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Steve Gadd, Zoomed In

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PERFECTION IS OVERRATED

“I don’t know anybody who’s perfect. You go out there and do your best. And if you don’t nail it, then you go out the next day and you try to get it right. That’s really all you can do.”

NO SHOWING OFF

“Instead of driving the music with this need to show off, I’ve learned to let the music dictate what I need to do. You have to really listen in order to do that.”

SEEK INSPIRATION

“Originally you’re inspired by hearing someone else doing something, and then taking it home and trying to learn how to do it. When I was growing up I would get records of Philly Joe, Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, and guys like that, and slow the records down and work out what they were playing, and then work on it and put my own feel to it. That’s how we all learn.”

BUT BE ORIGINAL

“You can’t be a copy of somebody else, no matter how hard you try. It’s impossible. I’ve seen people try to copy licks and get them exact, and I can tell they’re not playing in a way that’s natural or comfortable. That’s not what music is all about. You have to develop your own bag of tricks. The worst thing in the world you can do is let your enthusiasm for somebody else’s work stifle your own creativity.”

GET IN THE GROOVE

“I’ve seen so many drummers who have chops and technique that would make your jaw drop to the floor. People are doing some really incredible things. To me, though, I find it just as inspiring on a whole different level when I see somebody who can play a groove and get inside it and make me tap my toes. If you can get people tapping their toes, that’s it – you’re playing music.”



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On the Cover

36 Bernard "Pretty" Purdie

by Billy Amendola

The depth and breadth of the legendary drummer's career are simply astounding—and he's not even *close* to slowing down.

Cover and contents photos by Alex Solca

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TRIBUTE TO THE MASTER

*“There ain’t but one **Tony Williams** when it comes to playing the drums. There was nobody like him before or since.”*

Miles Davis



When Miles Davis invited the 17 year old Tony Williams to join his new Quintet, the music world would be forever changed ... and the art of drumming would never be the same. Not only did Tony set a new standard with this revolutionary group but the very sound of his instrument, in particular that of his cymbals, would set a benchmark to which, still to this day, all others would aspire.

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"Teach Your Parents Well"

Many of you will recognize the title of this month's editorial from the famous Graham Nash song "Teach Your Children," from Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young's *Déjà Vu* album. (RIP, drummer Dallas Taylor.) I always liked the way the line flipped the script on the title. It provided the core lyrical idea of the song, which is widely recognized as one of the most powerful calls ever for understanding among battling groups, in this case the different generations of the Woodstock era.

Forty-five years later, the world at large unfortunately has yet to completely internalize the song's message. But I'm happy to say that among us drummers, the natural chasm between generations doesn't seem to exist to the extent that it does elsewhere. Thumb through a typical issue of *Modern Drummer*, and count how many times an artist makes a positive reference to an early teacher. It's striking.

Take this issue. In his Q&A, cover star Bernard "Pretty" Purdie immediately finds cause to refer back to his first drum instructor, Leonard Heywood. Purdie was interviewed for the piece by *MD*'s Billy Amendola, who studied with the legendary R&B drummer at one time. The same relationship exists in our report on jazz great Kenny Washington, who spoke with Paul Wells, himself a thankful recipient of Washington's famous drumming tuition.

In this month's Catching Up With... department, Terry Silverlight talks not only about how he once studied with Morris "Arnie" Lang but also about how he recorded alongside the classical percussionist for his latest album, *Duets*. In that same column, Mountain drummer Corky Laing doesn't mention any of his own teachers per se, but he does go out of his way to thank those who've served in the role of drummer's best friend throughout his distinguished career—the bassists Jack Bruce, Felix Pappalardi, and Noel Redding.

Elsewhere in this issue, Mike Haid interviews international performer Gabor Dornyei, who remains extremely active in drum education, and former *MD* features editor Rick Mattingly talks with Colin Bailey, author of the timeless method book *Bass Drum Control*. And in their feature stories, we learn that Butch Walker regular Mark Stepro studied with Wilco's Glenn Kotche and with onetime Glenn Miller/Stam Kenton drummer Ed Soph, and that the individualistic Chaos Chaos drummer Chloe Saavedra has been guided by Death Cab for Cutie's Jason McGerr.

So, what's to be made of all this? It seems that we drummers don't need encouragement to give credit to our instructors—we're already doing it!

It never hurts to remind ourselves of our own respectful nature, however—or of the nature of the music biz. Right now, any number of *Modern Drummer* readers who just a short time ago were carrying our latest issue in their school backpack are reaching great heights in their playing careers. Sadly, the age-old story of the star who forgets where he or she came from never goes away. You might not have to spend very much time at all in the music industry before you find yourself suffering through a long night—or tour—with that kind of character, and it ain't fun, no matter how many records they've sold. And we drummers aren't completely immune to the ego-inflating symptoms that a successful musical career can bring. But if we regularly remind ourselves to stay humble—and make sure to keep people in our lives who care enough to stay humble—and make sure to keep people in our lives who care enough to stay humble—and make sure to keep people in our lives who care enough to stay humble—and make sure to keep people in our lives who care enough to stay humble—we'll all be just fine.



Adam Budofsky

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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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Gregg Bissonette

I really enjoyed the whole spread on Gregg Bissonette. He is one of my favorite people. I met him in a club in Dallas when I was on the road with Rickie Lee Jones in '81. He was a nice and engaging person. He was playing with the house band, and he was smoking it. We spoke on a break and he told me he was thinking about moving to Los Angeles. We hooked up briefly when he arrived, but it took no time at all for Los Angeles to get who Gregg was. He hustled with a velvet touch and a smiling face. He studied and grew fast and developed a great style and an extremely broad repertoire as a drummer, which seems to only grow daily.

I've met drummers that he taught, I've sent him some of mine, and we've exchanged ideas over the years. His curriculum is comprehensive, and he really cares about what he's doing. He's made great accomplishments as a studio sideman, and everyone remembers a great musical experience.

We talk on the phone occasionally, and although we live in the same town, I don't get to see him enough. Hey, we play the same instrument, so we're never on the same gig together. Although one night at a benefit some years ago, there were two drumkits on the stage and we got to groove together, and it was an experience that we both remind each other of.

Gregg's success couldn't have happened to a nicer, more deserving person and badass drummer. Thanks for the great article.

Tony Braunagel

Congratulations on the Gregg Bissonette feature in the December 2014 issue—the best I have had the pleasure of reading in my long, simple life. Kind regards.

Roger Wiles

Samba Songo

I was happy to see my piece "Samba Songo" running in the January 2015 issue

of MD. Although the examples are written correctly, there is one notable error in the first paragraph of column two. In the first sentence of that paragraph it is stated that the surdo drum pattern is played on the bass drum, and that is incorrect. It is played with the right hand on the floor tom and is part of the (correctly written) hand pattern.

I've put together the entire page with demonstrations and a breakdown.

Search on YouTube for "Samba Songo, Peter Magadini."

Peter Magadini

Dropped Beat

The photo of Shannon Larkin that appeared on page 36 of our January issue was credited incorrectly. The photographer is Paris Visone.

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BERNARD "PRETTY" PURDIE "ROCK STEADY" DEMYSTIFIED

Funk expert Jim Payne demonstrates the drum parts from the Aretha Franklin track, one of Purdie's most iconic

performances and the subject of this month's In the Pocket column.



Alex Solica

DEMOS

Product Close-Up

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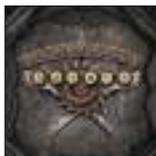
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Out Now



UFO A Conspiracy of Stars (Andy Parker) /// **Gang of Four** What Happens Next (Jonny Finnigan, Mark Heaney) /// **Steve Earle and the Dukes** Terraplane (Will Rigby) /// **Revolution Saints** Revolution Saints (Deen Castronovo) /// **Blind Idiot God** Before Ever After (Tim Wyskida) /// **Imagine Dragons** Smoke + Mirrors (Daniel Platzman) /// **Steve Turre** Spiritman (Willie Jones III)



Devo *Hardcore Live!*

"Whenever I can't do a Devo show," **Josh Freese** told *MD* in 2011, "I feel like my wife is running around town going on dates with some other guy. I feel territorial about it." Fortunately the busy drummer had no scheduling conflicts last June, when Devo performed a special set at the Fox Theater in Oakland, California, comprising music that was written between 1974 and 1977, prior to any label deal or public success. Available on DVD, Blu-ray, CD, and vinyl. (MVD)



Greg Anton *Face the Music*

The drummer, songwriter, and attorney, who's worked with John Lee Hooker, Stanley Jordan, Otis Taylor, Nicky Hopkins, the Rock Collection, and Zero featuring Steve Kimock and John Cipollina, has released his first novel, which tells the adventures of a singer-songwriter in San Francisco in the 1970s. (Plus One Press)



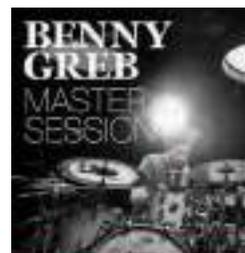
Pearl Launches MyFirstDrumset.com



Pearl has launched an interactive Web platform for parents and future drummers, myfirstdrumset.com. Focusing specifically on the experience of buying a first drumset, the site features a buyer's guide for new players, assembly and playing advice, and testimonials from top drummers and industry professionals about the value of studying drums and percussion. "The site is designed to be all about the drumming experience," Pearl director of marketing Steve Armstrong says, "and inspiring people to pursue it. Every player has a story about getting their first drumset and what it did for them personally and professionally. We want to take those stories forward and help create new ones in the lives of a new generation of drummers."

Benny Greb 2015 U.S. Master Session

International artist/clinician Benny Greb (*The Language of Drumming, The Art & Science of Groove*) is hosting a master session at the Full Moon Resort in Big Indian, New York, this March 12 through 15. Topics will include warming up, vocabulary building, artistic progress, effective practice techniques, ergonomics, coordination, independence, sound, groove design, developing a solid time feel, and playing with a click track. Accommodations include twin rooms and three meals a day. For more information, go to bennygreb.de.



Michael Shrieve Inspires Young Artists at Bethel Woods

Michael Shrieve, drummer with the original Santana band, recently spoke to a group of teens participating in Bethel Woods' creative expression group, Project Identity. Among those in attendance were students in the Pittsburgh-based For Those About to Rock Academy.

Shrieve, whose solo during Santana's "Soul Sacrifice" performance at Woodstock in 1969 was a highlight of the historic festival, shared his experiences in the music industry and his advice for developing a career built on passion. "Creativity is essential for life," he stressed. Later, the drummer joined participants on the original festival field—the Bethel Woods cultural and civic center is situated on 800 acres surrounding the site of the '69 event—for an acoustic set performed by the young musicians.

Project Identity was created by Bethel Woods to give teens a safe and encouraging environment where creative expression has the opportunity to thrive. For more information, go to bethelwoodscenter.org.





**On
Tour**

Todd Sucherman has been on the road with Styx.

Jason Powell



Mark O'Connell is out with Taking Back Sunday in support of the band's latest album, *Happiness Is*, with the Menzingers (**Joe Godino**) and Letlive (**Loniel Robinson**) in support.

Maat Christine



Eric Slick is out with Dr. Dog. The band recently released its first live album, *Live at a Flamingo Hotel*.

ALSO ON THE ROAD

Jon Larsen with Volbeat /// **Valentino Arteaga** with Of Mice and Men /// **Adam Patterson** with the Expendables /// **Curtis Marrero** with Milo Greene /// **Jen Ledger** with Skillet /// **Chris Hornbrook** with Senses Fail



Mind Matters

by Bernie Schallehn

The Approach-Avoidance Conflict

I have a problem that has plagued me for years. When my band books a gig, I immediately feel excited and begin to look forward to it. But as the date gets closer, I start to think of all the negatives, and I kind of wish I didn't have to play the gig. That's crazy, isn't it? Why does this happen, and what can I do to fix it?

B.C.

Quirky little creatures, aren't we? Here we spend innumerable hours in the rehearsal room, prepping and polishing songs for our audience, only to have some or much of our enthusiasm for the date leak out of us like a deflating balloon as we approach hour zero. Let's focus on why this happens.

Psychologist Kurt Lewin first introduced the concept of the approach-avoidance conflict as one element of stress in our lives. Lewin explained that approach-avoidance occurs when there's an event that has both positive and negative characteristics, making the goal (your gig) simultaneously appealing and unappealing. The approach side of the conflict is the motivation that drives you to book the engagement. You imagine being on stage, playing in the pocket, with all your fills precise and sounding sweet. But, because the gig might be a week, a month, or several months away, it's all fantasyland. The negative aspects of the job are present (refer to "The Unglamorous Side of Gigging" in the October 2014 issue), but at this point the positive aspects are much more powerful in your mind.

It's when you get closer to the actual date that doubts, fears, or simply an overall sense of avoidance can seep or flood into your consciousness. You begin to ruminate about the nitty-gritty mechanics of loading your gear, finding the club, wondering where you'll park, and so on. You might also worry about the audience size and response, the club owner's attitude, the

dependability of your equipment, the sound system, and, last but not least, your performance on the kit. If negative thoughts about the gig grow stronger as the date approaches, you can also expect physical manifestations of anxiety—clammy hands, a rapid heartbeat, or a dry mouth—as well as the mental torture of anxiety, including self-doubt, racing thoughts, and pictures or movies in your mind depicting a disastrous performance. As a result, when you could be feeling excitement about the upcoming gig, you end up wishing you could take the next bus out of town.

Possible Fixes

First, acknowledge that the approach-avoidance conflict exists, and surrender to it. I'm not suggesting that you let the negative aspects of an upcoming event push you toward ending your drumming career. This isn't a white-flag, "I give up" surrender, but rather it's a surrender in the sense that you accept the situation and flow with it.

Next, as the date approaches, steer your mental focus to all the reasons why you love drumming in front of an audience. Think excitement, not anxiety. Excitement and anxiety share many physical manifestations. Elevated heartbeat, increased respiration, and butterflies in your stomach can be labeled either anxiety or excitement. It's all up to you. If a negative thought gets stuck in your mind, let it be and don't fight it. That which we resist persists. But if you don't tussle with the negative thought, in time it should float out of your consciousness.

You also need to minimize "catastrophizing." Albert Ellis, the creator of Rational Emotive Therapy, used the word *catastrophize* when his clients would make mountains out of molehills. Ellis felt that humans were experts at catastrophizing

a situation. Imagine dropping a stick during your solo. Is it the worst thing that could happen, or is it just a minor flub? It depends on the meaning and weight you put on the incident.

Additional Help

You're an artist, and artists create. You create music on your drumkit. Psychotherapist and creativity coach Eric Maisel contends that all artists encounter anxiety, whether they are actively creating or whether they avoid or are denied the creative process. If you're in a working band, what happens when too much time lapses between gigs? I bet you start to feel antsy, jittery, restless, or unfulfilled. The reason is because, as an artist, you've been denied the opportunity to create. How many musicians do you know who don't care about getting paid and just want to play? Sure, there's anxiety involved in performing, but for these folks the anxiety of not playing is so great that they'll do a freebie. (I recommend Maisel's book *Mastering Creative Anxiety*.)

So if you're indeed an artist and you have a need to create, you're going to have some anxiety, whether you play the gig or feign illness and bail on your bandmates for the night. I'm not sure we ever truly master anxiety, but I do believe we can manage it. One good way to assess how deep the need to create runs within you is to take notes on how you feel when you're denied the chance to play your drums.



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



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DW Jazz Series Cherry/Gum Bebob Drumset

Warm but punchy. Strong but controlled. Could this be a perfect pairing?

DW's Jazz series has become a favorite among many types of drummers—not just those playing swing, big band, or bebop. Rock, studio, Latin, and even metal players are also leaning on these drums for their warm, punchy, and performance-ready sounds.

Jazz series drums feature a 3-ply core of gumwood. Gum is a softer, porous wood that was used most notably by the now-defunct Jasper company, whose shells were an essential ingredient in the highly coveted sounds of Gretsch, Fibes, and other American drums made in the late '70s and early '80s. DW went after that classic sound, which is known to be warm yet punchy, with the Jazz series shell, but tweaked the formula a bit by offering three choices of inner and outer woods (maple, mahogany, or cherry) and by configuring the veneers in alternating grain patterns.

The outermost ply (maple, mahogany, or cherry) of a Jazz series shell has the grain going in a horizontal direction, while the second ply has a shorter vertical grain. The gumwood core is vertical/horizontal/vertical, and the inner two plies of maple, mahogany, or cherry are configured horizontal/vertical. The vertical-grain veneers are said to help create a lower overall note, due to less tension in the wood, while the horizontal ones provide more low-mids. Jazz shells are also built without reinforcement rings, which not only fits with the intended '70s/'80s vibe but also helps to open up the tone.

Our Review Kit Specs

Jazz series drums are offered in just about any size you could want—from 7x8 Fast toms to 20x24 kicks—but our review kit came as a quintessential four-piece bebop setup, with a 14x18 bass drum, a 10x12 rack tom, a 14x14 floor tom, and a 5.5x14 snare. We received cherry/gum shells in a natural satin finish. The bass drum and toms come with Remo-made DW single-ply coated heads on both sides. The snare has a coated single-ply batter and a clear bottom head, also made by Remo. The bearing edges on all of the drums were clean and sharp, with a precisely sanded roundover back cut on each.

Hardware and Appointments

There are no off-the-shell components on Jazz series drums, from the strong bass drum spurs, brackets, and floor tom legs to the sleekly designed STM rack tom mount, which enhances sustain by suspending the drum from four of the company's trademark turret lugs. (DW's lugs began as a tribute to those used by another classic American drum maker, Camco, from which DW bought machinery in the late '70s.)

The tom and snare rims are DW's True Hoops, which come in graduated thicknesses depending on diameter and application. The 12" and 14" versions are 2.3 mm, while the snare hoops are 3 mm. (Although we didn't receive any, 8" and 10" True Hoops are 1.6 mm

thick.) These hoops are designed to be perfectly round and flat, and they feature a rounded outer edge, which gives them a chunkier feel and stronger attack that's closer to what you get from die-cast rims.

The snare came with the smooth, strong, and easy-to-use MAG throw-off, which has a magnetized lever, and the 3P three-position butt plate, allowing you to toggle between different snare tensions. Another DW upgrade is the True-Pitch tuning rod, which features tighter 5 mm threads for greater tuning control. These rods, combined with the precisely cut bearing edges and True Hoops, made the Jazz series drums super-easy to dial in for a pure, musical tone.

Also offered on drums in the Jazz line is the vintage-style 7771 rail mount. Unlike the awkward-to-adjust models of this type of mount used on drums in the '60s, DW's version comes with several large thumb-screws that allow you to position a tom in infinite ways, plus memory locks and a knurled rail that help to keep the drum from slipping out of position over time. I personally prefer to mount rack toms in snare baskets, simply for their stability and ease of use. But the 7771 rail mount is an outstanding option that doesn't add more floor stands and doesn't require a hole to be drilled in the bass drum shell.

Echoes of Tony

If the legendary Tony Williams were still with us, he'd probably be all over the Jazz series. Williams, who was a longtime Gretsch player before switching to DW in the '90s, was known for having a confident, powerful, and supremely agile touch, and this Jazz kit embodied those things to a tee.

We conducted the bulk of our testing with the drums tensioned very tightly, like the tuning Tony used in the '60s when he was working with Miles Davis's great quintet. They responded superbly at high tensions, exuding a clean, punchy, articulate, and melodic sound that also had plenty of projection and depth.

Cherry drums are known to be more focused than those made from maple, which proved to be an excellent pairing with the softer gumwood core. When compared with a vintage maple/poplar kit from the '70s, the Jazz outfit had much more power and clarity, plus exceptional balance. From the full and round boom of the bass drum to the crisp and dense crack of the snare, every note had a strong woody attack, a clear pitch, and a round but short sustain. And when the tuning went lower, the low-end frequencies came into full bloom without becoming boomy, and the attack punched through even stronger. If you haven't experienced the focused yet lively sound of cherry drums, you're missing out on something special. And when you add the warmth and punch of gumwood...delightful!

Michael Dawson





Check out a video demo of these drums at moderndrummer.com.

Mapex Wraith, Warbird, and Versatus Black Panther Snares

From ear-splitting power to recording-ready versatility, these new artist models are designed to deliver the goods.

Mapex recently added three new artist-designed Black Panther snares: the Warbird, Wraith, and Versatus. These drums offer high-end features at reasonable prices, including good hardware and nice shells made of wood combinations or brass. They're sharp looking, and, more important, they sound great. Let's check out each in greater detail.

The Wraith

Designed by Periphery's Matt Halpern, the Wraith is a 6x14 snare with a 1.2 mm brass shell and a street price of \$489. Features include a black satin finish, traditional 45-degree bearing edges, Black Panther stainless steel snare wires, and an Evans Heavyweight batter head.



The Wraith has unique venting comprising nine holes that are laid out to look like Periphery's logo, which help to dry out the tone. Halpern had the idea to vent the drum in this way. "It worked great," he says. I would have to agree; the drum had a very dry and explosive yet warm sound. It also had a wide tuning range. Tuned high, it was very crisp and produced clean ghost notes and a cutting crack from rimshots. Tuned low, it gave off a nice trip-hop sound. Between the venting and the Heavyweight head, no dampening was needed, but tossing on a Moongel or my wallet gave it an even tighter sound. This was a very versatile drum. Halpern says he wanted to design a model that could be a "producer's snare" because of its range of use, and I think Mapex has achieved that goal. Halpern used the Wraith on most tracks on Periphery's latest recording, *Juggernaut*, so check it out.

The Warbird

Designed by Lamb of God's Chris Adler, the Warbird is 5.5x12 and has a 6-ply maple and walnut shell. It features stainless steel Black Panther snare wires, SONIClear edges, a natural walnut stain, and an Aquarian Hi-Energy batter head. The street price is \$399.

Adler says that this drum draws from the same inspiration as his first signature snare, while taking things to the next level. "The artwork was designed by me and longtime Lamb of God artist Ken Adams," he explains. "It's a two-headed eagle that represents the battles and harmony of my two lives, as a loving father/husband and a traveling rock musician. The eagle is taken from my last name, which is 'eagle' in German. The Roman numerals in the

design are my birth year, and the inscriptions for determination and perseverance are my motivation in life and in my playing." The art on the Warbird, which is laser-etched into the outer layer of walnut, looks great. One of my students pointed out that it resembles a tattoo, which is pretty spot-on.



Adler went with the unique size of 5.5x12 because he was looking for a snare with high end and power. When I cranked this thing up it really cut, yet it didn't lose the full-bodied sound, which isn't always the case with tightly tuned smaller snares, like piccolos. The Warbird was quick and precise as well. It could get very loud and was a lot of fun to play. It took a minute for me to get used to its smaller size, but once I did I couldn't stop playing it. I was pleasantly surprised that I could tune it up or down and still get a good tone. Tuned low, it was dark and punchy, with a nice bottom end that sounded better than that of some larger snares I've played.

The Versatus

This drum is the result of a seven-year effort by studio/touring great Russ Miller. The shell is 4.625x14 and is made of a two interior plies of maple, three center plies of mahogany, two outside plies of maple, and a cherry burl veneer. It features staggered lugs, brushed black-nickel hardware, and a reinforcement ring on the batter side of the shell only. It has rounded 45-degree bearing edges on top and rounded 35-degree bearing edges on the snare side. It comes with a Remo Fiberskyn 3 Diplomat head. The street price is \$489.



The Versatus was an awesome drum with some really great features and an amazing sound. For a while I collected snares, and this drum belongs in my collection. It looked sharp, felt great, and sounded incredible. The dry punch provided by the mahogany

combined with the projection of the maple made for a versatile and naturally compressed tone. For such a shallow drum, it had a fat sound, whether tuned up or down. The 4-ply maple reinforcement ring brought a bit of vintage flavor, which I love. I use a vintage Ludwig as my main kit, and this snare complemented those old drums perfectly. It possessed the snap and sensitivity that I associate with aluminum Ludwig Acrolites, but with the added warmth

of wood. The staggered lugs allowed for a wide tuning range, from very low to extremely high. The thought that Miller put into this snare really shows: He started with a 6.5" depth and had Mapex chop off a quarter inch until he found the feel and natural compression that he wanted. From delicate and articulate brushstrokes and ghost notes to full-on rimshots, the Versatus snare can do it all.

Joel Weedy

RKM Bass Drum Pedal

A boutique model providing the utmost "tweakability."

Bass drum pedals are no longer taken at face value. Their limitations have been dissected, pondered, and retooled. Drummers now have a bevy of styles to choose from, and finding a pedal that acts as a natural extension of one's foot is actually feasible.

Rick Meyerson, drummer and inventor of the RKM pedal, never felt completely satisfied with existing models, so he took his experience in metalworking and put it to good use in developing a pedal with action that conforms to the drummer's foot. Using principles of leverage and the ability to adjust the reach of the beater, Meyerson feels he has designed a pedal that is functional and practical enough to satisfy the needs of any playing style.

Nuts and Bolts

The frame of the RKM pedal is machined and assembled in Spokane, Washington, and the pedal itself is made of solid aircraft-quality aluminum. There are no pre-indexed fixed positions, so infinite adjustability is possible in both leverage and reach. The cam feel can also be adjusted. The footboard is akin to a longboard, and it's hinged near the ankle like some vintage pedals. The built-in heel-plate adjuster slides the footboard either forward or backward along a slotted track in the base of the frame. It should be noted that with this design, if you step on the rear edge of the footplate, the front end could slam up into the camshaft. This is likely not detrimental to the pedal, but it was slightly awkward nonetheless.

Setup

The pedal was delivered with pictures of the cam, axle, and footboard track adjustments, plus a two-page list of setup tips. One bit of advice says to "use the pedal on a carpeted surface only," since the base has a nonskid substance applied that will scratch an uncarpeted floor. Another tip says the best action is realized "with the reach adjustment set so that the beater

is parallel to the head upon impact" and the bass drum is perpendicular to the floor.

The pedal comes with two springs, one with a heavier feel than the other, and it's suggested to keep either spring at maximum tension.

In Practice

I initially set up the RKM according to the supplied literature. Adjustments are made using an Allen key. (Don't lose the key, or make sure you have spares if you gig regularly.) The pedal was easy to adjust, and I didn't have to over-tighten the bolts to get them to hold everything in place.

The pedal performed very well. There was a noticeable increase in power getting to the head in comparison with some other high-end longboard models I've played. The instructions warn not to over-adjust the pedal, so I made a few small tweaks so that the rebound felt more natural to my foot. The pedal felt great, and I was able to execute everything I attempted without feeling as though a battle was going on between my head and my foot.

I used the RKM the following evening at a rehearsal for a cover gig, and I was very pleased by how well it performed. The round rubber beater, though, was showing significant wear after only a two-hour rehearsal. But I was nonetheless excited to try the pedal on a gig the following night.

In Use

Upon arriving at the gig I was told that I would be sharing backline drums with another band playing that evening—a common circumstance. This drummer's



bass drum was smaller than mine, and he attaches his pedal to a lift. I had a spare pedal in tow, but I wanted to see how the adjustability aspect of the RKM came into play, even though I knew the settings would have to change to accommodate the different drum. Fortunately I was able to extend the reach of the beater and compensate for this adjustment by tweaking the cam and footplate adjustments, so on with the show!

By the end of our set, the rubber beater was severely flattened at the spot where it had been striking the head, so the beater rating on its own is quite poor. The pedal performed well, but not as effortlessly as it did when I had it set up perfectly on my kit in my studio. So for gigging drummers that often share kits, the RKM pedal will likely be able to adapt, but it probably won't feel as efficient as it did before you left the house. But if you're always on your own kit and you're hell-bent on getting a bass drum pedal that delivers power and fluidity, the RKM may be perfect for you. It sells for \$359.95.

David Ciauro

Sabian Big & Ugly Ride Collection

Large, raw cymbals designed to deliver a darker and richer old-world-style experience.



Sabian recently released an interesting lot of giant, raw-looking rides that span four different series. This unique collection includes the HH Pandora, King, and Nova; the AA Apollo; the HHX Phoenix; and the Xs20 Monarch. The HH and AA models come in 22" and 24" sizes, while the HHX Phoenix and Xs20 Monarch are available only in 22". These cymbals are designed to produce a range of dry and complex tones, with each possessing a distinctive voice.

AA Apollo (22" and 24")

The highest-pitched models of the collection, AA Apollo rides are designed for versatility, whether hit hard for cutting yet musical tones, struck quickly for a strong and woody stick attack, or played more delicately for more nuanced textures. They provided utmost articulation at all volumes and had a controlled, semi-bright shimmer.

The 24" version was drier and had a muted crash sound with a very quick decay. The 22" provided more sustain and explosiveness but was still very dry. The bells on the Apollos were musical and clear (probably my favorites of the collection). The Apollos stood out in their ability to elicit super-complex, vintage-like tones without sounding too dark or trashy. (Bass players would appreciate how they didn't muck up the lower frequencies.)

The top surface of the Apollo has a heavy pink/green patina, wide but light lathing, and widely spaced circles of tight hammer markings. The underside is traditionally lathed, with a raw bell.

Xs20 Monarch (22")

Slightly lower in pitch than the 22" Apollo, the medium-thin Monarch is designed to deliver a cleaner and glassier sound with greater crash potential. The top surface features rings of raw and lathed bronze, while the bottom is identical to that of the Apollo (traditionally lathed with a raw bell).

Despite its bold appearance, the Monarch was the most all-purpose of the Big & Ugly collection, with a brighter Max Roach/Mickey Roker-type ride sound; a clean, "chimey" bell; and a powerful, shimmering crash. Fast swing patterns on this cymbal brought to mind images of stones skipping across a pond, rather than the dusty, chiseling-through-ancient-ruins feel I got from some of the other models.

HHX Phoenix (22")

Sitting on the opposite side of the color spectrum is the 22" Phoenix, which had a darker, rawer, and more complex tone, plus greater cutting power. This was the most "modern sounding" model of the collection and is sure to be a favorite among contemporary jazz/funk/fusion players who prefer the rich, dry flavor of vintage rides but require something that's more aggressive and nimble and is able to handle higher volumes without washing out.

The Phoenix was very dark and articulate, but it also had some fiery sustain that helped elevate the tone at higher volume levels. Its crash was quick and metallic. The top surface is raw and dark

and features large hammer marks that emanate from the bell in somewhat straight lines. Like the Apollo and Monarch, the bottom of the Phoenix is lathed and has a raw bell.

HH Pandora, Nova, and King (22" and 24")

Of the three HH Big & Ugly models, the Pandora fell in the middle, in terms of pitch, tone, and decay. Both Pandora rides provided a rich, dark, complex timbre with a strong, woody stick attack and subtler and more integrated bell sounds. The 22" version had a dark, controlled sustain, while the 24" was bone dry with almost no sustain (think Jack DeJohnette), but you could get some cool, quick Bill Stewart-like shoulder crashes from it without worrying about the sustain washing away the definition.

The Pandora bells are pretty wide and flat, and the top and bottom surfaces are randomly hammered and lightly/sparsely lathed. The 24" model we reviewed has a rustic red appearance, while the 22" features more greens and browns. Both models have a light grid pattern torched on the bottom.

The Novas were a touch brighter than the Pandoras, with the 24" offering a more metallic bite and a flashy yet extremely dry sustain. Crashing the 24" was almost comical, in that no matter how much force I exuded, it simply refused to budge beyond a dusty "puff." Again, it was good for quick shoulder crashes but offered very little for full crashes.

The 22" Nova opened up a bit more, and it had a raspier and breathier tone than the 24". The bells on the Novas are smaller and more elevated than on the other models, so they offered a brighter sound but were also a bit more difficult to hit accurately. The finish on the Novas is very similar to that of the Pandoras, including the grid-pattern torching applied to the bottom.

The 22" and 24" King rides were super-dark and complex sounding, and they had the same great articulation as the rest of the series, without being as dry as the Pandoras or Novas. The 24" had a slightly muted and more silvery undertone, while the 22" sustained a bit more and had a more open and unobstructed timbre. Both King rides were very responsive to dynamic shifts and changes in playing style.

Choosing between HH Big & Ugly models was like picking a favorite ice cream; each one brought a different but equally awesome flavor to the party. The Novas leaned more toward salty than sweet, while the Pandoras were a bit spicier and the Kings were a dark-chocolate lover's dream. Of course, you could also mix and match among the three, or throw in some of the brighter notes of the AA, Xs20, and HHX models, for an even more rewarding experience.

Check out video demos of the entire Big & Ugly Collection at moderndrummer.com.

Michael Dawson

Regal Tip Jason Sutter Signature Sticks and Brushes

One-size-fits-all tools for jack-of-all-trades drummers.

Being truly comfortable behind the kit, regardless of the style of music you're playing, is no easy task. Jason Sutter has earned the reputation of being a chameleon, adapting to the changes that naturally occur when you play with such diverse acts as Marilyn Manson, Foreigner, Smashmouth, Chris Cornell, and Broadway's *Rock of Ages*. Now the drummer has his own weapons of choice to keep his sound balanced, no matter what the situation has in store.

Sutter teamed up with Regal Tip to design signature sticks and brushes, both of which are meant to find the balance between musical extremes. His Chop Sticks are 16.375" long and .590" in

diameter, making them a beefed-up and slightly elongated 5B. Although this model is somewhat larger than my stick of choice, it felt balanced and comfortable in my hands. The wood barrel tip was a nice touch, giving the stick great cymbal definition and clear articulation that allowed the character of the cymbals to shine.

Custom brushes dubbed the Sutter use a wire gauge that splits the difference between Regal Tip's Classic and Jeff Hamilton



signature models. Like his sticks, Sutter's brushes aim to find a balance that can work in an array of musical applications. They offer a middle ground between flexibility and articulation, which would make them appealing for beginners and expert brush users alike. And the striking cobalt-blue handles offer a nice aesthetic.

These signature sticks and brushes are workhorses, well suited for a range of live and studio work—just like Sutter himself.

David Ciauro





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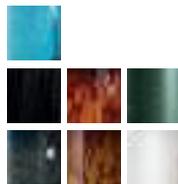


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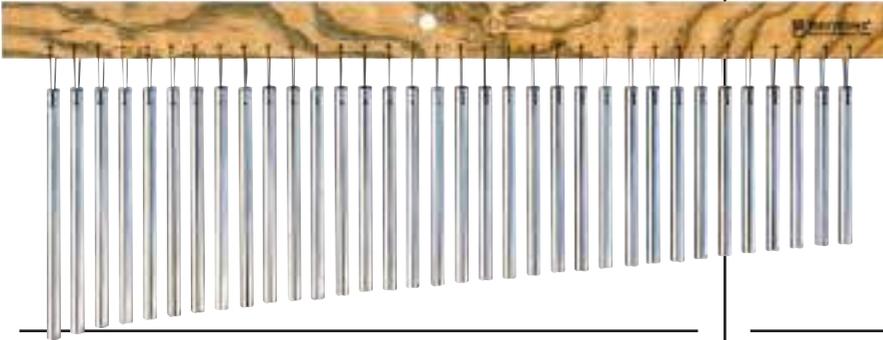


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Telefunken DD5 Drum Mic Pack

A smooth-sounding collection from a legendary name in electronics.

Telefunken, a well-known maker of studio microphones, has recently combined dynamic mic models in a package for drums. The mics have been modified slightly, and the company added accessories to make the pack more drum specific.

The Models

The DD5 consists of five mics: an M80-SHB for the snare, three M81-SHs for the toms, and an M82 for the kick. The M80-SHB is based on Telefunken's M80 dynamic vocal mic, which was designed with a high-frequency rise for a more "condenser-like" sound. The company took the same electronics and installed them in a shorter housing, with a built-in stand mount, to make the mic more convenient for placement on a drumset.

Similarly, the M81-SH is an M81 that has been shortened and has a stand mount attached. The M81 is a variant of the M80 with a more linear response (less bright, in this case) for applications where a warmer sound is desired. Visually, the M80-SHB and the M81-SH are pretty much identical except for the finish. The M80-SHB has black powder coating, while the M81-SH is gray.

The M82 isn't an adaptation of another model; it was designed from the ground up as a kick mic. It's a large, end-address model featuring two tone-shaping switches. The Kick EQ switch cuts the lower mids (several dB around 350 Hz), while High Boost adds several dB up to approximately 10 kHz. The switches can be used in tandem, yielding four different tonal options.

These aren't the smallest and lightest clip-on mics ever made, as they all feature rugged metal bodies and windscreens. But they give the impression of professional tools that could stand up to serious stage and studio use/abuse.

The Accessories

The DD5 ships in a super-tough FC80 case, which is one of the few so-called "flight cases" that I would trust to withstand rough baggage handlers. (Seriously...I jumped up and down on it, and it didn't wince a bit.) The snare and tom mics come with two mounts: the nylon M785 clip for attaching to drum hoops and the metal M784 that's made to fit on suspension mounts. The M82 comes with a nice metal swivel mount. Additionally, the DD5 pack includes five 16' high-quality mic cables featuring right-angle connectors on the female ends.

In Use

Miking up a five-piece kit using the supplied accessories proved quick and easy. Using the flexible M785 clips, the tom and snare mics snapped onto the hoops in a couple of seconds and were held in a good close-miking position, with some adjustability allowed by the clip. (Clipping heavy mics directly to a hoop can affect a drum's sustain, but that wasn't the case here. The shock-absorbing qualities of the mount apparently work both ways.) Using the metal M784 to place the mic on the tom's RIMS mount also worked well and positioned the M81-SH in a good spot. The right-angle cables made things more compact.

The M81-SH sounded smooth, warm, and fairly linear, with no big midrange presence peak and no huge proximity bloom in the mid-bass. So the toms sounded full and natural, even when



M82

M80-SHB

M81-SHs

miked closely in a live setting. In short, it was hard to get a bad sound out of them.

The M80-SHB sounded just like the M81-SH, but with 3 or 4 dB added around 8–10 kHz, making it well suited as a snare mic. The enhanced top offered a little more of the papery strainer sound, which added just enough crispness to cut through a mix. But the mic was still linear through the low end and mids. Really nice.

It took a little fiddling to get the M82 kick mic fully inside my drum, which is outfitted with a KickPort, due to the size of the mic and the geometry of the stand mount. We put this model through its paces, positioned deep in the drum near the beater as well as just poking halfway through the port. And we auditioned all four sonic voices afforded by the pair of switches. The M82 worked well within the bass drum, but for my money it sounded even better positioned just a few inches through the port, where it caught a little more low-end thud.

In the flat setting (both switches off), the M82 captured a big, natural sound, as you'd expect from a large dynamic mic, with a little of the boxy character typical of an un-equalized kick mic—also as you'd expect. With the High Boost switch engaged, I got the same sound with the addition of some beater attack. The Kick EQ switch smoothed out the tone very nicely, and engaging both the Kick EQ and the High Boost gave us a really good contemporary sound that was big through the bottom end and smooth across the mids, with the right amount of beater attack on top. All the settings were useful, but these last two variations were my favorites for miking a modern-sounding bass drum. One of the things I enjoyed most about the M82 was that the EQ switches weren't so extreme that all I got was boom and click. The personality of each drum remained intact, only enhanced in a very pleasing way.

Summing Up

The mics in the DD5 package work well in their specific applications and also play very nicely together as a family. You can check out an audio sample of them in action at moderndrummer.com. We've posted both dry and processed versions so you can hear how the mics sound naturally and how they function when used in a typical drum mix. The DD5 lists for \$1,650. A version with one fewer M81-SH tom mic, called the DD4, is available for \$1,395.

Mark Parsons

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DRUMS BY *Marshall*

Drum Miking 101

Part 3: Three-Mic Setups

by John Emrich

So far in this series we've looked at mixing a drumset with one and two microphones. Now we'll add a third. Three microphones are ideal for most drumset work. Even when I'm employing multiple mics, I find myself getting most of the sound from just three, usually a stereo pair over the drums and a single one on the bass drum. The reason is simple enough: The stereo overheads are the closest thing to the drummer's ears in terms of capturing the natural balance of the kit. If something sounds too loud in the overheads, you may want to look at the instruments you've chosen and, more important, your playing. The bass drum mic just helps fill out the low frequencies.

As you experiment with and listen back to the sounds captured from the examples discussed here, key in on the stereo field (the spread from left to right) and the detail of the drums and cymbals. Ask yourself a few questions: Do I get a clear representation of the set and a good overall tone? Do I hear the attack of each instrument, and is the sound clearly defined? Are all of the drums and cymbals balanced?

Position 1: Stereo Overheads and a Bass Drum Mic



There are many different positioning options for stereo overhead drum microphones. I'm utilizing the ORTF layout, which places the mic capsules 17 cm apart and at a 110-degree angle. The mics are placed 6' off the ground and with a slight clockwise twist to keep the snare and bass drum in the center of the stereo mix.

Pay attention to what happens when you bring in the bass drum mic. The playing that we've posted at modern drummer.com starts

with just the overheads. Adding the bass drum mic fills out the low frequencies that are missing in the overheads because of the distance between them and the drum.

Position 2: Glyn Johns Technique



Our second position was made popular by famed engineer/producer Glyn Johns (Led Zeppelin, the Who, the Rolling Stones). Johns is credited with this microphone configuration, which features a unique way of getting a very wide stereo field. Using two condenser mics, place one directly over the middle of the snare. I set ours about 6' off the ground. The second mic is positioned on the floor tom side, with the diaphragm set at a height just above the rim of the drum.

To make sure that the snare remains in the center of the stereo field, pinch one end of a string at the center of the drum and extend the other end straight up to the first microphone. Then pinch the string at the spot where it meets the diaphragm of the mic. Keep pinching at those places on the string, and move the end that was touching the overhead mic to the spot above and beyond the floor tom rim. Place the second mic there, and make sure that the diaphragm is facing the center of the snare.

On your mixing board or in your recording software, pan the mic over the snare all the way to the left, and pan the one near the floor tom to the right. (Reverse the panning if you want your mix to sound like it's from the audience perspective.) Add a bass drum microphone, and you have your three-mic setup. I like the Glyn Johns technique because it gives a very wide and well-defined stereo picture. It also puts a microphone closer to the floor tom, which helps fill out the low frequencies.

Position 3: All-Mono Configuration

The last three-mic setup is a simple mono approach. There's nothing wrong with recording drums in mono. In fact, some of the best-selling albums of all time are in mono. I recommend using a three-mic mono setup when you want to bring out a little more detail in the snare but don't want or have the capability to add another microphone. Mono drums can still be moved around in the



stereo field, and this setup is a very useful approach for recording jazz and brush playing.

Place one mic over the center of the set at about 6' off the ground. The second mic goes on the bass drum, either in front or aimed at the beater impact point on the batter head. The third mic is placed on the snare, positioned just a bit higher than the rim and looking straight across the head.

Remember that experimenting with different mic placements is the key. Use your ears and ask yourself: Am I happy with the sound? If so, great! If not, then try one of the other positions or adjust the placement of the mics until you get the sound you're after.

Next month we'll move on to a setup using four microphones.

To check out a video demo of the three-mic placements discussed in this article, log on to modern drummer.com.



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The "Christmas Show" Kit

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- B.** 9x10 Maple Custom Absolute tom
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- D.** 16x20 Maple Custom Absolute bass drum mounted as gong drum
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Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1.** 14" Oriental China Trash
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- 3.** 15" K Light hi-hats
- 4.** 18" A Custom crash
- 5.** 9" Oriental Trash splash
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Emperor snare batter and Clear Ambassador bottom, Smooth White Emperor tom batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, and Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter

Hardware: Yamaha HexRack II

Sticks: Vic Firth Rock and Dave Weckl wood-tip models, Vic Firth mallets and brushes

Microphones: Shure Beta 52 and Beta 91 on bass drum, Shure Beta 56 on top of snare and Audio-Technica AT 4041 on bottom, Audio-Technica ATM 35 on toms, AKG 451 on hi-hat, Shure KSM 32 overheads, Shure Beta 52 and SM57 on cajon, and Kelly SHU bass drum microphone mounts

Electronics: Roland SPD-SX sample pad, JH Audio in-ear monitors

Percussion: Popercussion cajon with pedal attached and used as throne, TreeWorks chimes, various LP and Meinl shakers and tambourines

This is the kit I used for this past year's Christmas show, and it required the addition of some percussion," Richardson says. "The chimes, shakers, and cajon are items I don't use for our regular shows. Also, I normally use a 20" K Custom Medium ride, but, since real estate is so precious on this kit, my 19" K Hybrid crash pulls double duty. It actually makes a great ride with nice washy qualities and still has plenty of articulation.

"I have a Yamaha Recording Custom kit as well as a Maple Absolute kit. I made sure they were both in the cherry wood finish, knowing I would probably want to mix and match. The warmth of the maple toms and the crack of the birch snare seem perfect for this show. And frankly I haven't found anything that sounds better than the 22" Recording Custom kick.

"My approach to tuning is based on my ear and the feel of the

heads. I tend to like the batter heads on the tighter side for nice projection as well as responsive rebound. I also like a definitive separation of pitch between the toms. The snare is cranked about as far as it goes, for a Stewart Copeland-type crack.

"We run few tracks in our shows. There are, however, a couple songs with percussion loops or parts that I just can't cover, so I'll run those with the SPD-SX. But I primarily use the SPD-SX to generate clicks. I record a couple bars of click, import it to the sampler, and then loop it. It's really convenient, because I can name each patch with the song title, and then at soundcheck I create a playlist in the order of that night's show. I love that machine."





8

D

C

E

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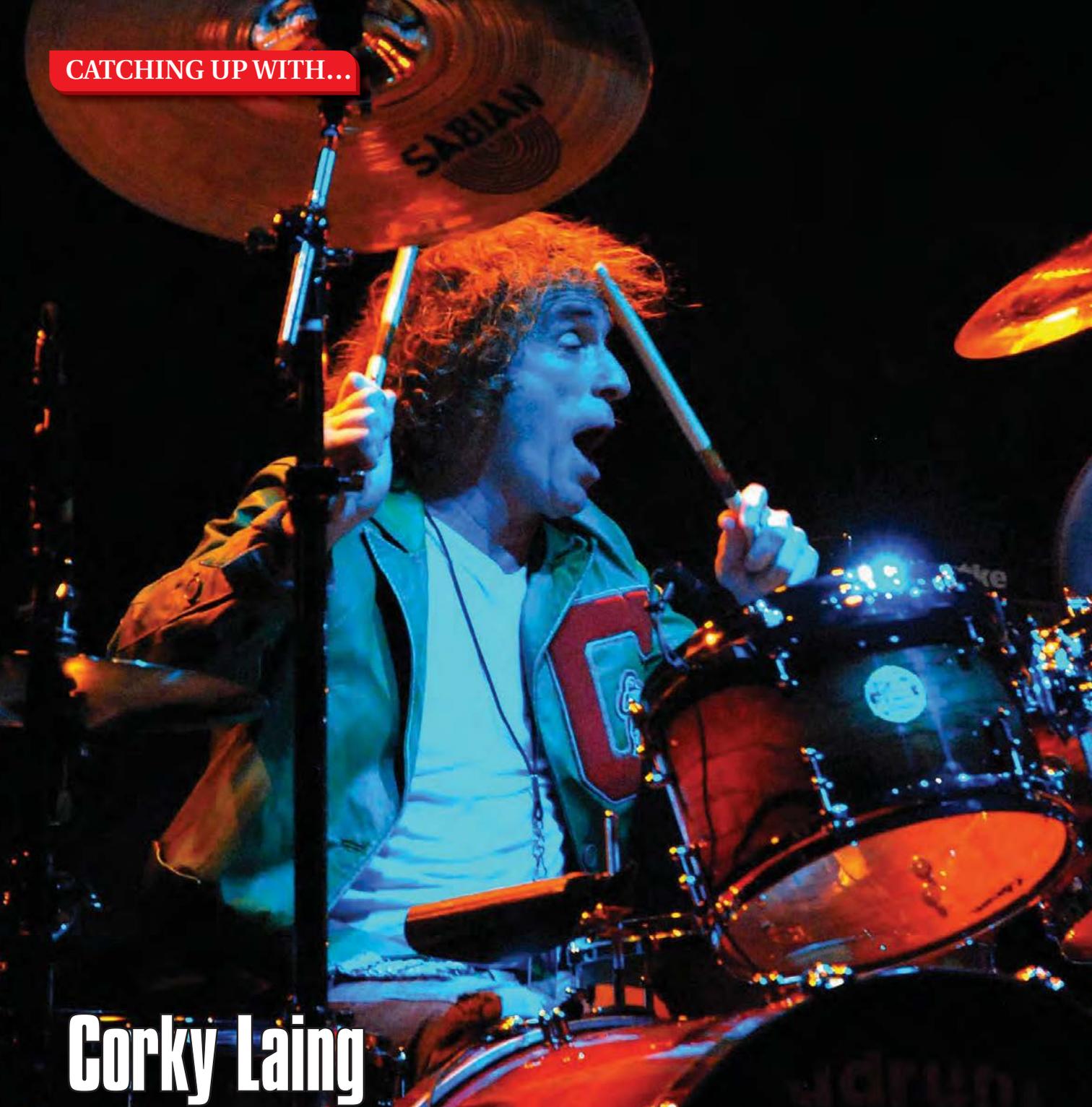
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Corky Laing

During classic rock's golden era, Corky Laing found great success with guitarist Leslie West and bassist Felix Pappalardi in the proto-metal band Mountain ("Mississippi Queen"), which he's played with on and off for decades, and with West, Bruce & Laing, featuring Cream's Jack Bruce on bass. The turn of this century found the drummer leading the group Cork, featuring Spin Doctors guitarist Eric Schenkman and Jimi Hendrix Experience bassist Noel Redding. And more recently Laing has worked with the

bands Memory Thieves and K2. Now he's at the center of what could be the most ambitious undertaking of his career, an international production of the rock opera *Playing God*, which sees its stateside debut this April.

While touring his stand-up show *Best Seat in the House/Under the Rock*, Laing met a couple of philosophy professors in Helsinki, Finland, Tuija Takala and Matti Häyry. "They asked me if I would compose music for a rock opera they were writing," Laing says, "that [dealt with the themes

of] bioethical research and genetic manipulation—which, of course, was way over my head." [laughs]

On the soundtrack, billed to Corky Laing and the Perfct Child [sic], the drummer's famed muscular kicks and tom-driven sound are ever-present, but so are sensitive rolls and cymbal work, reminding the world that the man is a complete player, not just the heavy rocker responsible for one of the most famous cowbell parts of all time. *Playing God* is an ideal showcase for Laing's many



Tajiri Laing

talents—though, as usual, he’s quick to share credit. “All the way around it was a collaborative effort,” Corky says, “with some wonderful Finnish musicians. We also got help from Eric Schenkman on guitar, and Jack Bruce’s son Malcolm assisted me with composition. Incidentally, I consider myself lucky to have played with three of the finest bassists in the world of rock in Jack, Felix, and Noel. These guys were not just musicians—they were brilliant, creative personalities. *Luck* is a four-letter word, and I am a very grateful recipient.” **Bob Girouard**



Terry Silverlight has covered vast territory as a drummer and composer for recordings, television, and film. As a sideman, he recently played on vibraphonist Dave Shank’s *Soundproof*, pianist Ted Brancato’s *The Next Step*—featuring bass great Ron Carter—and *Bolero* by the Manhattan Jazz Orchestra, with which he recently returned from a tour of Japan. He wrote music for the upcoming film *Two Nations*. And his work on Billy Ocean’s latest, *Here You Are*, marks a fond reunion, as Silverlight played on a number of the singer’s ’80s hits, including “Suddenly.”

Silverlight has also released more than half a dozen solo albums in both the jazz and pop idioms. Of his latest venture as a leader, Terry says, “The operative word I kept in mind was *different*.” To that end he took on the challenge of playing with a single guest on each track. The result is an engaging, diverse, and joyful disc titled, simply, *Duets*.

“The very fact that I wasn’t sure if I could pull it off and didn’t know where to start is what prompted me to sit down and make a game plan,” says Silverlight, who brought in some of his favorite musicians, including organist Paul Shaffer, bassist Will Lee, tenor saxophonist David Mann, alto saxophonist Aaron Heick, electric guitarist John Hart, vocalist Tabitha Fair, trumpeter Vinnie Cutro, pianist Tom Jennings, acoustic guitarist Jeff Ciampa, and bassist Mike Hall.

MD readers will be especially delighted with “Lang Hang,” Silverlight’s duet with legendary classical percussionist Morris “Arnie” Lang, who performs on timpani and assorted instruments. “I studied with Arnie when I was nineteen or twenty years old,” Silverlight says. “I’ve always admired him.” Another unexpected collaborator? Mother Nature—more specifically, some birds in Silverlight’s backyard.

The album is impressive in its balance of preparation and improvisation. Silverlight’s intuitive compositions lend a specific color to each track, to best complement the guest players. “I wanted to make sure that the playing wouldn’t get in the way of the composition—getting too noodle-y—but also that the compositions wouldn’t inhibit spontaneous playing,” the drummer explains.

What most surprised the adventurous Silverlight while diving into *Duets*? “That everything was working!” he says with a laugh. “I’m not surprised that everyone played well. But when I heard *what* they played, I guess you could call it a surprise. I thought, *Man, how lucky am I to be able to get these people to duet with me?*” **Jeff Potter**





TAMA STAR DRUMS

WHY TAMA? WHY NOW?

STAR

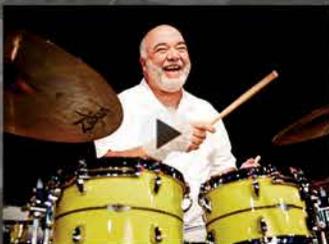
TAMA STAR IS, IN MY OPINION, THE FINEST DRUMSET BEING MADE TODAY.

STAR SOUND. STAR SING. THEY MAKE ME PLAY DIFFERENTLY: MORE RELAXED, YET MORE EXCITING. HAPPIER, MORE CONFIDENT AND ADVENTUROUS. STAR MAKES DRUMMING FUN.

THESE DRUMS ARE THAT GOOD.



Peter Erskine



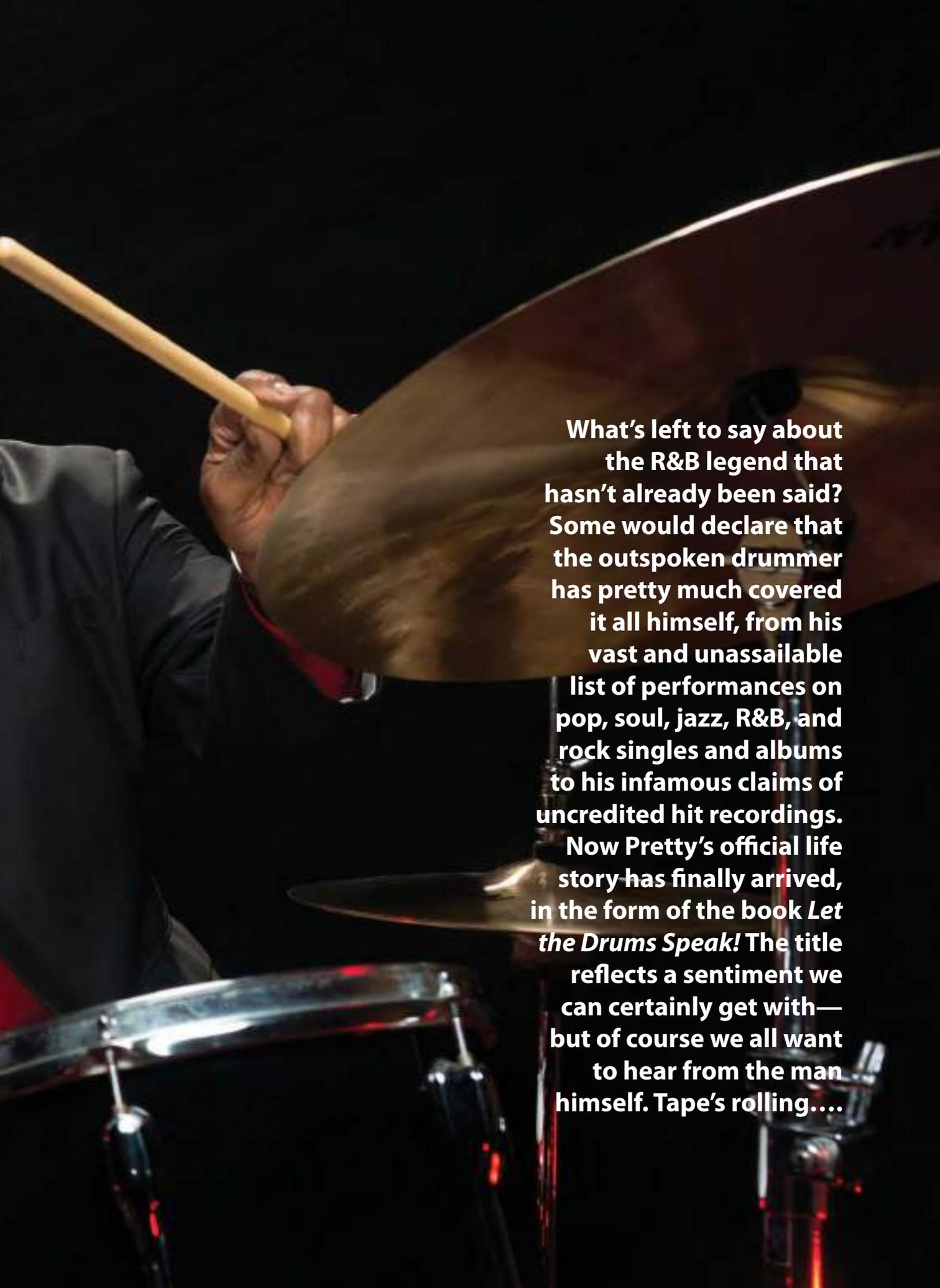
To hear what Peter Erskine has to say about STAR Drums, visit tama.com



A photograph of Bernard Purdie, an older African American man, smiling broadly while playing the drums. He is wearing a black beanie, a red button-down shirt, and a dark suit jacket. He is holding a drumstick in his right hand, positioned over a cymbal. The background is dark, and the lighting is focused on him.

Bernard “Pretty” Purdie

Story by Billy Amendola
Photos by Alex Solca



What's left to say about the R&B legend that hasn't already been said? Some would declare that the outspoken drummer has pretty much covered it all himself, from his vast and unassailable list of performances on pop, soul, jazz, R&B, and rock singles and albums to his infamous claims of uncredited hit recordings. Now Pretty's official life story has finally arrived, in the form of the book *Let the Drums Speak!* The title reflects a sentiment we can certainly get with—but of course we all want to hear from the man himself. Tape's rolling....

Bernard “Pretty” Purdie has never been one to shy away from controversy, and he’s *always* spoken his mind. Even at a very young age, his know-it-all attitude would get him into trouble at school on a daily basis.

Born on June 11, 1942, in Elkton, Maryland, as the eleventh of fifteen children, Purdie got his first real drumset at fourteen and helped support his large family by taking any playing job that came along, regardless of what genre the music was. This helped him develop his own style and made him comfortable playing jazz, rock, pop, and the style he’s most known for, R&B.

When he began working as a session musician, Purdie was just as cocky as ever, but now he could back it up the minute he sat down to play. Bernard’s no tyrant—he’s got a big heart, and he’s very charming and fun to be around, despite the occasional verbal outburst—but some who worked with him in his early days still saw fit to label him an egomaniac who would walk into a session as if it revolved around him. The drummer did nothing to contradict those impressions—in fact, on the advice of a bass-playing friend, Jimmy Tyrell, Purdie, now adding “Pretty” to his given name, even went so

far as to bring outrageous billboard-style signs into the studio that would boast “The Little Old Hit Maker” or “You’ve Hired the Hit Maker, Bernard ‘Pretty’ Purdie.” Sure, those slogans turned off some—but they also no doubt worked in Purdie’s favor when contractors and other musicians would say, “Let’s hire that drummer with the signs.”

And who could argue? By the mid to late ‘60s Bernard had earned the right to feel his oats, recording hit after hit after hit—Mickey & Sylvia’s “Love Is Strange,” Doris Troy’s “Just One Look,” Jackie Wilson’s “(Your Love Keeps Lifting Me) Higher and Higher,” Don Covay’s “Mercy, Mercy,” James Brown’s “It’s a Man’s, Man’s, Man’s World,” the Chi-Lites’ “Have You Seen Her,” and Aretha Franklin’s “Rock Steady,” “Spanish Harlem,” and “Day Dreaming,” among so many more classics.

The hits kept on coming in the ‘70s and ‘80s, on R&B and rock recordings—that’s Purdie on Daryl Hall and John Oates’ “She’s Gone” and on the Steely Dan classics “Home at Last” and “Babylon Sisters,” for instance. Today, fifty years after he hit the scene, Purdie can point to performances and recordings with giants of multiple genres: King Curtis (who kick-started his career), Larry Coryell, Miles Davis, Tom Jones, Isaac Hayes, Donny Hathaway, B.B. King, Ray Charles, Joe Cocker, Herbie Mann, Todd Rundgren, Cat Stevens, and the Brecker Brothers, and that’s just the tip of the iceberg. Today Purdie remains active recording, playing live, and doing clinics. Most observers credit more than 3,000 recordings to him; equally telling is the enormous number of his grooves that have been sampled for hip-hop, rap, and acid-jazz records.

This writer, like so many drummers, has been a fan of Bernard’s body of work for decades. I even took a few lessons with him in the ‘80s, when I was in my early twenties. I was well aware of his accomplishments, and as a huge Jeff Porcaro and John Bonham fan, I wanted to learn from the man whose approach to the half-time shuffle inspired both the Toto hit “Rosanna” and the Led Zeppelin classic “Fool in the Rain.” I’d already done a good amount of recording and touring by this time, but Purdie was quick to put me in my place, immediately focusing on improving my weaknesses, and always yelling at me to “Sit up straight!” He is still masterful at playing the half-time shuffle, and you’d have to look long and hard to find a drummer who doesn’t think he deserves to have his name attached to it.

In the March 2014 *Modern Drummer* cover story, readers chose Purdie among the 50 Greatest Drummers of All Time. A year earlier he’d received the magazine’s top honor by being voted into our Hall of Fame in the annual Readers Poll. We start our conversation by asking him how he’d reacted to that news.

“I’m very much into practicing. Practice makes perfect—and it’s a reassurance of my ability.”



Bernard: I felt wonderful and overjoyed that it finally happened. I'm looking forward to more awards! [laughs] Thank you to everyone who voted for me.

MD: You're still an active teacher. What are your methods?

Bernard: My thoughts go back to my teacher Leonard Heywood, and the advice he always gave me: Stay focused, and always know where the 1 is. I always believed that you could teach anybody—you can even teach an old dog new tricks—as long as they have an open mind. You're *never* too old to learn.

But I would like students to understand that the learning process takes time. Don't ever be in a hurry to get something done, because you will end up going out the door backwards. Take your time. Practice as slowly as possible, because the slower you practice, the faster you learn. And you *must* learn how to count.

MD: In *Let the Drums Speak!* you say that feel can be taught. Can you explain how?

Bernard: The easiest way to teach feel is to know your craft and stop worrying about technique. And for heaven's sake, don't always practice to a click. That's your job—you are the click. When you have to play to a click, treat that click like it's another instrument, just like you would guitar, bass, or piano.

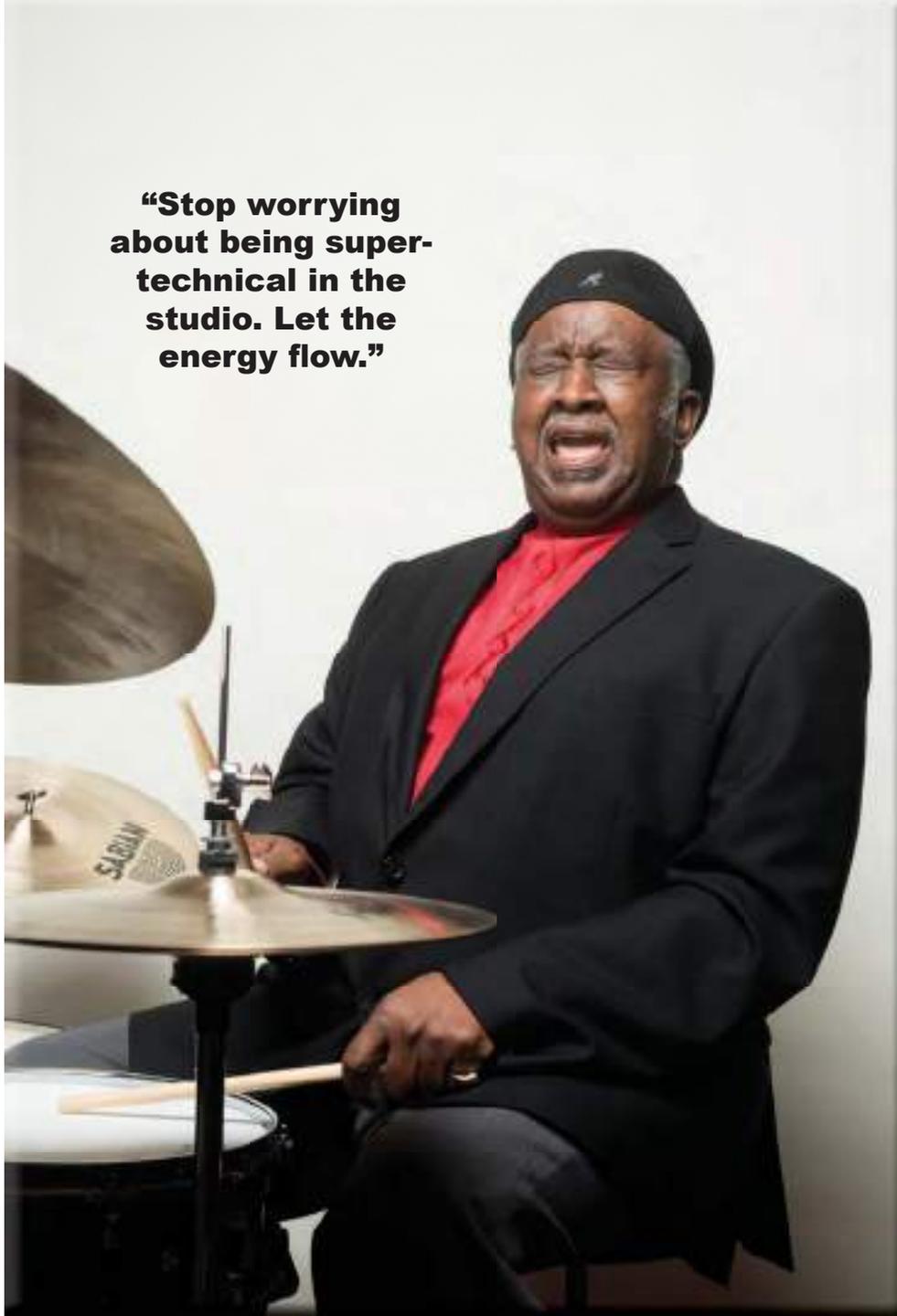
In order to establish feel, you must know your craft—always knowing where 1 is, knowing how to stay out of the way, learning how to interpret the music. You have to understand volume, touch, and taste, which is going to give you *your* feel. And keep away from monitors. Putting yourself in the monitor is the worst thing you can do, because you will be listening to yourself instead of the band, which means you're going to overplay. The idea of performance is allowing everybody to do his or her own thing. The drummer's job is to carry the band and to respect their instruments and their craft.

One more thing I'd like to recommend is to be positive—and let others know how good it feels by smiling as you play. That's the first order of business: Smile and be humble, because a smile can get you in the door. If you smile when you play, you're going to make the music feel good, and every bandleader will respect and trust you. And always be prepared for the job, and come dressed appropriately.

MD: What drummers inspired you when you were growing up?

Bernard: The drummers who inspired me back then were my teacher Mr. Heywood, Purnell Rice [Billie Holiday,

“Stop worrying about being super-technical in the studio. Let the energy flow.”



Lena Horne]—who could easily roll on a pillow—Louie Bellson, Buddy Rich, Cozy Cole, Herbie Lovelle...so many.

MD: Who inspires you these days?

Bernard: Again, there are many, but to name two, Chad Smith and Will Calhoun. Their playing is superb, and their approach and technique are wonderful. The versatility of all of these guys who inspired me then and now is mind-blowing, as far as I'm concerned.

MD: One of your more notable gigs in the '60s was the musical *Hair*.

Bernard: Before it became a play, *Hair* was a concert event. Composer Galt MacDermot and I made demos, and then we played in a club to see how it would work out. After

working on it for about a year, we did it in the park for a bit [under producer Joseph Papp, who ran the Shakespeare in the Park series in Manhattan's Central Park]. Then we took it to the Public Theater, and from there we went to Broadway. After playing on Broadway, I turned the show over to Idris Muhammad. The show lasted about four and a half years, and then we started doing concerts again around the world. Then forty years later it was revived on Broadway, and I did that for two and a half years. I created all of the [drum] parts in *Hair*, and they were all African rhythms and feel.

MD: In the early '70s you recorded many of soul legend Aretha Franklin's greatest albums, including *Young, Gifted and Black*,

which features the track "Rock Steady." How did you come up with your famous breakdown in that?

Bernard: When the song was being recorded, Aretha's music fell off the piano. Producer Arif Mardin came in to pick it up and put it back on the piano, but I never stopped playing. So basically it was a drum solo with her still singing the words "rock steady."

MD: You were Aretha's musical director for a time. What did that involve?

Bernard: Working for Aretha and being her MD, I also had to handle the lighting and sound and be the conductor, drummer, and bandleader. If you wanted to be MD for Aretha Franklin, it was a multifaceted job.

MD: How does one prepare to be a musical director?

Bernard: Well, number one, you *must* have your act together. You must know your craft frontwards and backwards. You will always be between the band and the artist, and communication is the key. And you must learn diplomacy and be comfortable wearing many hats.

MD: You've played with so many famous bass players over the years. What's your advice on getting tight with a bass player?

Bernard: Stay married to him or her. Love them to death. Follow *them*, and I guarantee you will be the happiest person in the world. Keep the respect going at all times, and it will be given back to you tenfold. Some people call it being joined at the hip. I call it happiness.

MD: Do you play differently in the studio versus on stage?

Bernard: In the studio you have to know about tuning and pressure points. Your approach has to be entirely different. Your dBs are going to be less than when you play live. You have to be a lot more sensitive in

the studio. And the sound has to be remarkably different, which has a lot to do with the overtones and ring of the drums. *Never* overplay, and that brings up the spirit of "less is more." Stop worrying about being super-technical, and let the energy flow.

When you're playing live you have to think about the sound going all the way to the back of the room. Sometimes you have microphones and sometimes you don't; it all has to do with the size of the room. And you always have to play with confidence, in the studio *and* live.

MD: You've seen a lot of changes in the music industry during your career—do you have any advice for today's drummers?

Bernard: Drummers today are not taking care of their business. They're becoming too mechanical, and by doing that they lose their ability to think on their own two feet.

To all drummers, especially young ones: You have some *big* shoes to fill. The way music is today, you have to know the business side, which means that you have to learn how to market and promote yourself. Always keep a positive image in what you do, and don't be afraid to sell yourself and your product. As long as you have the talent, a career in music is definitely worth pursuing. And *never* do drugs. I never did a drug in my life, ever.

MD: Do you still practice?

Bernard: Yes, definitely. I'm very much into practicing. And because I have to work with so many young people, the challenge is always there. Practice makes perfect—and it's a reassurance of my ability. Because of all the genres of music today, no one should ever stop practicing. It's through practice that you can hone your skills. And through practice, what's difficult becomes easy.

MD: What do you concentrate on when you shed?

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Purdie uses a five-piece setup (he doesn't currently have an official drum endorsement); Sabian cymbals including 13" hi-hats, a 22" and an 18" or 20" crash/ride, a 20" China, and an 18" crash; Cappella sticks; and Remo heads.



At the Foot of the Funk Peers and Disciples

Liberty DeVitto (the Slim Kings, ex-Billy Joel)

Most musicians are pigeonholed in their playing—rock, jazz, gospel, blues.... Bernard has no boundaries. He's crossed the lines in all kinds of music with his feel, passion, and incredible ability to know exactly what to play to make a song a hit record. He's what all musicians should be. He *is* music.

Russ Titelman (producer, songwriter)

Bernard Purdie doesn't play the drums—he plays *music*. He has an innate sense of what is exactly the right thing to play, and what he plays always has a pocket that never falters. His performances embody what people call funk and soul—a shine with a lightness of touch and a sense of joy that make you want to get up and dance. He's a natural and one of the all-time greats.

Chuck Rainey (bass legend)

Bernard is a very integral part of my recording career, "off record" as well as on, and I always make reference to him when I perform at clinics. Bernard is a household name in recorded music history, and he deserves as much attention as the universe allows.

John Blackwell Jr. (Prince, Justin Timberlake, D'Angelo)

The Purdie shuffle changed my life. I like challenges, and that shuffle is one of them. Day after day I study my Steely Dan records, and I *still* can't play that shuffle correctly. That is one solid groove. I pay much respect to Bernard for always teaching me how important it is to groove—and he can surely back up his words with all the albums he's graced for decades. Much love and respect to you, Bernard.



“Stay married to the bass player. Love him or her to death. Some people call it being joined at the hip. I call it happiness.”

on the Wonders of Pretty Purdie

Bobby Whitlock (Derek and the Dominos)

Bernard Purdie is the foot of funk. I was a drummer first, before I played the Hammond B3. I grew up listening to Bernard back in the mid to late '60s, playing with everything from Aretha to King Curtis. He's still an inspiration to me with his Purdie shuffle. Lock-tight and funky!

Jonathan Joseph (Jeff Beck, Joss Stone)

Back in 1986, while I was attending the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami, I had an opportunity to enjoy a clinic featuring Bernard. At the time I wasn't that familiar with his work, and needless to say I was knocked out by his musicality and groove. He seemed to have a certain style built into his persona, which was expressed in the way he laid down the groove. The feel

of his funk shuffle was so sweet! Watching him play was an experience I will never forget.

Carmine Appice (Vanilla Fudge, Cactus, BBA, Rated-X)

Bernard has a tremendous groove and feel. I especially love his hi-hat work. He's a *huge* influence on me.

Dom Famularo (educator)

Bernard exudes the joy of life and the power of music in every note he plays. He is a master musician, a legend on drums, and he constantly inspires everyone when he plays. I love his feel in every song. He makes me want to dance. And he is always so positive and happy. When I grow up, I want to be Bernard Purdie!

Bernard: I concentrate on time. Counting is equally important. And I practice at different tempos. So I'll do that for at least twenty minutes. Then I just play and let all hell break loose.

MD: How was it touring with Jeff Beck in 1975 behind one of his classic albums, *Blow by Blow*, and how did that come about?

Bernard: That tour came about through Jeff's manager, Ernest Chapman. They wanted to do an instrumental group this time around. [The Jeff Beck Group had previously featured singers Rod Stewart and Bobby Tench.] Touring with Jeff was the super highlight of my musical career. It was the first time that I really felt like a star, with star treatment. We toured the world for two years.

MD: Is there anyone you haven't worked with that you would like to?

Bernard: Yes, I would love to record with Madonna.

MD: Let's play word association. I'll name some drummers, and you tell me the first thing that pops into your head. Let's start with Steve Gadd.

Bernard: Dynamite feel, good groove. And he knows his gear.

MD: Vinnie Colaiuta.

Bernard: Great backbeat and an excellent timekeeper. And he can also solo musically.

MD: Billy Cobham.

Bernard: One of the best feel guys in the world, whether it's jazz, blues—just about any genre of music. And his reading is superb.

MD: Jeff Porcaro.

Bernard: Jeff is another player who had great feel and a strong backbeat. And he learned the Purdie shuffle very well. He took all of the parts of that beat for the Toto song "Rosanna."

MD: John Bonham.

Bernard: Very deep backbeat, and he also learned the Purdie shuffle well. John had a great feel on everything he played.

FAVORITES

Marvin Gaye "What's Going On" ///

Herb Alpert "Rise" ///

the Doobie Brothers "What a Fool Believes" ///

Stevie Wonder *Songs in the Key of Life* ///

Dizzy Gillespie "A Night in Tunisia" ///

Phoebe Snow "Don't Let Me Down" ///

Duke Ellington

"Mood Indigo" ///

Teresa Brewer

"Put Another Nickel in the Nickelodeon" ///

Procol Harum

"A Whiter Shade of Pale" ///

the O'Jays "For the Love of Money"



RECORDINGS

Aretha Franklin "Rock Steady," "Until You Come Back to Me" ///

Daryl Hall and John Oates "She's Gone" ///

Steely Dan "Home at Last," "Deacon Blues" ///

Donny Hathaway and Roberta Flack "Where Is the Love" ///

Mongo Santamaria "Cold Sweat"

MD: Hal Blaine.

Bernard: Mister Cool Daddy. The best in pop music sound.

MD: Carmine Appice.

Bernard: Mister Rock 'n' Roll himself. Carmine is a great guy. I love him.

MD: Dom Famularo.

Bernard: The quintessential all-around working drummer and speaking, teaching, and playing musician.

MD: Liberty DeVitto.

Bernard: Liberty is the nicest heavy-duty backbeat man that you want to have around. What a groove player he is!

MD: Speaking of Liberty, when he learned we were speaking with you, he wanted you to answer two questions. First, how did you come up with the snare/hi-hat fill on "Memphis Soul Stew" from the record *King Curtis Live at Fillmore West*?

Bernard: Hello, Liberty! I came up with that fill to stay out of the way, the idea being that less is more.

MD: His second question is, How does it feel to be the creator of a groove with your name on it?

Bernard: All I can say is that I feel very humbled and proud that the Purdie shuffle will live in infamy. Liberty, it feels "Purdie" good! [laughs]

MD: How did you come up with that groove, and who named it?

Bernard: It came from the sounds and rhythms that were all around me as I was growing up. The slow rhythmic sounds of

freight trains pulling in and out of the station ultimately became the foundation upon which that beat was built. Who named it? I did. [laughs] But in all honesty, I think my early teacher, Mr. Heywood, did—but I'll take the credit. [laughs]

MD: One more name: Ringo Starr.

Bernard: Ringo's drumming approach is a world apart from mine. His drumming has never been an issue for me. He's not a *bad* drummer. I'm not here to judge. But in my honest opinion, his drumming is not up to par for my standards.

MD: What about the controversy about you playing on early Beatles recordings?

Bernard: All I'm going to say on that topic is that the issue with that situation was addressed long ago to my satisfaction. I cover it in my book, and I'm at peace with everything.

MD: Why have you finally come out with your official life story?

Bernard: The book came about when I was working with one of my students. Because of the many stories and the examples I used to help get my point across, the idea of writing a book was born. Very simply, he said to me, "You should write a book, and I will help." I've been working on it for fifteen years. I feel that the time is right, because I'm not getting any younger, and I needed to preserve my experiences and thoughts. And cleanse my soul.



“Rock Steady” Demystified

Four Steps to Mastering an Advanced Funk Groove

by Jim Payne

MUSIC KEY

open	○	R.C.
H.H.	⊗	
T.T.	⊗	
S.D.	●	
F.T.	●	
B.D.	⊗	
H.H.	⊗	
w/ foot	⊗	

Have you ever checked out Bernard Purdie’s beat on Aretha Franklin’s “Rock Steady”? And what about the classic drum break that includes Purdie’s signature hi-hat bark? That’s one of the most recognizable funk licks of all time, and we’re going to break it down here.

“Rock Steady” combines a super-solid groove and some classic funk techniques with a special twist. Here’s my take on how to master it.

Step 1: The Hi-Hat Pattern

The hi-hat part is fairly simple. It’s two 8th notes and then one 8th and two 16ths, à la James Brown’s “Soul Power” with Jabo Starks on drums.

It’s easy to hear the hi-hat pattern as straight 8ths, but there’s more going on. Those two 16ths add drive and help to hold the beat in the pocket. This hi-hat phrase is the basic framework for the full beat.

1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

Step 2: Both Hands

Using Tower of Power drummer David Garibaldi’s technique (as described in his book *The Funky Beat*), let’s work on both hands by adding the snare to the hi-hat pattern.

You may not be familiar with playing a ghost note after a backbeat. This isn’t easy to do, but it’s an essential part of the funk vocabulary. Spend some time shedding it. Let the ghost note fall onto the head as you bring your wrist up after the accented backbeat. The ghost note should be super-soft, so let the stick just graze the head.

Don’t move on to the third step until the hand pattern is flowing nicely. I’ve found this to be the key to mastering more complex funk beats.

1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

Step 3: Add the Bass Drum

The next step is to add the bass drum to the hand pattern.

1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

Step 4: Add the Hi-Hat Openings

On first listen, it sounds as if Purdie is simply opening the hi-hat on the “&” of beats 1 and 3. Simple, right? Not quite.

Listen more closely, and you’ll notice something else going on in there. There’s actually a bit of an accent on the “a” of beats 2 and 4, and once in a while Bernard plays a slight hi-hat opening in those spots. If you sat down and tried to open the hi-hat there, it wouldn’t flow very well. So how do you get those subtle openings without disrupting the groove? Try simply playing quarter notes with the hi-hat foot throughout, and the hi-hat openings take care of themselves!

1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

To get this beat really happening, be sure to accent the hi-hat openings on the “&” of beats 1 and 3 while not making much of the openings on the “a” of 2 and 4. It’ll take a while to get that under control, but it’s a crucial element to capturing the correct feel of Purdie’s “Rock Steady” groove. Here’s the complete beat.

1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

The Drum Break

Here’s Purdie’s break from “Rock Steady.” Have fun!

1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

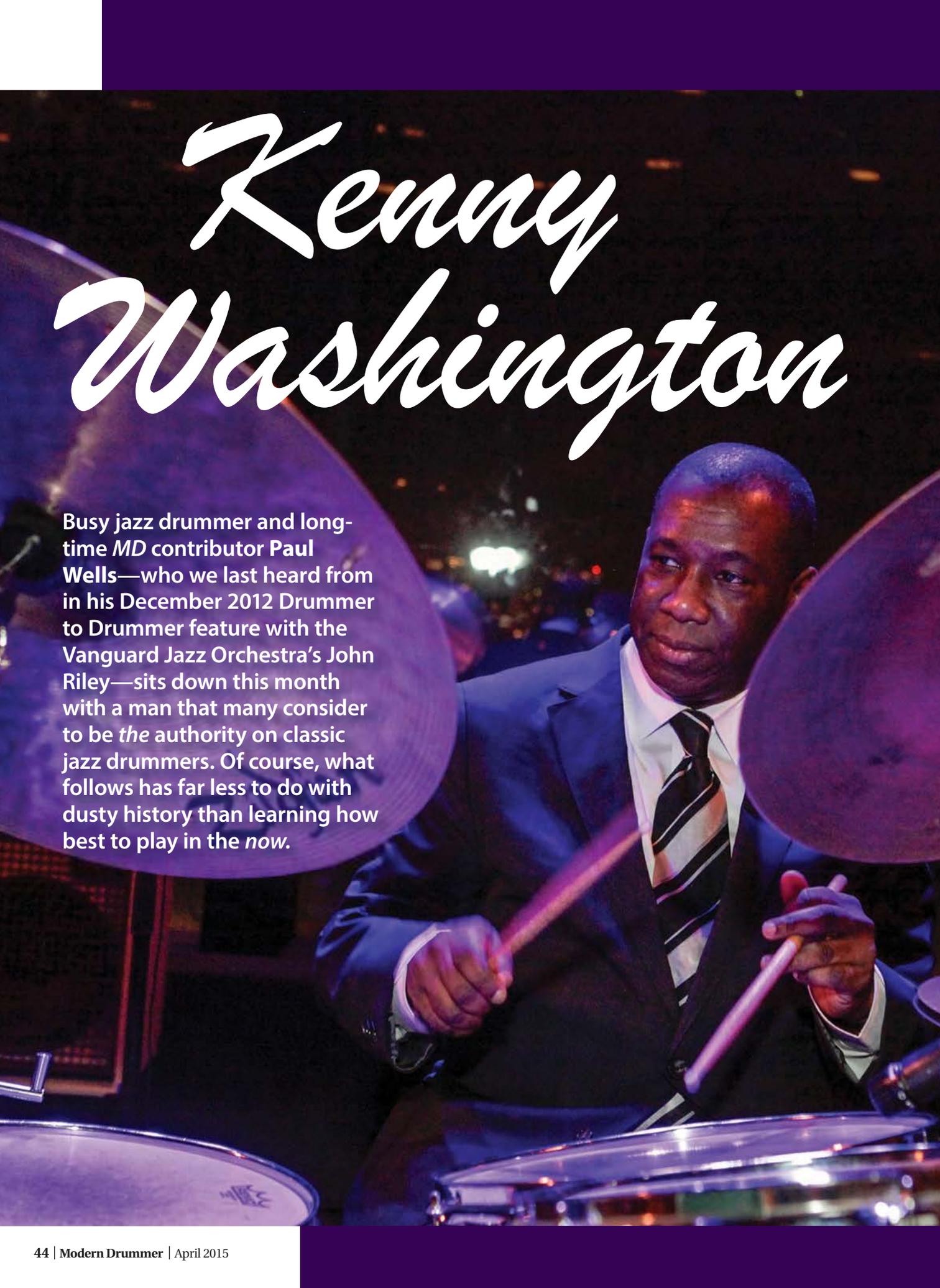
1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a

Jim Payne teaches funk and R&B drumming for Berklee Online. He has played with Maceo Parker and Fred Wesley. He can be reached at jpayne@funkydrummer.com.





Kenny Washington

Busy jazz drummer and long-time *MD* contributor Paul Wells—who we last heard from in his December 2012 Drummer to Drummer feature with the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra’s John Riley—sits down this month with a man that many consider to be *the* authority on classic jazz drummers. Of course, what follows has far less to do with dusty history than learning how best to play in the *now*.



Photos by Paul La Raia

Plenty has changed for Kenny Washington since his last *Modern Drummer* feature interview, in the July 1991 issue. For a long time, Wash was considered an underground figure in the jazz community. He was incredibly busy, but mostly playing with older innovators, including Dizzy Gillespie, Benny Carter, Tommy Flanagan, and Johnny Griffin. Sadly, most of the legends he built his career with have passed on. Washington is still very active these days, though, primarily performing with the piano trios of Bill Charlap and Benny Green. Despite having the same instrumentation, these two units couldn't be more different, while still functioning within the bebop trio tradition. Kenny knows exactly what to do at all times with each group.

He also continues to make regular appearances as a session drummer, perhaps most notably on Criss Cross, one of the few remaining independent jazz labels. Washington is on forty-six of its releases—thirty-seven of which he recorded since we last spoke with him. These recordings are an encyclopedia of brilliant bebop drumming; you simply can't go wrong with a single one of them.

When I first met Washington, in 1993, he was teaching students in his basement brownstone apartment in the Clinton Hill/Pratt area of Brooklyn. Not a lot of drummers outside the New York bebop scene were even aware of him at this point. Of course, those with the proper inside information knew that Kenny was one of the best drummers to take lessons from, despite—or perhaps because of—a reputation as being very demanding of his students.

My rudimental technique was rather weak back then, and my first lesson with Kenny was a rude awakening. As critical as he was, however, he was extremely helpful and inspiring, ultimately leading me on the right path. I remember wishing at the time that he were teaching at one of the big jazz universities in New York. It seemed a shame that the forces in charge of those programs didn't understand or appreciate what Wash had to offer.

Eventually, word got around, and Washington is now on the faculty at the Juilliard School and SUNY Purchase, teaching jazz history and private drum students. We begin our conversation here.

Kenny: I had done a couple of master classes at Juilliard. Carl Allen, who headed the jazz program at the time, called me and told me he wanted me to start teaching there. He told me, "Do what you do." Same thing at Purchase: Todd Coolman and John Riley had both brought me on board there. Todd asked me to teach jazz history as well.

MD: How many students do you have at each school?

Kenny: Juilliard is a small program. There are six drum students in the jazz department. Billy Drummond and I each have three students. And at Purchase, I have four. We do hour-long lessons.

MD: What do you find to be the most common things that are lacking in a first-year jazz drumming student?

Kenny: Rudiments! These kids don't have any hands—zero!

MD: Why is that?

Kenny: There are a lot of reasons. They're not getting a lot of training on the snare drum. A lot of drummers start out with the full drumset and never work on their hands. What they listen to has a lot to do with it too. When I was coming up, all the guys I listened to had great hands.

From the early 1900s up until the '50s, the thing that all the drummers had in common was good basic snare drum technique. After the '50s, it goes elsewhere. In my opinion, the technical side of jazz drumming has gone down so low. A lot of it has to do with

young people hearing the two most grossly misunderstood drummers—Tony Williams and Elvin Jones. Those two drummers played in the two most influential groups of the '60s, the Miles Davis Quintet and the John Coltrane Quartet. The records that both of those guys made with those groups are classics, no doubt about it. There's a certain mystique about both Miles and Trane, and young musicians want to play like that.

But what they don't realize is that Elvin didn't just wake up one

"Sometimes people tell me they were listening to the radio and heard something and they just knew it was me. It's taken me a long time to get that kind of sound. A lot of practicing and a lot of life."



morning and decide, "I'm going to play like *that*." A lot of young guys have no idea that Elvin started out playing with musicians like Harry "Sweets" Edison and Jimmy Forrest. He could play really great time, swing his ass off, play great ensembles—the whole thing.

MD: Elvin got his start playing in marching bands. You need good hands to do that.

Kenny: Absolutely! He knew all about the Wilcoxon book—he used to talk about it all the time. I mentioned that book to him, and he

said, "Yeah, the last page—'Battin 'Em Out!'" ["Battin 'Em Out" is on the final page of Charley Wilcoxon's *Modern Rudimental Swing Solos*, and many drummers consider it the hardest solo in the book.] He told me that he was once roommates with drummer Charli Persip, and they'd wake up in the morning and practice that stuff.

So when I finally saw him up close at the Village Vanguard, I realized that all of his stuff was based on rudiments. The way he phrases it and switches around the accents, it sounds totally



different. But it's still the rudiments. If you hear him on the tune "Keiko's Birthday March," you can hear that he has hands. It's the same thing with Tony Williams.

MD: Tony had incredible hands.

Kenny: Yes, but a lot of drummers these days don't have the sense to realize that Elvin and Tony had a foundation in technique and bebop that came from their predecessors. Today's drummers are losing a whole language that Philly Joe Jones, Sid Catlett, Max Roach, and Kenny Clarke created—using rudimentary stickings in a very musical way within the bebop tradition.

MD: What do you hear lacking in students' time playing as far as cymbal beat, comping, and so on?

Kenny: They want to play in odd time signatures like 5/4, 11/8, and 1002/37! But when I ask them to play in 4/4 and count off a medium-slow tempo...zero. Zero! They can't play in 4/4, but they can play all this "fancy" stuff. When you ask them to play spang-a-lang on the ride cymbal, 2 and 4 on the hi-hat, feather the bass drum on all four, and play a shuffle or comp with the left hand...zero!

They don't listen to the right stuff, and it's amazing because these guys have access to Spotify and iPods and all this stuff. Man, I spent thousands of dollars on records and CDs. I used to have to look for years for one particular record. Now it's so easy to check out so much music, but they're not even doing that. They're not listening to drummers who play the rudiments, per se. I get guys who don't even know what a five-stroke roll is supposed to sound like. I tell them to get the Frank Arsenault CD. Are you hip to him?

MD: No.

Kenny: He was a rudimental champion in the 1950s and made a recording demonstrating each of the twenty-six rudiments, from slow to fast. It's ridiculous! He plays them so well. The evenness between his right hand and left hand...it's just perfect. You can find the CD online.

MD: What steps do you take with students to get their hands up to par?

Kenny: The first thing I tell them is to turn off their cell phones when they practice. Everybody is on their cell phones and texting these days, and they want everything so fast. When they're practicing, they have their phones next to them. And the minute the phone rings, their concentration is gone. Also, practice using a recorder of some kind, because the recorder doesn't lie.

The next thing I have them do is to play everything slow. I'd rather hear somebody play slow and even than fast and sloppy. And the Wilcoxon book is a must.

MD: I wanted to ask you about your association with and love for the Wilcoxon book. You were introduced to that by the jazz educator Justin DiCiccio, correct?

Kenny: Yes. I went to the Music and Art high school in New York City. I not only had him as a band director—jazz band, symphonic band, percussion ensemble—but he was my homeroom teacher as well. So one day I walked in and he said, "Hey, man, do you have this book?" I looked at it—*Modern Rudimental Swing Solos*—and said no. And he said, "You should," and plopped it right on the table. And that was the beginning right there.

MD: You'd worked on rudiments before that, though.

Kenny: Oh, sure, but not that book.



TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Washington plays Canopus drums and Zildjian cymbals.

"I don't care if you play punk, funk, or skunk, you have to have good technique. Clarity and sound—those are the biggest things that I look for."



MD: That book is an ass-kicker.

Kenny: Oh, buddy! See, being at Music and Art, I was exposed to a lot of different things. When I got there, I wanted to be a bebopper. But besides being around Justin, Mark Sherman was there, who plays vibraphone and snare drum. Omar Hakim was there, and Danny Druckman, who's in the New York Philharmonic.

MD: These guys were teachers there?

Kenny: No, man, these were my fellow students! These cats were *bad*. They were mean back then, way ahead of me. But I learned a lot from those guys. They would have discussions, like how many buzzes per stick should be in a good buzz roll. I would watch Danny practice the handwritten exercises he got from Buster Bailey, the legendary snare drummer who was in the New York Philharmonic at that time. I'd sit there and watch him, and I got really into that stuff. I'd notice how he played different parts of the snare drum for different colors and different dynamic levels.

I also started getting into the literature, such as Podemski's *Standard Snare Drum Method* and Andrew Cirone's *Portraits in Rhythm*. One day while practicing, I realized that was how jazz drummers like Jo Jones and Sid Catlett were getting so many different sounds out of a snare drum. When I realized that, it was like a light bulb going off in my head. I realized it was all connected. Those guys all had great symphonic teachers. When I realized that, I knew I had a *lot* of work to do. That's when I really started to get the instrument together. I could already play bebop, but what I was trying to do was refine it. Being exposed to those guys made me a better drummer, period.

MD: It sounds like you went there humble and wanting to learn. You didn't show up at Music and Art thinking that you

knew everything.

Kenny: No, I didn't know anything! [laughs]

MD: How do you teach out of the Wilcoxon book?

Kenny: I tell them to practice it bar by bar, slowly. Don't start out even trying to play the phrases. Just play bar by bar, one bar at a time. Work on one bar slowly until you get it. Then move on to the next bar. Then stitch the two together. And very slowly! Don't use a metronome at first. When you're first working out each bar, you want to learn how it feels between your hands. Once you can play it slow, turn on the metronome and play each bar in time. The most important thing is to be honest with yourself. If it doesn't sound good, figure out why. If one stroke is out of sync, that's one stroke too many.

Man, I used to hear Philly Joe complain about Wilcoxon all the time. He'd say, "Man, Wash, this shit is hard! It doesn't get any easier."

MD: I'm glad you mentioned Philly Joe, because he's known for lifting entire phrases from Wilcoxon and using them in his solos.

Kenny: Cozy Cole was the one who turned all of the cats on to that book. And Max Roach was the one who turned all the beboppers on to it. Cozy Cole had opened a drum school with Gene Krupa in midtown Manhattan, and he used to teach out of that book. I heard that when Wilcoxon himself heard what Philly Joe and these guys had done with his material, it brought tears to his eyes. He thought that in a million years his stuff couldn't be taken to that kind of level.

It might seem boring as hell to practice this stuff this way, but you don't know what it will affect. It will affect things in your playing that seem to have nothing to do with Wilcoxon. It helps

Kenny Washington

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Kenny Washington

develop independence between your hands. It helps you with the dynamic balance between your hands. It helps your brushes. It helps your concentration.

MD: Do you find that it helps improve your sound?

Kenny: Absolutely! That was the next thing I was going to say. So many drummers play so loud. Everybody thinks that's the hip way to go—"Oh, you're playing with so much energy." Energy, my ass! It's loud, and you're getting a harsh and ugly sound on the instrument. People in the front of the club are covering their ears. But the funny thing about the drums is that in the back of the venue, you can't hear the instrument at all! Because the sound is staying welled up in the drums. The louder you play, the less sound you get out of the instrument. It doesn't make sense to me to play the instrument that loud. Guys are getting tendinitis and working themselves to death. But if you work on the rudiments and work on Wilcoxon, that will teach you about control and getting a full sound out of the instrument.

I used to think that Elvin Jones played loud, from listening to the records. When I heard him live at the Vanguard, I realized that he wasn't actually playing that loud, but the intensity was like being run over by a truck.

MD: His sound was big, but not loud.

Kenny: Yes, it was a full sound, but you weren't holding your ears. If you went to the back of the club, no matter what dynamic level he was playing, you heard a nice, full sound from the drums. Even when he was playing pianissimo, the intensity was incredible.

MD: I don't suspect that Elvin was playing loud with Coltrane in the '60s. You can always hear the bass on the records. And he doesn't wash out the cymbals—his cymbals were always thin, and you can always hear the stick.

Kenny: Right, right! My whole thing is this: I don't care if you play punk, funk, or skunk, you have to have good technique. I'm not saying that I'm a Buddy Rich or a Louie Bellson, but I strive to get to that level. Clarity and sound—those are the biggest things that I look for. There's nothing I can't

stand more than sloppy drumming. My hat's off to any drummer who plays the drums well. I don't care what kind of music it is—you can tell if the guy can play the drums. Not everyone wants to be a jazz drummer, and that's cool. But be a good drummer, no matter what style you decide to play.

MD: How do you feel about students playing jazz with matched grip?

Kenny: In my opinion, as a jazz drummer, there are some things that you can't do with matched grip. I'm not saying you can't play jazz with matched grip. But there are certain things that you'll get a better sound with by using traditional—when you're playing a shuffle, for example. There's a certain way of snapping the wrist that you can only do with traditional. With matched, you can certainly play a shuffle, but the sound is different. To me, it's the same thing with brushes. There are plenty of guys who play great brushes with matched, but there's a different sound. When I get

students who play matched grip, I don't insist that they switch—it's too much work, if they've already been studying with matched.

MD: Do you find that your students are receptive to all of this? Do you ever meet resistance?

Kenny: When I started giving lessons, I didn't necessarily want to teach this stuff. I wanted to

teach drummers how to play in group situations, how to listen, how to match long notes and short notes with an ensemble. If you're doing a record date and there's no drum part, or a bad drum part, you have to use your ears. So I wanted to teach musical conception for drummers.

What happened—and this was about twenty-five years ago—cats would come to me for a lesson and they wouldn't have their hands together. So I would send them to a drummer/teacher named Keith Copeland. A few of them would come back to me months later and tell me, "Keith is tough! He has me working on Wilcoxon, and if I miss one thing he makes me go back to the beginning and play the whole thing over again." And I would say, "That's good!" [laughs] So by the time they'd come back to me, they'd have all of that stuff together, and we could start talking about music.





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Kenny Washington

But unfortunately Keith moved to Europe, and I didn't have an ally. So I had to start teaching the hand stuff, because so many drummers didn't have this together. A lot of guys who come to me want to learn brushes. Now, a few of us have really helped to bring the brushes back—me, Jeff Hamilton, Lewis Nash, Clayton Cameron—and there's a renewed interest in brushes. But if I ask a guy to play a five-stroke roll and it sounds like an egg roll, then no, you can't learn the brushes yet.

I realized that I had to start teaching this stuff, because the students I get almost

always do not have this stuff together. Very seldom do I get pleasantly surprised. It's the fault of a lot of teachers who won't say anything to students. They're willing to teach drummers to play in all these odd time signatures even if they don't have their basic hand technique together. They're putting the cart before the horse. In my lessons I'll tell you straight to your face what needs to happen, and then we'll work on it and make it better. The whole aim is to try to get better, and I make sure they know the benefits.

Most guys who come to study with me

know me and know that we're going to be dealing with this stuff. But occasionally I get somebody who isn't aware of me or my teaching style, and I may meet some resistance. I just tell them that if they can play any solo from the Wilcoxon book perfectly, then we can work on anything they want to. Bam—nothing! A lot of times, after a few months, they start to see the benefits. They start getting a better sound, and their chops get a lot better. I tell them at the beginning of the school year that if they stick with this, their technique will be a lot better by the time they're wearing short sleeves again.

All of this stuff takes time, and it's a long process. My students say I'm tough. If we're at a lesson playing Wilcoxon and they play one thing wrong, I'll stop them and have them start again. I'm trying to get them to listen, so when they get home they're just as picky as I am. You'll realize what you're doing doesn't sound good enough, and you'll keep working on it. Each time that you do that, you're helping yourself. You're paying yourself off in technique, and you won't know what it affects.

I like teaching Wilcoxon and all of this stuff, but as I said, what I'd really like to teach is musical conception. Like, taking drummer-less recordings by the Nat King Cole Trio, or Benny Green's trio with Russell Malone and Christian McBride, or Oscar Peterson with Ray Brown and Herb Ellis, or Ahmad Jamal's *The Three Strings*. I'll give them a couple of these recordings and tell them to live with them for a while and then start playing with them. I'm interested in what they're hearing, in terms of how they play the ensembles. Then we start talking about the great ensemble drummers—Philly Joe Jones, Art Blakey, Arthur Taylor, Jimmy Cobb, Roy Haynes, Lex Humphries.

MD: What do you mean when you refer to playing ensembles?

Kenny: When I say ensemble playing, I mean playing with the band—matching the long and short notes and the phrasing with the ensemble. Generally, you match the long ensemble notes with a cymbal and the short notes with the snare drum. Drummers can make or break bands—a band is only as good as its drummer. All those great drummers were concerned with what was best for the band, not what was best for them. Sometimes you may need to do something you don't want to do, but it may help the band play in better time or make the band the best they can sound. All of those great drummers were obsessed with that, and they could all sing the parts.

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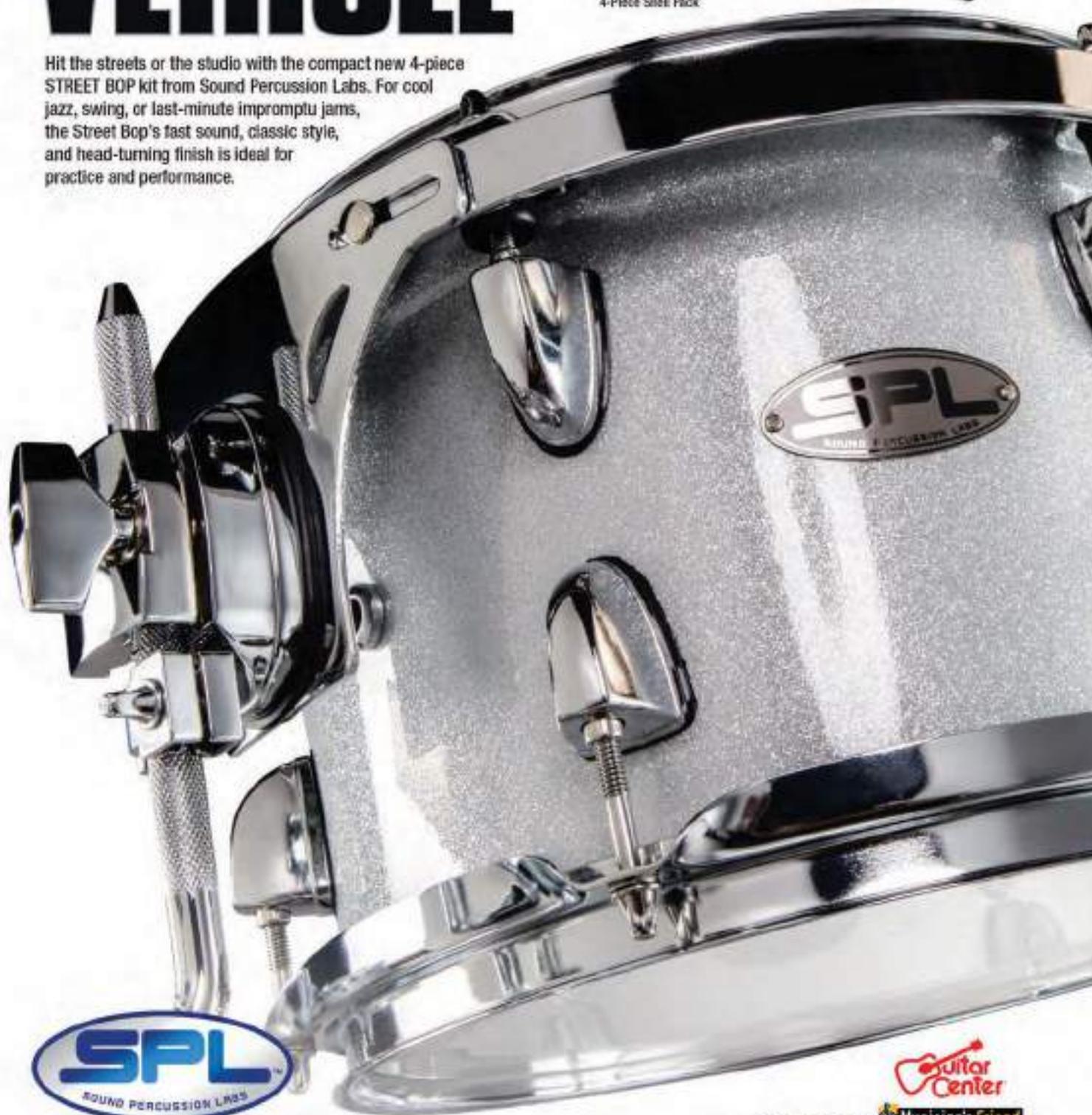
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Kenny Washington

They knew all the nooks and crannies of all of those parts.

Then we talk about the cymbal beat—getting the cymbal beat to swing. I have them get the Miles Davis record *Walkin'*, and I have them practice with that. Also, Al Harewood on the Horace Parlan records *Speakin' My Peace* and *On the Spur of the Moment*. Arthur Edgehill on Eddie Lockjaw Davis's *The Cookbook*. Mel Lewis—the last track on the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis featuring Joe Williams record, "Night Time Is the Right Time." Listen to the way he plays the cymbal beat—that sound and the way he's playing

the time. Practice along with it. Get that sound into your brain and into your heart.

MD: Tell us about the differences between Benny Green's and Bill Charlap's trio.

Kenny: Both groups have the same instrumentation and even the same bass player, but the music is completely different—two different ways of playing the drums, and they're both hard! Benny is a real bebop piano player, so you have to bear down a little more with him. His compositions are complicated. He'll send me MP3s of tunes he's working on—just solo piano versions—and ask me to check

them out. So I listen and get an idea of where the music conception is coming from. I may have an idea of what to play, but when I get with the bass player, it may change. He gives me complete freedom to come up with parts.

Bill's trio is different but also not easy. He plays a lot of different colors and sounds on the piano. He plays bebop too, but it's different. Bill plays with a lighter dynamic, and in some cases his arrangements are a little more elaborate. There are over fifty tunes in the book, and I know all of them by heart.

MD: How do you think your playing has changed and developed over the years?

Kenny: I think my sound is better, from practicing and everything.

MD: I still hear you coming up with new ideas and new things to play.

Kenny: I went through and studied every drummer you can think of. When I was a kid, I had a new hero every month. I wanted to play like all those guys—Shelly Manne, Mel Lewis, Philly Joe, Persip. So I've gotten to the point now where sometimes people tell me they were listening to the radio and heard something and they just knew it was me. It's taken me a long time to get that kind of sound. A lot of practicing and a lot of life.

All these different drummers I heard, I can take a little bit from each of them. All these guys that no one talks about—I grab from every one of them. Like an all-you-can-eat buffet! I'll take some Lex Humphries, I'll take some Cozy Cole, Big Sid... I'll take some Elvin too. But I try to do it my own way. I never thought about having my own sound—a lot of people put too much emphasis on getting their own sound. That will happen naturally, whether you try to or not. It just takes time. Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Elvin Jones—those guys took time to develop.

I'm never going to set the world on fire. I just wanted to play well and sound like my favorite drummers. If I can sound half as good as Louis Hayes or Kenny Clarke, I'll be doing well. I want to be able to play with different people in different situations and help them sound good. Mel Lewis told me that if you want to be successful, you have to be able to play different styles. Playing with Bill Charlap is one style. Playing with Benny Green is another style. Playing with Melvin Rhyne is a completely different style. You have to know what your role is—how you're supposed to play in each situation. And you learn that by listening to records.



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Mark Stepro

He's as likely to be seen rocking out on late-night TV as he is in war-ravaged conflict zones, playing the role of state-sponsored cultural ambassador. It's all part of a career defined by balance—between preparation and inspiration, commerce and art, emotion and intellect.

Story by Ilya Stemkovsky
Photos by Alex Solca

In his own words, Los Angeles-based drummer Mark Stepro faces a working reality that requires him to lead a double life. His studio work ranges from, as he says, "big, clicked-out, expensive pop sessions with Keith Urban, Gavin DeGraw, and Train" to "completely click-less, 100 percent live takes off the floor with Sara Watkins, the Mastersons, and Tim Easton."

Then Stepro will hit the road with the likes of Adam Levy, Ben Kweller, Hayes Carll, or Butch Walker—Walker frequently uses him in the studio as well—supplying a down-home, steady, earthy pulse and just enough vivid colors to make whatever he plays on come to life. "I want to sound like me," Stepro says. "And I want there to be just enough left-of-center moves in the performance that if someone was really paying attention and I was very lucky, they might identify it as me."

Stepro grew up in Ohio, where he dug the Eagles' *Hotel California* and Tom Petty's *Full Moon Fever* and figured, "That's what drums are supposed to sound like." After studying with a number of teachers, including famed University of North Texas educator Ed Soph and Wilco's Glenn Kotche, Mark moved to New York, and ultimately to L.A. Avoiding cattle-call auditions for the adolescent Disney artist of the moment, the drummer has managed to carve out his own niche, where he knows he's getting the call for *his* thing.

"I don't want to work for someone who doesn't know my last name," Stepro says. "I don't have, nor am I interested in landing, a big gig, and I wouldn't call myself a hired gun. I'm interested in being part of a group that's established. I have five part-time jobs that add up to a career."



MD: Was it always a goal to be affiliated with a producer, the way it has become for you with Butch Walker?

Mark: It's always a goal? No, because I didn't know any better. Now that I live in Los Angeles, and having lived in New York, aligning oneself with a producer in the studio...or, if you're doing it right, a lot of producers...or, if you're trying to do live touring with big pop gigs, aligning oneself with an MD—that's the move. I fell backwards into my relationship with Butch. I knew his name as being associated with expensive records. I was playing a lot with

Ben Kweller [when I met Walker]. Someone had given him my number, and he called me and asked if I wanted to come to the studio. I realized I didn't know much about his music, and if I was going to an audition, it was going to be terrible! But he just wanted to hang out, and we talked about Creedence Clearwater Revival the whole time. And it went straight into band practice for this record he was doing. Really organic.

MD: You didn't even play?

Mark: It's a testament to Butch and his ear as a producer. With YouTube and the Internet, he could quickly see everything I could and couldn't do. Which is why every gig you do, whether it's a bar gig or *Letterman*, you have to kill it these days. The fact that I played on a ton of TV shows has nothing to do with what I can or can't do on the instrument, but it sets a prospective employer's mind at ease a bit. Butch has his own career as a solo artist, and he's very Wrecking Crew-ish about the whole thing. He wants his own guys on stuff. I didn't know that was his philosophy, and I got lucky to get called by the right guy at the right time. He kind of made me a guy before I was a guy.

MD: Does it change your approach now that everyone's shooting HD video on their smartphones?

Mark: This is a new phenomenon, only five or six years old, really. I'm lucky that it came into reality after I spent my twenties playing a bunch of gigs that I sucked at. So YouTube came after I had matured as a player. And it has to be hard for younger guys—though some of them are weirdly embracing it, posting videos of themselves doing drum covers.

MD: Let's talk about sounds. Your recordings with Gavin DeGraw, Sara Watkins, Tim Easton, and others have a flatter, deader drum tone. Is that something you love from the '70s or just the nature of

"I'll tune the drums low and flat, turn up the mic preamps, and play really quietly, like James Gadson. It makes the drums sound way bigger than if you're just barreling into them."



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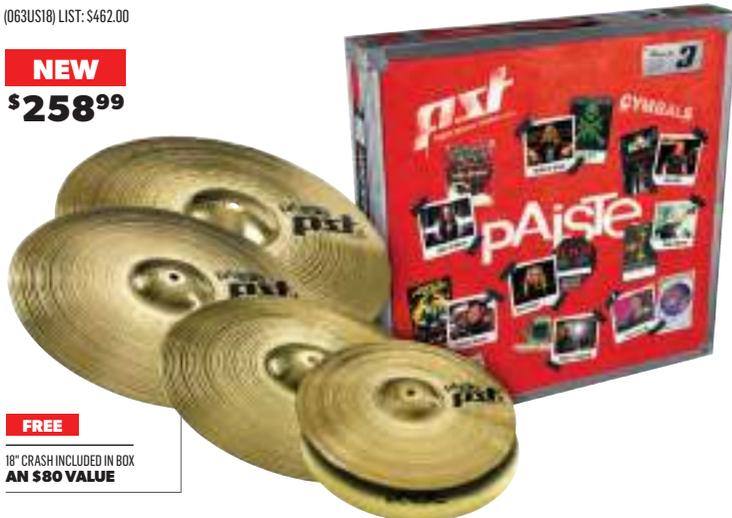


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Mark Stepro



modern tastes and approaches?

Mark: That's just the way I hear drums. My favorite drum sounds are like the one Jim Keltner gets on Bill Frisell's *Good Dog, Happy Man*. Just low and slappy. And with Butch, we keep the drums well muffled because the guys on the big pop stuff are adding samples and sound replacing. People get into meticulous conversations about shell depths and plies, but then they still put maxi-pads on their toms anyway. And it complements the style of music of the artists I play with. One of my favorite recording techniques is to tune

the drums low and flat, turn up the mic preamps, and play really quietly, like James Gadson. Weirdly, it makes the drums sound way bigger than if you're just barreling into them.

MD: Let's talk about the difference between "Mark performing a function" and "Mark being Mark"—getting called for that serviceable timekeeping vibe as opposed to a situation when you can be more creative.

Mark: Last night I played a bar gig with a friend where we were doing Donny Hathaway music for people drinking

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Stepro plays Ludwig Keystone series drums (13", 16", 24") with a 6.5x14 Black Beauty snare. His Zildjian cymbals include 16" K Light hi-hats, an 18" K Custom Session crash, a 22" K Constantinople Medium Thin ride, and a 19" K Constantinople crash/ride. He uses Remo heads and Vater sticks.



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Mark Stepro



martinis on a rooftop in downtown L.A. I always want to stay in touch with the craftsman element of it. There's a real romance to that. I'm happy to do both of those things and dig a ditch for a guy, as long as the people making the music are great.

I'm lucky to play exclusively with people that I have respect for. If they ask me to just keep time on something, I'm happy to do it. That's its own art form and requires its own skill. I did a record for a producer named Jim Scott, who's got multiple, multiple Grammys. He wanted simple drums. I would start with something that I thought was groovy and cerebral and kind of hip, and he would systematically pare it down. His reference was a cool track on '70s FM radio, and if a drum track pokes out and self-identifies, that wasn't right. But in the band Taurus, it was fulfilling to really create

something and not have to wear the hat of "side guy making his employer happy," and to just ask myself: What's the most interesting drum thing I can get going on here that won't upset the balance and make it sound like a drum solo?

MD: Are all your sessions with Butch pretty similar?

Mark: In most cases the artist isn't even there. I'm just playing with Butch and the engineer. They'll build a drum track based on the demo. For the Keith Urban session, I was basically replacing the drum machine. The reality is that's pop music and it's all going to get snapped to the grid, but they wanted a human playing over top of the metronomic machine.

The Gavin DeGraw stuff was live. We set up a band and played, and he was there. We had the demo cued up and we would play along to it to get our bearings. By the third

or fourth time playing along, we basically had a track. It was interesting, because I didn't have to chart it out and learn it. Before we knew it, the tracks were done, because we didn't think we were trying to pull anything off. Then they just pulled out the demo, and what was left was everyone's existing tracks.

MD: Do you lament missing the golden age of studio work?

Mark: Guys like Josh Freese, Shawn Pelton, and Matt Chamberlain got really good at the drums during a period in history where that was a marketable, bankable skill. This golden era, where the system was flush with cash and Hal Blaine owned a yacht—that's a very small period of time. I came around in the early to mid 2000s, and it's like I came to the party and there are beer cans everywhere and a couple of dudes are passed out on the couch. I did some recording with Jakob Dylan and was telling him I loved the [Wallflowers] record Chamberlain played on, 1996's *Bringing Down the Horse*, which was a real watershed for pop/rock drummers. I was saying that nowadays I wouldn't get a chance to deliver something along those lines. And Jakob explained that I never even had a bite of the apple, so I wouldn't be moping around L.A., bitter that there wasn't a \$500 cartage budget.

For me it's a new frontier. Maybe you're not going to get rich as a sideman drummer today, so let's just have fun. This next gig I'm going to do—I just want to play better than I did yesterday.



Home Touring

Stepro tours regularly with singer-songwriter Mary McBride as part of the U.S. State Department-sponsored project known as the Home Tour. "We could be playing Ray Charles songs for severely disabled orphans in Indonesia or Aretha Franklin hits for female prisoners in Albania," the drummer says. The shots here were taken in Nakhchivan, a small autonomous region in Azerbaijan.



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John Colpitts



Toeing the line between rigid structure and utter chaos, the drummer for the long-running art-punk band Oneida—who's also known by Kid Millions or by another of his "taken" names, Man Forever—bangs drums into infinity.

**Story by Will Romano
Photos by Paul La Raia**

The so-called father of minimalism, composer/performer La Monte Young, once said that drumming can be exciting, but it cannot "deal with the spiritual truths one can experience when very profound pitch relationships are executed perfectly in tune."

We wonder what Young would say about John Colpitts, aka Kid Millions, perhaps best known as the drummer for the experimental post-rock band Oneida. Defiantly flying in the face of Young's pearls of wisdom, Colpitts takes an approach that fuses concepts of minimalism with abstract art, percussion ensemble playing, and muscle-building kit workouts. Thanks to his association with friend

and Yeah Yeah Yeahs drummer Brian Chase, Colpitts has applied some of Young's groundbreaking tuning techniques to his recent rhythm-based project, Man Forever.

"I thought it would be cool to encompass the physical limits of your body—and the limits of your ear—to create this larger sound that's not about one guy," Colpitts says. "It's not about one drummer."

It appears Colpitts is game for just about anything, as long as it's adventurous. For instance, he was one of seventy-seven drummers participating in the Boredoms' 77 Boadrum project, which took

place in Brooklyn at the numerically auspicious time of 7:07 P.M. on July 7, 2007. In early 2015, Colpitts released a new record, *Era of Manifestations*, with the Oneida offshoot People of the North. (The name is a reference to an Oneida song of the same title, inspired by the marauding Norsemen the Vikings.) The free-jazz-influenced four-piece band, which includes guitarist Shahin Motia (Oneida) and bassist Richard Hoffman (of the avant-noise band Sightings), widens Colpitts' musical bandwidth.

"People of the North was initially a project that started as a duo," Colpitts says, "when [Oneida guitarist/bassist] Hanoi Jane had gotten hurt and was out of commission for a while. In the meantime, [keyboardist] Bobby Matador and I started playing as a duo just for fun and wrote a lot of new material that has, over the years, ended up on Oneida albums. I think People of the North is more nimble, and we can say yes to more gigs on the fly."

It's clear that Colpitts isn't afraid to place himself in a variety of settings to garner feedback and conduct artistic research. In 2010, the *New York Times* went one step further, dubbing Colpitts an "obsessive." There's some evidence to support this claim, however, as the drummer has been known to overdub dozens of performances to create a massive wall of sound—as on the improv-heavy *Era of Manifestations*, which Colpitts reveals is, in part, the result of meticulous editing.

However we describe him, Colpitts has created an aura of mystique about his drumming projects. For Man Forever's self-titled 2010 release, inspiration came from Lou Reed's iconic abstract double album, *Metal Machine Music*, after Colpitts saw a contemporary classical interpretation by the Fireworks Ensemble, which based its interpretation on Ulrich Krieger's transcription. "I said, 'I will make a *Metal Machine Music*-like record that's acoustic,'" Colpitts explains. "'The drums will be tuned, I will play the kit, and I'll do multiple passes.' I recorded onto tape so I could do the tape-speed [sound manipulation]."

Other recordings followed, including 2012's *Pansophical Cataract*, the concept for which Colpitts hatched while prepping for a performance with Chase at WFMU's Jersey City radio studio. Due to the station's space limitations, Colpitts' vision of employing the multiple kits necessary to realize the material could not be accommodated. Unfettered, he and Chase flipped the script and minimized their setup to include only one snare drum, on which the two played single-stroke patterns at different tempos simultaneously. The alternately soothing and unnerving matrix of rhythms that arose from this conceptual approach became the basis of *Pansophical Cataract*. "We kept simplifying the concept," Colpitts says. "It had this incredible effect with all this phasing."

Man Forever's latest major studio recording, *Ryonen*, featuring Chase on kit drums and the ensemble Sō Percussion, boasts

two massive compositions spanning more than half an hour, including the eighteen-minute title track, which suggests the kind of phasing inherent to the pioneering work of minimalist composer Steve Reich. (Other recent sonically textured Man Forever collaborations include *Live at the Pilot Light*, with White Gregg, and *Boanerges*, featuring saxophonist Jim Sauter.) Like Reich, Colpitts seems keen to investigate all things psychoacoustic—the physics of sound and the psychological aspects of how listeners interpret it. But to paint Man Forever's aesthetic with the minimalism brush is to ignore the delicate (or not-so-delicate) balance between strict compositional structure and utter chaos Colpitts achieves in his pieces.

"*Ryonen* takes cues from minimalism, but it's difficult to call it that," Colpitts says. "The second piece, 'Ryonen,' is kind of like you set off a musical box and let it play out. It's just rhythms stacked up against each other that don't change a whole lot. Steve Reich is the guy who has gone deep into [phasing]. My work is like a punk version of that, or something. It's a bit more random."

Colpitts has alluded to the idea that Man Forever's output

represents a kind of counter-vailing force to mass cynicism and the fatalistic view that our world is on the precipice of collapse. In theory, the tricky, repetitive rhythms Colpitts bangs out in nightly percussion endurance tests can be played ad infinitum to create meditative cyclical patterns. That is, if the spirit is present and the flesh cooperates. Repetition, even with slight deviation, taps into something timeless and therapeutic. It's trance-inducing music without beginning and without end. Music that flows. Music, or sound, that...just...is.

This mirrors Colpitts' writing process, which operates via one constant:

change. In fact, the opening track on *Ryonen*, "The Clear Realization," evolved from the song "Waiting on a Friend," which was recorded previously but went unreleased until Kid found the performance or performances he was after.

"John had been trying to record that song with a bunch of different people," says Colin Marston, recording engineer and owner of the Menegroth studio in Queens, New York, where Colpitts recorded *Ryonen* with Sō Percussion over a span of two hot, air-conditioning-challenged days in June of 2013. "I think he may have been the most happy with this one from *Ryonen*. It's something he's had in his head for a while and has been trying to figure out how to realize, I think. Then again, I wouldn't be surprised if he wanted to come back and try to record it again sometime."

MD met Colpitts at the Ocropolis, Oneida's base of operations in Brooklyn's Bushwick neighborhood. Although respectful and somewhat reserved during the interview, Colpitts seemed slightly preoccupied, as if the creative wheels madly spinning in his head were beckoning him back to the kit....





MD: What attracts you to the meditative aspects of certain rhythmic patterns?

John: The “why” is a good question. I think back to when I used to mow the lawn in Connecticut, where I grew up. Just the drone of the mower—it would hit a note and you could hum that note. You could sing melodies off of it. The other thing I would say would be efficiency. That’s efficiency of movement, efficiency of... ideas, maybe.

When I moved [to New York City] in 1996,

I was listening to drummers who were incredibly articulate but their ideas were surprising, like Zigaboo Modeliste on the great early Meters stuff. To me there was something minimal about that stuff. As a drummer I think a bit too much, but I guess that might be the “why” you were asking about. The technique and the obsession with technique and displaying technique can be distracting, so I think I got away from that a bit with the first album on Thrill Jockey, *Pansophical Cataract*.

MD: Can you describe the basic structure of the compositions on that record?

John: It’s just two drummers playing single-stroke rolls out of sync with one another.

MD: A lot of people compare Man Forever’s music with Steve Reich pieces.

John: Well, one thing with Steve Reich—I didn’t go to music school like he did. Sô Percussion has a great version of his *Drumming* that was a studio production. They multitracked it. It’s insane.

In terms of *Pansophical Cataract*, I wanted



to do a project that would allow me to go to a new town and hook up with some locals and I wouldn't need to worry about their technique. It would be something where I could say, "I just need you to play a single-stroke roll for a half an hour; it shouldn't be loud, but it should have even dynamics." This stuff creates a drone—a kind of drone that I hadn't heard. Maybe it's out there, I don't know. Maybe it's something like a La Monte Young [piece].

MD: You're very precise about tuning

TURNING EARS, TUNING HEADS

Man Forever's output is so evocative and sonically rich, it begs for colorful description and deeper analysis. In a 2012 review, *Modern Drummer* editorial director Adam Budofsky equated the sonic assault of *Pansophical Cataract* with "riding among a herd of a thousand buffalo." One of the definitions of *cataract* is a downpour of water or a waterfall, the sound of which some observers associate with Man Forever's pieces. "*Pansophical Cataract* is a wave, a waterfall, like the surface of a river flowing," John Colpitts confirms.

The tuning of the drums, handled by Colpitts' musical cohort Brian Chase, of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, was a key factor in the development of the pieces appearing on *Pansophical Cataract*. Its role, Chase says, "stems from the approach that was taken on the earlier versions of Man Forever. John knew I had a deep interest in tuning drums to exact pitches, and [he knew] my solo project Drums & Drones, which is greatly inspired by La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela's *Dream House* installation in TriBeCa. Tuning drums in Man Forever has to do with respecting the physical quality of resonance: The drumhead vibrates and resonates, which is a simple concept, but it's one that drummers often take for granted. When there are multiple drums being hit, it would make sense to have them individually and collectively be in tune. It's like harmony—we wanted the drums to be resonant together, like forming a big chord. John chose pitches that he liked for this 'drum chord,' and we tuned the drums in this fashion."

your drums.

John: I tried to tune the drums carefully in terms of how La Monte Young might have done something like this. It's very loosely inspired by him. My friend Brian Chase, from the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, inspired me in terms of tuning and being really focused on drum pitches. [See sidebar.]

MD: How did the whole thing with *Sō Percussion* come about? Did you know them?

John: I knew of them. For a number of years I had been reaching out to Ronen Givony, of [classical/contemporary music performance organization] Wordless Music, with different ideas. He had a project that he had been asked to do, a musical accompaniment to a punk couture show at the Met [*Punk: Chaos to Couture*, 2013].

MD: Interesting mix.

John: Right? [laughs] It's a little crazy. How he wanted to represent that musically was by having Man Forever collaborate with *Sō Percussion*.

MD: How collaborative was the "punk" show at the Met with *Sō Percussion*?

John: Somewhat collaborative, although quickly it became apparent that I should generate the pieces, which is fine. I didn't have the music written out. I have an eight-

track cassette recorder/player with five working tracks that I brought when we met. We hooked it up to their system, and we isolated the different tracks. We only met four times. It wasn't hard. They are so on their game. It wasn't difficult.

MD: You used single-stroke rolls as the basis of composition in the past. Any special sticking patterns used for the pieces on *Ryonen*?

John: I was trying to do an album that was pulse-based. I had two [Man Forever records] that were pretty abstract. I wanted to do something vocal that contained shorter pieces. I didn't get there. [laughs] With the first piece, "The Clear Realization," I was trying to create something that was a bit more open-ended. With Oneida, the band that I've been in for eighteen years, I've been experimenting with more open-ended improvisation. I was developing a forward-motion drumbeat that didn't have a 1. I had envisioned that the kick drum—my kick drum—would be the pulse. It would be somewhat in threes [sings pattern resembling repetitive accented triplets] for long, extended periods. Players would hear the pulse and they could just play through. It's kind of set up like a raga, in a way, except it's rhythmic only. Then I would play

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Colpitts plays a four-piece Modern Drum Shop kit and Latin Percussion *Aspire* bongos. His cymbals include 13" hi-hats featuring a Zildjian A New Beat top and an Istanbul bottom (model unknown), an 18" Zildjian K Dark Thin crash, and a 22" Zildjian K Constantinople Light Low ride. He uses a DW 5000 bass drum pedal, a Pearl hi-hat stand, DW cymbal stands, and Yamaha hardware. His heads include Remo Coated Ambassadors, and he plays Vic Firth American Classic 5A hickory sticks.

different phrases on top of the pulse that never ended clearly on the 1. I wanted the piece to be constantly evolving but keep the kick pattern steady. Time signatures would change constantly through threes and fours, fives and sevens.

MD: You have bongos in “The Clear Realization.”

John: I came up with the bongo pattern, because I wanted something that was musical that could be repeated. It was something that I could play but couldn’t sing. Apparently that figure is in eleven.

MD: Without written music, how did you communicate your ideas to Sō Percussion?

John: I would have to demonstrate patterns. I’ve done these types of pieces with a lot of people. I would say, “You have to get the sticking right.” I’ve played this on stage, and dudes would hear it and [plays the pattern incorrectly]...

MD: The patterns were not being resolved correctly.

John: Right. For the piece, I laid down the drumset performance with the kick. After that I overlaid bongo parts. Then I added a snare that was in five. It has a ruff in it to start with.

MD: So “The Clear Realization” is not really an example of phasing.

John: No. This piece is not based on phasing. I don’t want it to phase. This one is supposed to be locked in. In fact, it’s very hard to play.

The second piece, “Ryonen,” was developed through different sticking patterns on multiple drums. There are two drummers, facing each other, playing snare drums that are close together. On each side of the drummers there’s a tom. It formed a diamond. One of them is playing triplets and the other is playing—I was playing—quarter notes. As the piece progresses, different tom hits are added to the mix. Each part lasts a certain amount of time, and we have a metronome in our headphones. The triplets and quarter notes meld, in the same tempo.

I think we [recorded] the “Ryonen” piece first. We just set up the drums, and Jason [Treuting] and I are on the diamond. We recorded that first and tracked it to a click, together, then overdubbed snare and concert bass drum. Later, we added some of the additional pitched drums, the mallet work during the break part, and pieced that together in the mix. There’s also a bongo, low in the mix.

MD: Did you write the piece so that drummers would hit the toms at the same time?

John: No. That’s the phasing part, in a way.

MD: What pattern is played on the bongo?



John: I think it’s the same as the [quarter-note pattern]. The bongo player bolsters the melody. Then triplets are played on a snare without the snares on. It’s supposed to lull you. It’s actually programmatic in that there’s a story, a Zen koan, called “Ryonen’s Clear Realization,” which inspired the two pieces.

MD: What’s the koan about?

John: A nun, or a woman who becomes a nun, wants to study Zen, but the Zen masters, all men, say, “You can’t study with us, because you’re too beautiful. You’re too distracting to us.” So she takes a hot poker and burns her face. Ultimately she’s accepted by the masters, studies Zen, becomes a nun, and writes poetry.

MD: Returning to the music, the drums are tuned to resonate with one another to produce a kind of drone, right?

John: You can hear the resonances, yeah. With “The Clear Realization” we meant to harmonize with the drums when we sang. The kick is the drone. There’s a front head with no sound hole, so the kick has a tone. I’ve heard a live recording, and I would like to do better.

MD: How would you improve it?

John: More practice. The goal is to have the drums [create the melody]. Brian Chase’s tuning is so magical. He studied with La Monte Young and applies what he learned from his study of concepts, like just intonation, to the drums. He has a snare that he tunes to... I don’t know what. He’ll play it like a string. On different parts of the drumhead you’ll get different harmonics.

MD: Let’s shift gears to People of the North. The title *Era of Manifestations* suggests the religious group the Shakers. How did this historical time period inspire your playing?

John: Well, we came up with the album and

song titles after the music was recorded. That’s how we typically work. With People of the North we try not to overthink too much. We check in with each other every six or eight months and just record. The Era of Manifestations was something that I had been reminded of when we were working on the record.

MD: People of the North is far more loose and improvised than your Man Forever project. Did you prepare for these recordings, and if so, how?

John: We each practice on our own. Bobby [Matador] lives in Boston, actually. There’s not a whole lot of preparation. We try to just go for it, although there might be some discussion of what we’ve been listening to and what’s been inspiring us. We seem to take a different approach to each record, and each record has its own flavor. For this one, we recorded at Seizures Palace in Brooklyn with Jason LaFarge, who recorded the tracks to tape and then quickly transferred them to the digital world. I have to say, though, that I still feel that there are qualities of tape compression that do nice things to drums. I can really hear it. I’m sure I’m crazy, but I like the sound of drums to tape, especially cymbals.

MD: Please, discuss your background.

John: You mean where I grew up? Lakeville, Connecticut, in Litchfield County. I went to Middlebury College in Vermont, where I studied English lit.

MD: Does your literary degree help sculpt a narrative for your drum pieces?

John: For sure. Every job I had was because I could communicate. I don’t know how long I can keep this [drumming] up. [laughs]





This drummer has logged quite a few air miles in his career, and each stop along the way has left a lasting impression on his music.

by Mike Haid

U.K.-based drummer Gabor Dornyei is among the busiest touring player/educators on the international scene. His highly developed technique and advanced proficiency with multi-pedal patterns allow him to explore polyrhythmic, layered ethnic concepts with authenticity and passion.

As a performer, Dornyei has gained accolades for tHUNder Duo, with world percussionist Kornel Horvath. Several years ago the pair released a self-titled DVD on which they explore a plethora of dense world rhythms within their own multicultural compositions. More recently Dornyei completed a DVD project with famed world percussionist Pete Lockett, *Rhythm Frontier*. And for the past three years the drummer has circled the globe with the Thriller Live tour, a Michael Jackson tribute show based in London. He was also recently featured on DrumChannel.com.

Since the age of seventeen, Dornyei, who's now in his thirties, has correspondingly maintained a busy teaching career. Currently he's on the faculty of the Institute of Contemporary Music Performance in London, and he recently authored the drum curriculum for the Detroit Institute of Music Education's DIME Online program.

Growing up in southern Hungary, Dornyei was raised on hard rock and metal. "Those early years had a big impact," he says. "Later, though, I discovered fusion, Latin music, and acoustic jazz, which prompted my general approach to be a bit lighter and more musical rather than more technical or physical. As for complexities, well, all my favorite players—Billy Cobham, Trilok Gurtu, Terry Bozzio, and Vinnie Colaiuta—play in odd-time-signature settings, so I absorbed a lot from them. My first pro band, when I was



Marco Van De Meulenhof

seventeen, played in 7/8, 9/8, 13/8, so what others considered to be complexities became natural for me at an early age."

Mastering odd times might have been instinctive to Dorneyi; finding his own voice on the drums was a different matter. "When you're young, you absorb what others are playing," Gabor says. "But unfortunately many drummers [end up sounding] like a clone of their favorite players. Sounding like someone else was the *last* thing I wanted to do. So I searched out my own style and my own grooves, which is an ongoing part of my growing process. Ultimately my goal is that, after hearing just a couple of bars, listeners will say, 'Ah, that's Gabs!'"

The tHUNder Duo DVD is a particularly revealing showcase. "Kornel Horvath is an incredibly musical and creative player," Dorneyi says, "so fitting in with him was easy. In 2005 I was invited to perform at a drum festival, and that's when I approached Kornel with the idea of the tHUNder Duo. In our music, listening to each other is just as important as the actual playing. The reaction from audiences across the U.K. and Europe—and also to our live DVD—has massively exceeded our expectations. We even had a standing ovation at our first-ever gig!"

Dorneyi utilizes his advanced knowledge of world rhythms to create interesting counterpoints to Horvath's percussion parts. "Our compositions start from an individual idea instigated by Kornel or me," Gabor explains. "We simply show each other the core idea and let the other guy come up with

his individual part, or, if we have a rough idea for each other's parts, we just share our thoughts and explain how we imagine the entire piece."

Dorneyi attributes his quick hands and feet to many years spent practicing in a relaxed fashion. "My concept for hand and foot speed is to allow the limbs to react naturally, creating rebound and constant motion," he explains. "I use mainly German grip, as I allow the sticks to bounce, pulling the sounds from the drums. As I increase the tempo, I switch to more of a French grip

style [with the thumbs up], which allows the fingers to do most of the work. I keep my wrists loose, with very little arm motion.

"I use multiple pedals with both feet," Dorneyi continues, "so I also have to be able to move my feet quickly from side to side. By sliding and bouncing my feet, I can keep a relaxed and steady motion. The key is to never tense up, no matter what tempo you're playing. You must start slowly and gradually increase your speed, with no tension in your muscles. Once you start to tense up—game over!"

THUNDEROUS NOTES

Gabor Dorneyi details the multicultural roots of the compositions on tHUNder Duo's DVD.



"Hang Samba"

Kornel starts on a melodic metal drum-like instrument from Switzerland called the hang, while I quietly back him with a samba rhythm on brushes before changing to sticks.

"Step One"

After a double-pedal hi-hat solo, I introduce 5/16 over a 4/4 polyrhythmic rock-type groove, and Kornel solos over it on congas and shekere.

"Cuba Libre"

Stylistically, this is probably our "cleanest" Latin composition. It features me soloing over a 3-2 rumba clave with

constant changes in the 6/8 triplet feel, plus a multi-drumkit solo with percussion add-ons, before Kornel makes a switch during his solo on the headed tambourine and takes us on a musical journey to Turkey and Arabia.

"Tak-Tom"

This is a personal favorite of mine. It starts with a catchy Bulgarian dance rhythm unison beat before evolving into a 5/4 groove on the bongos, while I'm on the kit with my Vic Firth Rutes. Then there's a middle section where we're playing a 6/8 polyrhythm together over the 5/4 groove with some added Indian-style, Konnakol-type vocals.



Marco Van De Meulenb Hof

Dornyei says that his approach on the Thriller Live tour is very different from the way he plays during his clinics or with tHUNder Duo. How does he adjust his mindset for groove-oriented music versus multilayered, multi-pedal world rhythms? "First," Dornyei says, "one must recognize that there *are* differences, so those styles cannot be tackled with the same approach or applications of concepts and techniques. My responsibility with Thriller was to make the band groove hard, so that at each gig we could bring thousands of people to their feet and have them dance to the music. That meant I couldn't disturb the flow of the tunes with fills or polyrhythms. That gig was all about locking in and being consistent.

"As much as I like doing that, I *really* enjoy solo shows and master classes, as well as playing with Kornel in tHUNder Duo,

because it allows me to completely express myself without limitation. But to know when and where to do any of this, one must know the big picture of the music being played, which means understanding what makes that music happen, as well as what is the most suitable approach to it. I've been fortunate to play professionally most of my musical life, and I learned early on when and when not to play, as well as how much to put in and what to leave out. That's from experience in both playing and listening. In other words, do the homework and pay attention."

Dornyei puts great emphasis on versatility. "To be a pro drummer," he says, "it's good to know all the relevant styles, have good technique and time, but also master the dynamics in each. I like the idea of being a musical chameleon, because it means I can

take any type of gig."

With so many opportunities awaiting this on-the-rise player, what does Dornyei see as his next professional challenge? "Oh, nothing too ambitious," he says with a laugh, "just to have the ambidexterity of Billy Cobham with the brain of Vinnie Colaiuta and the freedom of Jack DeJohnette, spiced up with the swing of Peter Erskine and the technique of Jojo Mayer, all summed up in the groove of John Bonham and the creativity of Terry Bozzio, while having the independence of Horacio Hernandez and the coolness of Steve Gadd! But seriously, I'd love to get out to more major institutions and drum festivals in America and worldwide, to perform for new audiences and show them what this 'Gabs Gabor kind of drumming' is all about."



Marco Van De Meulenb Hof

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Dornyei plays a Sonor SQ2 kit with vintage maple shells in walnut roots finish, including a 7x14 main snare; a 5x12 side snare; 8x10, 9x12, and 10x13 toms; 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms; and an 18x22 bass drum. His Zildjian cymbals include 13" K/Z hi-hats, a 21" K Custom Dark Complex ride, a 21" K Custom Special Dry ride, a 19" A Thin crash, a 16" K Custom Dark crash, a 14" A Custom Fast crash, 13" A Mastersound hi-hats, a 20" Oriental Trash China, a 14" K China, a 10" A Armand splash, a 9" Oriental Trash splash, and an 8" K splash.

Gabor uses Vic Firth Jack DeJohnette signature sticks, Jazz Rakes, timpani mallets, and Rutes, and his Remo heads include Coated Ambassador snare batters, Clear Ambassador tom batters and bottoms, and a Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter. He plays Roland V-Drums, and his percussion instruments include a Tycoon Black Pearl mambo bell, 5.5" Hand Hammered pedal-operated cowbell, Hi and Low Jam Blocks, 6" and 8" mini timbales, and a mountable tambourine with brass jingles. He uses Sonor Giant Step pedals and 600 series hardware, a KickPort on his bass drum resonant head, and Hardcase drum cases.





Chloe Saavedra

of Chaos Chaos

Story by Adam Budofsky
Photos by Paul La Raia

You learn to multitask when you play in a duo. For the drummer who came to prominence in the indie sister act Smoosh, life continues to provide exciting reasons to try to do it all.

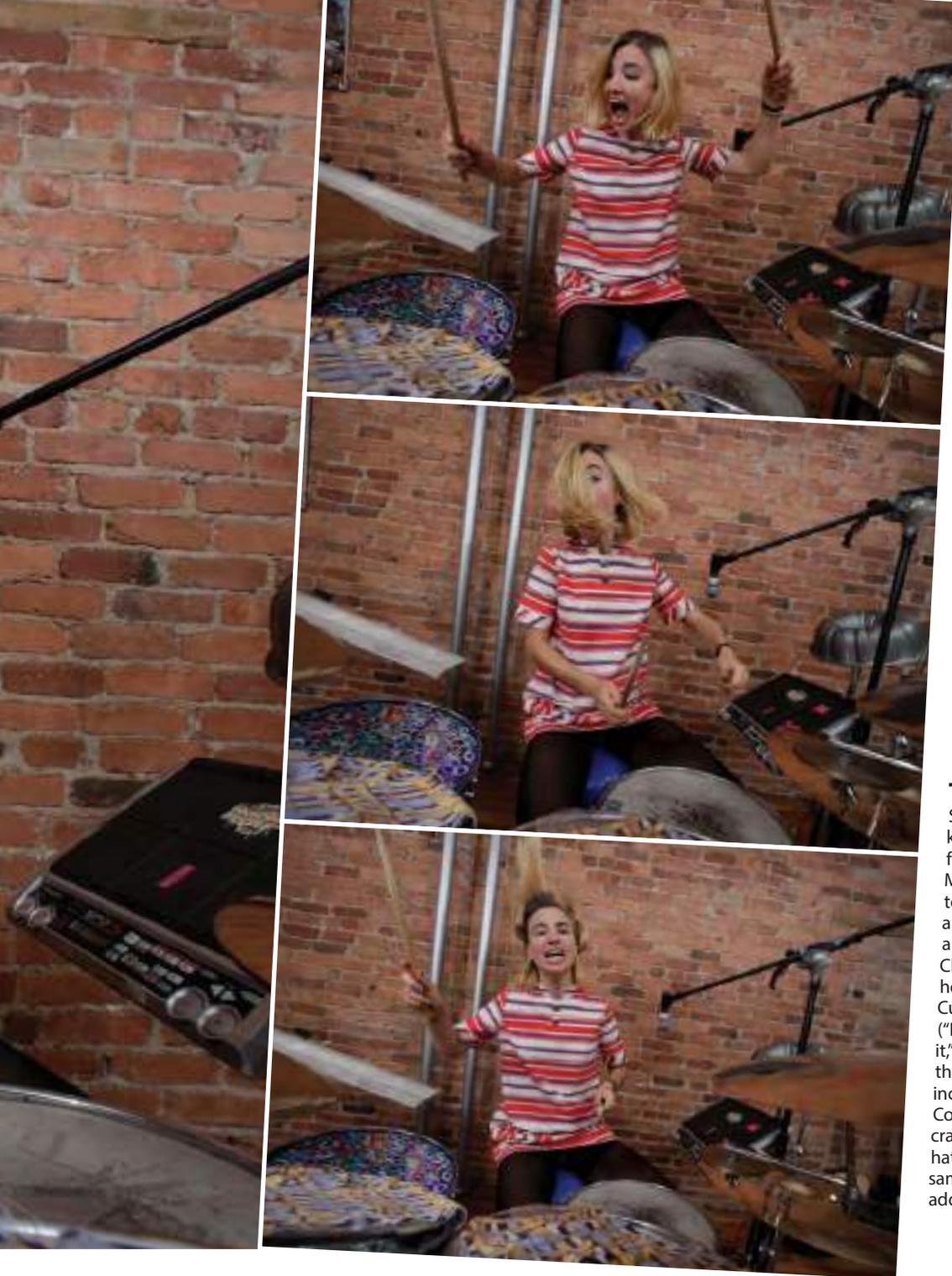
It's often pointed out that life's changes can be particularly stressful on young musicians who balance a "normal" existence with that of a performer. But anyone who's been following Chloe Saavedra's career knows that she seems to not only deal well with change but to hungrily seek it out.

"I never plan how I want to sound as a musician or how I want my playing to evolve," Saavedra says. "I think my drumming is more reflective of what I'm going through as a person than on a musical level, and part of growing up is having this relationship with restraint. With drumming that's really hard for me, because I usually like to do way too much. I like to be a bit much as a person too!"

When Saavedra and *Modern Drummer* last spoke, in September 2005, what she and her older sister, Asya, were going through was

atypical for girls their age. At the time eleven and thirteen years old, the siblings, known then as Smoosh, were opening for established bands like Pearl Jam and receiving rave reviews for their uncommonly mature take on indie pop. In 2012 the pair introduced a new project, Chaos Chaos, with the five-song EP *S*. That release found Chloe indulging her love for found sounds and urban vibes, to which she applied her unexpected drumset orchestrations and open-handed, lefty-on-a-righty-kit approach. Late last year Chaos Chaos put out a second EP, *Committed to the Crime*, which finds the sisters even more effectively incorporating electronic elements.

"I was really into mainstream hip-hop when we did *Committed to the Crime*," Saavedra says. "I just liked the simplicity of the drums and how there's this formula to making people anticipate the



Tools of the Trade

Saavedra plays a DW Pacific kit (an end-of-tour gift from former Bloc Party drummer Matt Tong) with 10" and 12" toms, a 14" floor tom, and a 22" bass drum. She plays a 12" 1971 Ludwig Super Classic snare borrowed from her teacher, Death Cab for Cutie drummer Jason McGerr. ("I'm hoping he forgot about it," Chloe says, "because I love this snare.") Her Paiste cymbals include a 22" Twenty Custom Collection Full ride, an 18" Wild crash, and 14" Alpha Rock hi-hats. She uses a Roland SPDS sampling pad. "And then," she adds, "there's the bread pans."

downbeat. I wanted to replicate that and have my own spin on it. And I think that being drawn to that music had something to do with my wanting to be into something that made sense to me. I've sort of changed a bit, though. Partly because of being in college now, I'm drawn to music that doesn't have such a clear message, where there are different ways to interpret it."

Chloe's recent full-time enrollment in college was a big decision for her, but she and Asya have no intention of putting the band on hold. In fact, at press time plans were already being made for their upcoming appearance at SXSW, an event that brings up a touching memory for the drummer. "I remember I was in sixth or seventh grade at the time," Chloe begins, "and we were at SXSW to play at Stubb's. We had a meeting there with our manager, and she was like, 'I want to talk to you about an offer—Eels want to do a tour

with you.' We were like, 'Yes! When do we go?' 'May through June.' 'But...my best friend's birthday is May 25. *Nooo!*' I remember I was crying, like, 'But there's going to be *cake!*' And Asya was like, 'Chloe, be quiet! We're not going to *not* do it because of your friend's birthday party!'" [laughs]

Smooosh ended up doing the tour, but the anecdote reflects a real issue that the sisters have always had to grapple with. "Yeah, I missed out on a lot of stuff with my friends," Saavedra figures. "But I like being super-busy, and Asya and I really wanted to go to college while we were still young, to have this communal experience. And we know that we'll always do music together. We've always tried to balance having a normal life and do our music. If we were to do only one of those things, we wouldn't be happy."



3

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

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

Now let's add flams to that. This exercise may be easier to execute, as the flams will now help connect the hands when transitioning back and forth.

4

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

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

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

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

Now we'll play the exercise using the floppy-flow sticking and the "no-chop flop-and-drop" technique. Since the taps need to flow out of the accent, it's important not to restrict the stick's rebound any more than necessary. Use your fingers to steer the rhythms and maintain taps in longer phrases, but do

not use them to add velocity or strength to the taps. You want to emulate the loud-to-soft accent/tap transition while letting go of strict downstroke control and stick-height differential. You can maximize the velocity of the accent stroke by starting with the stick in a vertical position or even beyond.

5

RRRLLLRRRLLL RRRRLLLLRRRR LLLRRRLLLRRR LLLLRRRRLLLL

RRRLLLRRRLLL LRRRLLLLRRR LLLRRRLLLRRR RLLLRRRRLLL

RRRLLLRRRLLL LLRRRLLLLRR LLLRRRLLLRRR RLLLRRRRLL

RRRLLLRRRLLL LLLRRRLLLLR LLLRRRLLLRRR RRRLLLLRRRRL

Finally, let's add flams. The challenge is to get consistent flam quality as you transition between the hands.

6

I RRR rLLL I RRR rLLL I RRR rLLLL I RRR rLLL I RRR rLLL I RRR rLLLL I RRR rLLL

I RRR rLLL I RRR rLLL L I RRR rLLLL I RRR rLLL I RRR rLLL I RRR R rLLLL I RRR rLLL

I RRR rLLL I RRR rLLL LL I RRR rLLLL I RR rLLL I RRR rLLL I RRR RR rLLLL I RRR rLL

I RRR rLLL I RRR rLLL LLL I RRR rLLLL I R rLLL I RRR rLLL I RRR RRR rLLLL I RRR rL

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



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Furthermore, the Ludwig Bonzo Bash giveaway kit and Paiste cymbals, along with Remo heads, were not used on stage as stated, though they were displayed and showcased in the VIP area. We apologize for any confusion that this may have caused. Nonetheless, this beautiful drumkit and cymbal set are a part of drum history!

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Creative Comping

Crossing the Barline Using Seven-Note Groupings

by Christian Finger

MUSIC KEY

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

The material in this article is designed to increase your independence and give you some fresh ideas for how to play behind a soloist. It's important to always use discretion, of course. Make sure to play these advanced figures musically, and only after you've totally absorbed them.

We'll be using a standard jazz swing ostinato involving the ride cymbal, hi-hat foot, and bass drum. The bass drum should be played very lightly so that it's felt more than heard. This technique is known as feathering.

Now add continuous 8th-note triplets on the snare with the other hand.

To train your ears to hear how a seven-note figure fits over the swing ostinato, add accents on every seventh note of the triplets. Play this very slowly, and count the triplets out loud to make sure you don't lose track of the pulse.

Once you have a good feel for how the sevens fit over 4/4, it's time to orchestrate them in a more musical way between

the snare and bass drum. Here's one option, which breaks the seven into two groups of two followed by one group of three.

Here's how that pattern fits into four bars of 4/4. Notice that there's a six-note grouping at the end to resolve the phrase back to beat 1 on the repeat.

For additional melodic texture, try replacing one or two of the bass drum notes with the hi-hat. In the following example, the second bass drum note is now played with the hi-hat foot.

Here's how that new seven-note phrase fits within four bars of 4/4, again with a six-note grouping at the end to bring the resolution back to beat 1 on the repeat.

Study these ideas slowly, and break them down into pieces if need be. Then experiment with your own ideas based on what we've presented here. You can also change the note rate to 16ths for additional fodder. The sky is the limit. Have fun!

For more on **Christian Finger**, visit jazzplanet.com/fingertrio.



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Traditional Percussion on Drumset

Part 1: Congas

by Arturo Stable

MUSIC KEY

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

My goal with this set of articles is to share a few traditional percussion rhythms and techniques that can be applied to the drumset. This first installment is dedicated to the tumbadora, aka conga drum. We will explore variations of the Afro-Cuban rhythms pilón, batunbatá, 6/8 guiro, and changui. Let the fun begin!

Pilón

Cuban singer Pacho Alonso popularized this style in the late '60s with songs such as "Rico Pilón" and "El Upa Upa," which were written in collaboration with composer Enrique Bonne. This style is a combination of dance steps, rhythms, and lyrics. For the purpose of this article we will focus on the conga rhythm, although we strongly recommend that you check out the melodic and dance aspects of the style as well.

The pilón conga pattern has a very important timbale counterpart, which we will explain in an upcoming article on timbales. When transporting the pilón to the drumset, you have the choice of adapting either the conga part or the timbale part. Here we'll look at the conga rhythm, which is traditionally played as follows (● = open tone, ▲ = slap, ■ = bass tone, ✕ = fingers).

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

Here's one way to apply that pattern to the drumset.

2

Batunbatá

This is a variation that the famous batá group Irakere developed in the late '70s. The powerful sound of the rhythm was created by the great conguero El Niño Alfonso and master percussionist Oscar Valdés, both of whom have been major influences.

Here's the conga part.

3 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

Here's the batá part.

4

Here's one way to apply those rhythms to the drumset.

5

6/8 Guiro Variations

Guiro, not to be confused with the instrument, refers to a Cuban spiritual celebration to commemorate things such as the birthday of a Yoruba spirit. (These spirits are known as orishas.) The songs are performed with chekeres (gourd shakers), a bell, and a conga. Each instrument plays around with a few base patterns.

Here's one variation for conga.

6 R L R L R

Here's a second variation.

7 R L L R L L R L L

Now here are two ways to apply those patterns to the drumset.

8

9

Changui

This style originated in the region of Guantanamo in the southeast of Cuba. It developed long before its more famous cousin, the Cuban son. Originally performed by maracas, tres guitar, marimbula, and bongo, the changui rhythm has been incorporated over the past thirty years by many larger dance orchestras, such as Elio Revé's band and Los Van Van.

Here's a changui variation for two congas.

10 L L R L R R L L L R L L L R

Here's one way to apply that to the drumset.

11

In the next article, which is dedicated to bongos, we'll dig further into the changui, as well as a few other styles.

Cuban-born percussionist **Arturo Stable** has performed with Dave Samuels, Esperanza Spalding, Paquito D'Rivera, David Sánchez, Giovanni Hidalgo, Miguel Zenón, and the Caribbean Jazz Project. For more info, visit arturostable.com.



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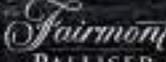
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-Billy Amendola
(Modern Drummer
Magazine)

Diamonds in the Ruff

Part 2: The Sexy Four-Stroke

by Matt Starr

MUSIC KEY	
C.C.	✱
T.T.	●
S.D.	●
F.T.	●
B.D.	●
H.H.	✱ Add'l
w/foot	T.T.

Welcome to part two of our miniseries on the ruff. I consider the three-stroke ruff to be the workingman's rudiment. The four-stroke is much sexier, but it's not easy to master. And it takes a certain amount of precision, which is also what makes it so cool.

The intention of this article is to demonstrate a way to practice and perfect the four-stroke ruff while at the same time helping you discover a world of fill possibilities. As we did with the three-stroke version in part one, we will pair the four-stroke ruff with a master rhythm. For this lesson, the master rhythm is the 16th-note triplet, or sextuplet. The ruffs are to be played as the first four notes of the sextuplet. The sticking should be consistent with that of an alternating single-stroke roll. So imagine that someone is playing sextuplets under each exercise, and whatever hand he or she would be using for any given note is the hand you should be using as well. This is great preparation for real-world execution of this ruff within beats and fills.

Be sure to use full, open strokes. I recommend practicing with a metronome clicking 8th notes at 60 bpm. This may seem ridiculously slow if you're a more advanced player, but really dig in and feel the groove.

1

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

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

2

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

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

3

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

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

4

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

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

5

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

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

You should also add the feet beneath the exercises to develop coordination and to help keep the tempo steady. Begin by pumping 8th notes on the hi-hat.

6

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

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

Now add the bass drum on the quarter notes.

7

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

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

You can also play 8th notes on the bass drum in unison with the hi-hat.

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

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

Now let's practice the ruff around the kit. Start with three four-stroke ruffs on the snare followed by orchestrations that use combinations of the kick, snare, toms, and crashes. Then move on to two ruffs on the snare and two orchestrations, and then finally one ruff on the snare and three orchestrations. Our first variation was made popular by the king of the four-stroke ruff, Led Zeppelin's John Bonham.

R L R L R L R L R L R L R F

R L R L R L R L R F R L R F

R L R L R L R F R L R F R L R F

Here's an orchestration used often by Ian Paice of Deep Purple. Start with the left hand.

This variation was a favorite of the Who's Keith Moon.

R L R L

Vanilla Fudge's Carmine Appice often doubles up with kick/crash combos.

R L R L

Contemporary rock icon Dave Grohl likes to replace the inner two 16th notes with the bass drum for a more aggressive attack.

Finally, here's how hard-rock icon Cozy Powell orchestrated the four-stroke ruff between two toms and two kicks. Start with the left hand.

Pretty rad stuff, right? With subtle tweaks and orchestrations, you can create a whole new set of sounds from something as simple as the rudiments. To hear the funky four-stroke ruff in action, check out "Please Please Me" by the Beatles (Ringo Starr), "Tired of Waiting" by the Kinks (Mick Avory), "Space Truckin'" by Deep Purple (Ian Paice), "Bargain" by the Who (Keith Moon), "Fox on the Run" by the Sweet (Mick Tucker), "Stargazer" by Rainbow (Cozy Powell), "Take Me Away (Together as One)" by Paul Stanley (Carmine Appice), "War Machine" by Kiss (Eric Carr), and "A Song for the Dead" by Queens of the Stone Age (Dave Grohl).

Matt Starr is the drummer for founding Kiss guitarist Ace Frehley. For more info, visit mattstarmusic.com.



Building, Not Burning, Bridges

Thoughts on Professionalism and Career-Destroying Attitudes

by Russ Miller

I was recently asked to do an oral-history interview for the Percussive Arts Society. During the interview, we talked about developing business relationships and how that relates to continuing to work in the long term. As an exercise, they asked that I trace career success backward, to see how I ended up in that situation. They chose a Grammy-award-winning record that I had recorded. How did I get there?

You don't go from practicing in your basement to winning Grammys all at once. There are many steps in between. How do

“He who burns his bridges better be a damn good swimmer.”

—unknown author

those steps build a staircase that leads that high? Will every staircase you build be a success? Which steps do you focus on that might have the most potential? These are all great questions. While I formulated my answer, I was struck with one profound truth: We are in a constant state of bridge building. We need to forge ahead in our playing careers with each step getting us closer to our goals. This should be our primary focus, but it's also important that we not set everything ablaze behind us each time we move a step ahead.

In this article I'd like to discuss moving in a forward direction toward your career and playing goals in a way that builds a solid foundation and long-lasting relationships. I love this month's quote because it's so true. You may need those bridges—situations and people—that helped you move forward at some point in your career. So don't destroy everything behind you as you climb your staircase to success. Let's take a look at a few versions of a bridge-burning attitude.

What Have You Done for Me Lately?

You've probably met people who are your friends only when you can do something for them. You hear from them only when you have something they want. The most common manifestation of this idea is the guy who takes calls but never makes calls. I work with some of the busiest contractors in Los Angeles, and I often hear them say, “I hired that guy for every gig, and he's never reciprocated anything.” Usually the contractors stop calling those people after a time, even if they're amazing players.

My point is that it's not always about taking gigs and opportunities. If a situation comes up where you can recommend somebody for work, even if it doesn't immediately benefit you, do it! We are all in this together. There have been many times when I've put guys on jobs, and later down the road they've ended up being the contractor on a gig or session and I've gotten the call. Think about building your reach in the music industry by building bridges for other players.

Been There, Done That

This is an easy trap. We all need to progress in our playing, relationships, and career, and we want to work with better players in higher-paying situations with more visibility. So it's natural to

question whether or not you want to do a gig after you've already done it for a while. But this can be a dangerous attitude. There have been times when I've been on a gig for a period of time and then gotten a call for a bigger tour. This presents a crossroads: Do I just quit the other job and leave them hanging?

I find it works better to gradually become “unavailable” instead of outright quitting a gig. (You never know when you might need that gig again!) Just fill up your schedule and work on availability scenarios. I've had many crazy travel itineraries over the years to keep multiple gigs moving forward. Once I flew from Japan to Mexico for a one-nighter and then went back to Japan the next day to finish a tour. Being able and willing to navigate that type of scenario shows the band members and leaders how concerned you are with *their* gig.

That's a Bit Beneath Me

This one is big trouble. Here's the reality of economics as a freelance drummer. You start by doing whatever gigs you can, taking home maybe \$50 a night. You focus on filling up your schedule with \$50 gigs until you're really busy. Then you raise your rate to \$100. Some of the jobs you were doing will meet the new rate, while others will drop off. This is a natural transition. Now you start to build new clients at \$100 a gig. When you get your schedule filled, you can raise your rate to \$300. The drop-off will happen again, so you build it up and move to \$600 a gig, and so on.

As you move to a higher pay scale, do so in a smart and respectful way. Don't insult the clients that can pay you only \$300. Just let them know that you're not able to do every gig for \$300 anymore but you'd be happy to cover anything that works with your schedule. It's not a good idea to take the “I get more money than that” approach. If the money is too light, then don't be available for it and instead invest that time into practicing, writing, or doing something else that profits you.

I've had several players ask me over the years, “How do I get into that higher-dollar circle?” My answer is always the same: When your schedule is filled up with \$1,000 gigs, you can start to have \$1,250 ones. Usually this isn't the case, and these guys are looking to jump from \$300 jobs to a much higher amount. Keep in mind that there are a lot fewer gigs that pay \$1,250 a day than ones that pay \$300, so be careful what you wish for. There's a definite backlash to doing bigger-money gigs. Everyone sees that and starts to think, *He probably won't accept a \$500 gig.*

Rock-starring people is never a good idea. Don't alienate yourself with super-high fees or make anyone feel you're “above” them. A gig is a gig. Some events have bigger audiences, better players, and more money, but they all rely on the same principles of professionalism: Show up early, be a nice person, play at your highest level, and present yourself in your best light.

Phoning It In

This attitude is probably the most destructive of all. *Phoning it in* is a phrase used to describe someone doing a gig with the least amount of effort. We spoke about this in the November 2014 column, titled “Being Prepared.” Not putting the proper effort into short-term preparation for a gig can lead to disaster. I can't stress enough how



important it is to always present your product at its highest level. Otherwise, you can gain a reputation as someone who's not serious about your work. I give the same effort and level of diligence to every gig. If you're hired to do a job, always do it with excellence. It's much easier to build a good reputation from the start than it is to fix a bad one.

To conclude this month's column, here's the breakdown of how I ended up on a Grammy-winning record. The sessions came through a recommendation from an engineer I met doing soundtrack sessions for a film composer. I had been referred to that film composer by a bassist I'd played with on several other sessions. I was on those record dates because of a sax player I'd played with on some jazz gigs, and I was on those jazz gigs because of a piano player I'd played with in a house band at an amusement park (which paid \$85 a show). I was on the house-band gig because I was subbing for a drummer friend of mine. So basically I played on a Grammy-winning project because I had subbed on an \$85 amusement park gig!

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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f p t

The Evolution of the Tom-Tom

From Chinese Noisemaker to Essential Instrument

by Mark Cooper

To most drummers today, the tom-tom is an indispensable part of the drumset. Aside from cymbals, the toms are the drummer's main tools for adding color, drama, and excitement to a performance. Throughout the years, the sound of these drums has played a crucial role in popular music.

One of the earliest popular performances featuring the toms came from swing drummer Gene Krupa and his rumbling floor toms on the iconic 1936 hit "Sing, Sing, Sing." Krupa revolutionized the role of the drummer with his energetic and aggressive style and was one of the first drummers to incorporate toms into popular music.

The Chee Foo Era

Prior to the swing era, the tom-tom evolved very slowly. The earliest versions were imported from China by American drum companies in the early 1920s. These old relics had pigskin heads, which were permanently attached and could not be tuned. Sometimes referred to as "Chee Foo" tom-toms, they were offered in various sizes usually ranging from 10" to 15" in diameter. The heads were generally painted with colorful Asian motifs like dragons, birds, and flowers. These drums were used mainly for special effects, along with cymbals, bells, temple blocks, whistles, and birdcalls.



Chee Foo tom from Leedy's 1933 catalog

In 1922, the Ludwig & Ludwig Drum Company produced the first drumset with two fully tunable tom-toms, which were mounted on top of the bass drum. The kit was called the Jazz Combination. The ad in Ludwig's 1922 catalog claims that the new drums would "put pep in a dance orchestra." Most drummers of that time didn't believe the hype. The double-tom configuration failed to catch on, and the Jazz Combination drumset was soon discontinued.

As the '20s came to a close, the tom-tom was gaining in popularity, and more variations were introduced. Around 1928, Leedy offered "Giant Chee Foo" toms, which were somewhat barrel shaped with permanently attached heads. These double-headed drums were available in 9x13, 12x14, and 16x16 sizes and sat in tripod stands. Giant Chee Foo toms were soon offered by Ludwig & Ludwig as well.

American Standards

The year 1930 saw Leedy's introduction of the first

American-made tom-toms, which were advertised as being "superior in every detail to the ordinary Chinese models." Unlike earlier Chee Foo drums, these cylindrical instruments were made from laminated 3-ply wood and had heavy reinforcing rings. Special tripod stands held the drums in place. Thick, close-grained steer hide was used for the heads, producing an improved tone and holding up to weather conditions much better than pigskin. These new toms could be ordered in various pearl and sparkle finishes. They were later called "China type" tom-toms.

The following year, full-size tom-toms that could be tuned were offered for the first time by Leedy and by Ludwig & Ludwig. These Full Dress drums were offered in what would become industry-standard sizes—9x13, 12x14, and 16x16—with batter heads that were permanently attached to wooden hoops. Timpani-style T-rods and threaded lugs attached to the shells, enabling tensioning of the top head only. The resonant heads, which were permanently tacked to the shells, were made from thick pigskin. This new design was to be the answer to the problem of humidity affecting the toms' tone. The 1933 Leedy catalog proclaims, "Now it's your turn to laugh at Old Man Weather!"

By 1935, most drum companies were offering toms with tunable top heads. But in order to project his new sound, Krupa needed drums with fully functional heads that could be tuned properly. In 1936, Slingerland proudly introduced Radio King Separate Tension Tunable Tom-Toms. These new drums were futuristic in appearance and design, with dual rows of art deco-style tension casings, twin "Harold R. Todd" internal tone controls, bright chrome-plated hoops, and flashy pearl finishes. The drums were constructed from three plies of mahogany and poplar with thick maple reinforcing rings. These new Radio King toms proved extremely popular, and the company was soon churning out four- and five-piece drumsets in record numbers.

Before long, other drum companies, like WFL, Leedy, Gretsch, and Ludwig & Ludwig, were attempting to catch up with Slingerland's innovative new drums, and by late 1937 they were offering separate-tension, fully tunable toms. In 1940, Leedy became the first company to attach adjustable metal legs to the sides of its larger toms to replace the old-style tripod stands. Oddly, Ludwig & Ludwig, Slingerland, and others didn't follow suit until 1946.

Hardware Upgrades

One of WFL's most important contributions to the evolution of the tom-tom was the triple-flange metal hoop. First appearing on snare drums in 1937, these new hoops were quite different from the straight, single-flange, or double-flange versions that were in use at the time. The outwardly flared third flange reduced wear and tear on drumsticks while giving the drums a unique appearance. The company began installing triple-flange hoops on toms around 1949. In 1955, Slingerland



1930s Slingerland sea green pearl tom



1930s Leedy white marine pearl Full Dress tom



Late 1930s Slingerland white marine pearl Radio King

began producing its own version of the triple-flange hoop for its futuristic-looking Sound King drums. Sound King hoops were made of brass and featured a rounded top flange that turned inward.

In 1958, Rogers designed the new Swiv-O-Matic tom holder, which was a big departure from the old-fashioned rail-mount holders that had been in use since the '40s. Rogers' holder was based on a ball-and-socket design that could put the tom in almost any position. It took nearly a decade for Slingerland to abandon its rail-mount system for a ball-and-socket design, called Set-O-Matic. Although heavier in weight and less adjustable than the Rogers holder, the Set-O-Matic worked quite well and gave Slingerland drums a distinctive look.

Toms manufactured by Gretsch were somewhat different from those of the competition. In the late '30s, the company's Gladstone line featured separate-tension toms constructed with 3-ply shells with reinforcing rings. After World War II, Gretsch began building shells without reinforcing rings, which no other company was doing. These shells were cross-laminated, which gave the relatively thin maple extra strength and stability.

The Concert-Tom Craze

Aside from developments in tom holders and gradually sharper, more precise bearing edges, the toms of the '60s differed little from those produced in the previous two decades. When rock 'n' roll began to dominate the airwaves in the late '60s and early '70s, larger and louder drums were in demand to compete with the amplified music. As a result, single-headed concert toms, or melodic toms, were designed to provide extra volume and attack. In 1972, Ludwig launched its Octa-Plus outfit, which featured an array of single-headed toms ranging in size from 6" to 16". These melodic toms were popular with many drummers and can be heard on numerous recordings.

The legendary studio drummer Hal Blaine played a custom-made fiberglass version of the Octa-Plus, known as

the Monster Kit, on many hits, including Paul Revere and the Raiders' "Indian Reservation," which features extended triplet tom fills. Other notable drummers, like Carmine Appice, Keith Moon, Karen Carpenter, Kenney Jones, and Nigel Olsson, played concert-tom setups during that era.

The '70s also spawned some bizarre tom designs, like North Drums' horn-shaped fiberglass models. North claimed these odd-looking, single-headed toms projected like horn-loaded speakers, producing increased volume, separation, and depth of tone. A typical North tom had a 10" batter head and a bottom bell measurement of 15".

Power Toms and a Return to the Classics

By the '90s, the concert tom was on its way out, as drum design was changing to bigger, deeper toms that challenged existing industry standards. Most American, European, and Japanese manufacturers began producing these "power" toms with lower diameter-to-depth ratios. Sizes like 10x11, 12x13, and 13x14 would become popular.

By the late '90s, drum designs, especially in terms of toms, had come full circle. Traditional sizes and designs of the '50s and '60s were regaining popularity, and the nostalgia-driven movement toward old-school drums inspired Slingerland to produce the Legends Signature series, which featured drums similar to those played by Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich.

The twenty-first century has seen even more interest in vintage-style sounds. Around 2005, Ludwig introduced the Legacy series, which features classic 3-ply shells. Gretsch recently released the Brooklyn series, which is a throwback to the thin 6-ply toms with no reinforcing rings the company used in the '60s. And custom shops like C&C, GMS, and RBH offer their own takes on classic tom shell designs.

From its humble beginnings in the '20s, the drumset tom-tom has undergone numerous changes, makeovers, and reinventions. Its early role as a special effect has transformed into an essential element of nearly every drummer's setup.



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To celebrate its 140th anniversary with the Vintage series, Sonor has brought back the iconic look and sound of the Teardrop drums it made in the '50s and early '70s. Like the Teardrops, Vintage series drums feature premium German beech shells with rounded bearing edges. Sonor has updated the classic Teardrop lug with its exclusive Tunesafe tuning system and has redesigned the Superprofil triple-flange hoops. The company has also brought back the logo and badge used between 1952 and 1961.

Vintage drums are available in a pair of three-piece preconfigured shell sets. One features a 14x20 bass drum, 8x12 rack tom, and 12x14 floor tom, and the other has a 14x22 bass drum, 8x13 rack tom, and 14x16 floor tom. Three finishes are available (vintage natural, vintage onyx, and vintage pearl), as is a selection of add-on drums and snares.

sonorusa.com



PEARL Chad Smith Signature Snare Additions

Pearl's latest collaboration with Red Hot Chili Peppers drummer Chad Smith has resulted in two new signature models. For one, Pearl added a candy apple red lacquer finish to the drummer's original 5x14, 1.3 mm signature steel-shell snare. The lacquer is said to add tonal control. List price: \$469.

The second model is a Free-Floater that features three interchangeable 3 mm cast rings (two of brass and one of steel) housed in Pearl's free-floating snare frame. The rings can be stacked in any order. Only fifty of these drums will be available in the U.S. List price: \$959.

pearldrums.com



RBH Americana Jump Kit

The Americana Jump Kit is a small drumset that gets its name from EMS and fire department first responders. The Jump Kit is easy to carry and set up, yet is said to deliver a powerful sound. Patterned loosely after small cocktail sets, the Americana Jump Kit is crafted with the same molds and patterns as RBH's flagship Monarch 3-ply series. The Americana bass drum measures 13x16 and is supplied with a universal mount for a snare basket or tom holder. Medium-duty spurs and a drum lift are also included. The outfit can be played from a standing position or used as a small bebop kit. The package also includes a 5x13 Monarch snare, and a 7x10 rack tom and a 13x13 floor tom are optional.

rbhdrumsusa.com

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Maryland-based 1710 Percussion was started in 2012 as a hobby to build personal snares and refurbish kits, and it quickly turned into a business that focuses on a detailed, artistic approach. The company uses domestic and exotic woods coupled with high-quality hardware to provide a sound, style, and design to meet each client's specifications. Notable drummers playing 1710 Percussion drums include Benjamin "Benzel" Cowan with George Clinton and Parliament Funkadelic and Larry Shotter of Lovebette. The company has also designed and auctioned drums to raise money for military families, cancer and ALS research, high school music departments, and nonprofit organizations.

1710percussion.com



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diamondbackdrumsticks.com

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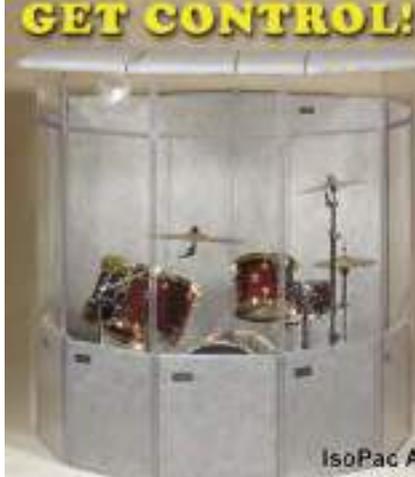
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Mats/Morgan [*schack tati*]

Their hero Frank Zappa's influence is evident throughout this wonderfully produced, quirky, virtuosic music, but the decidedly electronic vibe screams 2015.

Drummer **Morgan Ägren** and keyboardist Mats Öberg share a musical bond going back to their childhood, and that simpatico yields eye-opening results on their latest avant-progressive mind trip, recorded at Ägren's newly built home studio in Sweden. Ägren is in full-on *Abacab*-era Phil Collins mode on opener "Rubber Sky," with his crushing drums bigger than life, while "Rappel" flies out of the gate with a hold-your-breath, Squarepusher-esque intensity of up-tempo beat displacement and weirdness. The songs are over in a flash, most clocking in at under three minutes, but so many ideas are packed in that it's tough to remember what took place just thirty seconds prior. From blazing hi-hat and snare work to electro machine-music mania, Ägren and Öberg point the way to where fusion is going, or, if you've been drinking the water in Sweden, where it's already arrived. (Cuneiform) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Antoine Fafard *Ad Perpetuum*
This modern fusion recording has more going for it than just a great lineup.

Ad Perpetuum, bassist Antoine Fafard's third recording as a leader, finds the core trio of Fafard, **Vinnie Colaiuta**, and guitarist Jerry De Villiers Jr. traveling

through various grooves (shuffle, slap-bass funk), time signatures (7/8, 5/4), tempos, and moods. Unlike many albums that share similar concerns, there's a lot of joy, logic, and space in these tunes, which draws you in rather than beats you up. Among the copious drumming highlights: Colaiuta negotiating "Shuffle It!" with groovy odd meters, his polyrhythmic adventurousness on "Poly-Seven," his double bass grooves on "Slash One," and his energetic hand and foot combinations during the brief solo on "The Egg." And getting to hear Vinnie double drumming with the great **Gary Husband** on the track "D-Day," with its fun call-and-response sections, is an unexpected treat. "What a nutty song," we can hear the drummer say after the last bass guitar note fades from the performance and he lays his sticks to rest on his floor tom. ("Define 'nutty'" is the retort.) You'll no doubt be as engrossed listening to this music as Vinnie was while he was playing it. (Unicorn Digital)

Daniel Bédard

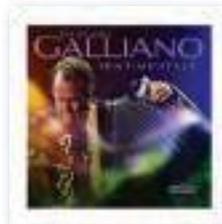


VHF *Very High Frequency*
For this music built from the drums up, the concept yields interesting results.

Who says magic comes only from playing live in a room together? The idea for VHF came about when drummer **Todd "Vinny" Vinciguerra** sent bassist Tony Franklin (the Firm, Blue Murder)

songs he had already arranged and recorded on the drums. Franklin was free to play whatever he wanted before sending it off to guitarist Joel Hoekstra (Whitesnake, Trans-Siberian Orchestra), who added virtuoso flash. The instrumental tunes range from up-tempo fusion ("Shattered Insomnia") to Middle Eastern rock dirges ("Whispers of the Soul"). Vinciguerra lays down a cool offbeat hi-hat on "Invisible Thread" and lands some nifty kick and snare doubles in the middle of "Suspended Animation." The drummer claims that the players never jammed together, just contributed unique parts independent of one another. This might

just be the answer to approaching your future project with those bandmates you don't get along with. Just remember: drums first. (Mind's Eye) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Richard Galliano *Sentimentale*
A stylistic traveler focuses on the jazz quintet setting, with sterling results.

Master accordionist Richard Galliano has trod much turf, including explorations of French folkloric music as well as Bach and Vivaldi. Here he returns to his jazz roots with a set dedicated to strong melodies and a shimmering ensemble sound. His quintet, featuring pianist/arranger Tamir Hendelman, guitarist Anthony Wilson, bassist Carlitos Del Puerto, and drummer **Mauricio Zottarelli**, brings pointed precision to the exacting chamber-jazz numbers. Originally from Brazil, the exuberant Zottarelli has built a sizable discography since relocating to the U.S. in 1999, and he's garnered recent acclaim via tours with pianist Eliane Elias. On the kicking opener, "Armando's Rumba," Zottarelli takes charge with a super-tight chops drive, and on "Verbos Do Amor" his homeland roots kick in, lifting each chorus higher. Much of the disc is a mellower, reflective affair, and the versatile Zottarelli is equally expressive when bringing a much-needed loose, breathing touch to these tender tracks. (Resonance) **Jeff Potter**



Me World *Common Ground*
Solid beats and slick fills are on the menu of this funky rock group.

A casual mix of rock influences, Me World is out to have a good time, and though there's nothing exceptionally inventive about the songwriting, the tight musicianship saves the tracks from blending

into each other. Drummer **Jon Doman** has no fear of throwing in a constant stream of ideas while still keeping things rocking and steady. On the Chili Peppers-ish "Mr. Reaper," the drummer locks in on the 6/8 pulse, injecting titanic tom fills where needed. Doman syncopates his ride pattern over the coda of the funky "Broke," and later plays some eye-opening rolls on the title track. Other tunes are funk based or guitar heavy, with Doman applying enough hip licks to offer a generally live feel, which the record benefits from. (meworldband.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Create Your Drumsolo by Andy Gillmann

German drummer Andy Gillmann divides this DVD into sections named Performance (with chapter titles including New Orleans Solo, Latin Solo, and Sounds & Colors), Teaching Exercises (16th Note Comping, Snare Solo Orchestrations, Ostinati, etc.), and Special Exercises, broken down into topics like Coordination & Balance

and Rudiments. Some of the patterns and improvs Gillmann lays down are approachable for all students, while others will require a bit of practice and analysis to grasp firmly. The teaching section, especially, contains lots of general drumming information that's valuable for skills beyond soloing. Gillmann has great chops and provides an English voiceover that's not too distracting; the production value is high here, with a beautiful-sounding kit revealing every detail. If digested in pieces, this DVD could be an excellent resource for years to come. (€39,80, amazon.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

Pages get blacker and blacker as you move forward, and chapters feature titles like Eighth Note Triplets in 4/4, Grouping of Cut-Cut Time 10 = 2+3+3+2, so just the thought of adding the Konnakol might make your head spin. But the two pulses *do* make sense, and they're laid out near each other clearly, so stick with it and practice at your own pace—your rhythmic horizons will be expanded soon enough. A chapter with recommended reading and the author's favorite drummers and recordings is a nice addition. (\$22.46, stvelangone.weebly.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Meshuggah *The Ophidian Trek*

Four years after releasing their last concert document, *Alive*, Swedish metallers Meshuggah offer another helping of pure power and brilliant musicianship on this DVD/two-CD set, recorded in 2013 in support of the studio disc *Koloss*. And while it's easy to fall back on adjectives like

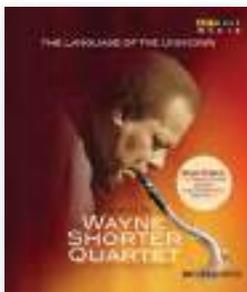
"tight" and "punishing," twenty-five years into its career, the band is undeniable in its live prowess, with each number performed with stunning precision to maximum head-banging effect. The dark-ish video is a combination of aerial-style, professionally shot festival footage and center-of-the-mosh-pit handheld audience recordings, so those looking for steady close-ups of guitar fingering or drummer **Tomas Haake's** incredible footwork on "Bleed" might be disappointed. If you want to feel as if you're there, however, cue up "Dancers to a Discordant System" for that robotic polyrhythmic intensity that's made Meshuggah the encyclopedia entry for a genre it invented and perfected. Even for home viewing, earplugs wouldn't be a bad idea. (\$14.88, Nuclear Blast) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Blood, Sweat & Tears by Roman Roth

The title of this e-book might deceive those looking for a transcription of "Spinning Wheel," though tears might certainly be shed when you dissect the 786 pages and more than 10,000 exercises contained herein. Author Roman Roth's goal is to free up students' timekeeping hands through the use

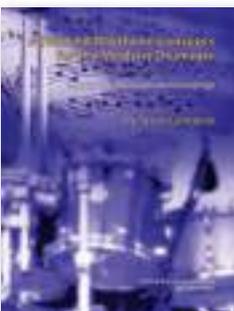
of thirty-four different hi-hat patterns, each given 304 snare and kick exercises of varying difficulty, involving quarter-, 8th-, and 16th-note and unison material. The snare and kick notation repeats throughout each chapter, so it might be necessary to master those parts first before adding the hi-hat, which understandably raises the difficulty level of the overall beat several notches. The hat patterns range from the elementary to tougher stuff with rests and accents, and Roth suggests that advanced students move to the ride and keep time with their foot if they're feeling saucy, so putting it all together might take a while. Methodical attention and patience will undoubtedly improve your independence. (£9, romanroth.selz.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



The Language of the Unknown: A Film About the Wayne Shorter Quartet

Watching artists watching themselves in the act of creation is a rare treat. And unlike the horrified Stones viewing the Altamont footage in *Gimme Shelter*, this fascinating documentary frequently shows saxophonist Wayne Shorter and his

exceptional musicians *enjoying* themselves as they witness their own joyous improvisation during a 2012 Paris concert, offering insights into their process along the way. Shorter adds commentary like, "You can't rehearse potential. These musicians have to be courageous and humble enough to not want to flaunt their musical credentials." The ninety-minute concert itself is included as a bonus feature. **Brian Blade** plays with total freedom, actively participating with a steady stream of input that's never indulgent. On an extended "Starry Night," he eases in with subtlety and mystery before some kind of pulse eventually takes root; the piece culminates with a full-kit meter-less frenzy of cymbal bombs and jittery rolls. Adventurous stuff, and an absorbing look under the hood of a pure musical machine. (\$39.99 Blu-ray, \$24.99 DVD, Arthaus) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Advanced Rhythmic Concepts for the Modern Drummer, Volume 1: Subdivisions and Groupings by Steve Langone

Using his lessons with Alan Dawson and others as a jumping-off point, Steve Langone delivers a great tool for those looking to expand their rhythmic language. The book highlights the concepts of primary pulse (quarter

notes in 4/4 time), secondary pulse (groupings of notes that imply different meters), and Konnakol (South Indian vocal percussion).



Colin Bailey's *Bass Drum Control*

by Rick Mattingly

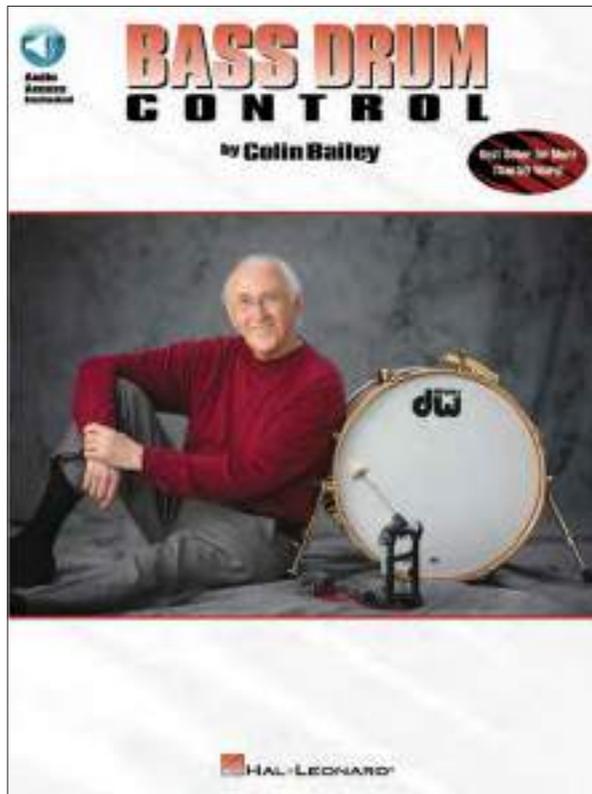
Steve Smith and Virgil Donati have praised it. Joe Morello recommended it. It was included in this magazine's list of 25 Timeless Drum Books. And at fifty years old, it remains a crucial part of many players' development.

When Colin Bailey was coming up playing jazz, first in his native England and then in Sydney, Australia, during the late 1950s, drummers didn't do much with their bass drums. The standard jazz practice was to "feather" the drum on quarter notes and play occasional accents, known as dropping bombs. Bailey played that way until immigrating to the United States in 1961 as a member of the Australian Jazz Quartet.

"We were rehearsing in a small room," Bailey recalls, "and the piano player asked me if I could *not* play the bass drum, because it was covering up the upright bass notes. So I stopped playing four on the floor, and I still play that way."

Six weeks after coming to the U.S. and settling in San Francisco, Bailey joined the Vince Guaraldi Trio, and in 1961 the group recorded "Cast Your Fate to the Wind," which became a huge hit. "I didn't think much about the bass drum until I came to the States," Bailey says. "I was playing jazz six or seven nights a week, and I decided I wanted to use bass drum in my solos. It expands your vocabulary to no end. So I was practicing one day, and I accidentally discovered that if I lifted my heel up slightly, just about a quarter of an inch, I could get more beats out."

In January of 1963, Bailey moved to Los Angeles to join Victor Feldman's group. "When I got to L.A.," he says, "I would practice four or five hours a day and work six or seven nights a week. Drummers would come to hear Victor Feldman, and then they would go to the Professional Drum Shop and say to the owner, Bob Yeager, 'Have you heard Colin Bailey play bass drum?' So Bob, who was also a publisher, suggested that I write a book of exercises between the hands and right foot."



The book's title, *Bass Drum Control*, as well as some of its content, resembles George Lawrence Stone's *Stick Control*. "Bob Yeager said, 'Stick Control... *Bass Drum Control*,'" Bailey recalls. "That's where the name came from. I practiced from *Stick Control*, like any sensible drummer. So I guess I got some ideas from it, for sure.

"Originally the book was just for a single foot pedal," Bailey adds. "But now, most of the people who buy it have a double pedal. So it's good that the book is adaptable. DW sent me a double pedal around 1980, and I messed around with it for a while. But I'm a jazz drummer; I don't need a double pedal. I got the reputation for what I can do with just the one pedal."

Bailey says that mastering the book isn't just a matter of practicing the patterns; it's also about the technique of finding the

sweet spot on the pedal that gives the best leverage, and using the toes or ball of the foot. "It doesn't really work in bands where you have to play extremely loud," he explains. "This requires softer playing."

The book has been through several editions over the years, and Hal Leonard has now released a fiftieth-anniversary edition. "I've made changes since its original publication," Bailey says. "It's a much better book now."

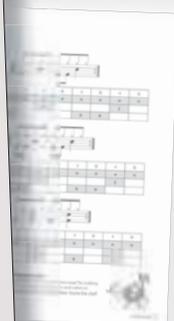
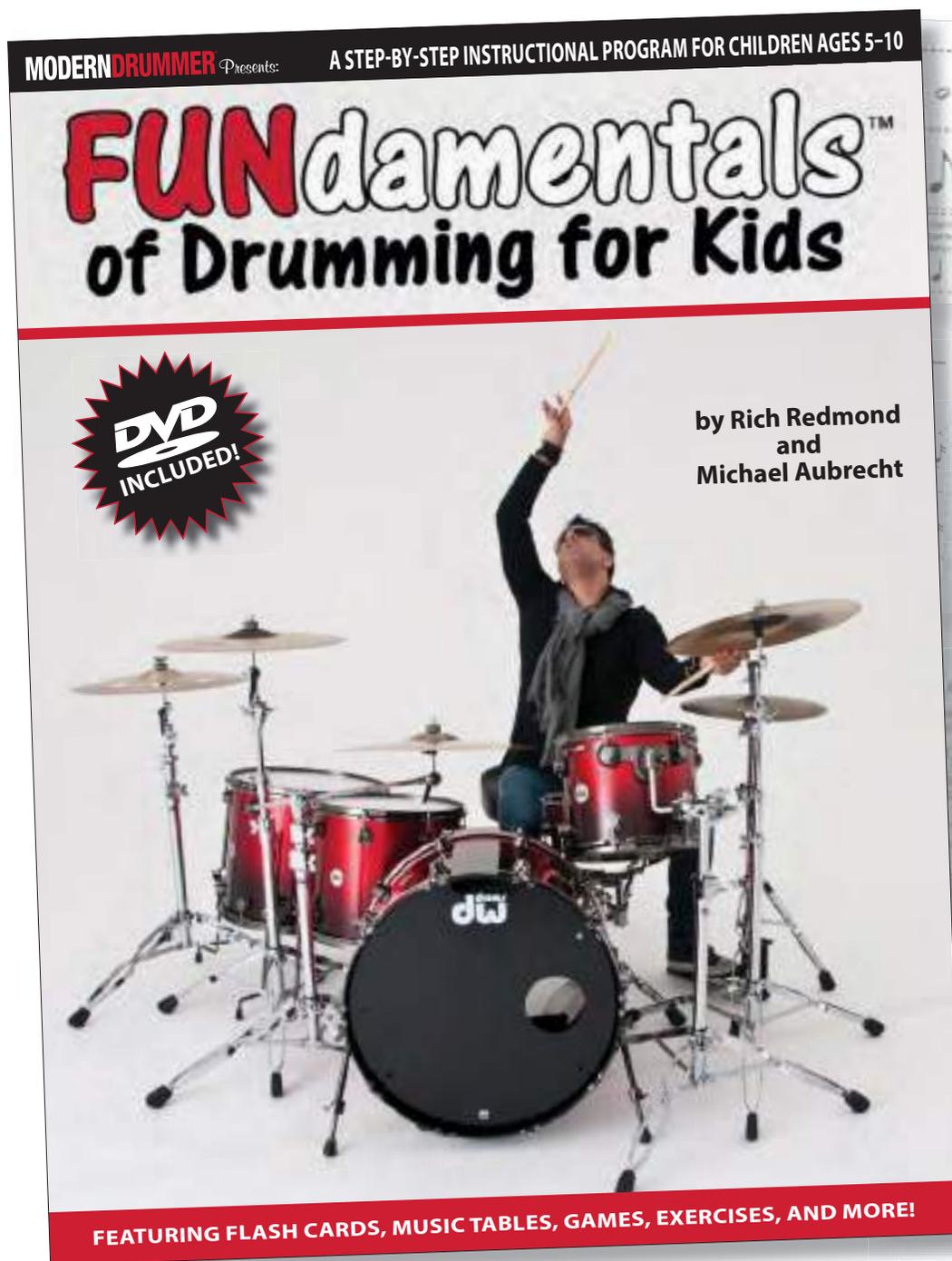
For the 1988 edition of the book, Bailey went into the studio and recorded an introduction and samples of all the exercises. Originally the recording was packaged as a cassette tape, and later it was issued as a CD. The new edition has a code that provides access to the recording from the Hal Leonard website. You can play it from the cloud on a computer, smartphone, or tablet, or you can download it to one of those devices.

Over the years, various authors have tried to improve on *Bass Drum Control* and *Stick Control* by putting out books with thousands of patterns based on the exercises in those classics. But you don't have to practice every possible permutation of a pattern to develop good technique any more than you have to practice every possible combination of words to speak fluently. Once you develop a basic drumming vocabulary, you can mix and match patterns at will. "It's all just quarter notes, 8th notes, 16th notes, and triplets," Bailey says.

Bass Drum Control provides all the exercises you need to be fluent on the kick drum. "I still practice from it every day," Bailey says. "It's a tough book—a challenge—but it keeps me where I'm at."



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Cuckoo for Cocoa Carts



“In 2009, Hersheypark wanted a zany, interactive drumming show,” Michael Windish of southeastern Pennsylvania says of his Cocoa Rhythm Factory percussion setups. “So, with four drummers cast as factory workers delivering their ‘groove ingredients,’ we designed the carts to pay homage to the history of the local chocolate factory while also having a cartoon-like quality. The bright colors, unusual instruments, and crazy drumming attract hundreds of guests to crowd around for each show.”

“The cart frames were built from steel roll-cage tubing for race cars. Karl Windish, my father, and Kurt Windish, my uncle, built them to my specifications. Every part of the carts is meant to be played, and the 1.5" tubing acts as a great surface for using our Boomwhackers and mounting cymbals.”

“The red ‘groove cart’ features a 10" jungle snare, compact bongos, a 20" Molecules spherical bass drum, an iron Ting made by Panyard,

and an effects cymbal. The white Molecules drum is meant to emulate a marshmallow sitting on a piece of chocolate. The yellow ‘tube cart’—the primary melody maker of the trio—was custom built to feature pitched Joia Tubes played with paddles, a xylophone, and a vintage 10" red North drum. The blue cart holds a series of oil drums, milk cans, and whatever else we can fit. We store our Boomwhackers and drumsticks here as well.”

“I got my start as a drummer playing in theme parks,” Windish adds. “Now my company, Windish Music & Productions, produces these unique shows, hiring more than sixty performers a year from top universities and conservatories. When I’m not working on new themes, I’m the touring drummer with Chubby Checker. I’ve been blessed to be able to experience such a wide range of drumming experiences.”

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

Jojo Mayer: Taking It to the Feet

2015 Readers Poll Results

10 Drummer Bios You Have to Read

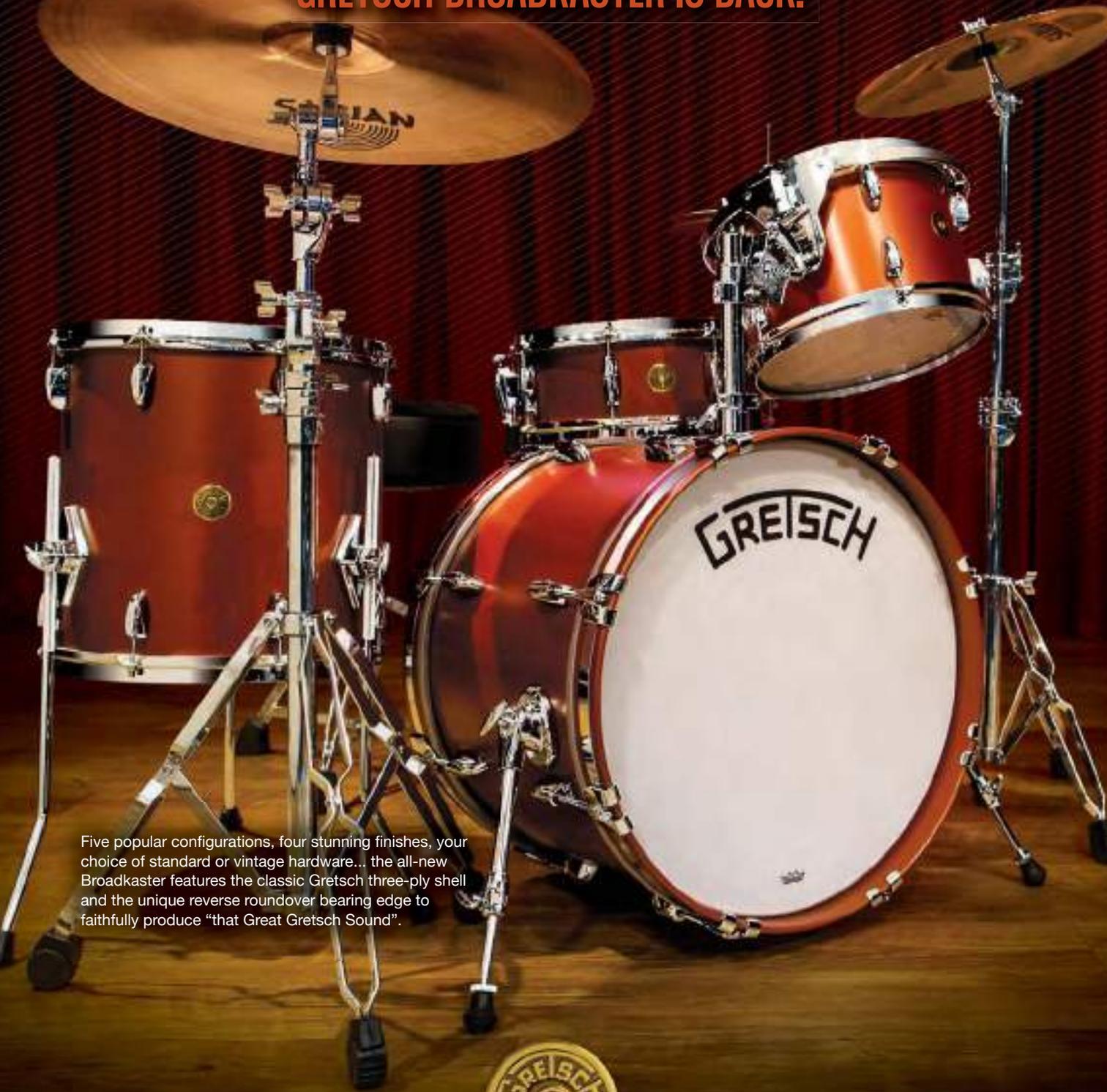
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