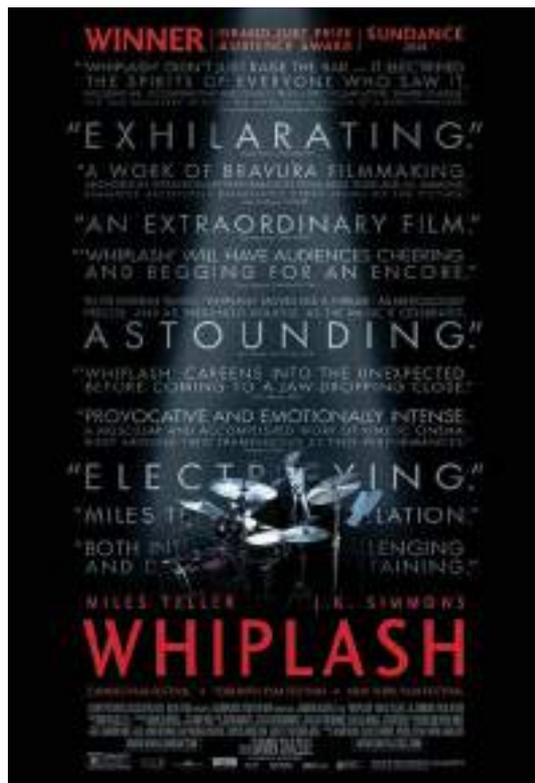
Am I rushing, or am I dragging? These concerns generally do not confront the general population, but as drummers we find them all too familiar. For Damien Chazelle, the writer and director of the out-of-nowhere hit movie *Whiplash*, similar thoughts plagued his high school big band drumming experience, as he played under a tough, demanding conductor and spent much of his kit time in fear. The aspiring drummer didn't then realize that his jazz-band days would provide the inspiration for a movie that would take the 2014 Sundance Film Festival by storm.

"It used to be my life—every minute of every day was spent playing, thinking about playing, or listening," Chazelle, who's since refocused his ambitions to the world of filmmaking, says. "So in that sense maybe I kind of burned out. But I still have such an emotional attachment to that kind of music especially. It gave me a lot of fodder to make a movie and gave me an angle in." *Whiplash*, out on home

video February 24, brings the action to the college level, at the fictional Shaffer Conservatory, with drummer Andrew Neyman, played by Miles Teller, hungry to succeed and to earn praise from fearsome conductor Terence Fletcher, who's brought to vivid life by J.K. Simmons in an award-winning, scenery-chewing yet nuanced performance.

Andrew's ordeals with Fletcher go far beyond what Chazelle himself experienced, entering the realm of abuse, but the director did try to give his tyrannical bandleader a bit of method to his madness. "I wanted to create a character who is this monster and takes it to a level that is utterly unjustifiable but does it from a philosophy, even if I don't agree with it, where at least you can see his point," Chazelle explains. "You can see underneath the twisted, ridiculous stuff he does that there's a kernel that maybe we can agree with, which is that you need to push people and that people shouldn't settle, and if you want to be good at something you need to work at it."

In Teller, Chazelle had a self-taught rock drummer with some of the tools to play the part, but the actor needed to woodshed at the kit and get in the frame of mind of Buddy Rich or Jo Jones, Andrew's heroes. "About a month out from shooting," Chazelle says, "I started working with Miles, giving him playlists and teaching him traditional grip, because I thought this character would be someone who worships these older players and tries to mimic them in his playing. We didn't have time for really running



scenes with the actors. You might think that would be a bummer, but my time with Miles on the drumkit was kind of as much rehearsal as we needed, because by just focusing in on the drumming, he was becoming this character." The drumming shots, as grueling as they are as Andrew tries to will himself to burn a swing beat at 350 bpm, are rendered lovingly and beautifully; *Whiplash* is a music movie that really is about music, specifically the tough stuff that goes on in the practice room.

"In a way that was my beef with certain other music movies," Chazelle says. "A lot of them took for granted this idea that you roll out of bed and suddenly you're this genius musician; you don't really need to work at it, and the main thing you work on is your personal life, so that the music becomes kind of a pretext."

Along those lines, Chazelle took on the challenge of showing subtleties in Andrew's development—again, something that not all viewers will pick up on but that drummers will appreciate—

and to define the character's playing style in contrast to the other student drummers in the film. At first, Andrew, Chazelle says, "has some nice ideas, a nice sense of feel, a nice overall approach to the kit, but he's very unpolished and he has a terrible inner clock." Meanwhile, Carl Tanner, an older member of Fletcher's top "studio band," is "totally in the pocket—perfect tempo, every hit with the band is perfectly in sync. He seems to always be completely in control. But there's not really that much inspiration there." Carl is played by Nate Lang, a professional drummer who also became something of a drum coach to Teller while filming.

Much of the drumming you hear, including renditions of Hank Levy's chart "Whiplash," was prerecorded, with the actors swinging along to a playback track blasting on the set, but some practice scenes include audio of Teller at the kit. "We had a guy who was basically Miles's drum double," Chazelle explains, "and we initially planned to use him quite a bit. But when we started doing some of the drumming scenes with Miles, I was so pleasantly surprised by how far he had progressed, and we wound up using the drum double a *lot* less than we thought we would. So there are images where you see tight close-ups on hands or shots from the top of someone's head where it's a drum double, but for pretty much everything else we wound up being able to use Miles without having to do any trickery or CG or anything like that." Chazelle adds with a laugh, "Which was kind of nice, since we couldn't afford to do that anyway." **Michael Parillo**

PASIC 2014

The World's Largest Percussion Event Does It Again

Last November, for the second year in a row, the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) took over the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis to bring together thousands of student and professional drummers and percussionists to be entertained and educated on a plethora of topics, from ethnic rhythms and symphonic studies to jazz and rock techniques. Headlining drumset artists included Gregg Bissonette,

who demonstrated what it takes to survive in the Los Angeles studio scene by playing along to one-minute excerpts of tracks by various artists, including jazz great Wayne Shorter and pop/rock hitmakers Taylor Swift and Foo Fighters. Will Kennedy laid down his trademark slinky funk groove, and Billy Cobham conducted a master class on classic fusion technique that also featured a rudimental duet with three-time DCI snare drum champion Roger



For video highlights of PASIC 2014, visit modern drummer.com.

Live photo by Alex Solca

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Carter. Jazz torchbearer Carl Allen gave a great drum clinic during his daytime slot and then brought the house down with a rousing evening concert in tribute to legendary post-bop master Elvin Jones.

Other featured drummers included *SNL*'s Shawn Pelton, who gave an informative look behind the curtain of his demanding weekly television gig and Hollywood sessions, while also laying down some of the fattest and most inspiring grooves of the event, and studio great/famed clinician Russ Miller, who jammed a super-tight duo set with British world percussion expert Pete Lockett. Pop/R&B workhorse Gorden Campbell, rock drummer Jason Sutter, fusion master Billy Kilson, prog-metal star Matt Halpern, and multi-percussionist Alex Acuña (along with relative newcomer Luisito Quintero) rounded out the main-stage lineup, while brush expert Florian Alexandru-Zorn, Musicians Institute faculty member Albe Bonacci, Drummers Collective's Jason Gianni, and Northern Illinois instructor Rodrigo Villanueva conducted more intimate clinics and master classes.

Highlights in other areas of percussion included performances and clinics by marimba greats Nancy Zeltsman, Mark Ford, and She-e Wu; experimental quartet So Percussion; and drum corps champs Ralph Nader, Jeff Prosperie, Jeff Queen, and John Wooton.

The 2015 PASIC will be held in San Antonio, Texas, November 11 through 14. Visit pas.org/pasic for more info.

Text by Michael Dawson
Photos by Warren LaFever



Gregg Bissonette



Billy Cobham



Carl Allen



Will Kennedy



Shawn Pelton



Russ Miller



Pete Lockett



Jason Sutter



Billy Kilson



Gorden Campbell



Luisito Quintero (left) and Alex Acuña



Matt Halpern





Trapped in Time

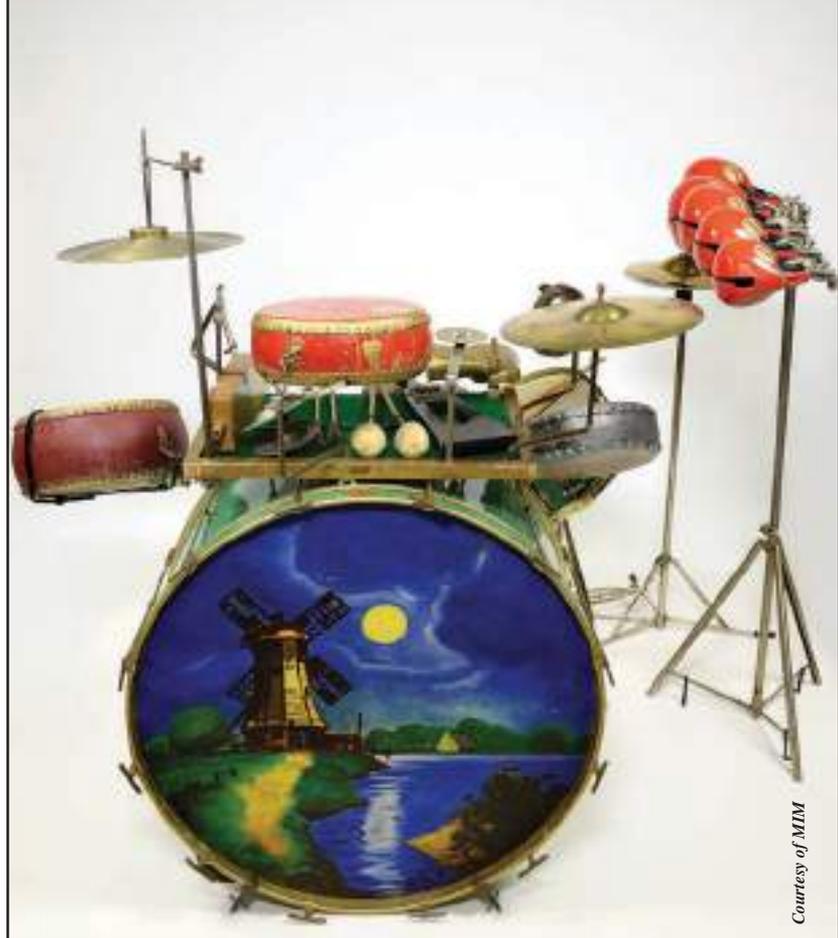
This old beauty, whose core is a 1920s Leedy Professional bass and snare drum with a jade green wrap and Art Gold hardware, comes our way via the Musical Instrument Museum (MIM) in Phoenix. The trap set is part of MIM's current Beyond the Beat: Drums of the World exhibition, which runs through June 21 and comprises more than a hundred pieces from forty-five countries, including a set of 1969 Camcos played by Doug "Cosmo" Clifford with Creedence Clearwater Revival. There's even a 6'-diameter drum commissioned from local Yaqui artist Alex Maldonado that visitors can play, along with other interactive features.

Discussing the traps you see here, exhibition co-curator Cullen Strawn of MIM says, "Inside the bass drum there are three electrically powered lights that alternate and illuminate the back of the landscape painting on the front head, indicating morning, midday, and evening."

Attached to the bass pedal is a cymbal striker, so that, Strawn explains, "when your right foot would play the bass drum, you would also be clanging a cymbal." The outfit sports Chinese temple blocks and tack-head toms, a bass drum muffler, a felted trap tray, wire brushes ("originally patented as fly swatters"), cowbells, a Ludwig slapstick and wooden whistle, hand-sock and various other cymbals, a tambourine, a triangle made from a rolling pin, and a high boy, "a fairly late precursor of the modern hi-hat" where the top cymbal is smaller in diameter than the bottom.

The bare bones of the Leedy Professional are intact. MIM added the other period-appropriate traps, Strawn says, "just like drummers at that time would have done, mixing and matching certain sound-effects devices regardless of whether they were the same brand. At that time certain tom-toms and cymbals weren't made in America at all—they came from China or Turkey or other parts of the world. And that's an interesting part of the story, because it reflects the emigration that was going on and the way it was affecting music making."

Acknowledging that drummers have always been fond of combining a diverse array of components to find interesting, useful sounds, Strawn concludes, "The spirit of experimentation is a direct line going all the way back to the invention of the drumset itself."



Courtesy of MIM



Courtesy of MIM

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



Coming Up in Modern Drummer

Bernard Purdie: Finally Commits His Story to Print

Kenny Washington: Jazz Wisdom

Arturo Stabile on Adapting Congas to the Drumset

Jim Payne Demystifies Aretha's "Rock Steady"

Bass Drum Control After Fifty Years

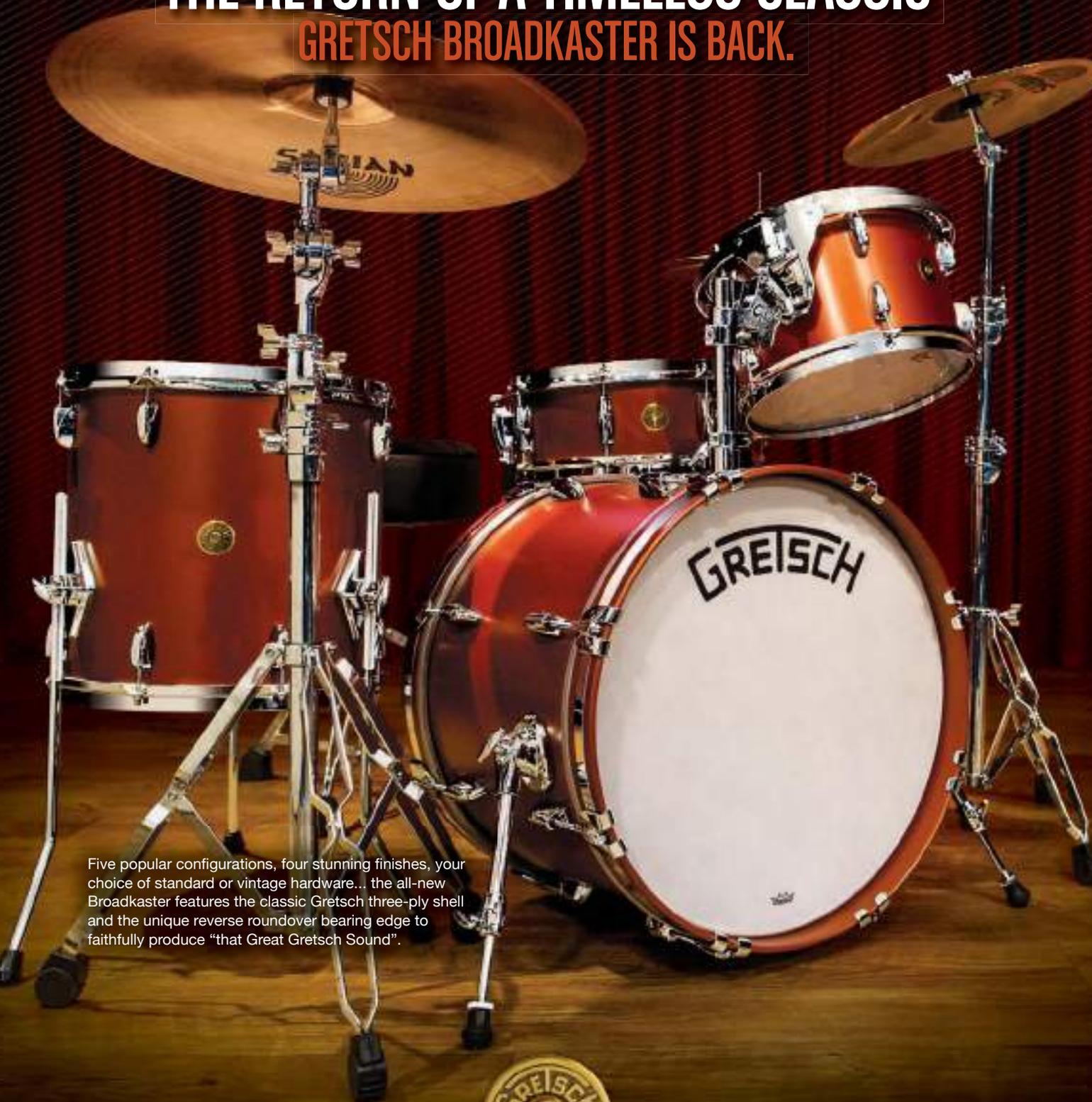
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The Zildjian logo is written in a white, elegant, cursive script. The letter 'Z' is particularly stylized, with a long, sweeping tail that loops back under the 'i'. The 'j' has a small dot above it, and the 'i' has a dot above it. The 'n' is also stylized with a small loop at the end. The logo is set against a dark background.