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# Benny Greb

by Michael Dawson

In his eagerly awaited new instructional DVD, the drummer boldly addresses the history and mystery of grooving like the greats. "I wanted to look at the full scale of phenomena within groove and what you can do to develop them," he says, "so that it's not a matter of upbringing or other things you can't change."

Cover and contents photos by Gerhard Kühne



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# The Groove Revelation

I don't want to give the entire story away, but this month's cover artist, Benny Greb, made one statement during our discussion of his latest DVD, *The Art and Science of Groove*, that resonated deeply with me: "Trust your own aesthetics."

Really? Can it be that simple? So all I need to do is acknowledge what I like, strive to make my drumming sound like that, and then everything will be okay? It seems like a logical and simple solution for learning how to groove, but as someone who's often unsure whether or not my time feel is hitting the mark, those four words carried a ton of weight.

Of course, I still have to make an honest assessment of whether my groove is actually living up to what I've grown to love and admire in others, but that's where the exercises Benny outlines in his DVD come into play. Some of them are incredibly humbling (the time chapter), while others reaffirm that the countless hours I spent refining my touch and dynamic control as a classical percussionist weren't for naught (the sound chapter). After watching Benny's DVD, I had a much clearer picture of what I needed to focus on to make myself a more confident musician, which I'm learning is truly the name of the game. As groove master Jim Keltner once said, "If you're going to be a drummer, you have to be *very* confident."

I'm still digesting all of the advice Greb dropped on me in regards to developing groove, but there are several other artists featured in this issue who have very different viewpoints that may inspire you to reevaluate your own aesthetics. Maybe you've been meaning to get your double bass drumming together. Then dig into the work of Dirk Verbeuren of the extreme metal band Soilwork. Or perhaps you need to chill on the licks and focus on a more selfless blend-with-the-track approach, like what session master Aaron Sterling does so gracefully with John Mayer. Then again, it might be time to throw caution to the wind and go all out, like post-punk powerhouse Jamie Miller does as drummer and guitarist with ...And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead. Regardless of where your tastes lead you, remind yourself again and again that it's all about the journey. Enjoy the pursuit!



Wendy Posehnick

Mike Dawson

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

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**MODERN DRUMMER** magazine (ISSN 0194-4533) is published monthly by **MODERN DRUMMER Publications, Inc.**, 271 Route 46 West, Suite H-212, Fairfield, NJ 07004. PERIODICALS MAIL POSTAGE paid at Fairfield, NJ 07004 and at additional mailing offices. Copyright 2015 by **MODERN DRUMMER Publications, Inc.** All rights reserved. Reproduction without the permission of the publisher is prohibited.

**EDITORIAL/ADVERTISING/ ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES:**  
**MODERN DRUMMER Publications**, 271 Route 46 West, Suite H-212, Fairfield, NJ 07004. Tel: 973-239-4140. Fax: 973-239-7139. Email: [mdinfo@moderndrummer.com](mailto:mdinfo@moderndrummer.com).

**MODERN DRUMMER** welcomes manuscripts and photographic material but cannot assume responsibility for them.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** U.S. \$29.95, Canada \$33.95, other international \$44.95 per year. For two- and three-year subscription prices go to [www.moderndrummer.com](http://www.moderndrummer.com). Single copies \$5.99.

**SUBSCRIPTION CORRESPONDENCE:**  
Modern Drummer, PO Box 274, Oregon, IL 61061-9920. **Change of address:** Allow at least six weeks for a change. Please provide both old and new address. Call 800-551-3786 or 815-732-5283. Phone hours, 8am–4:30pm Monday–Friday CST, or visit Subscriber Services at [www.moderndrummer.com](http://www.moderndrummer.com).

**MUSIC DEALERS:** Modern Drummer is distributed by Hal Leonard Corp., 800-554-0626, [sales@halleonard.com](mailto:sales@halleonard.com), [www.halleonard.com/dealers](http://www.halleonard.com/dealers)

**INTERNATIONAL LICENSING REPRESENTATIVE:** Robert J. Abramson & Associates, Inc., Libby Abramson, President, 7915 Via Grande, Boyton Beach, FL 33437, [abramson@prodigy.net](mailto:abramson@prodigy.net).

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Modern Drummer, PO Box 274, Oregon, IL 61061-9920.

**Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 41480017** Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: PO Box 875, Stn A, Windsor ON N9A 6P2

**MEMBER:** National Association for Music Development, National Association of Music Merchants, Percussive Arts Society

**MODERN DRUMMER ONLINE:**  
[www.moderndrummer.com](http://www.moderndrummer.com)

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES



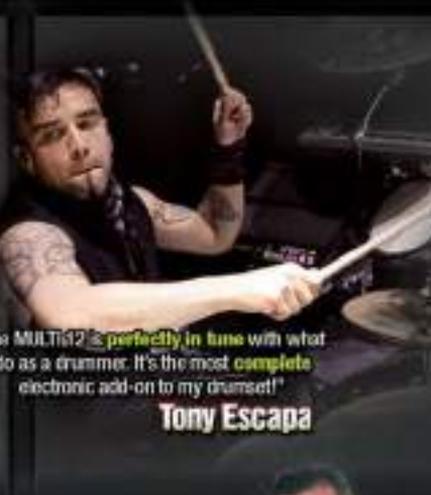
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**Kenny Washington**

I want to show my appreciation for the Kenny Washington piece in your April 2015 issue. Mr. Washington's advice to students of our instrument is priceless. Many of my own students balk at my "hands first" approach to learning, only to thank me later. I have also found that many students who come to me for "remedial" or problem-solving assistance do so principally from a lack of fundamental technique. We are all indebted to Mr. Washington for stating so clearly that without good rudimental skills, time, feel, and tone suffer.

**John Lester**

**"Teach Your Parents Well"**

Great April Editor's Overview by Adam Budofsky! There is not a day that goes by that I don't have some kind of contact with my teachers, who I consider my great friends: David Summerlin, Tony Mallard, Eddie Todd, and the late Brad Baker, all phenomenal drummers in Wilmington, North Carolina. These four men have been an influence on me throughout my life, since I was twelve years old. They took the time to include me in their lives and show me what a drummer is, and they were kind, patient and willing to impart any information they had to help me grow as a musician. Many hours were spent informally, just talking and watching. They were always helpful.

I am now fifty and teaching in New Orleans. I strive to make my students feel important and empowered. We are friends as well as student and teacher. It is a great responsibility, and I hope I'm helping my students/friends become confident and complete musicians as my four friends helped me.

Thank you, David, Tony, Eddie, and Brad. I am indebted to you always.

**John Golden Jr.**

**AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW**

**"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 *Delpi* via album. (CRP 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 for understanding among hating groups, in this case the different generations of the Woodstock era. Forty-five years later, the world is large unfortunately has yet so completely internalize the song's message. But I'm happy to say that among us drummers, the natural chain between generations doesn't seem to exist to the extent that it does elsewhere. Think 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 "Perry" Pundie immediately fields a question to refer back to his first drum instructor, Leonard Heywood. Pundie was interviewed for the piece by MFA Billy Amersala, who studied with the legendary *Rock* drummer at one time. The same relationship exists in our report on jazz great Kenny Washington, who spoke with Paul Wells. In this month's Catching Up With... department, Terry Silverlight talks not only about how he once studied with Morris "Annie" Ling but also about how he received alongside the classical percussionist for his latest album. Even in that same column, Mountain drummer Corky Ling doesn't mention any of his own teachers pre- or, but he did go on to say to thank those who've served in the role of drummer's best friend throughout his distinguished

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See video of Maxwell Drums' Nesting Kit and Paiste's Masters Dark crashes and hi-hats.



## Jazz Drummer's Workshop

John Xepoleas shows more ways to construct Elvin Jones-style fills.

## Rock Perspectives

Powell Randolph demonstrates how to play John Bonham's famous foot ostinato on Led Zeppelin's "Four Sticks."

## WIN!

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# NEWS

## Out Now



### **The Wrecking Crew**

This documentary, named after the group of musicians responsible for a staggering number of the hit records coming out of Los Angeles in the 1960s and early '70s, became available on demand this past March. At press time a limited national run in theaters was scheduled through May 10, and a DVD release is planned for the spring. Produced and directed by Denny Tedesco, son of Wrecking Crew guitarist Tommy Tedesco, the film includes interviews with the legendary artists Brian Wilson, Herb Alpert, Glen Campbell, and Roger McGuinn, among others, as well as Crew members Hal Blaine (drums), Tommy Tedesco (guitar), Carol Kaye (bass), Al Casey (guitar), Earl Palmer (drums), Plas Johnson (saxophone), Joe Osborn (bass), and Don Randi (keyboards). For more information, go to [wreckingcrewfilm.com](http://wreckingcrewfilm.com).



Earl Palmer



Hal Blaine



### **Gavin Harrison**

#### *Cheating the Polygraph*

Porcupine Tree/King Crimson drummer Gavin Harrison's brand-new solo album comprises eight Porcupine Tree songs, reimagined with help from bassist Laurence Cottle in something of a big band style and executed with the drummer's razor-sharp precision and world-class chops. "I don't think of this as jazz," Harrison says. "It's more like cinematic orchestral arrangements. There's an overall theme that ties the record together." *Cheating the Polygraph* is also impeccably produced, in part due to each instrument having been captured separately. "Purists wouldn't enjoy that fact," Harrison says, "but it gives you complete discrete control. You can put one trombone player in each corner for the surround mix. It's another level." **Ilya Stemkovsky**

**Bad Company** Bad Company and Straight Shooter Deluxe Editions (Simon Kirke) /// **My Morning Jacket** The Waterfall (Patrick Hallahan) /// **Bachman** Heavy Blues (Dale Anne Brendon) /// **Dwight Yoakam** Second Hand Heart (Mitch Marine) /// **Paul Weller** Saturn's Pattern (Ben Gordelier) /// **Blues Traveler** Blow Up the Moon (Brendan Hill) /// **Raven** ExtermiNation (Joe Hasselvander) /// **Blur** The Magic Whip (Dave Rowntree) /// **the Atomic Bitchwax** Gravitron (Bob Pantella) /// **Billy Cobham** Reflected Journey and Mirror's Image (Billy Cobham) /// **Joey Calderazzo** Going Home (Adam Cruz) /// **Everclear** Black Is the New Black (Sean Winchester) /// **Whitesnake** The Purple Album (Tommy Aldridge) /// **Built to Spill** Untethered Moon (Steve Gere) /// **the Word** Soul Food (Cody Dickinson) /// **Danko Jones** Fire Music (Rich Knox)



## Meinl Announces Lineup for 2015 Festival

The Meinl Drum Festival celebrates its tenth anniversary this coming June 27, in Gutenstetten, Germany. The roster includes **Thomas Lang** with **Luke Holland** of the Word Alive, **Adam Markó** (Special Providence), **Richard Spaven** (José James), **Matt Garstka** (Animals as Leaders), **Kerim "Krimh" Lechner** (Septicflesh), **Robert "Sput" Searight** (Snarky Puppy), **Benny Greb** (Moving Parts, *The Language of Drumming, The Art and Science of Groove*), **Ralph Peterson**, and **Anika Nilles** (Nevell). For more information, go to [meinldrumsfestival.com](http://meinldrumsfestival.com).

## Who's Playing What

**Matt Chamberlain**, **Kenney Jones** (ex-the Who, Small Faces), **Ben Thatcher** (Royal Blood), **Dan Freese** (Verses), **Bob Hall** (Catfish and the Bottlemen), **Freddy Sheed** (Baxter Dury), **Joe Luckin** (the Mouse Outfit), **Jonathan Ulman** (independent), **Greg Clark** (independent), and **Kristinn Agnarsson** (John Grant) are using Protection Racket drum cases.



**Brent Fitz** (Slash Featuring Myles Kennedy & the Conspirators) is using Vater sticks.



**Shawn Cameron** (Carnifex) has joined the Pearl Drums artist roster.



**On  
Tour**

**Josh Freese** is out with the Replacements on their first full U.S. tour since 1991.

Steven Cohen

**Ryan Brown** is on a world tour with Zappa Plays Zappa, performing the 1975 Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention album *One Size Fits All*.

**Also on the Road**

Converge (**Ben Koller**), Trap Them (**Brad Fickeisen**), Harm's Way (**Chris Mills**), and YAITW (**Randy Baucom**) are performing at a series of DW Fest Europe shows in Belgium, France, Switzerland, and Germany. /// Armored Saint (**Gonzo Sandoval**) and Saxon (**Nigel Glockler**) are doing a few dates together this month. /// **Brann Dailor** with Mastodon /// **Matt Ochoa** and **Jon Olazabal** with Dirty Heads /// **Tom Hane** with In This Moment /// **Jamiel Blake** with Sam Smith /// **Laura King** with Mac McCaughan /// **Mickey Curry** with Bryan Adams /// **Eloy Casagrande** with Sepultura /// **John Humphrey** with Seether /// **Jared Shavelson** with the Rentals

Thierry Jobbaud





# Dave King

Hot on the heels of two 2014 albums by the Bad Plus, *The Rite of Spring* and *Inevitable Western*, the drummer returns with something completely different.

**H**ave you ever brought a pair of antlers to use as sticks on a Little Caesars commercial session? Have you blown an enormous solo over ZZ Top's "Legs" during your drum clinic? Possibly not. But if you have room in your mind to consider these notions, and *many* more like 'em, you should check out Dave King's new online video series, *Rational Funk*, which giddily turns the idea of the instructional DVD on its ear.

"Of course it's not a new concept to make a parody of instructional videos, in any genre of the arts," King says. "I used to watch the oil-painting shows on PBS on Sunday mornings. I *loved* it. But I don't mean *Rational Funk* to be a stupid parody. The drumming in it is very real. I *am* a drum nerd. I'm a guy who grew up dealing with all the information, studying privately, but also being like, 'Whoa, a Steve Gadd instructional video!'"

Although King plunges headlong into comic absurdity in the brief clips, which he creates with filmmaker/engineer Joe Johnson and has been releasing on YouTube around once a week, he also sneaks across deep bits of musical insight (see "Episode 11: The Mystery of Improvisation"), along with some killer drumming. It's King's knack for balancing disparate elements, in *Rational Funk* as well as in his aesthetic with the Bad Plus and his other projects—highbrow and lowbrow, serious and playful—that makes the

videos unique. Dave will be cursing a blue streak and blasting off fireworks of goofiness (profanity is bleeped, but it's frequent, so beware of sharing the clips with younger viewers, who'd just be befuddled anyway), but then he'll suddenly invoke Hemingway or Frank Stella or Duchamp.

"Years ago I started thinking about ways that I could do this," King explains, "but I was sheepish about coming out with something silly, because I wanted to be taken seriously as a musician—because I take it *very* seriously. I want to be in the world as someone that is righteously pro-drums, pro-expression. So I felt the timing was okay at this point to explore some of these other avenues of my thing, in a way that's lighthearted and ultimately couched in some actual real-life stuff. I feel like there is room to explore the nature of the performer as a ridiculous person. And I'm hanging myself out as much as I'm hanging anybody out.

"*Rational Funk* is an assassination of the format, but it's also *me*—I mean, I am a dedicated technical fanatic of the drums. I love rock music, love really complicated fusion from all eras. And it isn't just going after big, muscle-car, Black Hawk-helicopter fusion guys. It's going after everything, from esoteric free jazz to punk rock, rap-rock. I'm going after jazz...I *play* jazz, you know? I just want to make people smile at the whole thing." **Michael Parillo**

# Steve Smith

**Is there a harder-working man in the business? Following a world tour with tabla master Zakir Hussain, he's got two new albums out and a third on its way.**

Featuring bassist Baron Browne, guitarist Vinny Valentino, alto saxophonist Andy Fusco, and keyboardist Mark Soskin, Vital Information NYC Edition's *Viewpoint*, out on May 26, finds fusion star Steve Smith maneuvering classic straight-ahead material and letting it rip on three solo tracks. "I get to play over the top a lot in this band," Smith says, "which is fun and reminds me of when I would go see Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, or Buddy Rich's groups, where the drummer could stretch out." Tracks include Rich's "Willowcrest," as well as his classic "Time Check." "That one retains the big band feel that we had with Buddy's Buddies," Smith explains, referring to the group he formed in the early 2000s with BR alumni. Other highlights include the Vinny Valentino composition "The Brush Off" (you can probably guess what Steve's working out on that one), Joe Morello's famous solo vehicle "Take Five," and Sonny Rollins' "Oleo," which Smith adapts with Indian rhythms. Those unable to catch the group on its current tour should look out for *Live in NYC*, recorded at the Iridium in 2011 and scheduled for an October release.

On the album *Groove: Blue*, which hits this summer, Smith is



joined by Valentino and Hammond B3 player Tony Monaco in a funky organ-trio format that includes original compositions as well as the standards "Cherokee" and "Green Dolphin Street." "The arrangements happened in the moment," Smith says. "It's very relaxed and swinging. A certain energy happens when the clock is ticking and you only have a few hours to get each tune."

So what keeps Smith going...and going? "I am constantly listening to music from all eras," Steve says, "including what's happening today with drummers like Eric Harland, Bill Stewart, and Mark Guiliana. I also stay in touch with the older masters. I feel like I have accumulated a large vocabulary that comes from every place I can dig up great ideas, including Indian rhythms. With these albums, I let it flow and put it all together." **Ken Micallef**

# George "Funky" Brown

**Five decades on, the legendary dance band Kool & the Gang was recently honored with a Soul Train Legend Award and given a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. One drummer has been there from the start.**

Kool & the Gang has sold 70 million records, including thirty-four top tens, and won seven American Music Awards and two Grammys. And the group is regularly cited among the most sampled acts in history. But despite all the accolades and



milestones, George "Funky" Brown insists that his priorities are family and community. The drummer is particularly proud of his work with underprivileged kids at the Boyle Heights Technology Youth Center in east L.A., where he assisted with a musical project—though not the kind you might expect. "I helped them put together a heavy metal album," Brown says with a chuckle. "It was seven or eight different bands. We pumped it up real good!"

"All of us [in Kool & the Gang] come from humble beginnings," the Jersey City native shares. "Early on we discovered each other's personal and professional limitations. So to keep our brotherhood intact we developed a gentleman's code, maintaining a high degree of respect for each other."

The approach certainly seems to have worked for the group, whose cavalcade of hits includes "Ladies Night," "Joanna," "Get Down on It," "Jungle Boogie," "Hollywood Swinging," and a song that for multiple generations is synonymous with the word *party*, the chart-topping 1980 disco-pop smash "Celebration." "Our sound evolved," Brown says. "If you look at the earlier stuff from the '70s, it was more jazz influenced and swung a bit more. You can hear it in my playing, as I was influenced by guys like Elvin Jones, Art Blakey, and Jack DeJohnette. I was pretty much free to play what I felt, letting my foot and the backbeat go where they wanted to."

A longtime martial arts enthusiast, Brown began to suffer from a degeneration of the discs in his lower back, which made drumming excruciating. In 2012, following a newly developed stem-cell procedure, he was back out on stage within a month, and these days he shows no signs of slowing down. "All musicians, no matter what form of entertainer they are, are there to make people happy," Brown says. "To see the smiles on faces says it all."

**Bob Girouard**



## E-Drums and Apartment Dwellers

I live in a very old three-story apartment building with hardwood floors. I bought a Roland TD-20 drumkit for my son, but apparently the impact from the pads is finding its way into the apartment below, and the neighbors are complaining. Does someone make a platform or something to help in these situations?

Chris

This is a very common problem, and one that we addressed at length a few years back, in Technology Corner in the June 2012 issue. The basic premise is to decouple the drumset from the floor by using multiple layers of different materials in an attempt to break up the vibrations. Try building a platform using foam workout mats, .75" plywood, and thick carpet. Roland has also released commercial Noise Eater products to help alleviate floor



vibrations, including NE-10 isolation mats and the small, round NE-1, which goes beneath the feet of the stands and rack.

## Ask a Pro

### Rival Sons' Michael Miley Wise Up and Warm Up!



Ed Miley

I love your playing with Rival Sons. It's so energetic and powerful yet so tasteful and musical. Do you have a specific warm-up routine that you adhere to before hitting the stage?

B. B.

Great question! I started warming up (finally) about two years ago. After years of muscle strains and tears and bouts with tendinitis, I wised up. Rival Sons had begun playing 90 to 120 minutes a night, so I had to view my work—meaning my paycheck and the food on my family's table—as being directly dependent on my physical and structural health. In drumming, consistency is everything, and live performance is my career. It was time to get serious and practical.

One night my wife and I hung out with some trapeze artists in Las Vegas, whose careers are also extremely dependent on physical and structural health. This was my "aha" moment in terms of warming up. They do two shows a day, six days a week, and their job involves flying through the air, walking tightropes, and so on. They hipped me to a bunch of training modalities and ideas that I then amalgamated into my own one-hour warm-up before every show.

Before you hit the stage, your muscles should be warm, literally. The trapeze artists warm up thirty minutes before and after each performance, along with a daily hour-and-a-half gym regimen. Think of boxers or MMA fighters entering the arena. Even before they get in the ring, they're bouncing and shadowboxing, and they're already sweating. Olympic sprinters and swimmers also keep their bodies warm and stretch. All athletes warm up before competition. How are we drummers any different?

My warm-up includes twenty minutes of yoga and stretching (this includes mental alignment, i.e., getting my head in the game); twenty minutes of resistance-band training, jumping rope, and a quick boxing routine I got from Josh Todd of Buckcherry; and twenty minutes of drumming on a DW Go Anywhere practice-pad kit. My drumming warm-up routine is as follows.

Start slowly (approximately 50 bpm), and count quarter notes out loud ("one, two, three, four"). Make sure the hands and feet are hitting at exactly the same time—no flams—and remember that you're warming up to get your blood flowing, your limbs moving, and your head on straight. Do Exercises 1 through 6 for about a minute each. Exercises 1, 2, and 3 are singles, doubles, and paradiddles. Exercises 4 and 5 focus on building strength in each

hand. Exercise 6 moves on to flams. Once I've played each exercise, I speed up a bit and move freely between the exercises, and I'll improvise different combinations and inversions. Doing all of this with the feet going underneath gets the entire body warm, and you're forced to focus on rhythmic precision. Once I get through the exercises, I'm feeling loose and free and ready to go play a rock show.

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

2 R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

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

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

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

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





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# Maxwell Drums Nesting Kit

Big, versatile tones in an ultra-compact package.

If you've ever had to pack up your set and navigate city streets, stairs, and sidewalks, you might agree that bigger is not always better. It's no wonder that drummers are experimenting more and more with different setup configurations to help lighten the load. We've seen this take shape through cajon-based kits or the use of electronics to supplement acoustic drums without adding too much extra gear. Maxwell Drums has an all-acoustic option that may provide just the solution you need to pack a huge sound in an ultra-portable setup. It's called the Nesting Kit (\$1,749), and we found that it's just as enjoyable to carry as it is to play.

## Specs and Features

The Nesting Kit comes in a three-piece shell pack featuring a bass drum, rack tom, and floor tom. Matching snares are also available in a variety of sizes, though they won't be able to nest with the rest of the kit. The shell pack that we received for review included an 8x10 rack tom, a 13x14 floor tom, and a 14x18 bass drum. The toms consist of 6-ply maple shells, while the bass drum is 8-ply maple. All of the drums come standard with 45-degree bearing edges and Yamaha hardware, including a bass-drum-mounted tom holder. In addition to the kit we received, Maxwell offers another shell pack with a 16" bass drum, 10" rack tom, and 13" floor tom, as well as the option to have any sizes custom made with nesting capabilities.

The bass drum and floor tom are equipped with butterfly latches and internal seating rings that allow you to separate the shell in half and put it back together with a consistently flawless seal. The rack tom fits snugly inside the floor tom, which sits perfectly inside the bass drum. The entire nested kit can be stowed in a bass drum case, with the exception of any additional hardware, cymbals, and drums that you'd like to bring along. To keep things as portable and light as possible, we paired the Nesting Kit with a 5x12 snare, a cable-driven hi-hat (which we attached to the tom stand), and a crash/ride cymbal.

## Size Versus Sound

You might think that with smaller shell sizes that separate into two halves, you would be sacrificing sound in some way. But we were happy to learn that no such concessions seemed to exist, as we played the Nesting Kit in a wide range of styles and at various dynamic levels. Quite simply, we couldn't identify any differences between this outfit and other similarly sized drumsets caused by the nesting design.

The warmth and buttery sound of the maple shells held true from the lowest to the highest tuning. The bass drum came with a felt cloth that helped shave off some of the overtones and provided just the right amount of dampening to maintain an open yet controlled tone. The bass drum also retained the projection and big sound that we've come to expect from a maple shell. Furthermore, the smaller size gave us just enough control over the tone and resonance that we decided not to use additional internal dampening for funk/rock grooves. The fat and open yet controlled sound of this kick was simply too addictive to tame.

## A Huge Win

There's no doubt that the Nesting Kit from Maxwell Drums is a great option, not only for players in the market for an ultra-compact drumset but also for anyone looking for a small but diverse kit to meet a wide range of musical needs. The toms sang with the delicate response of maple, while the bass drum offered a great wide-open punch that sat perfectly in the mix.

**Miguel Monroy**





Check out a video demo of this kit at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

# Paiste Masters Dark Crashes and Hi-Hats

Rich, warm, mix-ready tones from Switzerland's super-consistent cymbalsmiths.

The Masters series started in 2011 as a dozen ride cymbals, made from Paiste's CuSn20-formula bronze and designed for use in a variety of genres. Models included, among others, Medium, Dark Dry, and Dark Crisp. In 2014, the company fleshed out the series with three crashes (16", 18", and 20") and two sets of hi-hats (14" and 15"). We were sent a sample of each of the new offerings for review. Let's start with the crashes.

## 16", 18", and 20" Crashes

All three Masters Dark crashes are medium-thin and are designed for low to medium-loud playing situations. They had a quick response and opened up easily at all dynamic levels, including super-delicate strokes. They also had a great combination of warm, smooth tones with just enough complexity that they sat within the texture of the music rather than jutting over the top of it. While the Masters Dark crashes were trashier than some of Paiste's other offerings, such as 2002s or Giant Beats, they are in no way niche cymbals. In fact, they were about as all-purpose as any crashes I've ever played. They had a pleasing "broken in" sound (no harsh overtones or frequency imbalances) and felt very satisfying to hit. They also recorded beautifully.

The 20" Masters Dark crash doubled very well as a light ride or a crash/ride. Its crash was big and lush, the bell sounds were clear but integrated, and the ride remained clean and articulate at low to moderate dynamics. This was a very versatile cymbal that I would use often as a left-side crash/ride in conjunction with one of the other Masters rides on the right side of my kit.



## 14" and 15" Hi-Hats

Both sets of Masters Dark hi-hats come with a medium-thin top and a medium-heavy bottom. They are also designed for low to medium-loud playing applications. Whereas I felt that the crashes in this series had widespread universal appeal, the hi-hats were a little more specialized. They had a complex tone, whether struck closed, open, or with the foot, so they didn't offer ultra-crisp, clean articulation. They occupied a bit more sonic space, with a touch of sizzle beneath every stroke. They weren't papery like some old hi-hats, but they did bring to mind more of a vintage vibe. The 14" models were more controllable, so they fared better in situations where I needed to jump genres, from straight-ahead swing to classic rock.

The 15" hi-hats had a lot more growl and rumble, and they produced a wider, deeper, trashier, and more expansive sound—almost like what you get when you use two crash cymbals as hi-hats, only with a more full-bodied tone. These hats paired well with the 20" crash for grooves on a big, deep-tuned mahogany kit. They threw out an awesomely dark, rich bark and had a very commanding open sound for playing fast 8th-note beats, like Tom Petty's "You Wreck Me." Jazz players who prefer a super-low, "crashy" hi-hat sound would also dig these. Just be sure to have a second pair of more general-use hi-hats (like the 14" Masters Darks) in your cymbal bag in case these are a bit too much for the gig.

**Michael Dawson**

Check out a video demo of these cymbals at [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com).



# Vic Firth Barrel 5A and 5B Drumsticks, Split Brushes, and Tala Wand Bamboo Slats

Clarity, balance, and control are what's up with these new implements.

**A**lways looking to fill voids in its catalog with products that drummers need, if not demand, Vic Firth has put out a handful of new items that are destined to become standards in many players' stick bags. Let's take a look.

## 5A and 5B Barrel Drumsticks

Some of Vic Firth's most popular sticks feature round barrel tips instead of the company's standard teardrop tip. Yet the highest-selling models, 5A and 5B, weren't offered with anything but teardrop or nylon tips until earlier this year.

To make the 5A and 5B Barrel models, Firth shaved off the top of the teardrop tip, rounded it, and added a bit of length to the butt end so that the stick still measures 16" in length. (The 5A is .565" in diameter; the 5B is .595".) The result is a very balanced, light-feeling stick that has great rebound and more focused, clearer articulation. The 5A is a great choice for fans of that size who often have to sacrifice comfort by dropping down to a smaller model, like a 7A, when playing quieter gigs. I had no problem articulating very soft ride cymbal patterns and super-delicate snare parts. Musical theater percussionists, jazz drummers, singer-songwriter supporters: Check these out!

The 5B Barrel stick is as articulate and balanced as the 5A, providing a bit more power without sacrificing control or clarity. I've often switched between a 5A and a 5B for different gigs, depending on the volume and amount of articulation I need from my cymbals. A 5B-diameter stick feels most comfortable in my slightly larger-than-average hands, but the bigger teardrop tips on standard versions often elicit a wider tone than I want, especially on the thinner ride cymbals I often employ. As a result, I end up grabbing a 5A. With the 5B Barrel, I have another option that's the same size as my ideal stick, but with the added clarity and control I often need. Big thumbs up!

## Split Brushes

Tapping the expertise and specialized needs of German brush master Florian Alexandru-Zorn, Vic Firth created the Split Brush, which is a retractable model featuring two rows of different-length medium-gauge wires and a crimped pull rod that allows for three playing positions with different spreads. The goal with the two tiers of wire lengths was to create a fuller, louder sweep sound that's more dynamically balanced with regular taps and accents. When you sweep the Split Brush, the tiers make contact with the head at different places; the lower tier sits about an inch below the longer wires.



I was skeptical that this design would actually create louder sweeps, since it's still the same number of wires brushing the head as with a regular model. But the difference was significant; the Split Brush sounded almost like two brushes sweeping at once. And I didn't have to adjust my playing technique to accommodate the unique design. The tiered wires also thinned out the tap sound a bit, which helped to balance the volume between taps and sweeps. When striking the center of the drumhead with a firm wrist snap, I felt myself missing a bit of the full-bodied shell tone that I get from traditional wire brushes, but for situations where you're dancing all over the head with various combinations of sweeps, slides, taps, and trills, the Split Brush provides a noticeable and effortless increase in dynamic headroom.

## Tala Wand Bamboo Slats

Rounding out fusion great Steve Smith's signature low-volume Tala Wand lineup, which includes birch and bamboo models that feature a foam center wrapped in dowels and PVC, are Bamboo Slats. These are different from the other two in that they feature four flat pieces of bamboo surrounding a rectangular foam core. (The birch and bamboo Tala Wands have round foam cores and small, round dowels like those used on other multirods.) Also, the tips of the Slats are covered in PVC to create a denser, deeper tone with less of the wood-on-wood "slap" you get from regular rods. Firth and Smith's goal was to create a new model that performs closer to sticks, but at a softer dynamic level that's a bit louder than the other Tala Wands.

I preferred using the Slats to regular multirods. I was able to get a wider variety of tones from them, including some nice mallet-like cymbal accents by striking with the center PVC-covered section, and they didn't have the thin, pervasive click sound of most regular rods. The Slats also produced a bigger sound on toms, and I could play buzz rolls with them fairly easily. Again, for ultimate dynamic control in situations where you might vacillate among thin drumsticks, rods, and brushes, consider adding the Tala Wand Slats. I wish these things would've existed back when I was doing a lot of local musical theater productions. They would've made playing those pianissimo two-beat shuffles a cinch!

**Michael Dawson**



# SJC Maple/Brass Hybrid Snare

A powerhouse drum combining the spray and bite of hammered brass with the warmth of maple.

When I first started playing, choices for snare drums were a bit more limited than what you see in today's marketplace. Over the past few decades, manufacturers have begun looking outside the box with shell materials and have even started combining different materials. Today, you can find drums made of everything from wood and metal to fiberglass, acrylic, and carbon fiber, with all kinds of things in between and many of those materials mixed together.

Into the fray comes SJC, with a beastly 8x14 hybrid drum that combines a 6.5x14 hammered beaded-brass center section and 12-ply, 1x14 maple edges with a bird's-eye maple outer veneer. The drum is a first of its kind for SJC, made in collaboration with top Los Angeles drummer and tech Mike Fasano.

The snare came to me fitted with a Remo Coated Emperor X double-ply batter, an Ambassador Snare Side head, die-cast hoops, a Trick throw-off, a set of 20-strand snare wires, ten tube lugs, and a huge badge that floats above the shell. Whoever used the drum before me had set the top head quite loose, and right out of the box it had a fat, pleasant "boosh" sound with a lot of meat but still a bit of cut. This round tone would work very well with brushes or rods.

The drum had plenty of bark and snap at higher tunings, but I felt that I was playing on a tabletop, due to the combination of the 2-ply head and die-cast hoops. But it loved a medium tension with the 2-ply head, offering a fuzzy, pingy growl that I enjoyed quite a bit.

I swapped out the Emperor X batter for a single-ply coated head,



and the drum immediately opened up. Fatter, brighter, more snare response, more...everything. Overall, this snare proved to be more versatile with the single-ply batter head, and it had a powerful, commanding bark at all tensions. I've always been a fan of metal shells that have a center bead, because of the pleasing distortion that's added to the tone. So to have that, plus a hammered shell to dry out the sound just a bit and maple edges to warm everything up? Great drum! The list price is \$1,150.

**Nick Amoroso**



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**#PLAYMORE**

# Drum Miking 101

## Part 5: Multi-Mic Setup

by John Emrich

Over the past few months, we've explored miking a drumset in a studio environment by adding microphones one at a time. This article takes all of those concepts to the final stage, as we look at how to handle a fully miked kit that includes room mics. This is the setup most often used for a typical recording session.

We'll start with four channels. I always begin with the stereo overheads, because they're the key to capturing a balanced drumset sound. I use a Violet Flamingo Stereo microphone. For the other two channels, I added a Milab BDM-01 on the bass drum and a Violet Flamingo Junior on the snare. We listened to that combination in the last article, and it's a great four-mic setup that always gives me good results.

Then we added microphones on the toms. A lot of different models work well in this position, but I chose a Violet Globe mic for each tom (photos 1 and 2).

The next step is to place the room mics. I position these about 10' in front of the set to capture some of the ambient sound of the drums reverberating in the room. Experiment with the distance of the mics from the drumset to achieve different sounds. Measurement is crucial; you must be exact. I prefer to use a long string to make sure each mic is the same distance from the center of the kit. I start by attaching the string to the center of the bass drum. In photo 3, Scotty, my friend and engineer, is holding the string in place. Pull the string tight and pinch it at the point where it touches the capsule of the microphone. Keeping that mark, go over to the other room microphone and make sure it's placed at the exact same distance. This





punch and a fuller frequency response from the toms. Next I add the stereo room microphones, which are Sony C-48s. You should immediately hear the difference when the room mics are added; the sound gets a bit brighter and the stereo image is very smooth. The room mics should be blended into the mix to give you a more natural sound.

The PZM taped to the studio glass makes

the sound even brighter and a bit more aggressive. With that mic, in addition to the stereo room channels, you now have a lot of choices to work with when you mix the recording. Different combinations can be utilized with this setup to create different effects. As always, trust your ears.

**Check out a video demo of these mic positions at [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com).**



measurement is key to having an accurate stereo representation of the kit.

The last microphone I add is a Crown PZM boundary model. I tape it to the studio glass on the far wall, which extends the range of the mic to the entire size of the glass (photo 4). I record with this mic because I may decide to use it for an effect when I mix.

As you're watching and listening to the accompanying video, which is posted to [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com), note that we start with just the four basic microphones (overheads, kick, and snare). That establishes the baseline drum sound. I then bring up the tom mics to provide a little more

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BY RUSSELLER

With a balance of power and finesse, this one can handle it all. It possesses sensitivity for brushes, articulation for light sticking, and control for big back beats.

**Size:** 14" x 4 5/8"  
**Material:** Mahogany/Maple Hybrid Shell  
**Top Edge:** Rounded and Reinforced 45°  
**Bottom Edge:** Rounded 35°  
**Sound:** Versatile, Articulate, Controlled

**MAPEX**  
#PlayMore

Interview by John Martinez  
Photos by Alex Solca

# Suicidal Tendencies' Eric Moore II

**Drums:** DW Design series clear acrylic with RGB LED lights by DrumLite

- A.** 6.5x14 Collector's series wrinkled coated aluminum snare
- B.** 6.5x14 brushed aluminum snare by Battlefield Drum Co.
- C.** 8x10 tom
- D.** 9x12 tom
- E.** 12x14 floor tom
- F.** 14x16 floor tom
- G.** 16x18 floor tom
- H.** 18x22 Design series maple bass drum

**Heads:** Aquarian Response 2 Coated Black snare batters and Classic Clear bottoms, Response 2 Clear tom batters and Classic Clear Gloss Black bottoms, and Super-Kick 10 Clear bass drum batter with DW logo front head

**Hardware:** DW 9000 series single bass drum pedal, Air Lift tractor-seat throne, and hi-hat, tom, snare, and cymbal stands

**Sticks:** Promark Eric Moore II model (not available in stores) and Mono stick bag

**Electronics:** Roland SPD-SX sampling pad, 10" Aquarian onHEAD PED with inBOX nested in DW piccolo tom, Monster cables, 24k headphones

**Cymbals:** Zion Eric Moore II Signature series (medium)

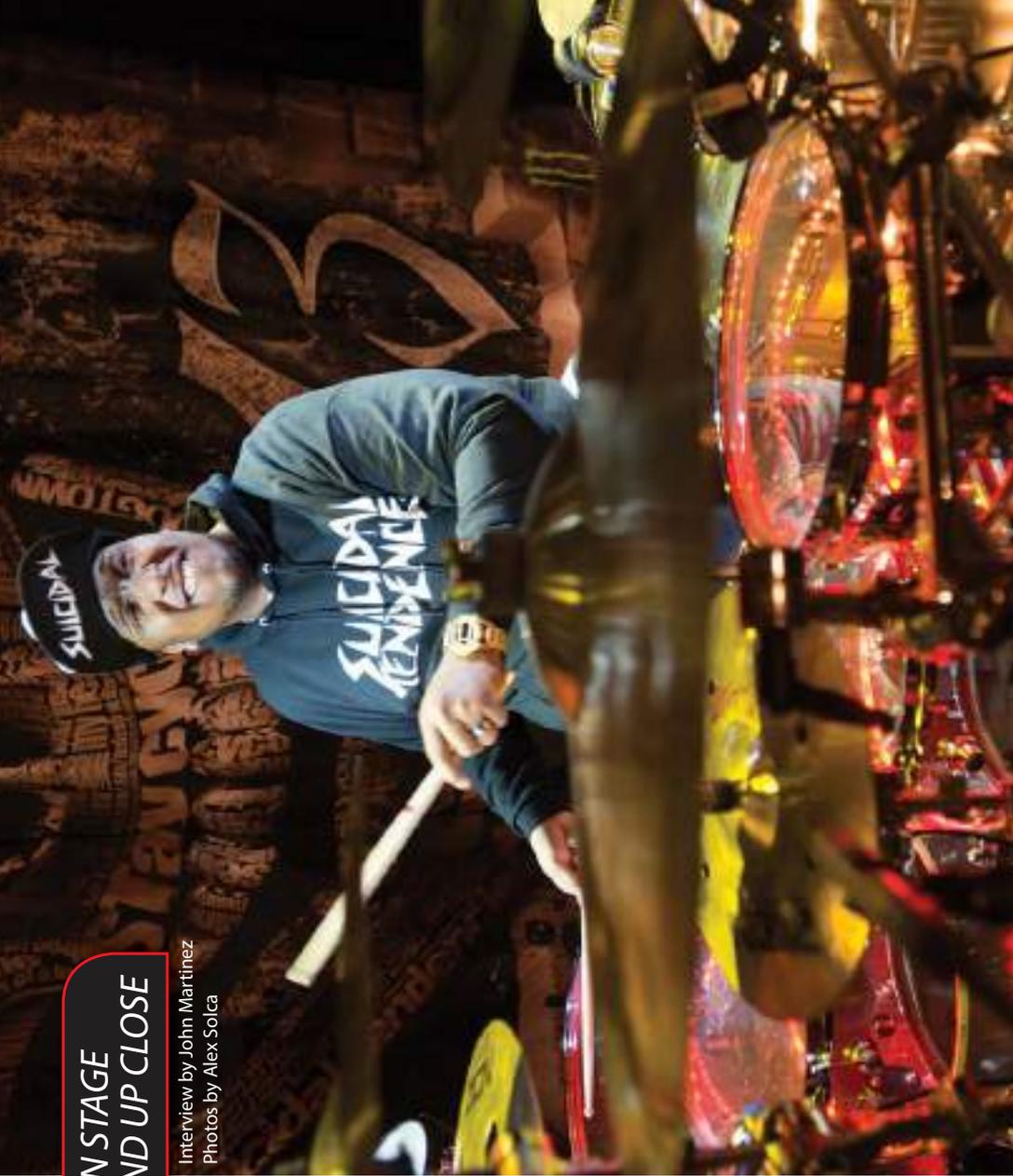
- 1.** 14" FX hi-hats
- 2.** 17" crash
- 3.** 19" crash
- 4.** 16" China
- 5.** 21" ride
- 6.** 12" Air hi-hats
- 7.** 18" crash
- 8.** 18" FX crash
- 9.** 19" Epic series crash

"On this tour," Moore tells *MD* at a Suicidal Tendencies show in Riverside, California, "I wanted to bring out the maple bass drum. I have the acrylic bass drum, but I like how this maple feels. I've always loved playing two up/three down. I've been playing this setup since 2007. I used to use 12", 13", 14", 16", and 18", but I like playing the 10" tom, and the 18" floor tom comes in handy with beefy tones—for this gig it really works. I'm able to get around the kit faster with two up. Maybe if I play R&B or something, I'll play an 8" or even have a 14" on the left, but with Suicidal Tendencies two up and three down feels comfortable.

"I use the SPD-SX for song intros and samples that go into the set. Also, triggered all the way to my right is the onHEAD with an 808 bass drum sound instead of having a gong drum.

"I tune everything by ear and feel. I like to have a good balance—nice and warm. The bottom heads will be a bit tighter. The top heads are tuned lower and not too tight; I want my drums to sing. My left snare drum is tuned deeper for songs like 'Institutionalized.'"

"I went on a hiatus for a number of months and changed my lifestyle and my way of eating. I'm down 140 pounds and counting. It's changed my drumming tremendously. My foot strength and everything is stronger; I feel I can drum for hours. As far as acrylic drums, I've always liked their sound and look. I take out a new kit for every tour, and I wanted something that would represent who I am. Now you can see the new me, and I'm not trying to hide behind the drums. Smaller drums, smaller me. I beat the mess out of them every day, and they have not let me down."





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CLUB MONITOR



# BENNY

There are very real ghosts that haunt every drummer's subconscious: *Am I really grooving? Do I sound confident enough at the kit? How well am I pushing or pulling the time?* One of modern drumming's premier educators and performers thinks that, with a little research, ingenuity, and good 'ol elbow grease, anyone can bust those dastardly thoughts permanently.



**N**ot all basketball players are blessed with the freakish physical abilities to sky through the air from the free-throw line and slam a one-handed dunk like Michael Jordan did to win the 1988 NBA dunk contest. Likewise, not all drummers are born with the instincts necessary to throw down a perfectly placed, spine-tingling backbeat like Steve Gadd, Bernard Purdie, or Steve Jordan. Or are they?

If you ask German drummer/composer/educator Benny Greb, who's spent the past seven years researching, testing, and producing the ideas and exercises that comprise the monumental educational DVD *The Art and Science of Groove*, the answer is unequivocal: Yes, *all* drummers can learn to groove. The caveat, however, is that if you want to play with a great-feeling pocket, you have to practice. And, more important, you have to know *what* to practice.

Using his drum camps and private lessons as the litmus test, Greb set out to bust the myth that some people can groove while others cannot by applying concepts that he developed to improve his own feel. This extended experiment was set into motion before he began working on his previous award-winning educational book/DVD, *The Language of Drumming*, which distills the essential vocabulary required in all musical styles into chewy yet very digestible bite-size portions. "I didn't feel ready back then," Greb says in regards to why it took nearly a decade to make *The Art and Science of Groove*. "These were ideas and exercises that helped me, but I hadn't field-tested them with students, so I didn't know whether they worked for everyone or if I knew how to explain them exactly."

The hard work and thorough research certainly paid off, as Greb leaves no stone unturned in his quest to reveal the "secrets" to confident, consistent timekeeping. The drummer divides his discussion of groove into five key elements: time, feel, sound, body, and mind. Each chapter contains a detailed explanation of a given element, plus exercises, practice suggestions, and very clear demonstrations, either by a drum machine automaton or by Benny playing alone at the kit, with a click track, with bass-playing counterpart Frank Ilt, or with his new experimental electronic/jazz trio, Moving Parts. (The group's self-titled debut album, which was released in November 2014, is a great real-world demonstration of all of the elements of groove at play.)

*The Art and Science of Groove* is an impressive achievement for Greb and is one from which all of us "non-blessed" drummers can reap rewards. Just be sure to have your remote control handy, because you'll undoubtedly want to pause the player often and pick up your sticks to put the exercises into practice. (Spoiler alert: You *will* develop a stronger and more confident groove by doing so. Myth busted!)

We caught up with Greb a few weeks before the official release of *The Art and Science of Groove*, as he was preparing for a three-day Master Session drum camp at the Full Moon Resort in scenic Big Indian, New York, where he planned to continue putting his ideas into action with a fresh crop of able and willing test subjects. Our conversation, which was conducted between Germany and New Jersey via Skype, begins and ends with—you guessed it—groove.

# GREB

Story by Michael Dawson  
Photos by Gerhard Kühne

**MD:** It's a pretty bold challenge to take on the topic of groove. Did you have naysayers who said it couldn't be done?

**Benny:** Yeah, I had colleagues who said, "I wouldn't do it," or "I wouldn't take the magic out of it." But I don't see it that way. For me, knowledge is nothing that takes away from the magic—it *enhances* it. For us drummers, understanding the elements of groove makes things reliable and not a matter of luck. If it's magical, then sometimes you're lucky and sometimes you're not. You might play four bars in the first chorus that feel great, but you have no idea how to do that consistently. For that, it takes knowing the inner workings. That's the challenge I, and many drummers, faced.

**MD:** One of the aha moments I had with the DVD was in the time chapter, when you demonstrate how to elongate phrases by changing the subdivision. It was great

to have the notation on the screen to show the basic subdivision. It made it so simple to understand: It's just triplets and 16th notes.

**Benny:** Right, and to be able to pinpoint that is what's important. The most important thing with this DVD is to make people great at diagnosing problems, so when you don't like something, you know why and what you can do about it. That's why I created practical exercises for some of the phenomena that weren't necessarily put into exercises before. If you want to create that tampering-with-the-time effect, which I call the hand brake, it's a matter of subdivision. But before that, I go into defining what subdivision really means and what it sounds like. I tried to look at all the aspects of groove that are hard to describe in a book or are often left up to being a "gift."

**MD:** Many people have said that in terms of groove, you either have it or you don't. But what is "it"?

**Benny:** The gift! [laughs] As I say on the DVD, if groove is a gift, then I didn't have it. I worked on it and improved over time. I don't think groove is a gift; it's a combination of learnable skills. It's true that some people have a great feel intuitively, through experience. But not everyone has the luck that their mother was a background singer with James Brown, or they grew up in a vibrant music scene or had parents who listened to great records. Those are things that can teach you groove intuitively, but you still have to work on other stuff. I wanted to look at the full scale of phenomena within groove and what you can do to develop them, so that it's not a matter of upbringing or other things you can't change. I mean...I was born in





Augsburg, Bavaria, so I had to come up with *something* to get those aesthetics going. [laughs]

**MD:** When did you discover that you didn't have your groove together? Was it on a recording?

**Benny:** Yeah, it was the first recording. That's when I figured out that things can sound drastically different from how they feel while you're playing, to the positive and to the negative. Sometimes you can beat yourself up and then you realize it's not that bad. But then there's the other way around, where you're thinking, *This is great!* But when you listen back to the recording it's horrible. When that happens, you have to ask what's horrible. Oh...the fills speed up. *Why* do they speed up? Maybe, like I say in the body chapter of the DVD, it's because I hold my breath or I stop the motion of my body. Those can cause things to sound off.

What's comforting is that these are not things that take forever. Once you think about them, you'll sound different immediately. So I understand the respect that you have in regards to tackling this subject, but is there anything really *more* important? It's funny that we sometimes

give up on that, education-wise. Having a great groove is more than just playing steady time to a quarter-note click; it's about incorporating your body, your mind, sound, and all that. There are different elements that play together.

**MD:** Let's talk about how you present these elements in the DVD. You go from time to feel to sound to the body to the mind. Was that order deliberate? Do you have to have your time together before you can move on to feel?

**Benny:** It was the best order to teach it in, but I wouldn't say that it's important to learn groove in that order. People should start with whatever they want to start with. The time chapter has some definitions that I then use in other chapters to explain something, so it just made sense to establish the theoretical stuff, like subdivision and beat placement, in the beginning. Then we can look at how changing your feel, your mindset, or your body movement will automatically affect your groove.

**MD:** Is it possible to have a good groove without having all five of these categories under control?

**Benny:** I don't think so. I think it's possible

to have a good groove without having worked on all of these elements and being super-aware of them, and that's fine. But the question I wanted to answer was: What do I do if it's *not* fine? You need to be able to diagnose what you can improve on now. Every drummer is at a different point, where they're intuitively doing some things right. But there's often something missing, or there's something that can be improved on if you think about it differently.

**MD:** I discovered that I needed to spend a lot more time on subdivisions. I couldn't play a beat with the click on the "a" or the "e."

**Benny:** The point of those exercises isn't to make things complicated or for you to be able to make deceiving displacements. You really start to feel subdivisions differently if you're able to hear the click on the second 16th, for example. You become very aware of the space between the quarter notes, and you're forced to establish your own confident downbeats and backbeats without having the click tell you, "Good! Well done!"

If we regard the quarter-note click as the cure for everything, then you're just

shooting at it like a target. That's why when bands record with a quarter-note click and then you take the click away, it sometimes sounds weak. The flow doesn't come from arriving at the quarter notes; it comes from the space between them and from the subdivision. And confidence comes when you're certain that you know where the stroke belongs. It puts you in the driver's

seat, and you don't have to ask permission from the click. You can say, "This is where it goes; I'm doing this." That's why some drummers sound a little bit weaker than others. But it has nothing to do with dynamics. You can play very quietly with authority. That's what those exercises are good for: to help you play simple grooves with more accuracy and confidence.

**MD:** The first exercise involves having the click drop out for a measure every once in a while. How do you get better at keeping that space even? What do you do if you're always off when the click comes back in?

**Benny:** The first thing is, do you realize that you're off? And how fast do you realize that? The goal is not to play it perfectly right away. The exercise is to come closer to

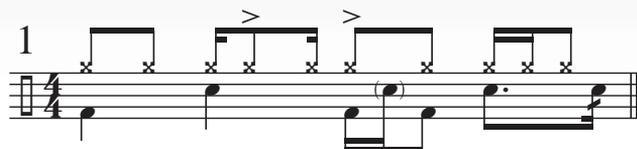
# Greb's Grooves

While *The Art and Science of Groove* isn't about grooves per se, Benny Greb has laid down his fair share of tasty beats. Here are some highlights chosen from his four albums as a leader/producer that put into action many of the concepts discussed on the DVD.



## Grebfruit "Twist"

The opening groove from Greb's debut album showcases a masterful command of subdivisions and dynamic interplay, especially between the hi-hat and snare.



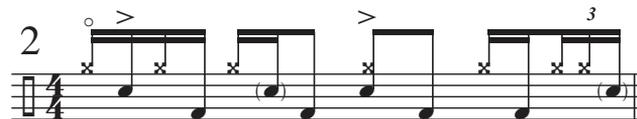
## "Outtasite"

Check out the tension and release in this Jamaican dancehall-inspired groove, which alternates between a tight, jumpy hi-hat pattern and a smooth open/closed rhythm. It's amazing how such a subtle change can drastically affect the feel.



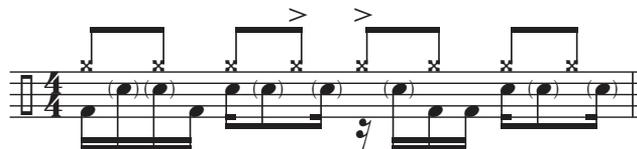
## "Dr. Schnitzel"

This slick, deceptive pattern is simultaneously dense and spacious. You can really feel the tension and release when the snare juts to the offbeat (the "e" of beat 1) and then lands squarely on beat 3. Greb keeps it anchored with a heavy quarter-note hi-hat.



## Brass Band "Good Question"

For his second solo album, Greb brought in a trio of horn players and wrote songs that called on many of his early musical influences (classical, film scores, New Orleans jazz, funk, pop). On the opening cut, Benny digs deep in the cracks between straight and swung 16ths with a swampy second-line-inspired groove. Again, it's the dynamic interplay between the hi-hat and snare that brings it to life.



## Two Day Trio "No. 5"

For his third album as a leader, Greb shelved his composer's pen and took a group into the studio for forty-eight hours of spontaneous jams. Even without preconceived ideas, the drummer still manages to create compelling, logical, and deep grooves. In this pattern, the rests in the second and fourth bars are just as stirring as the gut-punching kick drum and deadily accurate backbeats.



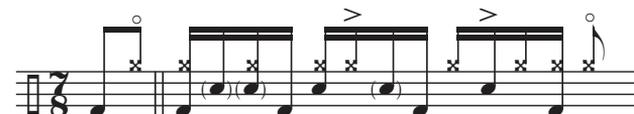
## "Nodding Hill"

Greb makes this 3-2 clave-based groove feel smooth and airy by keeping time on the bell of a washy ride cymbal. He also gets a lot of tonal contrast between the subtle snare ghost notes and ringing rimshots, which are played toward the edge of the drum.



## "No. 6"

This groove ebbs and flows like a gentle wave, thanks to the fully incorporated texture Greb creates with his punchy kick, slinky snare, and expressive hi-hat. The feel is so natural that it's hard to believe the track is in 7/8.



the click each time. That will sharpen your alarm system, because you hadn't realized that you were changing the tempo before.

The second step is to listen for how much you're off. Are you getting faster or slower in that space? If you have that information, you're almost there. The next step is to make an adjustment so that you're not thrown off at the second click. Chances are

your adjustment will be too big, so the last step is to make the adjustment a bit smaller than before so you land spot-on.

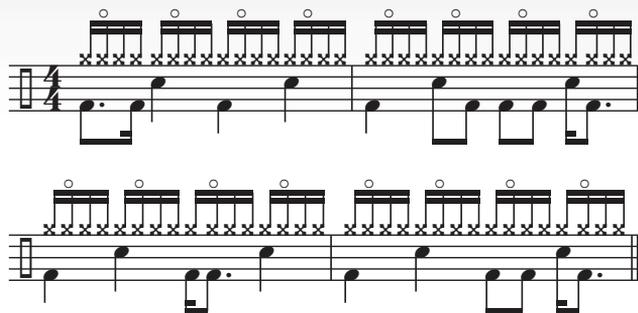
I have taught players at my drum camps who think this exercise is impossible, but after five or ten minutes they can do it. And they sound so different when they play a simple groove afterwards. It takes the trauma away from not knowing if you're

speeding up or slowing down.

**MD:** One of the other mystical topics you cover is defining what it means to play ahead of and behind the beat. You use a drum machine to demonstrate those ideas, and you make the demonstrations a bit extreme so that they're easier to hear. Have you explored how far you can push these concepts or examined how many

### Moving Parts "Stabila"

The first set of exercises in *The Art and Science of Groove* explores ways to get comfortable with each of the subdivisions of a quarter note. If you don't have those under control, you're going to have a hard time making this pattern, which emphasizes the "e," feel confident and comfortable.



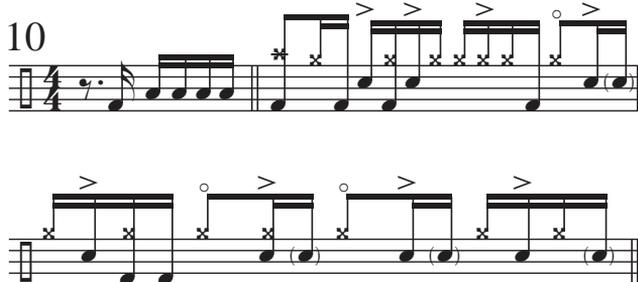
### "Soulfood"

This is another beat that exemplifies how rests are just as important as the notes themselves. Greb adds subtle texture in the snare part by playing the ghost notes with his fingers and the backbeats with rimclicks. The soft finger strokes help keep the momentum moving forward, but in a more subconscious way.



### "Barking"

Fans of the displaced funk grooves of Tower of Power's David Garibaldi will appreciate Greb's take on that approach during the opening section of this tune. Check out how the open hi-hat notes provide just enough relief from the tight, complicated conversation going on between the kick and snare.



## Benny's Moving Parts Setup

**Drums:** Sonor SQ2 Vintage Beech in white pearl finish

**A.** 5.75x13 Benny Greb signature snare

**B.** 8x10 tom

**C.** 16x16 floor tom

**D.** 17x20 bass drum

**Cymbals:** Meinl

**1.** 8" Classics Bell (bottom) and 8" Byzance Dark splash (top)

**2.** 14" Byzance Vintage Sand hi-hats over Generation X Filter China

**3.** 18" Byzance Vintage Sand Thin crash over 14" Generation X Trash Hat bottom

**4.** 8" Classics Bell (bottom) and 8" Byzance Dark splash (inverted on top)

**5.** 20" Byzance Vintage Sand ride

**6.** 16" Byzance Vintage Trash crashes used as hi-hats (with hi-hat tambourine resting on top)

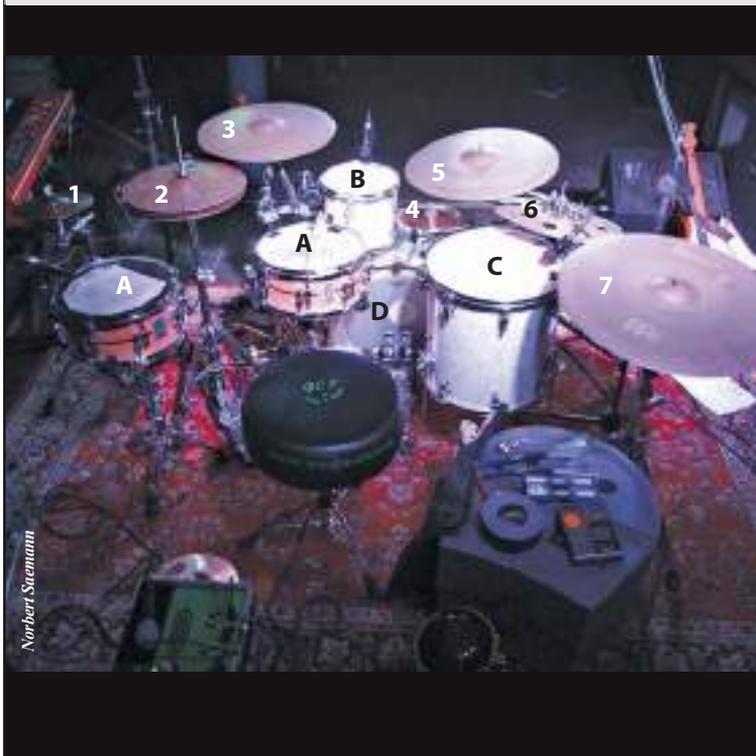
**7.** 22" Byzance Vintage Sand crash/ride (with rivets)

**Heads:** Remo Coated Ambassador snare batters, Coated Emperor tom batters and Coated Ambassador bottoms, and Renaissance Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter and Fiberskyn P3 Drumsigns.com custom logo front head

**Hardware:** Sonor 600 series stands and Giant Step pedals

**Sticks:** Promark 5BG Benny Greb signature model

**Percussion:** Meinl shekere, shakers, and tambourine



## Benny Greb

milliseconds it takes to go from being on to behind the beat?

**Benny:** I tried to stay away from making those types of aesthetical judgments. I wanted to give a clear reference for what these things are and how they feel. Many confuse playing ahead of or behind the beat with changing the tempo. So for me it was very important that drummers could hear the differences. Maybe I overdid the examples a bit, but you can find even more extreme examples in electronic music, where the snare is really flamming with the

other instruments. But once you understand the concept, it's just a matter of aesthetics and taste. It's not for me to judge how you use it. I leave that to the player.

The other thing I wanted to do was play with my friend Frank on bass and show what happens when we change our beat placement so that we're not perfectly on the click but it still works. That showcases that sometimes groove is a matter of democracy. Then we had fun showing what happens when we're *not* playing together. [laughs]

**MD:** I liked that illustration. It shows how



even when two people are playing the same rhythms, it can still sound off when they're not being interpreted the same way.

**Benny:** Exactly. Everyone has different ways of phrasing triplets and 16ths. Again, if everything works, fine. But if you hear something where things *aren't* aligning correctly, you need to know where the problem is so you can make the necessary adjustments.

**MD:** Is that something you would stop and discuss or just adjust on the fly?

**Benny:** On the bandstand, you just have to adjust. But I've had rehearsals where we've talked about being more relaxed or more up-front on certain accents. Both can happen, but it's not something that has to be discussed. It's just something you have to realize can happen.

**MD:** The next chapter discusses feel. The big lesson there is to record yourself so you can hear how your own playing makes you feel. In terms of understanding what a good groove is, I've heard some people say, "If you can't feel it, then you never will." But how do you discover what feels good and what doesn't?

**Benny:** I don't think you have to discover that. Everyone has it. But it's not for me to say it's blasphemy if someone doesn't like James Brown, for example. Trust your own aesthetics. Focus on the stuff that you like, and get your playing to that level. Then maybe from there you'll get to somewhere else. But this is the source of most of our frustration: when our expectation—how we *want* something to sound—doesn't match up with how we actually sound.

But I've never said to someone, "Well, you just don't feel it." Sometimes it's overshadowed when someone is only focused on getting their hands to play the right notes. But none of the concepts on the DVD are about *what* you play. It's not about grooves; it's about groove as a quality that you can have in everything. A fill can groove, and even rests can have that same flow. That's why I included the section on the heartbeat in the feel chapter. If you have those ideas in your mind as reference

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points, you'll start to produce something that breathes in and out, has tension and release, and is lifelike.

**MD:** At what stage of a drummer's development does this stuff come into play? The drums are such a difficult instrument to play, physically, that it can be hard to get past simply playing the right notes.

**Benny:** Is it difficult? Compared to a trumpet, it's much easier. Trumpet students make fart noises for weeks before a tone comes out that you can regard as music. But in the first drum lesson, you can have a student play a groove or clap a backbeat. So I think these things come in at the very beginning. We just always think that you have to start with *Stick Control*, but I'm not sure everyone has to do that. These elements are always at play, whether you know it or not.

**MD:** In the sound section, you talk a lot about inner dynamics and exploring the sounds of your kit. How does sound affect groove?

**Benny:** Although all of these elements work together, your groove will only be as good as the weakest link. Sound is one of those links. If something is nice, timing-wise, and you have the feel there, you still need sound differences to convey a phrase and that heartbeat feeling. And that has to do with tone length and other things. Tone length is time-relevant, and tone height—high versus low—causes your brain to organize sounds in predictable ways. So sound is ultimately how we transmit the groove.

**MD:** Is touch synonymous with sound?

**Benny:** Touch produces sound, but sound is where it all comes into action. You can think about something and feel it, but it has to be transmitted into sound, or else it isn't music. That's the difference between noise and music. Music has a certain organization and intent of sound. Otherwise, we hear it as noise.

**MD:** You've changed your sound a bit. What's the new aesthetic?

**Benny:** The band Moving Parts changed my setup. We moved into more electronic soundscapes, and we have a huge dynamic

range, from subtle jazzy stuff to nastier sounds. I needed sharper hi-hat sounds with different tone heights to get an electronic aesthetic, and I wanted a different trash sound. I realized I didn't need three toms anymore, so I only use two. And I wanted to have a 20" bass drum, because it allows me to travel back and forth between jazz and the heavier stuff.

**MD:** What about the deep side snare?

**Benny:** I always mess around with my snare. I like it tuned very low, and I can take it way up. I wanted to have both sounds, so I use two of my signature snares and tune them completely differently. The main snare is quite high, and the second drum is deeper for a more electronic sound.

**MD:** What was the concept behind Moving Parts?

**Benny:** The concept was to have a band that can evolve together, play live, and go on tour. I've always played with other people, but my solo stuff was more like side projects, and they ended up staying mostly in the studio. *Grebfruit* is an example of that, where I sang and played everything on it. My second album, *Brass Band*, was with a band that played a couple gigs, but we never went on tour.

I produced the next album, *Two Day Trio*,

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## Benny Greb

very differently. Instead of me being totally German about everything—controlling, planning, and writing every note—we went into the studio for two days with no preparation. We improvised and recorded, so whatever came out came out. I was happy with the result, and I played differently because of it. I could just be the drummer again, because I didn't have to focus on the writing.

Then I was like, "I need a band that I write for but with guys that are great composers, arrangers, and bandleaders themselves, so

there's a level of understanding." I found those guys in England, Kit Downes and Chris Montague, and the synergy was great. I didn't want to do a jazz trio. I wanted improvisation in there, but I wanted to use more electronic vocabulary.

**MD:** How are you writing the material?

**Benny:** I do demos and send them to the guys, or I write the main parts and themes and we arrange things together. There are a couple songs on the album that developed during a jam, which was very rewarding. We came up with ideas as a group that none of

us would have come up with by ourselves.

**MD:** How was the album recorded? Was it live?

**Benny:** Everything was done live in a small room with a lot of bleed and no editing. There's one song that has a backwards guitar part that's done with a loop pedal, but it's created on the spot.

**MD:** Were you influenced by groups like the Wayne Krantz Trio to create this band?

**Benny:** Yeah. I'm very impressed with what the New York jazz scene has done in the last couple of years with the electronic aesthetic. What I love about what they're doing is that they not only attack form, melody, and chords, but they also make tempo and subdivision a subject to explore in improvisation. That idea was demonstrated first in the electronic scene, but for drummers to incorporate those things is something I find super-interesting. That can be seen with guys like Mark Guiliana, Jojo Mayer, and Zach Danziger.

**MD:** Who are some of your other influences?

**Benny:** I like the band Troika a lot, which is a bit avant-garde. Their music makes you think differently and breathes freedom, in a sense. But I also love improvised piano music. Especially when I play a lot, I like to listen to stuff without drums.

**MD:** Bringing it back to the DVD, the next chapter is on the body. Do you find that the ideas discussed in this section, like posture and tension, are the easiest for people to understand?

**Benny:** I can't say that one thing is easier than the others. But the ideas in the body chapter are the easiest to *discard*, because sometimes people think they're so basic. But if you really keep your breathing in a loop through a fill, the fill will automatically be in the same flow as the groove. It's miraculous. A lot of it is common sense, but if you put them into context with all the other concepts it can have a great effect on your groove.

**MD:** So it's important to combine the exercises from all the chapters in the DVD.

**Benny:** Right. These are all things you can do with your own repertoire. It's not restricted to specific exercises, like the paradiddle. You'll find yourself on the drumset doing what you always do and then thinking, *Maybe I should put my shoulders back, or Where is the subdivision?* These things will come to mind after you're alerted to them, and they'll inevitably change what you're doing. But it does work best to focus on one element at a time and *then* combine them.

**MD:** The most deceptively difficult exercises

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## Benny Greb

in the DVD are in the mind chapter, where you talk about pressing an imaginary mute or solo button to isolate what each limb is playing. How do those exercises improve your groove?

**Benny:** First off, it's a very practical independence exercise. It's important to remember that independence exercises don't have to sound like you're throwing the drumset down the stairs. [laughs] Independence is also being able to change the dynamic of the hi-hat pattern without affecting the rest of the groove. Many

people think they can do that, but then the snare changes a little bit and the groove isn't sounding exactly how you want. So it's important to have the ability to do that.

But when talking about the mind aspect of groove, because we deal with muscle memory, we often do things on autopilot. Sometimes that's great, but if something about the groove isn't right, you need the ability to put yourself back in the driver's seat and listen to how the ghost notes are interacting with the hi-hat, for example, so you can make adjustments.

Ask someone to play the beat to the Toto song "Rosanna," but have them leave out every second ghost note. There are fewer notes, so it should be easier, right? It's not, because your muscle memory has the entire thing saved as one piece of information. When you try to change it, it suddenly becomes a whole new thing. So to really become flexible with what you're playing is very handy, and the first step to get that is to be able to listen to and isolate the parts one at a time.

**MD:** You conclude the mind chapter by talking about being able to run through an entire song mentally. How does that improve your groove?

**Benny:** Your musicianship and your groove happen in the now. But most of us think about things that are coming up in a few bars, or we get distracted by something we messed up that's already passed. So who's really playing at that moment? You're not able to put everything you have into it, because you're worried about the form, which takes a lot away from your psychological bandwidth to be able to groove and to be emotionally present in the moment. If you're able to sing through the entire set list of your band, your psychological bandwidth opens up so you can play to your fullest potential.

That's why some people sound great in the practice room but don't sound so great on the bandstand. That happens because different things grab your attention. Maybe the bass player is looking at you weird, or there's a water bottle falling over, or the monitor sound is bad.... You have all of these other things taking over your focus, so you don't have all of your capabilities available to do what you could do in the practice room. It's important to pay attention to everything else on the bandstand, but you need preparation for that. One way is to really know the form of what you're playing.

**MD:** It comes down to knowing the repertoire on an instinctual level.

**Benny:** It's a matter of: What do you need your capabilities for most in that moment? If you're unsure of the form, your resources will go down and your groove will suffer. Also, it sets you up for a more musical way of playing, rather than thinking about slipping in more ghost notes or whatever. You get out of the drummer mentality and into the musician state because you're focused on arranging the song and pacing yourself to convey the right emotions, which is basically our job.

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# Dirk Verbeuren

**He describes himself as meticulous. Anyone who's a fan of his remarkably detailed drumming with Soilwork or the Devin Townsend Project—and there are many of you—will find no surprise there. But what you might not know is how happily he courts imperfection. Could this be the secret to the metal master's success? Turns out it's only one of them.**

Story by David Ciauro  
Photos by Hannah Verbeuren

In the '90s, as heavy metal splintered into dozens of subgenres, a need was established for players who could come into any setting, from thrash to extreme tech metal, and nail the session with power, efficiency, and authenticity. Enter Dirk Verbeuren.

The Belgian-born drummer's pro credits were established in 1994 with Scarve, a highly advanced "new-age death metal" band that was among the first to employ a dirty/clean tandem-lead-singer lineup. From there Verbeuren parlayed his abundant skills into a busy career as a session musician, appearing on notable releases by Mortuary, Aborted, Sybreed, and the Devin Townsend Project, among others. In 2005 Dirk officially joined the

Swedish melodic death metal outfit Soilwork, with which he can be heard and seen on the brand-new *Live in the Heart of Helsinki* audio/video package. And when he's not on tour, he can generally be found at his own Die Crawling studio, recording drum tracks for freelance projects.

Verbeuren's work extends beyond performance; in addition to offering private lessons as well as a series of subscription educational videos, the drummer has collaborated with Toontrack on a handful of popular metal software sample libraries. Taken together, these projects make him the very picture of the modern metal musician.



**MD:** You've managed to make yourself a viable brand. What propelled you to examine drumming as a business model?

**Dirk:** Declining record sales probably had something to do with it at the start. But over the years I've learned that the more entrepreneurial you are with your craft, the more you'll work. I like going on tour and having the flexibility to do so, but at the same time it's not enough for me to survive.

Technology is the other component. I have my own studio, which is a very minimal setup in a small room—just an electronic kit and a computer—but it allows me to work a lot. It also allows me to work with people that maybe don't have budgets to record in the traditional setting of an acoustic studio.

**MD:** And these days geography is no longer a deal-breaker.

**Dirk:** Exactly. It's really amazing. In the past few years I've worked with people from all over the world, which is fun because you get to enjoy discovering different musical styles. With Soilwork too—although we love jamming together, we're spread across the globe. So in recent years we've been mostly emailing songs in preparation for recording. Then we'll get together a few weeks before heading into the studio to flesh out ideas or come up with some new ideas. It's limiting to just do email with the bands you're a permanent member in, because nothing replaces being in the same room together.

**MD:** Your website, [dirkverbeuren.com](http://dirkverbeuren.com), is very well designed. It comes across as professional, as opposed to self-important. Do you feel that self-promotion is a difficult area to navigate in terms of standing out from the crowd without seeming obnoxious?

**Dirk:** I have to give a lot of credit here to my wife, Hannah. I used to think it would be cocky to have my name as a website, but she convinced me that it was important to open my mind to that side of the business. Now it's come to the point where if you want to work, you have to make yourself into a brand and operate as a company. I'm a very meticulous person. What I put out needs to be appealing. It needs to look good and sound good, and it should reflect the professionalism that I put into every recording I do.

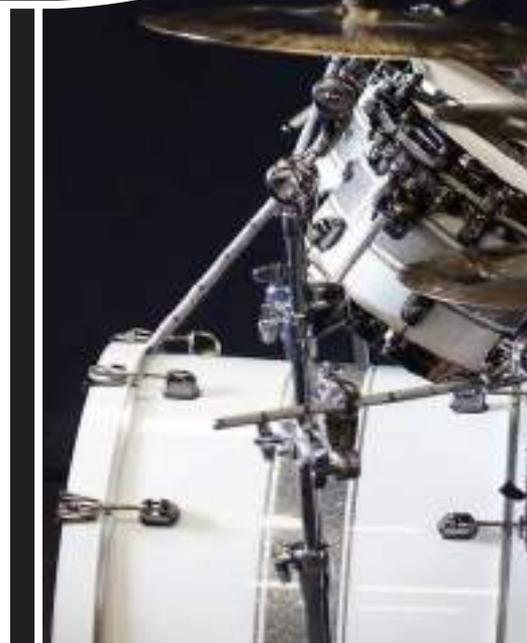
I record everything on an electronic kit, and although it's easy to "cheat" with editing, for me it's a question of honor to know I can play everything I record. I don't play for five minutes and then spend time editing the rest until it sounds good. That would make it impossible for me to be



proud of it. The website, I think, reflects the professionalism I want to project.

**MD:** Do your online lessons discuss the importance of knowing the business as well as you know your craft?

**Dirk:** Definitely. It's important to find the balance, especially for upcoming musicians. There are still a few bands that are breaking through, but it's becoming more and more difficult to stand out. I tell my students that they have amazing tools at their fingertips—YouTube and SoundCloud, for example—that allow you the opportunity to show the world something you did. In the early '90s, when I started doing music professionally, these tools didn't exist. We sent cassette tapes to fanzines in Indonesia; everything was traditional mail. You have to find the right edge between selling yourself too overtly and keeping true to yourself. This is something that can shine



through with how you go about producing your videos.

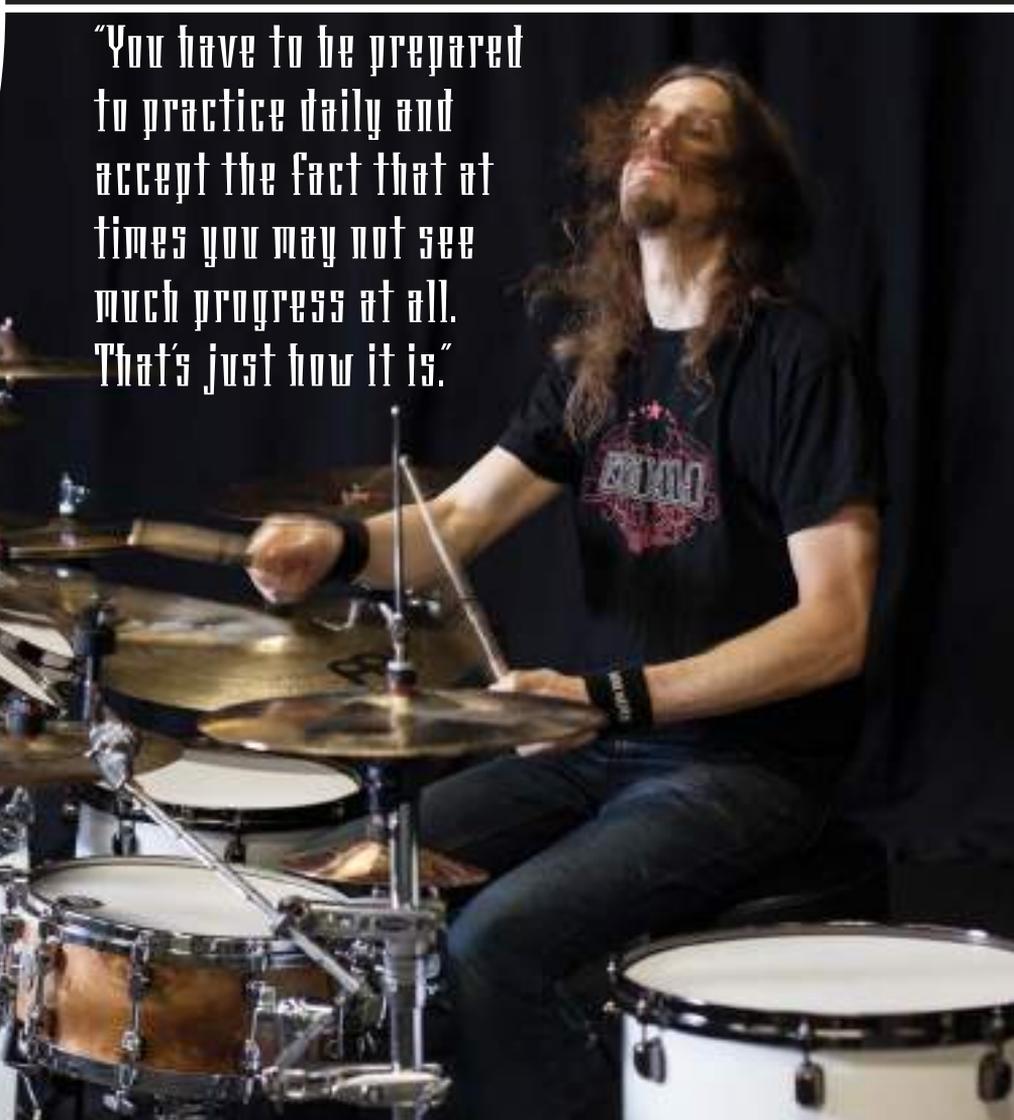
**MD:** Let's talk a little about the online lessons you're offering through your website. Describe some of the content that's available and how it works.

**Dirk:** People can subscribe for a year. You get two videos each month with PDFs, as well as access to my private Facebook page, which is just for my students, where they can comment on the lessons, make suggestions, ask questions, etc. I cover everything from technique and exercises to working with e-drums—learning how to set them up, recording with them, and using the software. I also cover how to write sheet music and charts, and I offer advice on the business side: marketing, self-promotion, professionalism, etc. It covers a broad spectrum.

**MD:** Can you give an example of how one



"You have to be prepared to practice daily and accept the fact that at times you may not see much progress at all. That's just how it is."



**Drums:** Tama Starclassic Maple in silver snow racing-stripe finish (in Sweden; uses Starclassic Performer Bubinga/Birch in the U.S.)

- A. 5.5x14 Starphonic Maple snare (for the studio; uses 4x14 Artwood live)
- B. 14x16 floor tom
- C. 8x10 tom
- D. 9x12 tom
- E. 12x14 floor tom
- F. 18x22 bass drum

**Cymbals:** Meinl

- 1. 8" Classics Low Bell
- 2. 14" Mb20 Heavy Soundwave hi-hats
- 3. 14" Generation X Trash Hat (used as China)
- 4. 12" Mb20 Rock splash
- 5. 17" Heavy crash
- 6. 19" Heavy crash
- 7. 10" Mb20 Rock splash
- 8. 20" Heavy crash
- 9. 14" Byzance Dark hi-hats
- 10. 22" Mb20 Heavy Bell ride
- 11. 18" Classics Custom Extreme Metal China

**Heads:** Evans, including G2 Coated snare and tom batters (in the studio; uses Hybrid and EC2 SST models live) and GMAD bass drum batter

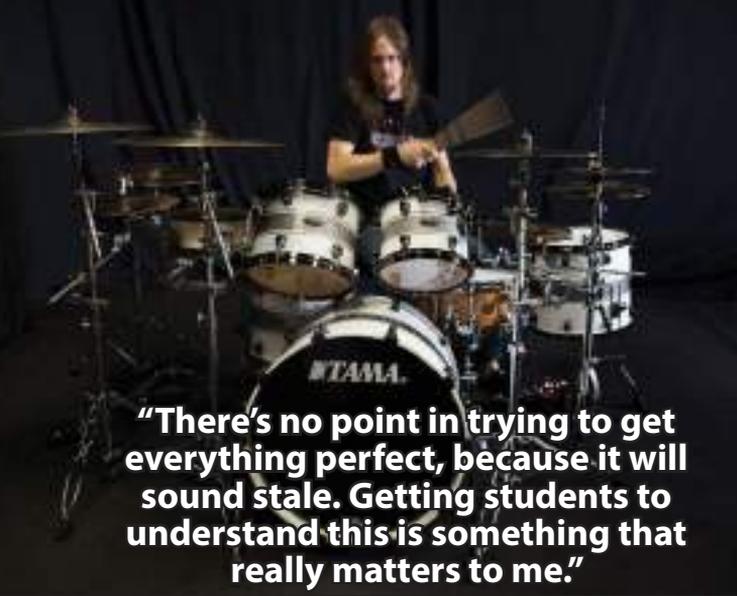
**Hardware:** Tama, including Speed Cobra Midnight Special double pedal

**Sticks:** Tama Dirk Verbeuren Signature model

**Accessories:** dB Groove shoes, Tama gloves, Alien Ears in-ear monitors

## Die Crawling Studio Setup

Roland V-Drums TD-10, Rain Ion computer, Steinberg Cubase/Nuendo DAW, Toontrack Superior Drummer 2 software with Toontrack EZX expansion packs



**“There’s no point in trying to get everything perfect, because it will sound stale. Getting students to understand this is something that really matters to me.”**

of your videos covers that span of content?

**Dirk:** For example, if a video is about recording, I remind my students that we’re human—we’re not perfect. Sometimes little mistakes can make for the perfect take when it comes to recording. There’s no point in trying to get everything perfect, because it will sound stale. If that’s what you’re going for, you might as well just program the drums. Getting the students to understand this is something that really matters to me. There are so many productions right now that are so polished that kids growing up listening to these records think drums aren’t dynamic. Kids need to remember that the production value doesn’t necessarily represent what you actually sound like when you’re playing drums.

Also, if you don’t want to get screwed over in this business and want to make smart decisions in your career, you have to be well versed in all aspects of the music business. With Soilwork, I’m very involved in the business end of the band. I know how a tour works, what a tour manager does, what a booking agent does, and how to deal with those people. Truth is, if you’re not aware of how these things work, you’ll get thrown around. You can’t rely on being lucky enough to fall into the hands of the right people that will treat you well. It’s not just about being a drummer anymore; you need to really get involved in everything else. That takes a lot of personal initiative, which is not something everybody has.

**MD:** How did you get started on the drums?

**Dirk:** I started out basically playing along to records and jamming with friends. But when I finished high school I told my parents that I wasn’t really interested in anything other than music. So they sent me to a school in the northeast of France called Music Academy International, which is similar to Musicians Institute. I studied nonstop for a

year and a half, learning all different genres and styles.

Education has been a huge part of making me who I am as a drummer. Before this experience, I had only been playing for a few years, and I already felt stuck as a drummer. Studying with people from different backgrounds opened me up to unfamiliar styles and techniques.

**MD:** What’s your main teaching point in terms of improving players’ technique?

**Dirk:** One of the biggest things to understand is that it’s going to take a lot of time to master certain things. Some recurring questions I get are “How can I get my double bass faster?” and “How do I master blast beats?” When I started, it was the early years of blast beats, and the bpm’s were slower. It seemed fast at that time, but now drummers are playing so fast, it’s almost ridiculous.

You can’t just wake up one morning and play like Derek Roddy or George Kollias. That takes an immense amount of time, work, patience, perseverance, and talent. “Patience, practice, perseverance” is a mantra that I use to help me through frustrating periods. When I was studying jazz, some of that stuff took me a lot of time just to master the basics, and it was very frustrating at times. But it paid off, because now I incorporate what I learned into my playing to spice it up and make it sound different. You have to be prepared to practice daily and accept the fact that at times you may not see much progress at all. That’s just how it is.

**MD:** You obviously have a lot of experience now with e-drums. Were you already familiar with them before you began working with Toontrack?

**Dirk:** Before I started working with Toontrack I had never played electronic drums in my life, so it was a big adjustment. It feels very different, and you have to get all the parameters set where the drums respond in a manner that represents how you play on an acoustic kit. I spent a lot of time getting my settings right. Since I only play e-drums in my studio, when I go on the road with Soilwork on my acoustic kit, I get

shell-shocked. [laughs] My body isn’t used to [playing so hard], and two songs into the set my fingers are cramping up and my shoulders are hurting. I tend to have that issue. I do get a little bit lazy behind the e-drums, because I don’t have to attack the drums in the same way I do my acoustic kit.

**MD:** How much of an impact has the Toontrack software had on your career?

**Dirk:** It’s definitely been a huge blessing. I haven’t had the chance to live in a place where I could easily set up acoustic drums, let alone have a studio. I also don’t know anything about different microphones and compressors, etc. The Toontrack software is real easy to use and sounds great from the get-go. It’s allowed me to make a living off of drumming; without it, I wouldn’t be doing a bunch of the sessions I’m doing. I’m very happy I spent the time to learn it. It’s amazing software.

**MD:** When you complete a track, do you EQ it at all, or do you send raw files?

**Dirk:** I send everyone raw files, just the same as it would be if it were done on acoustic drums. I make sure everything is good as far as the velocities go, because that’s one of the hardest things to get right when playing e-drums. I always talk with the artist about who’s producing it to find out if they’re familiar with e-drum recordings, and I try to find out any particulars the producer would want from me. Sometimes I’ll add some EQ, but usually it’s a raw file.

**MD:** How long does it typically take you to track a song once you receive it?

**Dirk:** Of course it depends on the style of music. Some songs are a lot more work than others, but it can be anywhere from a couple hours to an afternoon or evening. The next day I’ll go through it and make sure all the velocities are okay, and I’ll remove any double triggers or pollution that comes naturally with e-drums. Over time I’ve developed a good sensibility for



Per Burström

This past February, Verbeuren recorded drum tracks for the next Soilwork album at Ghost Ward Studio in Stockholm, Sweden. “I proceeded a little differently than usual,” he tells MD. “I used two kick drums for the first time since my early years as a drummer. And I did only full takes on this recording, something I hadn’t done in a while.” The album, untitled as of press time, is due in September.

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## Dirk Verbeuren

connecting with the groove of the song. Some people send me programmed drum tracks and want very specific things, while other people send me raw drum tracks or just guitar and tell me to play whatever I want. It varies, but I think it's helped me grow as a drummer.

**MD:** You've also done some touring work as a hired gun. You played some shows with the Norwegian black metal band Satyricon on pretty short notice. That seems like a difficult task to pull off. How did you prepare?

**Dirk:** Yeah, that was very interesting. It was very short notice, and also very specific, because [vocalist/multi-instrumentalist] Satyr wanted the drum parts to be very close to how Frost plays. Luckily I'm familiar with the band. I've listened to them for a long time, and I know how Frost sounds. He has his own style, and I tried to emulate it.

I had two days from when I got the call to when I had to leave to go join them for the shows. I basically played drums for two days straight, studying the parts as much as I could. And I made sheet music for each song. That was the only way I could have done it, with all the cues and little changes between live versions and studio versions. It was something like sixteen songs, some

of which are seven or eight minutes long. It would have been impossible for me to do those shows without having charts. This is another big thing I put in my drum lessons. I learned how to write charts while at music school, and it's something I work on with my students. Knowing how to write charts can be the difference between getting a gig and not getting a gig.

**MD:** What information do you include on your charts?

**Dirk:** I do an outline of the song's structure on the left side of the page, and on the right side I'll write out any beats, cues, or stuff that's important for me to remember. I try to keep them as clear and condensed as possible, because I don't want to be reading a book on stage. I try to find a balance that works.

**MD:** What other projects do you have in the pipeline?

**Dirk:** Soilwork is recording a new album now. We just got a new management deal that we're real happy about. It's going to be good for us moving ahead, and we want to come out big with the next record. There was a good response to our last album, *The Living Infinite*, so it's time to step up our profile. This lineup has been together for a number of years now, we get along very well, and we're all on the same page creatively. We also have a new live DVD out, which we shot at a show in Helsinki with an extra-long set list.

Then there's Tronos, which is a project that's been in the works for a while. It was started by [Napalm Death bass player] Shane Embury and producer Russ Russell. They sent me some songs and asked me to play drums on them, and they were stoked with what I played. They also invited a bunch of other people to play on it, like bassists Billy Gould [Faith No More] and Troy Sanders [Mastodon]. It's not at all grindcore. It's very dark, atmospheric music, but it's one of those projects that takes time to get off the ground because of everyone's schedules.

**MD:** Your approach to doing fill-in dates and how you go about managing your session work must lead to getting referrals.

**Dirk:** Yes. For example, all the guys in Satyricon have tons of other projects going on, and as soon as I got home, I got a gig with a band that's related to one of the guys. I'm also working on a project with one of the guys in Satyricon that's just getting underway.

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# AARON STERLING

Story by Robin Tolleson  
Photos by Alex Solca

**In an era when the concept of the studio drummer is constantly being redefined—and even questioned—the player who’s tracked for artists including Taylor Swift, Sara Bareilles, the Civil Wars, and John Mayer has made no bones about embracing the role one hundred percent. (Okay, maybe with the rare exception...)**

**M**arketing. Branding. Setting goals and seeing things through. These are skills that don’t always come naturally, but honing them can make all the difference to the career of a musician with burning aspirations—like Aaron Sterling. “I’m talking about training people to perceive you in a certain way,” Sterling says. “I tried to train my focus on a specific thing that I really wanted to do. I took [some] gigs just to meet a producer or a bass player who was a little bit busier than me and try to get on some session with him. That was always the goal.”

Sterling grew up in Nashville, the son of arranger/producer Robert Sterling and session singer Cindy Sterling. He started playing drums at twelve years old in middle-school band, for no particular reason, but within weeks he was hooked. “It was over,” he recalls. “I couldn’t stop.”

After studying privately in Nashville with JD Shuff (First Avenue Sound) and Dale Armstrong (Crystal Gayle, Marian McPartland, Kenny Burrell) and getting a glimpse of Music City’s studio scene, Sterling attended the Berklee College of Music for a year, decided that live performing wasn’t for him, and chose to become a session drummer in Los Angeles. Hundreds of sessions later, he’s able to pick his projects more and more carefully. Recently Sterling recorded tracks for John Mayer’s upcoming album—spending five days in the studio side by side with the legendary Jim Keltner—and even broke character, going on his first world tour with the guitarist. “I’m kind of expanding things a little bit,” Aaron says.

Most of the time, however, he can still be found working simultaneously on a handful of projects at his home studio in Los Angeles, Sound of Sterloid. “A song for this guy, three songs for this girl—there’s always things going on,” Sterling says. “I’m doing a lot of drum tracks at my studio, a lot of writing and producing....” You know, the usual: making things happen. It’s a mindset, it turns out, that the drummer learned early on.



**Aaron:** I was definitely raised in a musical household, specifically one where they make money doing music. It's not as daunting to figure out how to make a living doing it when you grow up seeing two people already doing that.

**MD:** So you were used to seeing sheet music spread all over the piano at home, for instance.

**Aaron:** There would definitely be music on the piano, and then, as I got a little older, my father started getting Digital Performer and programs like that. He produced records and did a lot of arranging and orchestrating, and he would work at home too.

**MD:** Do you believe that exposure influenced your thinking in terms of arrangements?

**Aaron:** Oh, yeah. You know, I think one strong suit I have—I have plenty of weaknesses, so I might as well talk about things I'm good at—is arranging and understanding concepts of arrangements. You could argue that it's a genetic thing, or you could say what you're kind of getting at, that it could have just been drummed into my brain, no pun intended. Saturday morning I'd be watching cartoons, hanging around the house like kids sometimes do, and hear the same figures over and over again for hours—hearing a person working on just one line or trying to figure out what to do with those four bars of music. I'd hear this progression in a person's mind, moving on to another part of the music.

Sometimes my father would do full-on orchestral things—strings and horns—and you would hear the progression of that. And yeah, maybe that helped me get used to the idea of form and what that is, and different shapes that song forms can take.

**MD:** What kind of music did you like to listen to growing up?

**Aaron:** I got obsessed with a lot of '60s and '70s jazz-fusion, that whole movement, all the typical guys. But I eventually discovered a lot of music that was definitely *not* about the amount of notes, like albums on the ECM label. Elvin Jones and Tony Williams and the Mahavishnu Orchestra all led me to this or that weird ECM record. I ended up basically listening to Keith Jarrett solo piano records for two or three years. I was hardcore into the ECM thing at that age, after three years of being obsessed with all the typical drummers that you'd imagine a person would be obsessed with.

I also listened to all the pop radio of the '80s and '90s, buying CDs, studying everything, actively trying to prepare for a studio career. I knew I needed to know everything, so that's how I spent my high school career.

**MD:** The idea of moving to L.A. to break into the studio scene can be daunting. What was your formula?

**Aaron:** The one thing I try to tell people is that, whatever your focus is, maybe tighten up that focus even more. I don't mean that you should close off other options in the world, but if you're too open to everything, sometimes nothing happens. I know this can be misconstrued—I'm not talking about positivity. What I mean is, a lot of guys move to this town and say, "I want to do sessions, and I want to tour, and I want to do local gigs..." It's like, man, I'm already overwhelmed by all the things you want to do, just hearing that.

People need to define you. I don't know if that's human nature or if that's just the music business, but whether you like it or not, people are going to pigeonhole you, and you need to take full advantage of that instead of trying to fight it. And if you come out here and say, "I really want to get a tour" and

stop there, you might end up getting something that's not a tour—but at least you've planted a seed in somebody's brain, which is, "This guy wants a tour."

When I moved out here, I was nineteen, and I made it clear to people that what I wanted to do was sessions. That's what I came here for, that's what I want to do, and that's what I think I'm best at. I knew I had a ton to learn, but I also knew that's what I'm good at. I was better at that than getting on stage, because I had a lot of social anxiety. I've never been in a band for even a day. It's just not my thing. I think that helped me get to where I've gotten, because I was hyper-focused on this one thing.

I didn't close myself off; I just helped focus other people, potential clients, that this is what I'm good at. And that makes people say, "Maybe this guy is good at that. That's all he wants to do, and that's all he *does* do. Okay, he's clearly the guy to hire." That's how it worked for me. It's not like I only did sessions, but I just drilled it into people's heads: "I'm going to be a session player. Hire me for sessions. Trust me, you'll love it."

**MD:** Were there particular sessions that opened things up for you?

**Aaron:** Yeah, there were. One was a Korean pop thing. I had been doing this church gig every Sunday for a couple years, all in Korean—nobody spoke English. This guy comes up to me and says he would love to have me play on a session. I thought, *Fantastic, I'm in*. And then he explained to me, "The usual drummer, Vinnie Colaiuta, can't make it." I'm about twenty-two and thinking, *Oh, crap, this is a whole other thing*. It was *the guys*, the session musicians that I grew up listening to—Mike Landau on guitar, Greg Mathieson on keys, Luis Conte on percussion, this whole team that he used—and Vinnie couldn't do it, so he threw me a bone. That was a cool session because I got to meet [bassist] Abe Laboriel and all these guys, and they were really cool to me. That helped me get into that circle.

There's all these different little circles of people out here, and I try to get into as many as possible. Those circles kind of start

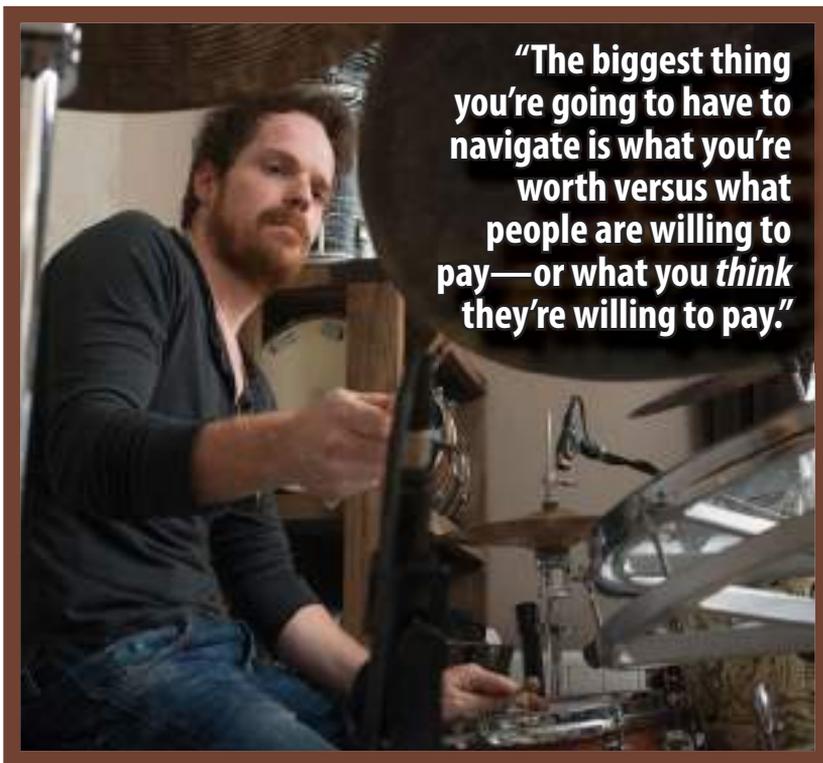


**"People need to define you, whether you like it or not. You need to take full advantage of that instead of trying to fight it."**

cohabitating, and you find that this guitar player who was on the hipster session is doing the jingle session over in Santa Monica, and you think, *Oh, I didn't realize he did that too*. There were a bunch of different sessions like that that helped me meet a lot of people.

**MD:** When you're starting out, can you name your price? Or do you pretty much have to just get your foot in the door?

**Aaron:** Sometimes I wonder if half of my career has been spent thinking about that question. Man, that's the biggest thing you're going to have to navigate: what you're worth versus what people are willing to pay—or what you *think* they're willing to pay. Are you the person who says, "I'm X amount of dollars—take it or leave it"? Or are you the guy who's going to be the whole other extreme, like,



**“The biggest thing you’re going to have to navigate is what you’re worth versus what people are willing to pay—or what you *think* they’re willing to pay.”**

“Whatever you’ve got, bro, I’ll do it”? And I’ve worn all of those hats and every hat in between. The problem in the business and the thing that you have to navigate is that you mean something different to everybody.

**MD:** In terms of session drumming, are there certain players that you listen to for inspiration?

**Aaron:** There are so many people. All those usual suspects—Jeff Porcaro, Vinnie Colaiuta, JR Robinson, those L.A. guys. I loved how those guys had their own sound, but you could hear that they were also trying to serve the song. The thing I’ve always loved about Vinnie is this constant compromise—the *healthy* compromise—of figuring out how to be yourself but serve somebody else’s song. It’s not your song; you didn’t write it. Help this person. Do what’s right for that person, but also have your personality there. Clearly Vinnie does things that I’ll never be able to do, but that’s not really what I

love. I love that there’s this kid inside that’s just dying to do all this crazy stuff, but he knows he can’t do it all the time.

I just like the idea of somebody saying, “Hi, you’ll be working for me today. This is a song I wrote, and I really want it to be as good as it could be. Is there something you can do to help me with that?” That’s my thing.

**MD:** You play with a lot of vocalists. Do you enjoy it when you’re there with them on a session and hearing the vocal tracks? There must also be times when you don’t even know what the vocal might be.

**Aaron:** Man, I try to listen to the vocal more than anything in a song. I just love it. And anything I do, I want to support that. When they’re singing with me, it’s an amazing feeling, very different from just playing to a track. So yeah, the energy of a singer is an awesome thing.

Now, I can’t always do this, because I’ve got to make money, but I try my best to tell people, “I don’t want to play on your song if you don’t send me a vocal.” If they haven’t finished writing the song and they’re just looking to experiment and have me play on something and try to create the song around that, that’s a little different. That’s a cool approach, and I’m open

to that. But sometimes people send me finished songs and they don’t send me the vocal, because the scratch vocal wasn’t good enough or something. I just say, “Listen, I don’t want to play on a song if I don’t even know what the most important element is.”

**MD:** You’ve now become a touring drummer as well, having gone out with John Mayer.

**Aaron:** A bassist I play with, Sean Hurley, got the gig playing live with John. John was planning to make another record, and he asked Sean to be a part of it. John had tried some drummers out, and Sean brought up my name and told him he should call me, and he did. So I went to New York, where we had three days booked at Electric Lady. The idea was that I work for three days, and if he hates me, then he pays me for three days and that’s that. But we really got along well.

**MD:** Mayer’s combination of sophisticated jazz harmonies and

## AARON’S KIT

“As a session player who’s constantly doing all sorts of different projects,” Sterling explains, “my kit is always dependent upon the song and the artist. I’ve been using the kit shown here a lot in my studio, and I’ll potentially be using it live in the future. It gives me the super-dead tom sound and the big, bright craziness that I get from the Rototom.”

The kit here is a U.S. Mercury set featuring an 8x12 tom, a 14x14 floor tom, and a 12x20 bass drum, with a 16” Rototom. Like all studio drummers, Sterling uses various snares; the one in our photos is a 5x14 Ludwig Acrolite.

Sterling plays Istanbul Agop cymbals “of all kinds, mostly 20” crashes and cymbals all over the kit. And all sorts of hats—lots of 15s.” Shown here are 14” 30th Anniversary hi-hats, a 20” Signature crash, a 22” Vezir ride, and a 19” Signature crash. Aaron’s heads of choice are Remo, and he uses Regal Tip sticks and DW hardware.

The electronics shown include a Synsonics drum machine, a Yamaha DD-5 drum machine, a Nord Drum module, and a Line 6 M9 multi-effects unit.





soulful, funky grooves is deep.

**Aaron:** As a drummer it's great—he has all of the same information that those top session guys have: a combination of skill level and knowledge. He's not a session musician—he's in the category of pop star or rock star—but he *is* a session musician. I'm telling you, at his core that's what the dude really is. But what I love about him is that he's also an artist and has something to say. That's what makes it such an amazing gig.

**MD:** What are some of your favorite

tracks that you recorded with John?

**Aaron:** I like the groove on “Queen of California,” the first song on the record *Born and Raised*. It's a very simple groove—anybody can do it—but I like how it fits with the guitar part. And maybe I have an emotional attachment to it, because we had just met and I like that we had this sort of interplay immediately. There's a lot of subtleties on the snare drum on that track that I like.

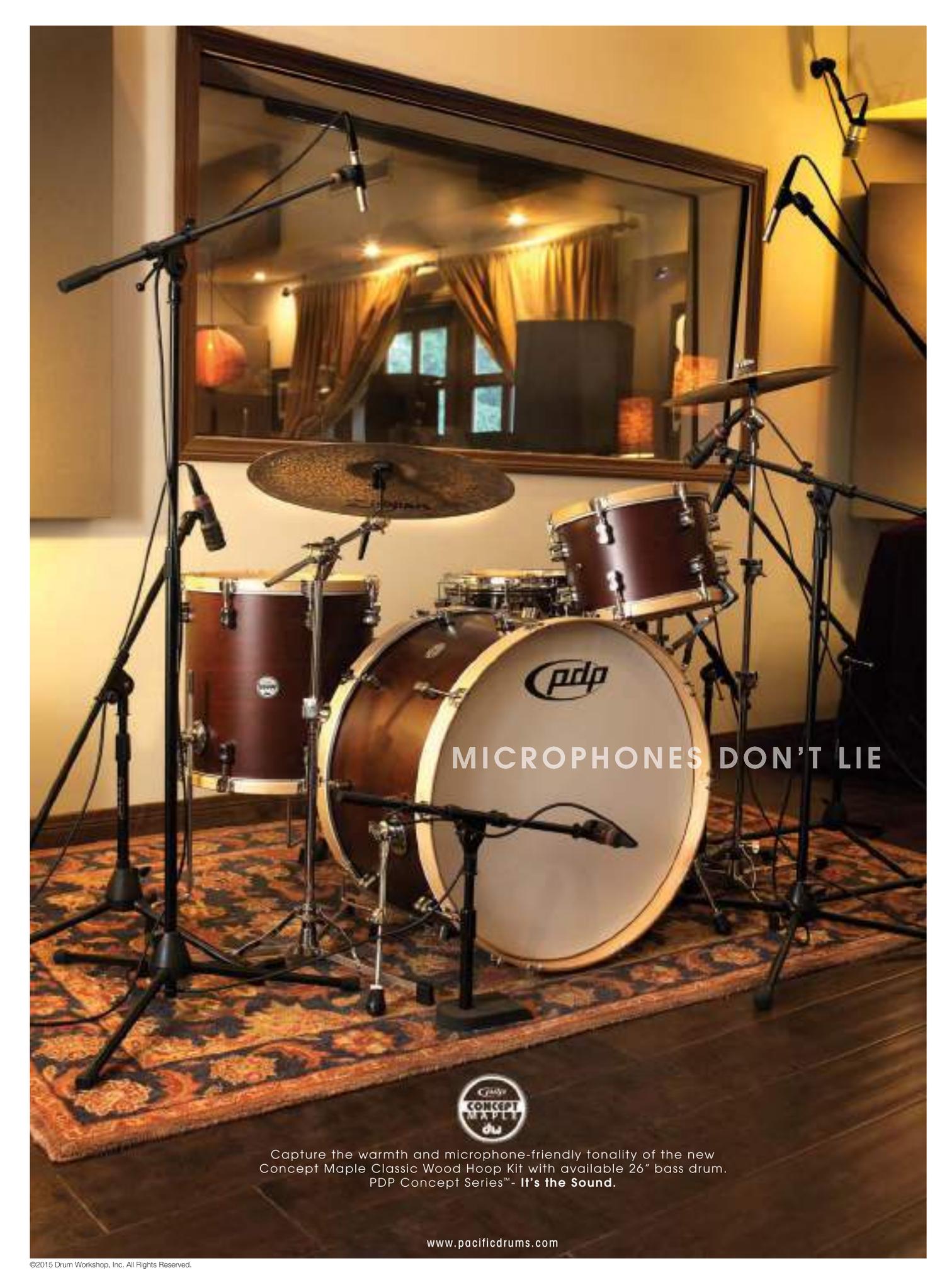
The first day was great, and we started on that song within, like, my first hour of meeting him. We just started playing, and that was some riff he started coming up with, and I started playing to that. I think most of the take of that song that's on the record is what we did three or four hours after meeting each other, and that's really cool. We tried to recut the song over the course of a year and a half, and just kept going back to that version. It wasn't to a click track, and I think he was wanting to do it to a click for some specific reasons—there were some things he was hoping to add—but we just kept that first thing we did. I ended up staying in New York on and off for four or five months, just going back and working on that record.

“Paper Doll” is on the second record that I did with John, *Paradise Valley*. That's a really cool song too, one that he and I did together. I like collaborating with him, and I'm the drummer on the track, but he's doing some other stuff on there that's really cool. He'll put a snare drum on his knees and play it like a banjo. He'll turn it around so that the snares are turning away from him and strum the snares with a pick. It's a really loud, annoying sound in the room, but if you mike it up appropriately and put it really low in the mix, it's a cool sound. People think it's an aggressive shaker or brushes. We created “Paper Doll” around that little pattern that he's doing.

And I really love the song “Who You Love,” which is also off *Paradise Valley*. That's a really simple groove, but I'm a sounds guy too, and a lot of why I like that one is that I love the sound of those drums. We added a little delay on there, to kind of give it an extra vibe.

I like all the songs I've recorded with John, but in terms of drum parts, I don't know.... I guess I'm proud of all the songs as a whole. It's hard for me to talk about certain tracks like that in a “drummery” way, because it's hard for me to separate the two, the song from the drum part. I don't know if any of that stuff exists well on its own. But it certainly works well for the song—I hope.





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## WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT...?

# Barry de Souza

He was ubiquitous in British studios during the '70s, a favorite of producers and artists for his elegance and efficiency—and occasionally for his ability to navigate some weird and wonderfully ambitious art-rock tracks. **Will Romano** investigates the life and work of a quiet giant of classic rock.



De Souza circa 1980

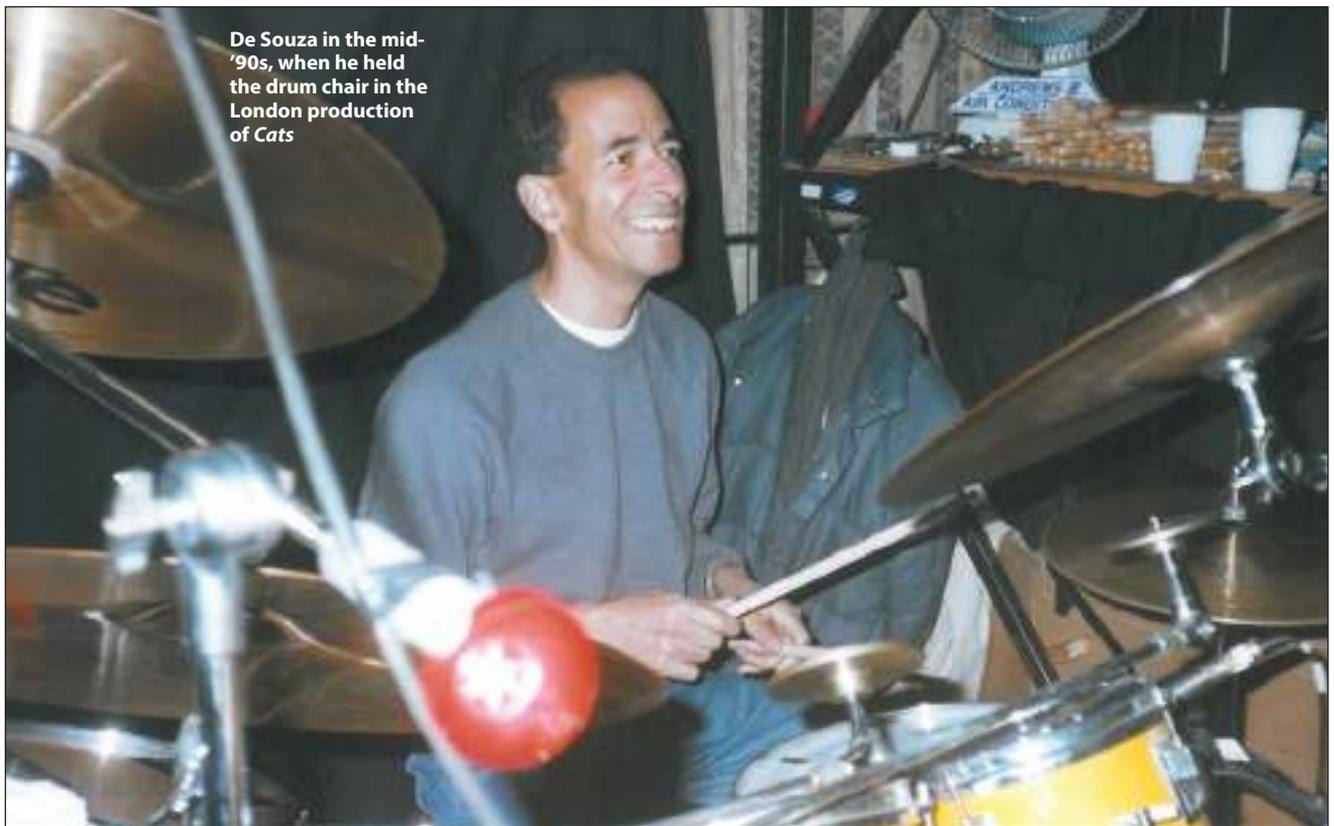
To paraphrase C.S. Lewis, humility isn't thinking less of yourself and your character, it's thinking of yourself less.

Sacrificing a bit of ego to help bolster various aspects of the music isn't bad career advice, and, ironically, some

drummers have made a name for themselves by consciously playing supporting roles. Few drummers, however, have embodied Lewis's statement—and its musical corollary, "serving the song"—more than Barry de Souza, an introverted man who let his

performances speak for themselves.

Producers, artists, and session "fixers" alike swore by de Souza's musical sensitivity, effortless grooves, and personal generosity, humility, and wit. A first-call session musician living in and around London, de Souza, who died in



De Souza in the mid-'90s, when he held the drum chair in the London production of *Cats*

2009, recorded and performed with Jeff Beck, Shawn Phillips, Rick Wakeman, Lou Reed, Kate Bush, and David Essex, among many others. Valued for his sharp musical instincts and up-for-anything nature, he could be found in unlikely places like Jeff Wayne's concept-album extravaganza *The War of the Worlds*, or backing Phil Collins for a television appearance in support of Collins' 1982 single "I Don't Care Anymore." Whatever the setting, de Souza could be relied on to bring the music to life in any number of ways.

"Some criticize session drummers for not having any feel," says conductor/arranger Martyn Ford, a friend of de Souza's who coordinated various sessions around London. "But once the '70s arrived, you had drummers like Barry, Bill Bruford, Stewart Copeland, Mike Giles, and Simon Phillips in the U.K. These guys were brilliant and quick."

"Barry kept time and grooved," renowned session guitarist and leader Ray Russell adds. "He made everyone feel very relaxed. He was selfless in that respect."

De Souza was a reliable and steady-handed player who in 1983, at the top of his game, won the drum chair for the West End production of *Cats*, a position

he held until the show went dark in 2002. "My mom described Dad's style as 'economical but sophisticated,'" de Souza's daughter, Danielle McDowell, says. "You could hear in his playing that he was listening," adds percussionist Nigel Shipway, a friend who worked with de Souza on *Cats* for nearly twenty years. "He was a drummer who was completely unafraid to accompany a singer or soloist. If it needed it, he would adjust the time to make the singer more comfortable with what was going on."

Notable restraint and an instinctual knack for weaving around a vocal line were encapsulated in what could be de Souza's most famous recorded performance, Marvin Hamlisch and Carole Bayer Sager's "Nobody Does It Better," sung by Carly Simon for the 1977 James Bond thriller, *The Spy Who Loved Me*.

"Some people say that Barry's time wasn't solid," Shipway says. "But he was listening and letting the singer stretch out. Elkie Brooks, Elaine Paige, Barbara Dickson—that generation of English singers *adored* Barry, because he gave them elbow room."

Pop star and matinee idol David Essex detected these characteristics early on. Scantly framed by little more than a kick drum, spare hi-hat patterns,

and triplets on the toms, Essex's 1973 smash hit, "Rock On," is a wonderfully quirky homage to '50s American popular music, featuring multitracked vocals and Herbie Flowers' bubbling bass line. "Barry's drumming style was an important part of the early Essex sound," the singer tells us via email. "Barry was a determined professional who became more outgoing and confident as we worked together."

De Souza may have been best known for his efficiency, but he wasn't averse to flashing his chops on occasion. Opening a virtual can of whup-ass, courtesy of roaring single-stroke rolls, intermittent tom strikes, and punctuating accents, he builds tension throughout the mercurial "Catherine Howard," from keyboard wizard Rick Wakeman's 1973 album, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*.

By the same token, de Souza seemingly had no qualms pushing the pedal to the metal for Shawn Phillips' 1974 symphonic folk-/jazz-rock release, *Furthermore*... On tracks such as the funky and boisterous "January First," the political "Ninety Two Years," and the instrumental "Plainscape," de Souza locks in with John Gustafson's driving bass notes and lets his hi-hat-centric grooves alternately simmer under and



propel Phillips' cross-genre ideas and four-octave voice. "Barry knew about deep pockets before most of us got around to buying the pants," Shipway says.

While much of de Souza's work has been well documented, some of it remains unrecognized or even in dispute. For example, there's some debate over whether the drummer performed on two iconic cuts from Lou Reed's 1972 album *Transformer*. (De Souza, John Halsey, and Ritchie Dharma are credited with drumming in the album's liner notes, but who played on which cuts is not specified.) "There are a few things on the album that he said to me he had played on," daughter Danielle recalls. "He always said it was he on tracks like 'Walk on the Wild Side' and 'Perfect Day.' I mean, we haven't got the proof, but with me he was pretty adamant."

Along the same lines, some of de Souza's work remains obscure. The post-*Jesus Christ Superstar* concept album *The Bible: A Rock Testament*, recorded by the controversial Family of Love (aka the Family International) and coproduced by Martyn Ford and Paul Buckmaster, was released through Polydor and distributed by Polygram, but it generated barely a blip on radars in the U.S. and the U.K. Sharing drum duties with boy wonder Simon Phillips, de Souza stresses economy of beats. "Dad was a very composed drummer who could make these enormous sounds just by moving his wrists," Danielle says.

A man of few words whose drumming was often minimalistic, de Souza simply got on with the job at hand and didn't open up about himself very often. It comes as no surprise that

details of his life are sparse and not widely known. Only upon further investigation does a skeletal biographical structure emerge.

De Souza was born in central London on March 29, 1946, was brought up in Camden, and eventually moved to Haringey, North London. The drummer's father, Yorke de Souza, a jazz pianist who arrived in the U.K. from Jamaica between World Wars, performed, most notably, with Fats Waller and Ken "Snakehips" Johnson. Barry played with his father on occasion and was even a member of a house band in a London casino before, the story goes, he broke into session work with the help of Martyn Ford and Rick Wakeman, the latter his bandmate in a group called the Spinning Wheel in the late '60s.

"Yorke was one of the Caribbean musicians who came over to England, I think, in the 1930s," Danielle says. "The jazz element of Dad's playing came from Yorke."

The mid and late '70s were de Souza's heyday as a session musician. He was receiving steady work, performing on film soundtracks and with artists ranging from David Essex to Justin Hayward of the Moody Blues, Kate Bush, and Kevin Ayers.

De Souza was inspired by many players, from Ed Thigpen to Steve Gadd and, later in the '80s and '90s, Dave Weckl. Nigel Shipway compares de Souza to late Sinatra drummer Irv Cottler, who, he says, "made a very good living leaving out the stuff that everybody else played. When we did jingles, Barry would take a snare drum and a cymbal. Every other drummer in the world would have taken the entire drumset. Barry had this unique way

of seeing what was needed, and it sounded absolutely right."

"Apart from having every single style under his fingertips, Barry could read," Martyn Ford adds.

Over time de Souza gained a reputation for both his rhythmic versatility and his personality. "Barry had a very expressive face," Shipway says. "He could say a million words with just lifting his left eyebrow. If something didn't sound quite right, he would give you the look. The next thing you knew, you were rolling around with laughter, because you knew exactly what he was thinking."

"He really did have a wry, dry sense of humor," Paul Buckmaster says.

It seems de Souza was also a bit of a prankster. In one memorable incident at a label event, he stealthily perpetrated a hilarious practical joke. "It was a record-release reception for the band Sailor," Ray Russell recalls. "They were running short of knives and forks, and we couldn't work out why. We realized that Barry was going around putting them in people's pockets. Everyone was walking around with these utensils on them."

In 1983, after more than a decade of consistent studio calls, sometimes involving multiple sessions per day, de Souza won the drum chair for the London production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's exceedingly popular musical *Cats*, a seat previously held by Jon Hiseman (Colosseum) and Graham Ward (Paul McCartney, Tom Jones). For years de Souza divided his time between the T.S. Eliot-inspired musical, session work, and performing in his home studio in Enfield, playing host to musicians such as Ray Russell and Danielle's godfather, the late

percussionist Morris Pert (Brand X, Mike Oldfield, Peter Gabriel).

"There are a lot of tapes around with Morris's name on them," Danielle says, "but they are in such bad condition that I couldn't rescue them. Lots of people went through that studio."

As time passed, advancements in recording technology and massive shifts in popular tastes changed the London professional recording landscape forever, drying up de Souza's prospects for session work. Trouble brewed at home as well, as the drummer and his wife, painter/composer/recording artist Zoë Kronberger, divorced in the early '90s. Kronberger started a new life in France, and de Souza moved to the outskirts of London, where he raised Danielle.

"It's difficult for me to gauge exactly how [the split] impacted Dad, because I was so young," Danielle explains. "He never remarried, and there was never really anyone serious after my mom. He had a regular job [with *Cats*] at the time, so I think that helped to keep his mind off of it."

The spring of 2002 was a turning point: *Cats* closed, having been seen by more than 8 million people in the West End alone, according to *Billboard* magazine, leaving de Souza to reevaluate his life. "After *Cats*, I think he felt as if the parade had passed him by," Shipway says. "Barry was never one to push himself to the front of the queue, which, to be honest with you, he should have done."

"A part of him really missed [session work]," Danielle says. "But I think he was quite happy to have it slow down."

De Souza had fairly quiet final years, spending them with his loved ones. "He got to meet his grandson—they had six months together," Danielle says. "I know that made him really happy. Dad even let my son have a go on his drumset."

On March 11, 2009, less than three weeks shy of his sixty-third birthday, de Souza succumbed to cancer. Years on, shockwaves emanating from his passing are still being felt. When *MD* spoke with Martyn Ford, he was so upset that he needed to pause during the interview to collect himself. In addition, Shipway keeps in his pocket Shakespeare's Sonnet 30, which was reprinted in London's *Daily Telegraph* just after de Souza's passing. The sonnet, Shipway says, which focuses on friendship, silent thoughts, and the

time when "all losses are restor'd and sorrows end," speaks volumes.

"The last two lines summed up everything I felt about Barry," Shipway, who shares a birthday with de Souza, says. "When you think of him you think of laughter and the raised eyebrows and never saying anything. Barry's communication was beyond words, and it was true musically and verbally."

Danielle asked close friends Martyn Ford and Ray Russell to speak at her dad's funeral, but both felt they were too devastated to deliver a coherent eulogy.

As it so happens, Herbie Flowers recounted anecdotes involving the drummer's life, Ford performed a pastoral piece on the French horn, and "Nobody Does It Better" was handpicked by Danielle to be played at the ceremony.

"The place was packed," Danielle remembers. "I knew Dad was successful and well regarded, but I almost didn't expect this. Dad was modest. To see all these things happening because of the work he did really opened my eyes."

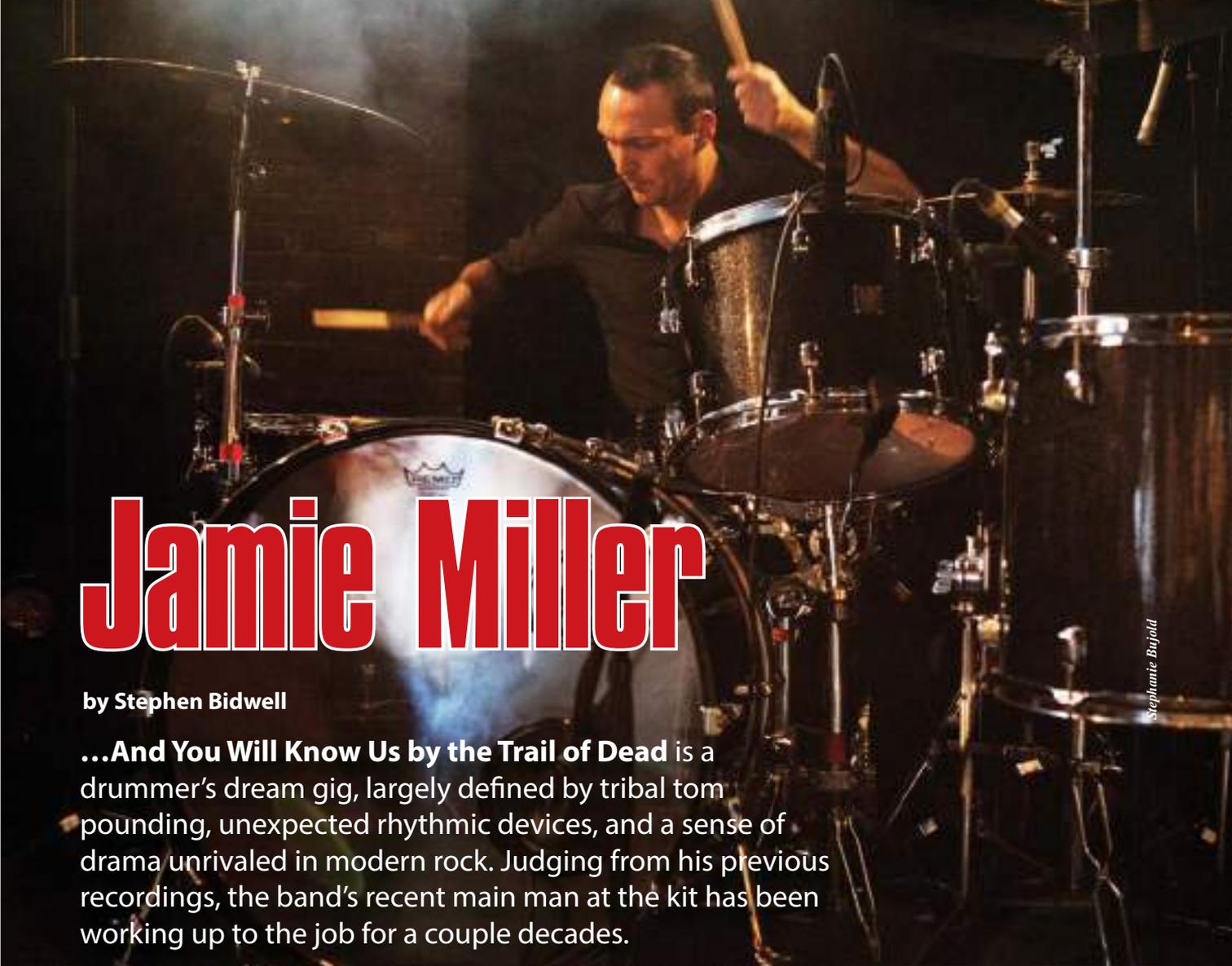


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# Jamie Miller

by Stephen Bidwell

...**And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead** is a drummer's dream gig, largely defined by tribal tom pounding, unexpected rhythmic devices, and a sense of drama unrivaled in modern rock. Judging from his previous recordings, the band's recent main man at the kit has been working up to the job for a couple decades.

**A** journeyman of heavy music since his migration from Baltimore to Santa Barbara in the early '90s, Jamie Miller has kept a full schedule with a variety of projects, not only as a drummer but as a producer and guitarist as well. You may know him from his early work in the '90s metal band Souls at Zero and the recently re-formed SoCal hardcore faves Snot, but if you haven't heard his current work with ...**And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead** or *Vanishing Life*, you've got some catching up to do.

**MD:** How did you connect with Trail of Dead?

**Jamie:** I've been with the band for about five years now. We've done two records together, *IX* and *Lost Songs*. They'd expanded to a six-piece, but the original lineup was four guys who switched instruments, and I think [leader/multi-instrumentalists] Jason Reece and Conrad Keely missed doing that. [Several other band members departed prior to Miller's

hiring.] They were looking around for someone who could play drums and guitar, and I guess my name was the first one that popped up on their radar.

**MD:** You're playing guitar live as well?

**Jamie:** I'm playing about 90 percent of the drums and adding guitar here and there.

**MD:** What's the recording process, since you're spread out so far geographically?

**Jamie:** We did the last album at a place called Sonic Ranch in El Paso. I live in Long Beach, Jason and bassist Autry Fulbright live in Austin, and Conrad lives in Cambodia. We'll demo at home any way we can, and then we get together in Austin for a few weeks and jam as a band.

**MD:** Live, Trail of Dead hits you like a train. On record, though—especially on the latest album, *IX*—a lot of subtleties come out.

**Jamie:** The idea was for the four of us to go into a studio, à la the Beatles' *Let It Be* movie, play together, and see what happens. The songs were born out of jams, but it wasn't like we were in a tiny

room with the amps on 10. It was more like, "Oh, we've got this chord progression—wow, it sounds cool on the piano."

**MD:** You worked with Austin-based producer Chris "Frenchie" Smith [the Darkness, Jet] on the Trail of Dead albums.

**Jamie:** Frenchie did some really neat stuff. We tracked drums in an enormous live room, and he miked up the drums with the same models and techniques they used on David Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust* album. That

## Tools of the Trade

Miller plays a Q Drum Co. set in the United States and a Kirchhoff kit in Europe, each featuring a 16x26 bass drum, a 10x14 tom, a 16x18 floor tom, and, on his left, a 16x16 concert floor tom. His snare is a 6.5x14 Ludwig Supraphonic. Miller's Sabian cymbals include 14" Paragon hi-hats, a 22" AA Medium ride, a 19" HHX X-Plosion crash, and a 20" HHX Evolution crash. His DW hardware includes a 5000 series single pedal that's been in use since 1997.

was sort of his touchstone for the record. Oddly, even though we were recording in this airplane hangar of a room, the drums are the driest they've ever been on a Trail of Dead record.

**MD:** The group has almost twenty years' worth of material at this point. What was the process of learning the catalog?

**Jamie:** When I joined the band, Conrad sent me a list of about thirty songs to learn, not specifying whether to learn them on drums or guitar. So I listened to each of them, and knowing how Jason plays the drums, I could recognize who played drums on which songs. I went through and guessed which songs I would play drums or guitar on, and I was pretty much right.

**MD:** That's one way to do the homework.

**Jamie:** It was really fun, as it made me listen to the music even deeper, because I had to say to myself, *I think this is going to be me on drums*. When you're trying to listen to a specific instrument, it makes you listen a lot closer.

**MD:** How did you come to the drums in the first place?

**Jamie:** My father's side of the family is all musicians, and he and my uncle had a band. Apparently I jumped on their drummer's kit at three years old. They thought it was their own drummer playing, turned around, and it was my dad's three-year-old son playing.

I just joined bands and played all the time, and I did school band in middle school, but other than that I've had no formal training. I can read music just from the little bit of training I got, though, so when I go to sessions I'm not completely lost.

**MD:** And what led you from Baltimore to L.A.?

**Jamie:** Sometime after high school we had a huge snowstorm, and I said, "I'm moving somewhere!" An old drummer friend of mine, Shannon Larkin, had moved out to California to join Ugly Kid Joe, and he suggested I come out and join another band, which ended up being Snot. So as soon as the snow melted, I jumped in my car, drove to Santa Barbara, and met the guys in Snot, and I've been here ever since.

**MD:** Who are some of your drumming influences?

**Jamie:** My favorite drummer is probably Budgie from Siouxsie and the Banshees. That's sort of my favorite band, and he's always been my favorite drummer. Whenever I hear one of their songs, I can hear his drumming and know that it's him. I love drummers like that. It's not necessarily that they have a signature sound, but rather a signature feel. Of course I love Stewart

## Tough to Pin Down

Jamie Miller's drumming can be heard on a diverse selection of recordings. Though Miller's an ace at fitting like a glove in each setting, consistent qualities come across after repeated listening: a muscular but unstrained feel, a penchant for slyly slipping in offbeats that keep the more basic patterns from becoming stagnant, precise but not overused hand/foot combinations, and uncommon but still pummeling tom rhythms. And Miller is happy to whip out a 32nd-note blitzkrieg when the spirit calls.

To hear an early example of the type of cool tom-based patterns that Miller would later explore on powerful Trail of Dead tracks like "Lost Songs," "Heart of Wires," and "A Million Random Digits," listen to "My Fault?" from Souls at Zero's 1995 album, *A Taste for the Perverse*. Following that band's dissolution, Miller joined the Santa Barbara act Snot. Though usually thought of as a hardcore act, Snot had a rare ease with shifting dynamics, giving the remarkable vocalist Lynn Strait tons of structural and emotional support. Miller provides rock-hard punk-funk grooves throughout the group's classic, but unfortunately only, full-length album, *Get Some* (Strait was killed in a car crash as they were working on new material), spewing out blistering fills and rubbery post-Chili Peppers grooviness all over the LP.

For further examples of Miller's flexibility, check out theStart's 2007 album, *Ciao, Baby*, which is closer in vibe to electro-pop architects like Missing Persons and Garbage than to any thrash or punk recording. Miller works the hi-hats and four-on-the-floor bass drum like a West Coast Clem Burke and squeezes lots of life out of the drum-machine-ish tones. Still another side of his playing personality can be heard on *Perdition Hymns* by the contemporary stoner-blues-rock group Night Horse, which runs the gamut from the Queens of the Stone Age-style desert riffage of "Rollin' On" and "Blizzard of Oblivion" to classic Allmans/Black Crowes territory on the 12/8 throwback "Same Old Blues" and the slightly shuffled steamer "Black Clouds." **Adam Budofsky**



Copeland and John Bonham and Buddy Rich. People think that's weird, but I'm a huge Buddy Rich fan.

**MD:** How did Vanishing Life come together?

**Jamie:** Autry from Trail of Dead was like, "Hey, man, we should start a punk band!" I think we had just seen Off! at a festival. Then we ran into Walter Schreifels [Quicksand, Rival Schools] and told him about this idea, and he was like, "I want to sing on that." Eventually I recorded two demos, playing all the instruments, and sent them to Walter. Within a day he sent it back with vocals, and those two songs ["People Running" and "Vanishing Life," available from collectrecords.org] are the ones that we just put out. Then we ran into Zach Blair from Rise Against, and he was like, "Can I be the guitar player?" And the band was born.

**MD:** Do you do anything to stay in shape to play all this heavy music?

**Jamie:** Not really. The other guys in the

band are like, "How are you able to play all that and not even break a sweat?" It's just from really warming up, I suppose. My wife runs a yoga studio and taught me a few stretches, and then I use those gigantic Vic Firth Chop-Out sticks, and I'll just bang on 'em all day long, keeping the wrists limber.

**MD:** Can you name everyone you've toured or recorded with in the past year?

**Jamie:** Trail of Dead, Snot, Vanishing Life... I did some guitar work with Billy Ray Cyrus, and I've done a few sessions that I think ended up being incidental music for a TV show or movie. Every once in a while I'll get a call to come out to L.A. for a session and have no idea what it's going to be for. Those are always fun. Every once in a while I'll fill in on drums for Chris Olivas in the band Berlin. That always brings me back to hearing "Take My Breath Away" at my junior prom—now I get to play it once in a while.









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# The Drumset Drag

## Orchestration Options for Powerful and Melodic Textures

by Powell Randolph

MUSIC KEY



In this lesson we're focusing on orchestrating the drag rudiment, which is traditionally played on the snare, by moving the two grace notes to the bass drum and tom. This gives it a much more powerful sound and creates melodic movement.

Here's the drag played on the snare and then orchestrated two ways on the kit.

Here are examples of fills using the drag in different places. When you get comfortable with them as written, play them in cut time (twice as fast) to get more of a closed-drag sound.

Here are some variations played as 16th and 32nd notes that use different groupings to displace the pulse. Try playing them as fills at the end of four- or eight-bar phrases.



# Elvin Jones–Style Triplet Fills

## Part 2: Orchestrating Accent Patterns

by John Xepoleas

**MUSIC KEY**

Welcome to our second lesson covering triplet fills based on the playing of jazz great Elvin Jones, who made a huge impact on drumming as part of legendary saxophonist John Coltrane's quartet in the 1960s. The goal with this series is to show you how to construct high-energy fills like those Elvin played, in an effort to take your drumming to a new level. I'll teach you his sticking patterns and then show you how to apply them to the drumset.

Here's the sticking pattern for this lesson. Practice it until it becomes part of your muscle memory.

1

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

Now let's move the pattern around the drumset. To start, play the accented notes using the ride cymbal and bass drum. Play them with an aggressive feel, and make sure they're the lead parts in the pattern. Play all of the left-hand notes softly on the snare.

2

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

In this example the right hand starts on the snare and then moves to the toms.

3

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

Now the right hand starts on the snare and then moves to the ride cymbal (played along with the bass drum); it concludes by hitting the high tom.

4

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

This is the same as the previous example, except the right hand ends on the low tom.

5

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

Now combine a couple of the previous examples and play them as a two-bar fill after two measures of time. In the following pattern we're playing one bar of Example 2 followed by one bar of Example 4 for the fill.

6

For this version we're combining Examples 3 and 5 to create the fill.

7

That wraps up this lesson. Check back next month for the third and final installment of this series.

John Xepoleas has written two drum books, *Style Studies for the Creative Drummer* and *Essential Drum Lessons With the Greats*. He is also an active online educator. For more info, visit [johnxdrums.com](http://johnxdrums.com).

For a video demo of some of these exercises, visit [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).





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# Traditional Percussion on Drumset

## Part 3: Timbales

by Arturo Stable

MUSIC KEY			
	Jam Block	Timbal High	
H.H.			
S.D.			
B.D.			
H.H. w/foot			

In a previous article (February 2013) I shared some of the history of the timbales and a few of the main rhythms of the instrument, and I recommended some great players to check out. I also included examples of how we've adapted those rhythms to the drumset. In this article I want to share different grooves that you can use when you work alongside a timbale player, which is very common in modern Cuban dance music.

### Cha Cha (2-3 Clave)

Two staves of musical notation for the Cha Cha rhythm. The first staff shows a 4/4 time signature with a 2-3 clave pattern. The second staff shows a similar pattern with accents.

### 4/4 Abajo (2-3 Clave)

*Abajo* translates literally as "down." In this context, the word refers to a section of a song where the vocalist is singing the

main part. Most of the instruments are playing quietly during this section. The drummer often plays on the closed hi-hat.

R R L L R L R L L R L

Two staves of musical notation for the 4/4 Arriba rhythm. The first staff shows a 4/4 time signature with a 2-3 clave pattern. The second staff shows a similar pattern with accents.

Two staves of musical notation for the 4/4 Arriba rhythm, showing a different drumset part.

### 4/4 Arriba (2-3 Clave)

*Arriba* translates to "up" and refers to a louder and more energetic section of a song where the band plays a montuno vamp and the horns play heavy riffs. Here are two drumset parts that work for this section. The right hand plays the bells and snare, while the left hand plays woodblock and timbales.

Two staves of musical notation for the 4/4 Arriba rhythm, showing a different drumset part.

Two staves of musical notation for the 4/4 Arriba rhythm, showing a different drumset part.

Two staves of musical notation for the 4/4 Arriba rhythm, showing a different drumset part.

Two staves of musical notation for the 4/4 Arriba rhythm, showing a different drumset part.

### Afro-Cuban 6/8

Finally, here's a basic drumset groove that works great alongside a timbale player on tunes that have a 6/8 feel. The snare drum hits in the middle of the measure, which creates a funky half-time vibe.

Two staves of musical notation for the Afro-Cuban 6/8 rhythm.

Two staves of musical notation for the Afro-Cuban 6/8 rhythm.

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](http://arturostable.com).

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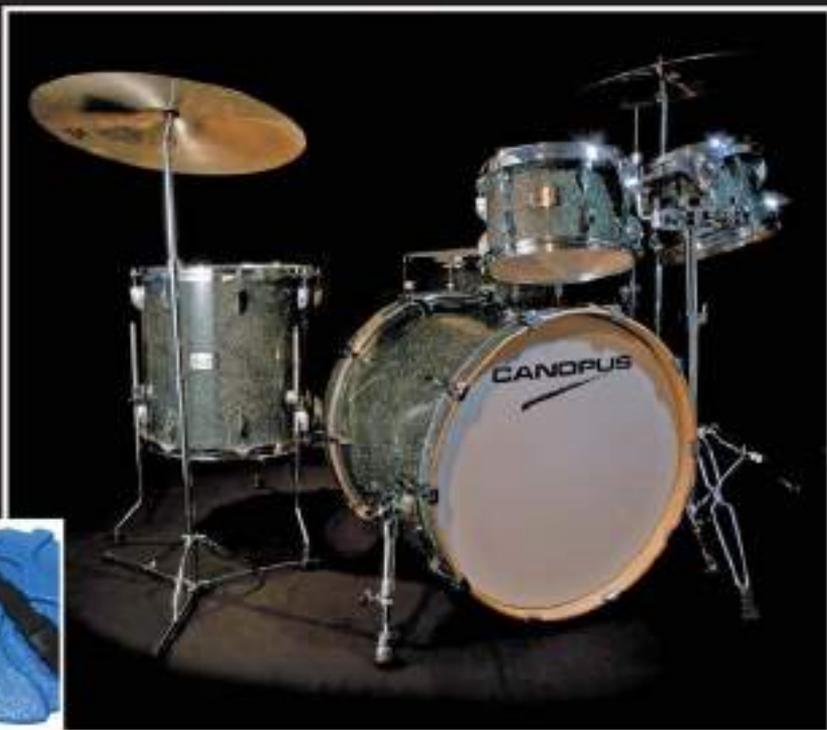
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# A John Bonham Foot Pattern

## Creative Ideas Based on the "Four Sticks" Ostinato

by Powell Randolph

MUSIC KEY	
open	R.C. Bell C.C.
H.H.	○
T.T.	●
S.D.	○
F.T.	●
B.D.	○
H.H.	○
w/foot	○
	Add'l T.T.

Led Zeppelin's John Bonham is considered by many to be rock's greatest drummer of all time. He's definitely one of my favorites, and in this article we'll focus on a foot pattern that Bonham used often. It's essentially an alternating pattern between the feet, starting with the left foot on the hi-hat pedal.

Start by getting comfortable with the foot pattern by itself. Make sure the hi-hat is played with the same force as the bass drum.

1

Now add some flams on the snare and flat flams on the toms.

2

3

4

5

6

7

This next one is a little tricky; it's like rubbing your belly and tapping your head at the same time. Play alternating 8th notes with your hands (RLRL) over the LRLR foot pattern.

7

Once you have that down, add accents and move the right hand around the toms. Here's one option.

8

9

In this next example we're dropping in an open hi-hat hit at the end of the measure. Any notes played on the hi-hat on the offbeat will automatically be open because of the foot pattern. Once you have this example down, experiment with some variations of your own.

9

In the next example, the hands are playing a three-over-two polyrhythm.

10

If you add a couple quarter notes to the previous pattern, you have a groove in 5/4 that's very much like the beat Bonham plays on the song "Four Sticks," from *Led Zeppelin IV*.

11

By spreading out a flam and delaying the last bass drum note, you can create a triplet at the end of the measure. You can play the triplet with either an RL or LR sticking.

12

These next two examples use that triplet idea throughout the measure. Beat 3 is played as a crossover, with the right hand hitting the rack tom and the left hand hitting the floor tom.

13

14

This example is written in 6/4 and is very similar to the groove in the bridge of "Four Sticks." Pay close attention to the sticking and the tom orchestration. I've created a pattern where the right hand descends down the toms while the left hand goes back and forth between the floor tom, rack tom, and crash. This keeps the three-over-two polyrhythm going on the rack tom.

15

Here, the flam on beat 1 is spread out so that it becomes two 16th notes.

16

For a video demo of some of these exercises, visit [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

By hitting the snare on beats 2, 4, and 6, and by moving the left hand to the crash, you can create a powerful four-over-three polyrhythm.

17

Now play the cymbal bell with the right hand, and the floor tom and snare with the left. I also add splashes with the hi-hat tom and snare with the left. I also add splashes with the hi-hat foot part on every other note. Kick the hi-hat pedal with your heel to get the open notes, and stomp with your toe for the closed sound. Have fun!

18

**Powell Randolph** is a teacher at Alpha Music in Virginia Beach. He tours with Windborne Music Productions, which puts on rock shows with major orchestras around the world. He can be reached through [powellrandolph.com](http://powellrandolph.com).



# Focus on Elimination

## The Key to Success

by Russ Miller



Here's one of the topics I get asked about frequently by other players. It probably stems from my work in pressure situations. From sight-reading live on TV on *American Idol* to reading multi-page charts with an orchestra on a movie session, my ability to focus on the task at hand can be the difference between success and failure.

**“The secret for mastery is concentration; the success of concentration is in elimination.”**  
—Israelmore Ayivor

This month's quote, by the African leadership coach Israelmore Ayivor, sums up the key to focusing. Elimination is paramount. You must eliminate what is not absolutely necessary at a given point in time. This can be used in a few different ways when it comes to our circumstances as musicians. It's relevant in removing pressure and calming yourself. It's also used to refine and focus the direction of your playing.

### The Pressure Cooker

First let's talk about the most obvious use of focus: to help ourselves get through a pressure-filled situation. Everybody experiences a measure of stage fright or performance anxiety. It's just a matter of how much you let it debilitate you at crunch time. I've seen a lot of different manifestations of performance anxiety in my career. Some musicians don't play the same way on stage as they do in rehearsal, and I've worked for artists who become a completely different person on the gig. They get visibly stressed, forget their parts, miss cues, and perform leagues below their rehearsal level. I even witnessed a string player pass out on a movie session. Her face went right into the music stand!

I've suffered from nerves many times, like when I had to play a ten-page chart containing eight different time signatures with an eighty-five-piece orchestra, while watching a conductor, syncing with a click track, and referring to a movie-cut playback. So how do you get through these extreme situations with your career intact? Of course, not every situation is as stressful as a Hollywood movie session. But even playing with your band at a club can really get to you, especially if you don't learn to eliminate distractions and focus.

The key is first recognizing what's actually requiring your attention while you perform. It's probably not the cute guy or girl in the front row, the 10,000 people in the arena, the eyes of the producer, the camera, or the red “recording” light. What's likely requiring your attention is the chart, the time, the dynamics, the execution of tones on the instrument, and the act of opening your ears to listen to the band and yourself. Eliminate everything else. You should play the music by yourself the same way that you do in front of 50,000 people.

I've played halftime shows at football bowl games and on

late-night television shows with millions of viewers. If you let those facts into your focus, you'll melt down. When the nerves start to build, stop for a second and think, *What is actually requiring my focus right now?* Just play your part of the music as well as you can.

### Eliminate the Distractions

Have you ever been to a show and noticed that it sounds as though you're listening to a record? I've been to shows and thought, *I haven't heard one thing that isn't spot-on.* When that happens, you're witnessing musicians who've successfully eliminated all distractions. This takes serious maturity as a player. When something seems out of place, it usually is. Something could be flat-out wrong, like the time breaking down or a note being out of key. Or maybe the tempos are way too fast and the lyrics sound rushed. Often I hear something that was played to bring attention to the player. Sometimes it's a crazy drum fill that's overly busy or too loud or has no business being played at that particular moment.

I recently went to a big drum competition. Each contestant came out on stage and played for about three minutes. Collectively, in the eighteen to twenty minutes of combined drumming on display, I heard about four bars of time. The core function of the drumset—to keep time—wasn't present in any of the performances. One of the things I noticed while watching the crowd was how everyone was longing to connect to the artist's playing through a form of groove. If the drummer would start to play a beat, people began to bob their head. Unfortunately, all of the drummers left the groove almost instantly and moved on to fill ideas. I kept thinking, *Man, you had them...and you left them hanging!* The players were creating distractions from communicating with the audience.

Communicating with the band and then the audience is a primary job for every musician. The guy who played the most groove at the competition ended up winning. Why? Because he made the strongest connection with the listeners and the judges.

I feel that these competitions should require all of the contestants to perform with a click track so they are forced to play everything in time. It's much harder to execute drumming acrobatics with a solid pulse. The event was essentially an example of what *not* to do if you ever want to work in the music business. This is why players who get work for playing great time are seldom the ones attempting inappropriate drumming acrobatics.

If you're one of the drummers who feel the urge to be “impressive” by squeezing in chops and licks every chance you get, realize that the heaviest cats in the room will be moved only by moments of great *musicality*. Whatever you play has to be relevant to what's currently happening in the groove and music. Sorry, but those “look at me!” moments are clear signs of immaturity. When you deliver the music respectfully and passionately, it connects with everybody in the room. The band, the listener, the producer... everybody is drawn to your performance.

How many times have you zoned out while watching someone playing? That's a failure of the artist. You never want to lose the

audience to distraction. You couldn't take your eyes off Michael Jackson, not feel the emotion of the lyrics delivered by Frank Sinatra, or fail to connect with the rhythmic drive and energy of Elvin Jones or Buddy Rich. Focus your energy on the task at hand. If the current task requires some awesome drumming skills, great! Go for it. If that's not the focus at that moment, don't distract yourself and everybody else by forcing things into place.

This focus on the elimination of what is *not* required is one of the differences between good and great musicians. Your internal focus while playing will in turn determine the focus of the band and the audience. Keep yourself zeroed in on the important things in the music, and everybody will end up being focused on you.

Learning to eliminate distraction is the way to succeed in many things. It's the key to effective time management, successful business decisions, keeping calm in pressure situations, and playing music at the highest level. My favorite *Star Wars* quote: "Your focus determines your reality." If you focus on maintaining a high level of execution, it will become a reality. Do this through the process of elimination.

See you next month!

**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](http://russmiller.com).



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# NEW *and* NOTABLE

## Highlights From NAMM 2015

This past January, large and small drum manufacturers from around the world brought their latest wares to Anaheim, California, for dealers and guests to check out. Here's a baker's dozen of our favorites. For additional NAMM Show coverage, visit [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).



Photos by Michael Hacala and Michael Dawson



### CANOPUS

#### Neo-Vintage 6.5x14 Maple/Poplar Snare

This odd-looking snare from the Japanese company Canopus features twelve lugs on top and six lugs on the bottom. It's designed to produce big, fat tones.



### DIXON

#### Gregg Bissonette Signature Snares

For utmost versatility, top Dixon artist Gregg Bissonette had the company build him two signature 6.5x14 models: one with a hammered and beaded black-nickel-over-brass shell and one with a black-nickel-over-steel shell.



### DW MDD Direct-Drive Hi-Hat

To accompany the MDD direct-drive bass drum pedal, which was one of last year's releases, DW put out a tough-looking MDD hi-hat that can switch from the free-floating feel of a 9000 series stand to the solid-stock pull of the 5000 series.



## **GRETSCH** **Broadkaster Drumset**

Harking back to the drumset design that made the company famous in the 1920s through '50s, Gretsch has revived its classic Broadkaster series, which features 3-ply maple/poplar/maple shells and vintage-style appointments.



## **LUDWIG** **Copperphonic Snare**

To round out the ever-popular Supraphonic line of snare drums, Ludwig added a copper model with a raw finish.

## **NFUZD AUDIO** **Inspire Series Electronic Drum System**

These pads are designed to fit right over the rim of any acoustic drum. The cymbals have three zones and choke features, and the two-piece hi-hat mounts to any standard stand. The sounds included in the module are uncompressed. The module can also grab samples from any sound library, and it includes a special version of BFD Eco software.



## **ISTANBUL MEHMET** **Tony Williams Tribute Collection**

This set of limited-edition cymbals (18" crash/ride, 22" ride, 14" hi-hats) is designed as a replica of the Turkish-made setup that jazz great Tony Williams used in the '60s.



## **MEINL** **Byzance Extra Dry Series** **20" and 22" Dual Crash/Rides**

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**PAISTE**  
**PSTX Effects Cymbals**

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**TAMA**  
**Star Series Walnut Drumset**

To add warmer, fatter tones to the super-high-end Star series, which originally comprised bubinga and maple options, Tama is now offering drums and kits made from walnut.



**PEARL**  
**Crystal Beat Acrylic Kit With DrumLite LEDs**

To boost the visual appeal of its new Crystal Beat acrylic kits, Pearl worked out a deal with DrumLite to include LED light packages as an optional upgrade.



**TYCOON**  
**Triple-Play Cajon**

One of the most practical and versatile new products we checked out is this cajon model that features three different surfaces. One side is snare-less for classic Pervuian-style sounds, another is set up to provide hybrid high-pitched bongo/cajon tones, and the third has snares under the faceplate.

**ZILDJIAN**  
**FX Spiral Stackers**

In addition to unveiling heavier models for the vintage-style Kerope series, Zildjian caught our attention with a few unique Spiral Stackers, which can be placed on top of any splash, crash, or ride for funky, noisy effects.



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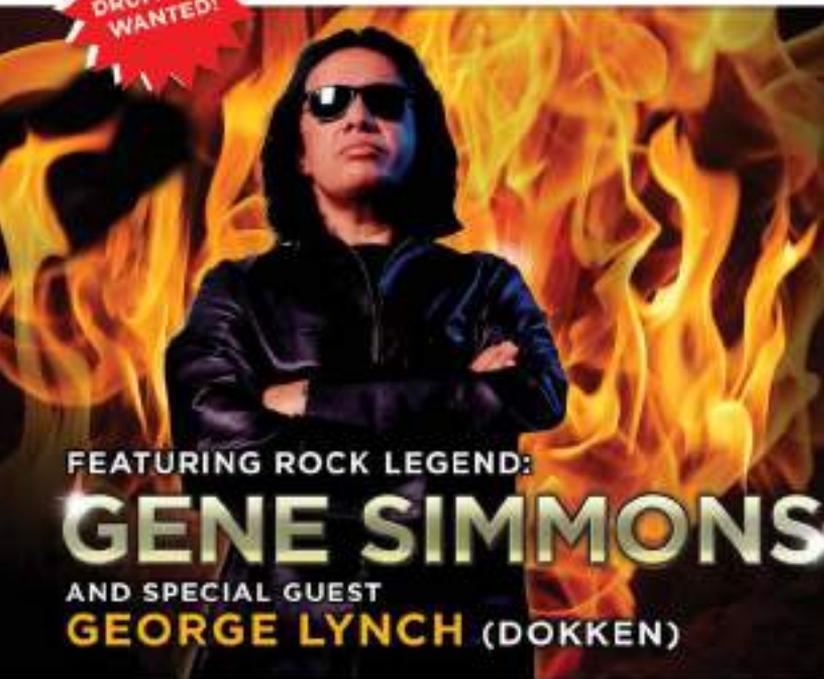
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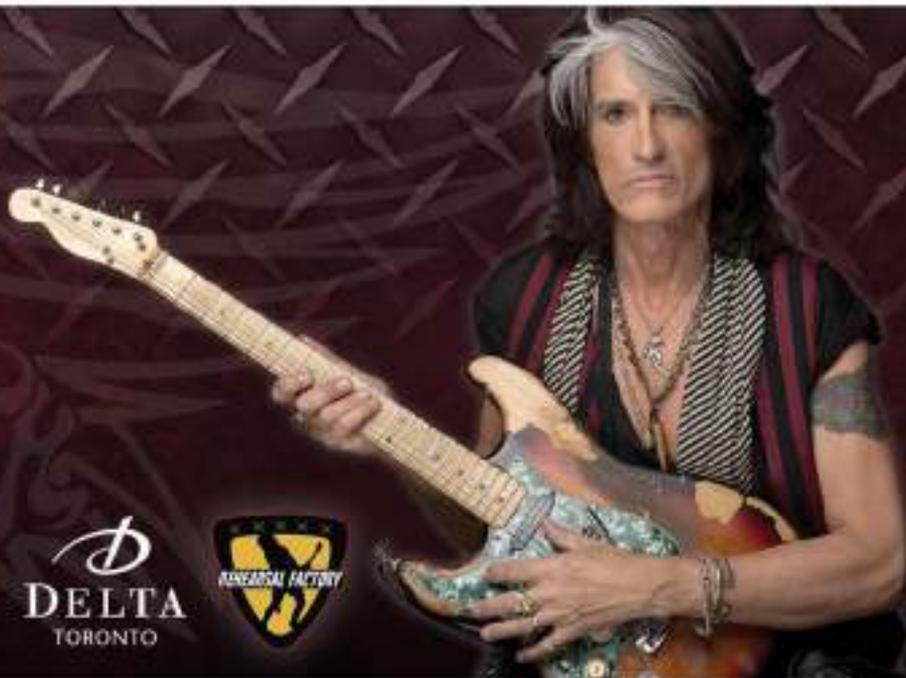
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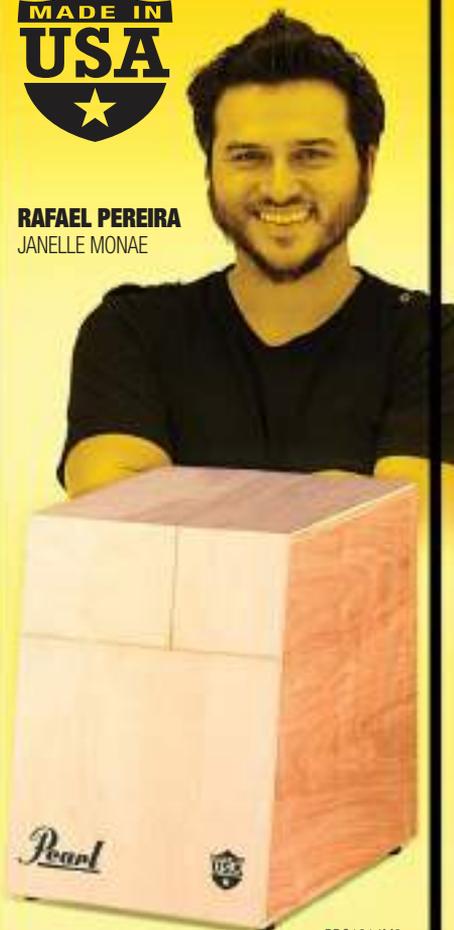


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# CRITIQUE

## D'Angelo and the Vanguard *Black Messiah*

**There was a rush of attention last December when the R&B trailblazer released his first album in fourteen years. But we'll all be studying this one for a while.**

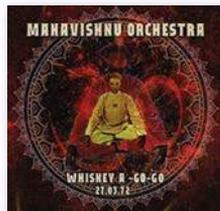
The savory grooves, soulful melodies, and amazing sounds on *Black Messiah* evoke Marvin Gaye, Prince, P-Funk, and the Beatles. You'll be hooked immediately by the rich, decaying crash cymbal on opener "Ain't That Easy" and the multitracked rimclick on "Betray My Heart." **Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson** gets the call for the bulk of the material, shuffling the raw groove back and forth with Pino Palladino's off-the-beat bass on "1000 Deaths" and rushing the backbeats intentionally on "Till It's Done (Tutu)," bringing a powerful and unsettled vibe. "Another Life" features a salvo of tightly tuned snare flams and deep, roaring cymbals. **Chris Dave** contributes the solid and playful "Prayer," while R&B legend **James Gadson** provides the album's smoothest moments, from the laid-back funk of the aforementioned "Ain't That Easy" to the radio-ready, rim-rattling "Sugah Daddy." On "Really Love," Gadson shows he too has listened to J Dilla, kicking some silly, syncopated soul. (RCA) **Robin Tolleson**



## Wovenwar *Wovenwar* **Laser-beam precision defines the former As I Lay Dying drummer on his new project.**

Following frontman Tim Lambesis's arrest, the remaining members of As I Lay Dying re-formed around singer Shane Blay to record this thick slab of

razor-sharp metal, produced by legendary All/Descendents/Black Flag drummer Bill Stevenson. Drummer **Jordan Mancino** sticks to a no-nonsense approach, throwing in perfectly executed double bass on "Archers" and "Identity," plus some wicked toms on the verses of "All Rise." Things slow down for a brief minute during the production piece "Father/Son," but that's a fake-out, as the rest of the album features Mancino riding his crashes and whipping out one punishing snare fill after another. It's extremely aggressive stuff, and the exactness and suffocating nature usually on display on this type of modern metal record leaves little room to breathe. Anyway, how can you breathe when you're banging your head? (Metal Blade) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



## Mahavishnu Orchestra *Whiskey A-Go-Go* 27.03.72 **A previously unissued live set from the famous fusion group is welcome, particularly for fans of drummer Billy Cobham.**

While Mahavishnu Orchestra rages on the early-'70s albums *The Inner Mounting*

*Flame* and *Birds of Fire*, the audio quality is weak at best, distorted at worst. Taken from a live console feed, this concert recording is a revelation of group detail, with every note of **Billy Cobham's** scorching jazz-rock drumming revealed as never before. The biggest surprise is Cobham's attack, which registers at dynamics from whisper quiet to heavy-metal extreme. Creating the template that influenced the careers of everyone from Dennis Chambers to Vinnie Colaiuta, Cobham's drumming is a study in subtleties, culminating in "The Noonward Race," which joins Jimi Hendrix with Black Sabbath for a maniacal sound never heard before or since. (Klondike) **Ken Micallef**



## The Dream Logic *My Black Arts* **Crossover in the best sense of the word, this multi-style album makes a good case for the ongoing open-ended nature of rock, jazz, and R&B.**

**Camille Gainer-Jones** creates a world of hybrid drum sounds, acoustic and

enhanced, with the Dream Logic, brainchild of guitarist/vocalist Charles Compo. A crisp pop-rock beat on "My Red Heart" leads to some pounding on the War classic "Cisco Kid." "Biznasty" is interesting psychedelic rock and soul, and Gainer-Jones' groove on "It's Murder" is broken, edgy, and fierce. "Just Can't Quit It" is straight-up rock with some cool hi-hat stuff—she's thinking hip-hop and jazz. "Trying to Be a Buddha" features live dub effects and cool triplets on the snare and hats, while "Don't Judge" is sweet soul jazz and "Think I'll Stay" has a great rimclick groove, subtle and strong. Gainer-Jones saves her most wicked beat for last; the set-ending title track is a romp with halting fills and stumbling, rumbling grooves moving from half time to triple time. (Chaos Music Company) **Robin Tolleson**



## Toto *XIV* **Toto's first studio recording in nearly a decade features sophisticated arrangements, deep lyrical content, and the tough but elegant drumming of Keith Carlock.**

Longtime fans will revel in the trademark

polished production and progressive Beatle-esque level of compositional prowess on Toto's new studio release. Masterful musicianship and superb vocal artistry resonate throughout, reaffirming the longstanding benchmark set by these highly decorated L.A. masters. The Toto drumming legacy began with the unrivaled pocket of the late, great Jeff Porcaro, was carried on by British legend Simon Phillips, and is now brought forward by Porcaro's kindred spirit **Keith Carlock**. From the classic '80s-based 16th-note hi-hat groove of "Chinatown" to the Steely shuffle "21st Century Blues" and the rhythmically progressive "Orphan" and "Great Expectations," Carlock's contributions to *Toto XIV* usher in a new era of finesse drumming in pop music. One can only hope that this tasty trend will continue. (Frontiers) **Mike Haid**

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## **The View From the Back of the Band: The Life and Music of Mel Lewis** by Chris Smith

There was a time when certain jazz drummers were instantly identifiable. One was Mel Lewis, subject of this superb book. Chris Smith, a drummer and jazz educator, has beautifully interwoven the man and his music via extensive interviews—including with Lewis himself—

and long-lost, previously published materials. Smith also includes transcriptions and an overview of the equipment that was essential to the unique and singular sounds Lewis was able to get from his drums and cymbals. Curiously, the man who recorded almost 700 records and drove the bands of Stan Kenton, Terry Gibbs, Gerry Mulligan, and dozens of small groups had little technique in the traditional sense of the word. But he knew what his job was: to accompany, to inspire, and, above all, to be musical.

The biography really takes off with the story of the beginnings of the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra, an ensemble that changed the course of big band music. Smith effectively details its beginnings on Monday nights at New York City's Village Vanguard and its evolution into a touring road band. In 1977 Jones left the group to settle in Denmark and lead the Danish Radio Orchestra. Lewis kept the band going until he lost a courageous battle with cancer at age sixty. Now known as the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, the ensemble plays every Monday night at the Vanguard, as it has for forty-eight years. Mel would be pleased. (\$24.95, University of North Texas Press) **Bruce Klauber**



## **Anthrax Chile on Hell**

By the middle of the classic "Caught in a Mosh" from this 2013 live performance in Chile, **Charlie Benante** has already switched from a lightning-speed double-time assault to a heavy four-on-the-floor beat to odd-metered patterns, injecting double bass flurries without blinking an eye. Anthrax has been at it for a very long

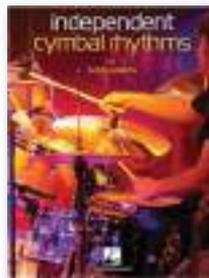
time, and while some might cry foul at yet another live DVD with a similar set list, this time around classic-era singer Joey Belladonna is back and the band is clearly inspired by the mayhem from the rowdy South American crowd. The production value is high, with clear video (although the quick cuts and split screens get annoying) and exceptional audio, so Benante aficionados can hear the fat toms in "Indians" and the unflinching groove on a cover of AC/DC's "T.N.T." Fans of today's extreme metal drummers would be wise to check out this recent showing from one of the originals, still doing it at the top of his game. (\$16.98, Megaforce) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



## **Altered Live 2014**

This fifty-minute concert film featuring the trio Altered, led by drummer **Steve Holmes**, represents the essence of the small-cub vibe of L.A.'s longstanding jazz-fusion haven, the Baked Potato.

Holmes, guitarist Jeff Miley, and bass player John Flitcraft produce a unique bicoastal blend, and Holmes proves his deftness at shaping subtle rhythmic statements and pulling a plethora of tones and textures from his Yamaha kit, building a perfectly balanced ghosted/accented dialogue from a whisper to a roar. On "Sinister" the drummer displays his double-stroke mastery, and on "Digging Out" he catches key accents yet eases in and out of time with blistering crescendos. Holmes, who edited the video of this eight-camera, HD streaming/download release, thoughtfully captures crucial highlights of each player's performance. (from \$5, alteredlive.vhx.tv) **Mike Haid**



## **Independent Cymbal Rhythms** by Bobby Williams

While many books have focused on independence and coordination, the material often includes exercises for kick, snare, and toms while a cymbal pulse or pattern remains steady. Bobby Williams offers a challenge here, with ever-changing cymbal parts that are

tricky yet musically satisfying. Ranging from 8th notes to triplets to 12/8, there's no shortage of cool stuff to play on the ride or hi-hats, and the kick and snare notation can make things a bit hairy, so it's suggested to straighten out the bass drum to even quarter notes before moving on to the music presented. That means the exercises will take quite a while to master and should be taken piecemeal in their one-bar examples. Sure, advanced players can alternate hands if they're feeling up to it, or even add bass drum notes where rests are notated, as Williams recommends. But the varying cymbal material on its own should keep most of us busy for a while. (\$12.99, Hal Leonard) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



## **Stompin' in Seven for the Solo Drummer** by David Reeves

Influenced by Wynton Marsalis drummer Herlin Riley, David Reeves created this advanced multi-percussion solo for snare, bass drum, and hi-hats to sound improvised, although each note is clearly written out and explained. The snare and bass parts serve as a "dueling duet" (especially with the double pedal), while

the foot-only hi-hat acts as accompaniment. This piece, just under five minutes in length and written in 7/4, is a challenging solo for contests, concerts, or just for fun. With swung 8th notes, lots of buzz rolls, and a distinctive New Orleans flair, the "duet for one" score/CD-ROM package is a great addition to any drumset player's library. (\$16, Tapspace) **Andrea Byrd**



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# Bill Evans Trio

## *Sunday at the Village Vanguard*

A shaky start and a tragic end couldn't keep this collection from becoming a classic.

On Sunday, June 25, 1961, a portable Ampex tape recorder was perched on a back-wall bench in New York City's cramped basement club the Village Vanguard. The goal was straightforward and low tech: The Bill Evans Trio was at the tail end of a two-week engagement, and jazz producer Orrin Keepnews hoped to capture the final matinee and evening performances. Waiting until the last day was deemed risky, should there be unforeseen problems, but it was the only scheduling possible.

Sure enough, there was a sudden power outage, rattling Keepnews. But the lights quickly flickered back, the reel rolled, and pianist Evans, drummer Paul Motian, and bassist Scott LaFaro swung into their first set of the afternoon. What followed was a two-show, five-set piece of history, yielding one of the landmark live recordings of jazz, an event that defined a new approach to the jazz piano trio format itself.

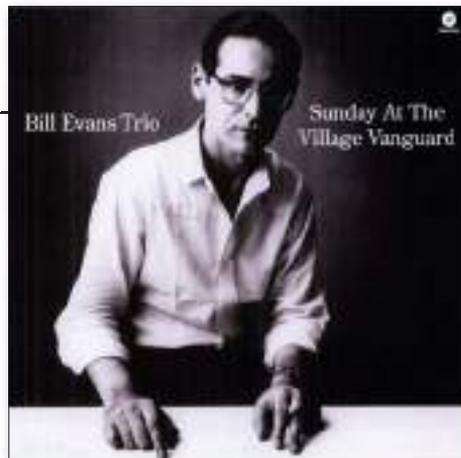
When the three packed up that night, they couldn't have understood the long-

term influence the past few hours would have. They also couldn't have foreseen that their closing tune, LaFaro's composition "Jade Visions," would be the last piece they would play together. The ascending twenty-five-year-old bassist perished ten days later, when his car skidded off an icy road and into a tree.

On the fortieth anniversary of the Vanguard performances, Motian told writer Adam Gopnik of *The New Yorker*, "[Evans] was good. But I was good with him, you know, because I listened. We listened to each other, and you can still hear us listening when we play."

At the time of the engagement, Evans was already an important new voice in jazz, helping to shape Miles Davis's ultra-classic *Kind of Blue*. Since signing to Riverside Records, Evans had been recruiting a variety of fine bassists and drummers. But he discovered an especially rare bond with Motian, whose sensitive, swinging touch, interactive open-mindedness, and responsive ear ideally suited the introspective pianist's explorations. Furthermore, Motian intuitively understood that Evans sought to dismantle his trio's boundaries.

Once the astonishing LaFaro joined Evans, the circle was suddenly, brilliantly whole. The trio introduced their newfound sound on Evans' *Portrait in Jazz* (1959), followed by *Explorations* (1961). The innovators broke the traditional mold of the piano trio as a lead instrument supported by a rhythm section. Instead, the unit was an equal-voiced chamber group. Departing from traditional walking bass patterns, LaFaro danced freely between Evans' phrases, offering a continuous commentary of rhythmic and harmonic suggestions. Motian was immediately simpatico with the bassist's approach, interplaying freely while still delivering strong, swinging time. Motian generated an urgent—though never heavy-handed—forward pulse with intricate brushwork and nimble ride cymbal variations, uniting the ensemble. And his exquisite colorations lent an



### *Sunday at the Village Vanguard* (1961)

Gloria's Step • My Man's Gone Now • Solar • Alice in Wonderland • All of You • Jade Visions

**Bill Evans:** piano  
**Scott LaFaro:** bass  
**Paul Motian:** drums  
 Produced by Orrin Keepnews  
 Recorded by Dave Jones

ideal complement to Evans' shimmering, impressionistic sound.

By the dawn of the Vanguard dates, the trio's concept was at its pinnacle. And having just returned from the road, the players were more in sync than ever. The Riverside label's Vanguard album—with its intermittent clinking glasses and bar chatter—stands as a living snapshot of a musical turning point. An immediate follow-up LP featuring additional selections from those sets, 1961's *Waltz for Debby*, is also a classic.

Evans' career would enjoy other triumphant sessions. But the model for many of his future bands stood on the shoulders of Motian, LaFaro, and the Vanguard recordings. And throughout Motian's own long career—up until his passing in 2011—the drummer continued to embrace and evolve the concepts he helped to define on that historic day. Those elements are quite evident on one of Motian's final recordings, a trio tribute to Evans featuring Chick Corea and Eddie Gomez, aptly titled *Further Explorations*. As always, you can hear him listening. **Jeff Potter**

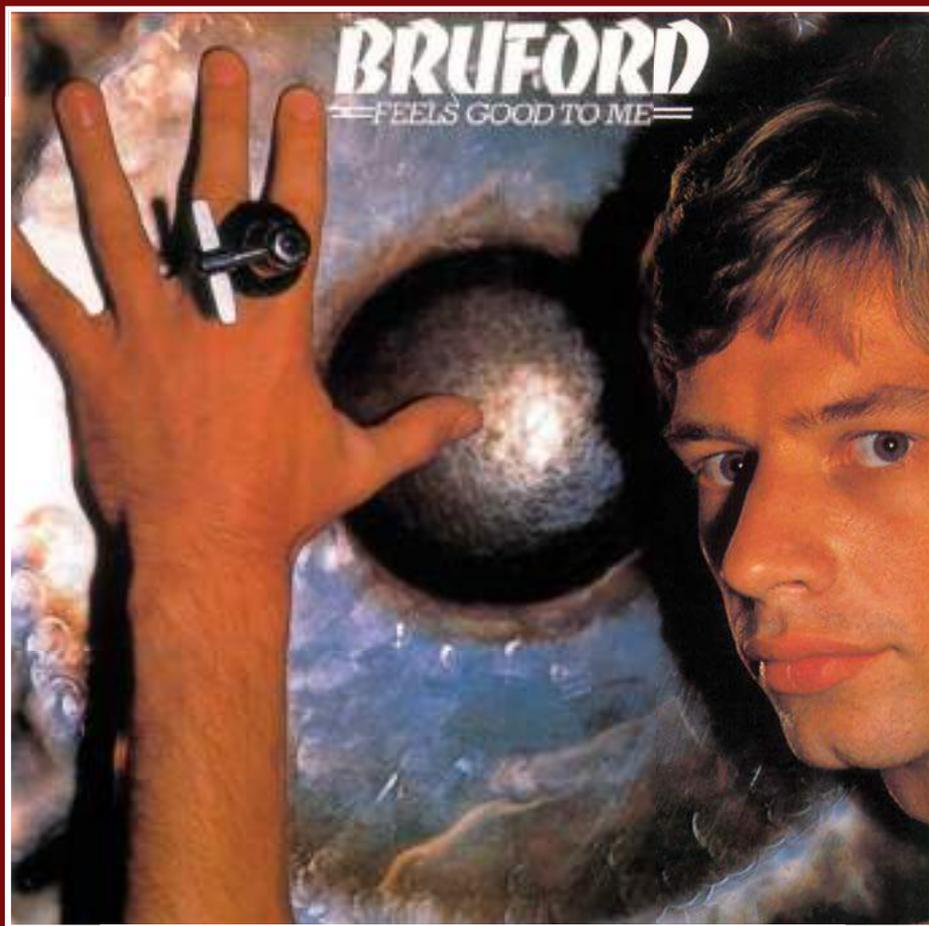
### Hot Stuff

**Setting each other free.** On the Miles Davis number "Solar," pianist Bill Evans gets the first eight bars to himself, and the instant drummer Paul Motian and bassist Scott LaFaro enter, they shake things up vigorously. The head becomes merely an improv reference point, never fully played out. Motian swings, playing freely over the barlines, eschewing typical 2 and 4 signposts, while LaFaro bobs and weaves. Casual listeners may be unsure where the 1 is during the solos. Doesn't matter. Motian is a swinging slipstream.

**Playing it (relatively) straight.** Reinventing the standard "All of You," Evans explores brilliant reharmonizations. Motian provides a cooking, more straight-ahead pulse here, allowing Evans to rhythmically stretch with his left hand. The drummer unleashes his finest solo of the sets, with melodicism, dynamics, and fiery chops. LaFaro comments freely over Motian's solo, asserting that even the traditional concept of trading fours will be interactive. In the final head, the three contribute so collectively that no one fully owns the wrap-up.



# GREAT DRUM COVERS III

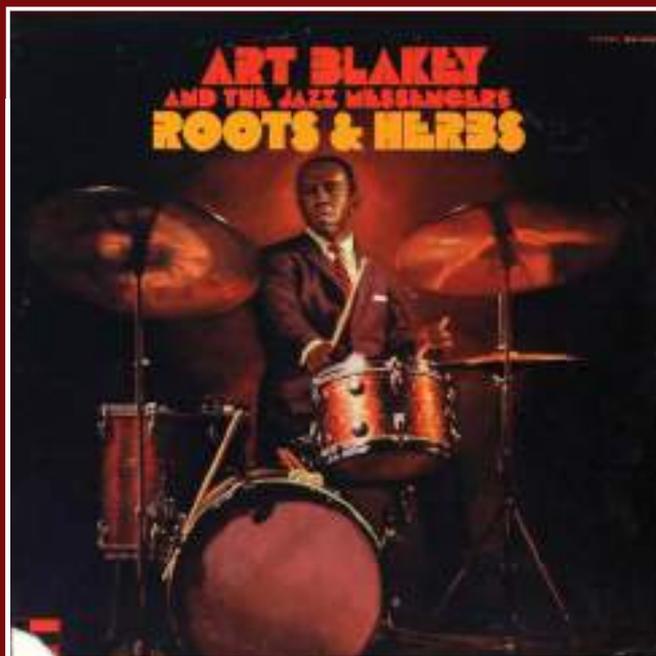


**Bruford**  
*Feels Good to Me*  
1978

"Gered Mankowitz," Bill Bruford recalls, "was the celebrated photographer of the day who'd shot everyone from Hendrix to the Stones, and, in our case, the King Crimson *Red* photo, aka 'the good, the bad, and the ugly.' There was just enough money left in the budget to use him again. I'd always been struck by the visual beauty of my Paiste gongs under the stage lights, and I knew Gered would be able to highlight all those colors in this portrait shot. I can't remember why I decided to hold a hi-hat clutch between my first and second fingers, left hand, other than to have people say, 'Why's he doing that?' or 'What's that?' Dumb, really."



*Gretsch Drum Night at Birdland*  
1960



**Art Blakey**  
and the Jazz Messengers  
*Roots & Herbs*  
1970 (recorded 1961)



**Roy Burns**  
*Drum Set Artistry*  
1971



## 2014 Guitar Center Drum-Off Grand Finals



This past January 17, Guitar Center's 2014 Drum-Off Grand Finals were held at Club Nokia in Los Angeles. With sturdy time, flashy chops, and even a quote from John Coltrane's "Giant Steps" on the Roland Octapad, Shariq Tucker, from the Bronx, New York, was crowned the winner by host Gregg Bissonette. The runners-up were Clyde Frazier, from Orangeburg, South Carolina; D'Andre Gosey, from Pasadena, Texas; Forrest Rice, from Rancho Cucamonga, California; and Jharis Yokley, from Crestwood, Missouri.

"They were all amazing," Bissonette tells *MD*. "Nobody just blew without playing a groove, and nobody just grooved without blowing, so it was a good mix. The judges had a hard choice, because the finalists were really close, I thought." Advancing steadily through local and regional rounds over the past year to emerge victorious in the end, Tucker, who was a runner-up in 2013, will receive prizes worth nearly \$45,000, including \$25,000 in cash, a Roland TD-30KV kit and SPD-SX pad, a set of cymbals of his choice, and a high-end drumset by DW, Tama, Pearl, Gretsch, or OGDP.

The judges for the event included DeShaun Allen, Gorden Campbell, Cora Dunham, Dave Elitch, Peter Erskine, Eric Hernandez, Chris Johnson, Mike Johnston, Thomas Lang, Nick Smith, and Brooks Wackerman. Steve Jordan was honored with an induction into Guitar Center's RockWalk and played with his band the Verbs. Matt



Clockwise from top: Shariq Tucker, D'Andre Gosey, Jharis Yokley, Forrest Rice, and Clyde Frazier

Garstka opened the show with a solo and then did a short set with Animals as Leaders. Royster, who brought a full band, joined a trio of marching drummers and played a kit duet with Mike Moore (*Making His Band*). And Stephen Perkins took a break from hosting the finals to connect with Tim Alexander for a long, drum-heavy workout on King Crimson's "21st Century Schizoid Man."

**Photos by Alex Solca**



Stephen Perkins and Tim Alexander played an epic version of King Crimson's "21st Century Schizoid Man." Says host Gregg Bissonette, "It was amazing to see how well orchestrated all their parts and duets were."



Steve Jordan joined GC's RockWalk and played with the Verbs. "Man, what a groove," Bissonette raves. "His pocket was just so deep."



Tony Royster Jr. (top) brought a full band. "Great playing, kind of funk/pop," Bissonette says. "Just phenomenal." Royster also played with Mike Moore (bottom).



Matt Garstka performed with Animals as Leaders. "I told him, 'Man, you knocked me out!'" Bissonette says. "I was supposed to be looking at my notes, but I couldn't stop watching and listening."



# DRUM-OFF

26<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL

Guitar Center Drum-Off, the world's premier drum competition, celebrated its 26th anniversary with a star-studded finals event featuring the top five undiscovered drummers in the country.

Shariq Tucker of Bronx, N.Y., was named this year's champion—out of more than 5,000 competitors—by an all-star lineup of competition judges, including top touring and session drummers like Cora Dunham, Eric Hernandez, Peter Erskine, Thomas Lang, Chris Johnson, Dave Elitch, Gorden Campbell, Nick Smith, DeShaun Allen, Brooks Wackerman and Mike Johnston.

Hosted by Gregg Bissonette, the show featured exclusive musical performances by some of today's most revered and innovative talents, including Matt Garstka with Animals as Leaders, Stephen Perkins with Tim Alexander, Tony Royster Jr. featuring Mike Moore, and Steve Jordan with The Verbs. The night also honored Jordan's influential career and contributions to the music world with an induction into Guitar Center's RockWalk, and the spectacular evening closed with a private after-party DJ'd by Trevor Lawrence Jr.



Steve Jordan



Matt Garstka

Stephen Perkins



Tony Royster Jr



Gregg Bissonette



Drum Off Contestants



Tim Alexander

VISIT [GUITARCENTER.COM/DRUM-OFF](http://GUITARCENTER.COM/DRUM-OFF) FOR PHOTOS AND VIDEOS FROM THE EVENT.





DRUM-OFF CHAMPION  
SHARIQ TUCKER

May 15, 16, and 17, 2015 Kane County Fairgrounds, St Charles, Illinois 989-463-4757  
 Friday 1:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M., Saturday & Sunday 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

**Steve Smith**

Sonor, Remo, Firth, Shure, DW, Puresound, Samson, Hudson, Korg, Cympad



**Todd Sucherman**

Pearl, Sabian, Remo, ProMark, Audix



25<sup>th</sup>

**Chicago Drum Show**

2015

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**REBEATS**  
 Artists/Cymbals: Ron Anderson & Susan Jovani, Arnie Drake, Mike Drake, Michael Eddins, Keith Larson, Billie-Jane Drake Company, Ryan Savage Drums, Buster Raga, Bruce Almy Drums, Ryan Almy Drums, Ben E. Carlin & Frank Robinson Drums, Cynthia Corvino, Gault Drum Company, Elmer's & Ed Stone, Lathrop, George Stone & Associates, Chicago Drum Exchange, Andy Christie, Classic Drummer, Cold Mountain Drums, Connecticut Pro Percussion, Coopers Vintage Drums, Cash Room Bar, Corvino Drum Company, Crescent Cymbals, Custom Tack Drums, Cymbals, Cympad, Cympad, eAble Drumworks, Marco Ganga, Downing Drums, Grogan's Drums, Drum Factory, Drum Supply House, Drums Up, Grandstanding, Drummers Drum-USA, Drumtown, Dynamic Drums USA, Empower Percussion, Evans, Explorer's Percussion, Foundation, Gamm, Gamm Percussion, John Brandt Vintage Drums, Great Lakes Trade, Buller Center, Handmade Drum Works, Hi Speed, Holloway Drums, Holloway Custom Drums, Mike Hagan Drums, 1960THAT Humes & Berg, J's Drummers Music, J.D. Music, James Dean's Vintage Drums, Jankin, Jenkin-Media Drum Co., James & Sons, Kelly She, Kid Drummer Music, Klash Drums, Jim Nicks, Kuma Drums, Tang Lewis, Liberty Drums, Lou Boy Custom Drums, Joe "Joko" Luma, Steve Marshall, Art's Lissen-Wal-Maturo Drum, Lullaby Drum Company, Matt's Vintage Drums, Lary Mathew, McCauley Music, John Medina Jr., Modern Drummer, Jim Murray, Skip Town Productions, Neil McMath Drummer.

Ten O'Hara, Galax Drums, Palmetto Drum Company, Pat Tami Drums, Pearl Drum Company, PLATONUMS, Prolink Percussion Systems, David Polakoff.

Power Metal Builders, Parkland Drums, R&B Drum Co., Red Head Drums, RCD Vintage Drums, ResoundUSA, Rini Custom Drums, Lee Roll, Rocco, Sabian, Chad Scala, Anthony Scott, Sero Percussion, Bob Shee, Steve Shee Drums, Stone & Toy, Southern Young Music, The Mission Shop, Slicks & Farris, Stone Custom Drums, Stone Tensions, Tays Drums, Texas Vintage Drums, Thunderdrums, Tork Drums, Uick, Vintage Cymbals, W.P.D. Drums, Wood Blocks, Yamaha, Zildjian, Zildjian Cymbals, Frank Zornell & Andy Dwyer

**Dave Mattacks**

Zildjian, ProMark, Yamaha, Evans, LP, Cympad



**Paul Wertico**

Remo, Shure, DW, Paiste, ProMark



**Bob Henrit**

Rebeats



**Will Calhoun**

Remo, Firth, Mapex, Sabian, Audix, Revolution, Korg, Hammarax, Ddrum3, Protector XL



**Daniel Glass**

Firth, DW, LP, Crescent, Aquarian, Big Bang



Daniel's Clinic: Sing! Sing! Sing!  
 Roundtable with Denny Brown: "The Life And Times Of Gene Krupa"

**THE BRITISH BEAT BOOM**  
 A historical overview on what it was like to be a part of British Rock scene of the late 1950s, early 1960s, and 1970s.



20th Century Sound: Drummer's Traps & Sound Effects of the Early 20th Century  
 Nick White will display and demonstrate his large collection of drummer's sound effects devices.

**Master Drumbuilder** Gregg Keplinger  
**Master Drumbuilder** Adrian Kretler

**Special Exhibit**  
 "The Drum History of Buddy Rich" by Tommy Piorek,  
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# Dangerous Curves



Photo by Aaron Cooper

“This is my 1975 Ludwig Vistalite spiral kit,” Tim O’Connor of Wickenburg, Arizona (timtrapsconnor.com), says. “It started off as a six-piece kit and turned into fifteen pieces. Never leave your drums alone with other drums!

“I’ve had the kit all over the USA, and I had the opportunity to play with Chuck Berry in 1983. As he walked out, he looked at my drums and said, in front of 6,000 people, ‘What the hell is a giant roll of Life Savers doing on stage?’ He smiled and gave me a thumbs up.

“Some bands wouldn’t allow me in their group due to the color and style of my drums. Their loss! I’ve also used the drums as a Christmas tree, stacking them up. I still have all my original Ludwig stands and Speed King pedals. The only new parts are the rubber feet on the bass drum and floor toms.

“What makes this kit different is that the spiral pattern goes the opposite way on one of the 15” toms—from top left to bottom right, rather than bottom left to top right. I guess someone wasn’t paying attention to detail. I’ve had a blast putting the kit back together. I keep it under lock and key and only bring it out for special occasions. This is the last of the Monster Vistalites!”



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



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