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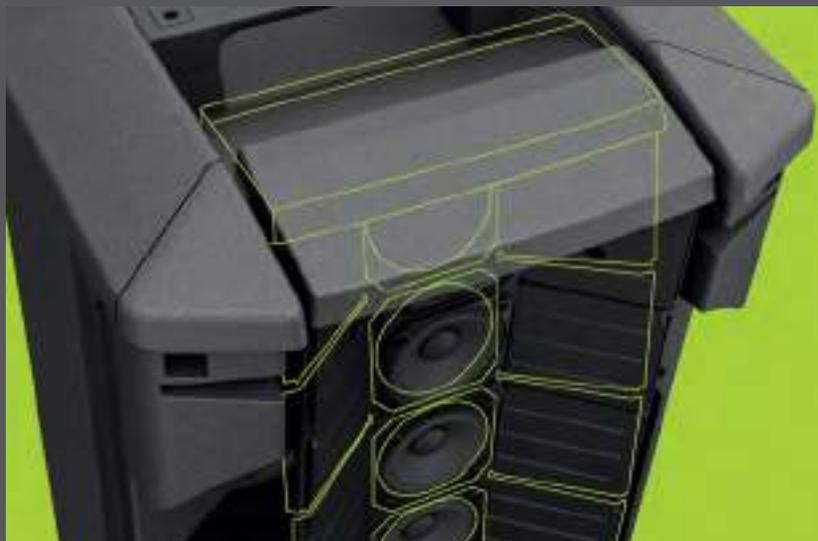
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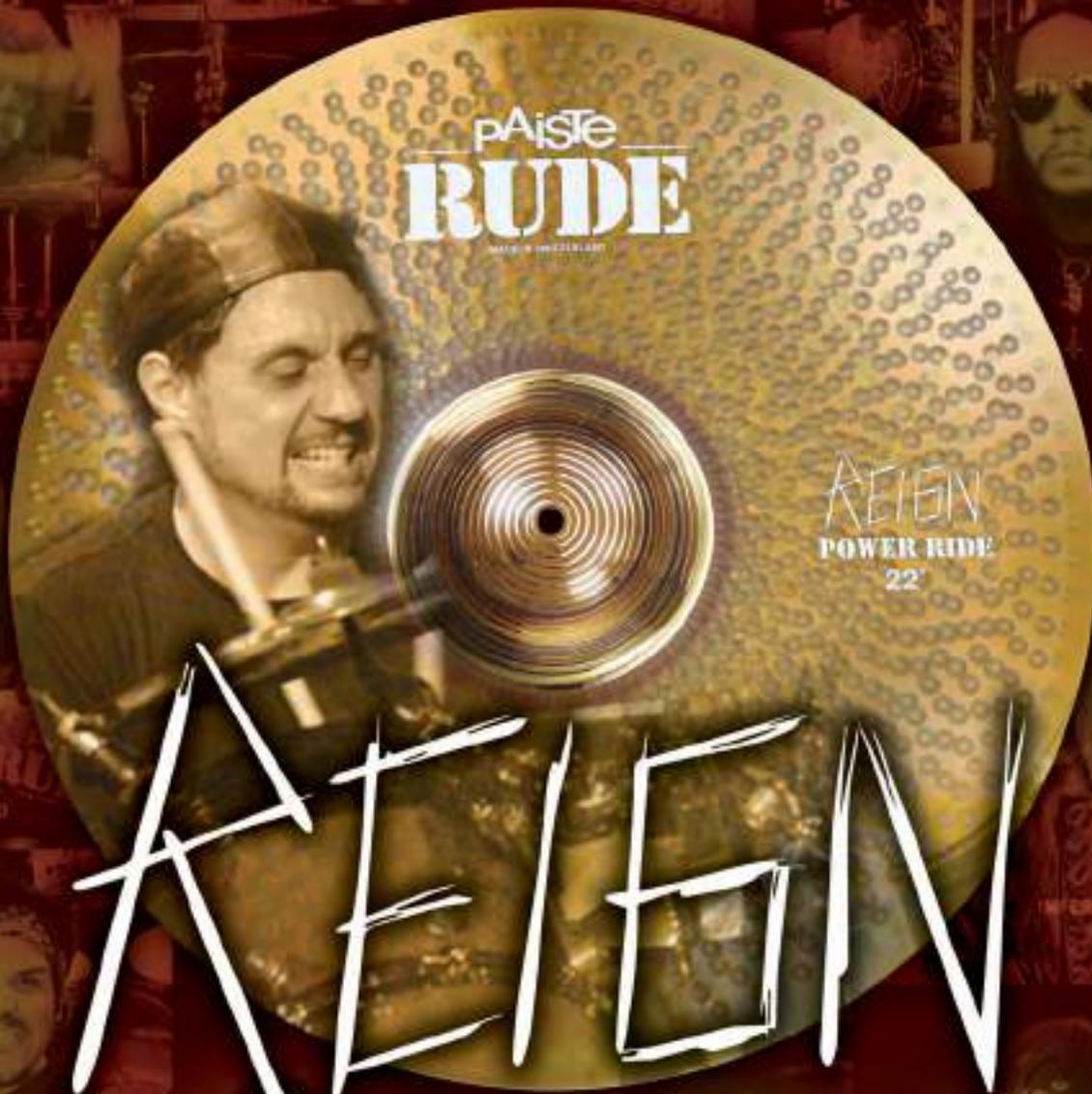


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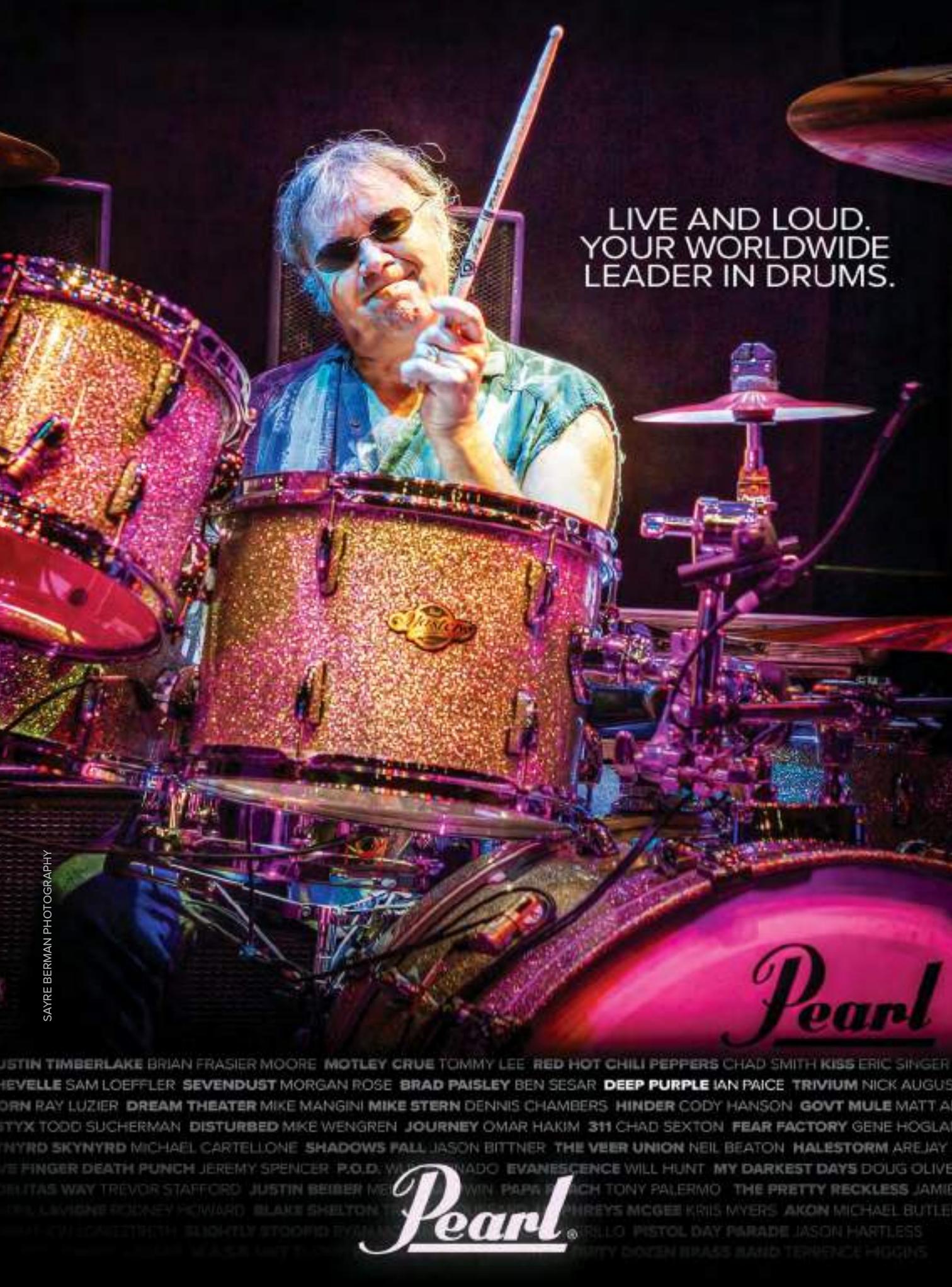
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38 On the Cover

**Marilyn Manson's
Gil Sharone**

Cover and contents photos
by Clemente Ruiz

"I like being in situations where I'll be super-distracted but I won't get thrown off. If anyone on stage were to get lost, all they'd have to do is look at me and they'd know *exactly* where they are."

After conquering the intricacies of Dillinger Escape Plan and the soulful subtleties of Jamaican music, this wicked beatmaker has accepted the challenge of crushing the heaviest jyre-breathing rhythms of modern rock—no matter how wild it gets out there.

by Adam Budofsky

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The One-O~ Conundrum

Last month a guitarist buddy and I were enlisted to back a singer for an evening performance in a church, with the set list spanning Sting to Hildegard von Bingen. There was also a bassist—who switched to bodhrán on a couple numbers—plus three string players and a keyboardist. A few days before the show, the bassist, guitarist, singer, and I had a three-hour rehearsal in my basement, to hone the seven tunes that would comprise the more or less electric portion of the performance. We spent an hour on the first song, half an hour each on the next couple...and then—uh-oh!—we raced through the last batch because we we'd completely run out of time. You know how that goes: "Okay, good enough!"

Although I like to think I'm ready for anything, I felt some serious *agita*. When you're helping someone out, you want to deliver. In fact, you *always* want to deliver, period. I pride myself on not being the onstage problem child, but I just did not feel comfortable with some of the material; I suspected I was the wrong guy for this very quiet, very not-rocking gig. It didn't help that the singer and bassist—the bandleaders in this case—hadn't really run through the tunes themselves. Arrangements were fuzzy, and questions from the guitarist and me were met with blank stares.

There were fun moments during practice, though, mostly when I felt I was rising to the challenge of playing more softly than I ever had in my life. I was working on an *MD* story about Antonio Sanchez at the time, and he's among the best at bringing intensity and groove at low levels, so I imagined him whispering in my ear: "Shhh...you got this..."

During the show, as the guitarist and I played one song here, sat out two there, played two more, then sat out a few, I tried to *Zen* out and chill out and *feel* the strings out front; those players, whom I'd never met before, couldn't see me in my spot on the altar, and I could barely see them. I attempted to lock in with everyone as best I could, and that actually went pretty well. In the end, it was the *singer's* time that I couldn't hook up with. She seemed nervous, and although she sang great, she was all over the place while strumming her acoustic guitar. And I just felt wrong taking the *here it is!* approach with the time, since this wasn't rock 'n' roll and I wasn't steering the ensemble; I was simply trying to blend in. The truth is, this wasn't the right setting for a drumset, musically or sonically.

The best tune by *far* was the one from Hildegard von Bingen. And that one was a cappella. There was very little backslapping after the show, and I limped home without feeling the satisfaction of a job well done.

But there's always something good to take away. This time it was the idea of Antonio saying to me after the rehearsal, "You could've been quieter, you could have been groovier, but, you know, that didn't suck."



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

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READERS' PLATFORM

Bernard Purdie

In your April 2015 edition, you asked Bernard Purdie about Ringo Starr. Mr. Purdie stated that Mr. Starr's drumming is not up to par for his standards. For whatever reason you chose to ask Mr. Purdie this question, you did not challenge his opinion. You have the right to ask the questions you want, and Mr. Purdie is entitled to his opinions.

I recall watching *The Ed Sullivan Show* that Sunday night when the Beatles first appeared on American television. What was then an extraordinary event redefined drumming and pop music forever. It may occur to you, and others, that Ringo Starr was a significant contributor to this. Just like that, drums were cool and everybody got the backbeat. Some picked up on the dynamics, the originality, the spare fills, and the terrific time it is to play the drums.

I am pleased to advise that Mr. Starr meets my standard as a great drummer. The urge to compare and criticize is within all of us. Rather than do that, the better course is to improve.

Jim Walsh

I just finished reading the cover story with Bernard Purdie in the April 2015 edition of *Modern Drummer*. I am a fan of his drumming and know of his accomplishments. He seems to be a likable and fun person. That said, I was taken aback by his comments about Ringo. Maybe because his claims that in the early part of his career he played on twenty-one Beatles songs, and Ringo never played on the early music, have shooed his brain.

Paul McCartney has already addressed this matter. Who knows



better than Paul? Paul stated that he and Ringo tracked together and it would be impossible to remove Ringo's drum parts without removing his bass lines. I am a drummer myself and studied audio engineering. I know how the recording chain works. On those early Beatles songs, that is not Bernard's drumming, and those are Paul's bass lines. Bernard talks about being married to the bass player, not being super-technical in the studio, and playing what the song needs. Well, nobody did it better than Ringo. He was like a Zen master on those recordings. He had the groove, backbeat, and swing. Could it be that Bernard can't recover from his ego and was a little in envy of the Beatles back then?

Ray Geraneo

How many will write you concerning Mr. Purdie's response to Billy Amendola's question on his thoughts on Ringo Starr's drumming? The more I pondered Bernard's answer, the less concerned I was. Mr. Purdie has every right to his thoughts and convictions. Had Ringo's drumming been up to par to Bernard's standards, would the drumming world have been robbed of Ringo's unique abilities? To quote Rod Morgenstein on Ringo, he stated that "Some of the most memorable moments in music come not from sheer technique but from what the imagination comes up with." This couldn't be more true in Ringo's case, and Ringo never ceased to amaze me. Bernard is amazing as well, but in the case of the Beatles and Ringo's part in it, I applaud those differences.

Danny Wyant

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The advertisement features a large, close-up image of an Evans Reso 7 drumhead. The drumhead is white with a black logo in the center that reads 'RESO 7 EVANS LEVEL 360'. Below the logo, the text 'RESO 7' is written in large, bold, black letters. Underneath that, 'NO TAPE OR GEL NEEDED.' is written in red, bold letters. Further down, there is a paragraph of text in black: 'Control resonance and sustain the natural way. The first coated resonant head in the Evans line, the Reso 7 is a 7mil drumhead that provides a full, warm tone while controlling sustain.' At the bottom of the advertisement, the website 'evansdrumheads.com' is listed in black text. The background of the advertisement is a solid red color.

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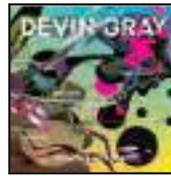
NEWS

Out Now

Sly and the Family Stone

Live at the Fillmore East, October 4th and 5th, 1968

The Fillmore becomes Sly Stone's church of love and funk, with drummer **Greg Errico** and bassist Larry Graham anchoring the tight live unit in 1968. "The band was at the top of its game," Errico says. "The moments that everything comes together, where the train is going a hundred miles an hour, the plane lifts off the ground and just takes off, I get excited like a fan." Recorded following the *Life* album, this four-disc set includes versions of such tunes as "Are You Ready," "Love City," "Chicken," and "Music Lover." "We always had to keep our eye on Sly," Errico recalls. "We would change things up. You'd pull it apart, put it back together, and take it to another place." For more with Errico, go to moderndrummer.com. **Robin Tolleson**



Devin Gray

RelativE Resonance

For the title of his second album as a leader, drummer Devin Gray took inspiration from a comment that Tony Williams made in a master class he saw on YouTube. "Tony was talking about tuning a drum and getting the relative resonance right between the top and bottom heads so that the drums will speak or sing," Gray says. "I thought about that idea as a universal philosophy that extends to an entire band—getting the relative resonance between instruments and personalities right so that the group will really sing." Gray's band on *RelativE Resonance* includes saxophonist and clarinetist Chris Speed, pianist Kris Davis, and bassist Chris Tordini.

Other New Releases

Joe Satriani Shockwave Supernova (Marco Minnemann, Vinnie Colaiuta) /// **Exovex** Radio Silence (Josh Freese, Keith Carlock, Gavin Harrison) /// **Walt Weiskopf** Open Road (Steve Fidyk) /// **Purposeful Porpoise** Purposeful

Porpoise (Vinnie Colaiuta) /// **Denny Zeitlin and George Marsh** Riding the Moment (George Marsh) /// **Heads of State** Search for Peace (Al Foster) /// **Neal Schon** Vortex (Steve Smith) /// **Billie Rainbird** Deep Blue (Simon Phillips) /// **John Yao** Flip-Flop (Vince Chericco) /// **Danielle**

Nicole Wolf Den (Stanton Moore) /// **IZZ** Everlasting Instant (Greg DiMiceli) /// **David Cook** Scenic Design (Kendrick Scott) /// **various** Bop: A CD to Help Fund the Cure for PKD (Harvey Mason, Brian Dunne) /// **Kenny Werner** The Melody (Ari Hoenig)

Who's Playing What



Jano Rix (the Wood Brothers, shown), **Nick Kilroe** (Echo and the Bunnymen), **Budgie** (ex-Siouxsie and the Banshees), and **German Quintero** (Bacalao Men) have joined the Natal endorser list.

Industry Happenings

Michael Berg has been named president of the **Humes & Berg** case company, filling the role that his father, Irwin (left), held for thirty years. Michael has been a full-time employee for twenty-four years, holding many positions, including developing new products and markets. Irwin, who also held the post of CEO for the eighty-year-old company, will continue as chief executive officer and chairman of the board.



Joe Bergamini has joined the **Sabian** team as an education consultant. Bergamini's main focus will be the design, implementation, and maintenance of a new program aimed at drum teachers, called the Sabian Education Network. For more on the program, go to sabian.com/joinsen.

Istanbul Mehmet was presented with a 2015 MIPA award for its Tony Williams Tribute Cymbal Set at the Musikmesse trade show in Frankfurt, Germany. The set features a 22" ride, an 18" crash, 14" hi-hats, a deluxe leather cymbal bag, a selection of rare Williams photographs, and a certificate of authenticity.

The 818 Drummers Lunch

"I've always said the coolest people in any band are the drummers," says Dean Butterworth, drummer with Good Charlotte and Sugar Ray, busy session musician, and bandleader for NBC's *Hollywood Game Night*. "Come to think of it, most of my closest friends are drummers."

For years, Butterworth and two of those friends, Jordan Burns of Strung Out and Glen Sobel of Alice Cooper's band, had been meeting in the San Fernando Valley for lunch. One day the three talked about inviting some other rhythmists to join them. The gatherings soon took on a life of their own—Jason Sutter of Smashmouth, Franklin Vanderbilt of Lenny Kravitz's band, Jose Pasillas of Incubus, Tony Palermo of Papa Roach, and Christian Coma of Black Veil Brides were early attendees. Using their shared area code as inspiration, the gang began to officially refer to their get-togethers as the 818 Drummers Lunch.

Modern Drummer had photographer Alex Solca drop by a recent gathering at the Stoneÿre Grill in West Hills to check out the scene. It was the biggest 818 Lunch yet, with nearly forty in attendance. "Drummers share a special bond," Butterworth says. "We're always happy to hang out and talk shop. The great thing about getting this many drummers together in person is that it gets back to the way things used to be—people looking each other in the eye while talking. Hopefully we'll wind up with a hundred or more drummers at one of these events soon!" To read more about the 818 Drummers Lunch from Dean and some of the other regulars, and to see more photos from the Stoneÿre Grill event, go to moderndrummer.com.

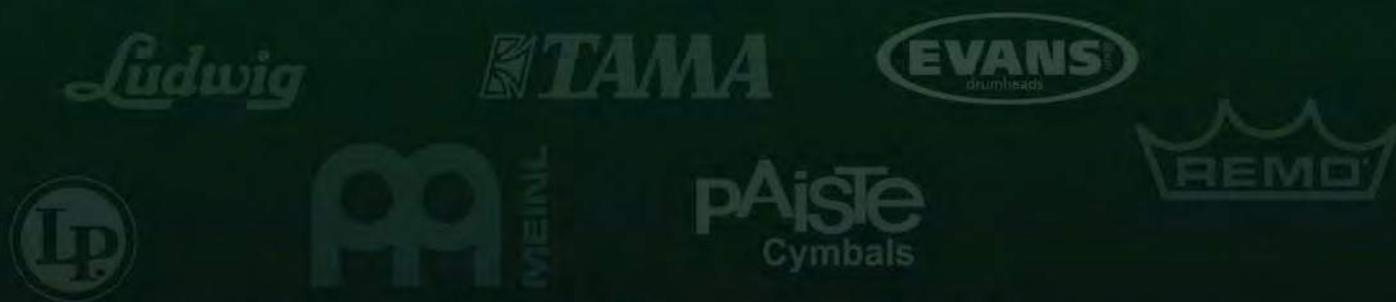


Top: Dean Butterworth, Jordan Burns, and Glen Sobel. Bottom: former Paul McCartney and Wings drummer Denny Seiwell and former Daughtry drummer Robin Diaz.

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On
Tour



Rick McMurray is out with Ash. "We're traveling from Montrose, Scotland, to the Isle of Wight, from New York to Fuji Rock, Japan," McMurray tells *MD*. "We're releasing the album *Kablammo!* this year, our first since 2007. I can't wait to play the songs 'Cocoon,' 'Let's Ride,' and 'Machinery.'" McMurray, whose regular gear includes Zildjian cymbals, Evans heads, Promark sticks, and Animal Custom Drums, will be taking his vintage Ludwig gold sparkle set on the road.





Paul Smith will be touring the Midwest and Eastern U.S. with Dengue Fever this September.

Also on the Road

The Doobie Brothers (**Ed Toth, Tony Pia**) and Gregg Allman (**Steve Potts, Marc Quiñones**) are co-headlining a string of East Coast dates in August and early September. /// **Patrick Berkery** is out with Clap Your Hands Say Yeah, replacing **Rob Walbourne**, who did the first leg of the tour in June. /// **Laurence "Loz" Colbert** with Ride /// **Tim Powles** with the Church /// **Marco Minnemann** with Joe Satriani /// **Andy Woodward** with Toro y Moi /// **Des Kensel** with High on Fire /// **Michael Cartellone** with Lynyrd Skynyrd



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Steve Jordan

Jordan and Verbs
bassist Willie Weeks

This drummer, who's famously fond of all things analog, puts his money where his mouth is on the Verbs' latest release, a collection of old-school covers.

The Verbs' third album, *Cover Story* (Jay-Vee), was recorded in Steve Jordan's home facility in New York City and at London's famed Abbey Road Studios, where bands from the Beatles to U2 to Radiohead have cut million-selling tracks. "I was playing in London with Eric Clapton, so we booked time at Abbey Road," Jordan tells *MD*. "I played this incredible '60s-era Rogers kit that belongs to Jeremy Stacey. I over-miked the drums so I would have a lot of choices. We set up in the spot where the lads [the Beatles] sat. That's why the drums sound great."

"There's something incredible in that room," adds vocalist and guitarist Meegan Voss, the Verbs' other creative half. "The decay on Steve's cymbals lasts into next year. A lush, beautiful sound."

But back in Abbey Road's control room, the tones Jordan, Voss, and bassist Willie Weeks heard on the studio floor were missing in playback. "When I started to mix,

the drums didn't sound that unique," Jordan recalls. "So we removed all the close mics and broke it down to the room mics—the far mics, the overheads—like I do at home. Then I heard the sound of the room, and it was magic. Magic!"

Drawing on Jordan's vast production and drumming experience and on Voss's gritty rock 'n' roll vocals and guitar, *Cover Story* reimagines such hits as Badfinger's "Baby Blue," the Kinks' "Till the End of the Day," Clapton's "Easy Now," and the Dave Clark Five's "Glad All Over." Each song was stripped down to capture its essential melody, harmony, and rhythm, revealing the power of subtlety and careful interpretation.

Returning to his Knotek studio in New York, Jordan played a kit consisting of German '60s-era Trixon Vox drums, Remo heads, and Paiste Traditionals cymbals, along with Elvin Jones' 20" K Zildjian ride cymbal and Greg Errico's K Zildjian hi-hats.

A Ludwig piccolo snare, Vic Firth Steve Jordan signature sticks, and one of Jordan's three pairs of Elvin Jones brushes completed his arsenal. To capture this setup in its vintage glory, Jordan relied on his studio's all-analog recording chain.

"Recording analog, there's dimension," Steve says. "But now, with everyone recording digitally in the box, it's one- or two-dimensional—there's no depth. With analog, your body reacts subconsciously. The sound hits you a certain way and you feel it in a certain way. To try to replicate that feeling, you're being assaulted. It's like a video game. It's coming at you, as opposed to drawing you in. If you listen to enough music recorded like that, you'll be agitated by the end of the day."

The Verbs are currently recording *Cover Story*'s follow-up, *Garage Sale*, which will include original material built from time-trusted tools and well-honed instincts. **Ken Micallef**

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Sean Kinney

Priding themselves on being a “live” band, the members of Alice in Chains need little encouragement to get out and play. But for this summer’s tour, there’s a more compassionate motivator at the core.

Earlier this year, a radio station in Hartford, Connecticut, connected the members of Alice in Chains with a cancer-stricken superfan named Stefan-Dayne Ankle. Sadly, this past March, Stefan lost his battle with leukemia. As a consequence, for its current tour, the band will be donating two dollars for every presold ticket to his memorial fund. “He was a real fan of the band, and his story touched us,” Sean Kinney says. “We kept in touch with him, and when we learned that he passed away, helping his family became a good reason to go out and play. When you have a nineteen-year-old kid that digs your band, and you’re in your forties, it’s a glaring reminder of why you continue to do this and what it all means.”

Kinney’s desire to create and improve hasn’t waned through the years, but hitting the road remains his favorite part of the age-old three-prong process of writing, recording, and touring. “I like touring the most, that ‘anything can happen’ aspect,” Kinney says. “We’ve never been the type of band that lives in the studio. It’s much more of a clinical thing for us that comes with its own set of challenges. I’m far less stressed on tour. Live, it’s the one time you’re going to play a song that way in that moment, and we have far more experience with that as a band. When writing, you’re creating

things and getting excited about music, which is why you do it in the first place. In the studio, you’re trying to capture that excitement with your little tribe of dudes...it’s nerve-racking.”

When not on tour, Kinney plays almost every day, but he admits that doesn’t compare to getting in a room with other musicians. Lack of proximity, however, makes free-form jams with his bandmates unrealistic, with Kinney residing in Seattle and the other members spread out in various cities. “A band has a purpose, which is both super-open and super-conjuring, if that makes any sense,” Kinney says. “We have to schedule time to get together, and it’s usually to write, record, or prepare for a tour. So I seek out people to get together with in a garage and just spaz out for a while, strictly for fun. Not to say that the band isn’t fun—it’s great—but it’s your livelihood and it has different tenets and boundaries.”

Though Alice in Chains doesn’t have immediate plans to head back into the studio, “We’ve been tossing around ideas,” Kinney says. “After the tour we’ll get back to working on music and see if we can come up with another album of tunes that we dig—and then force them upon the general public!” **David Ciauro**



Mike Savoia

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Miles Davis



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Mind Matters

Is the Money Worth the Abuse?

by Bernie Schallehn

I'm having trouble making ends meet. Even with yll-in jobs supplementing what I make with my cover band, unpaid bills are starting to pile up. My friend is getting ready to leave a high-paying gig with a wedding band, because the leader has been verbally abusive. I've already auditioned and have been o° ered the position, but I'm worried that I won't be able to endure the bandleader berating me. If I leave my current band, I know they wouldn't take me back. What's the best choice?

G.N.

You've already said that you're not generating enough revenue to keep your head above water, so you're going to have to do *something*. As the old adage goes, the deñition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a di° erent outcome. Before we address your decision as to whether or not you should take the new gig, let's look at a couple of other ways you might be able to keep yourself solvent.

Consider applying for part-time work at a music store. If you're lucky, you might land a position in the drum department. Even if you don't, you'll still be around instruments and fellow musicians. If stores aren't hiring in your area, check the classiñeds for jobs that may be of interest to you. Just make sure that whatever you pursue leaves you with enough energy and stamina to perform at your weekend gigs.

Now let's tackle the decision of whether

to go with the wedding band. First o° , you have an error in your thinking. Just because your drummer friend has labeled your prospective new employer as verbally abusive, there's nothing to suggest that your relationship with that person will be the same. You mention that you auditioned and were o° ered the gig. What was the bandleader like then? Did you receive any negative comments about your drumming? What was the vibe that he or she exuded? Friendly? Nasty? A little of both?

The deñition of what constitutes verbal abuse also needs closer inspection. Ask your friend for speciñcs. Does the leader rant and rave before, during, or after gigs? Do audiences hear these "corrections"? Does the leader only single out the drummer, or do all of the players receive the same verbal lashings? If possible, see if you can speak with other band members and get their take on the situation.

Consider this: Regardless of how your outgoing drummer friend has portrayed the bandleader, this individual is capable of holding a band together and nailing down some great gigs. Buddy Rich was pretty tough on his band. Some might call what he did bullying, while others would dismiss it as his managerial style. You have to judge for yourself.

Do you have a tough hide, or are you thin-skinned? If someone has criticized your drumming in the past, were you able to blow it o° , or did you ruminate on it for days? Worse yet, did you allow it to take a chunk out of your self-esteem? These are the

questions you should be asking yourself.

Let's say you take the new gig and the bandleader is indeed highly critical of you and certain aspects of your drumming, and these criticisms are presented in a verbally abusive manner (a level 8 out of 10). You really need the cash, so maybe you suck it up and accept the situation on a time-limited basis until you can get your ñances back in the black. No one says you have to stay in this situation forever.

Now let's imagine that you play your ñrst gig with the wedding band and the bandleader lays into you big time (level 10 plus) with one insult after another between songs. Other band members hear it, and the audience, shocked at such unprofessional ranting and raving, hears it too. What do you do? Me? I'd pack my gear and walk, and I hope you would too. Let the bandleader ñnish the gig without a drummer.

I've given you a lot to think about, but there's one ñnal issue I need to address. You say that if you were to leave your present band, they wouldn't take you back. We're all in this together, and bills need to be paid. Might they understand that your decision to jump ship and play with a group for more money was made out of necessity? Life isn't always in absolutes. The group may take you back. If not, there are always bands looking for a good drummer.

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

Is This a Leedy?

I recently inherited my grandfather's snare drum. I believe it's an old Leedy from the 1920s, but I'm not sure. Any information you can provide would be much appreciated.

Tim

According to Collector's Corner columnist Harry Cangany, "That's a late-1930s Leedy Utility model snare from Elkhart, Indiana. The drum had been available since the '20s, but back then the center ridge was inverted. When Conn bought Leedy and then, in 1929, Ludwig—years before the companies were conjoined—Leedy and Ludwig shells were made the same, in the same factory in Elkhart, using the Ludwig design with the Ludwig-style outward center ridge. The strainer, introduced in 1911 and also known as the Utility, was once the high-end model, but as other versions came out it was used on lower-price drums.

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RBH Drums Americana Jump Kit

Impossibly big and rich tones from a tiny grab-and-go setup.

Virginia Beach-based RBH Drums has been quietly but steadily building steam as one of the preeminent custom shops, forging a lush, over-the-top concoction for more reined, classically single-ply snares (Prestige series) and vintage-style 3-ply mahogany/poplar/mahogany kits and snares (Monarch series). While Monarch drums are offered à la carte in the most common sizes, including 10" to 18" toms, 16" to 24" bass drums, and 13" and 14" snares, owner/master craftsman Bruce Hagwood recently developed a unique and super-compact cocktail-style setup, dubbed the Americana Jump Kit.

The basic Americana Jump Kit setup—street price: \$1,750—comprises a 3-ply 13x16 bass drum (on a Lift riser), a matching 5x13 snare, an Axis snare basket (not pictured), and a custom case. Add-on toms include a 7x10 (\$550) and a 13x13 (\$780). Our review kit, which did not include toms, was covered in a striking peacock pearl, but more natural finishes, like maple, mahogany, and burgundy stain, as well as custom inlay options, are also available.

Hagwood named this tiny setup after the gear that EMS and your department first responders grab when jumping from their trucks after arriving at the scene. (Bruce is a retired firefighter.) The Americana Jump Kit is designed to be small enough to carry in one trip into and out of gigs, and it takes up very little space on stage. The bass drum has a universal mount on the shell to hold a snare basket (for stand-up playing, à la the Stray Cats' Slim Jim Phantom), or you can use the mount to accommodate a tom holder, should you decide to expand the kit to three or four pieces.

The bass drum has sturdy medium-duty spurs that are contoured to fold in closely to the shell so they don't have to be removed when packed up. The Lift is a molded-plastic device that sits under the shell, just past the batter-side hoop, raising the drum a couple of inches for better



beater positioning. It includes a ledge for connecting the pedal, so nothing is attached directly to the hoop. The Lift not only prevents hoop damage but also does wonders to increase sustain and low end from the bass drum, since the shell is not resting directly on the floor. The Axis snare basket is appropriate for this kit because it's very light but ultra-sturdy, and the basket separates from the post with the turn of a thumbscrew, so it can remain attached to the bottom hoop for even quicker setup and teardown.

For a gig with my Johnny Cash tribute band, the Americana Jump Kit fit like a well-worn leather glove. The 13" snare had incredible warmth plus super-crisp snare response, so buzz-stroke-laden swing patterns and chugging train beats with brushes sounded rich and articulate. The 16" bass drum, on the other hand, sounded much deeper and fluffier than its size would suggest. Tuned just above the wrinkle point, this little guy packed a fat punch followed by a warm, balanced boom that was super-satisfying to the ear. My bandmates and I were completely blown away by how big this kick drum sounded.

When I took the Americana Jump Kit to my studio, I set it up traditionally, with the snare in a regular stand, so I could test it sitting down, and I inserted a cymbal arm into the tom

mount to hold a 19" ride. I tuned both drums up as high as they would go, recorded a Steve Jordan-type swing-funk beat like what he tracked on the John Mayer song "Waiting on the World to Change," and then repeated the process with the drums tuned a little lower each time. You can check out the results in the video demo we've posted to modern drummer.com, but the range of useful, versatile tones these two drums emitted was stunning.

The tighter tunings would sit well in a bebop situation or as a sped-up breakbeat option when you want to go for quick drum 'n' bass textures. Even with both heads cranked all the way, there was still enough tone to carry some weight in the mix. Then, as I gradually backed off the tension, the sounds got fatter and richer. Even with the heads slack, there was still some useful sustain and body. The Americana Jump Kit also sounded great when recorded with just room mics, which falls right in line with its intended rootsy, old-school aesthetic.

Michael Dawson

For a video demo of this kit, visit modern drummer.com.



Paiste PSTX Series Cymbals

Affordably priced, trashy effects hats, stacks, and crashes, plus a couple of calm, cooling bells.

The PSTX series is a complete lineup of effects cymbals designed to achieve trashy tones and clean bell sounds at very affordable prices. Models include 14" (\$151), 16" (\$192), and 18" Swiss Thin (\$232) crashes, which have holes of different sizes punched in them to produce noisier, dirtier textures. There's also an 18" Swiss Medium crash (\$232) that provides a bit more volume and durability, a 10" Swiss splash (\$106) that blends the light, airy burst of a classic splash with the grit of the trashy Swiss crashes, and a 14" Swiss Flanger crash (\$151) that has fewer holes and is thinner so that the overtones undulate a bit after the initial explosive attack. All of the Swiss crashes are made from 2002 (B8) bronze.

The PSTX Swiss crashes were a lot of fun to play, effectively bridging the gap between the smooth wash of regular crashes and splashes and the explosive, dissonant nature of a China, but where the series really stood out was in the hi-hat and stacker options. Available in 10" (\$212), 14" (\$302), and 16" (\$384) sizes, PSTX Swiss Hats combine two cymbals of different alloys (2002 bronze and brass) to create a dry, gnarly sound that's similar to the funky hi-hat tones found in classic analog drum machines. If you're a fan of the small stacker sounds employed by modern jazz/electronic greats like Jojo Mayer, Mark Guiliana, Zach Danziger, and Benny Greb, then get a pair of the 10" PSTXs. I mounted them right in front of the snare, in place of the rack tom, and had a ball playing quick 16th-note figures between them and the snare.

The 14" Swiss Hats were louder than the 10" but equally dry and nasty sounding, and they had the most familiar feel and response when played in place of standard hi-hats with the foot or with sticks. The 16" Swiss Hats rode the middle ground, sonically and responsively, between a similarly sized China/crash stacker and a set of large hi-hats constructed from two crashes. They weren't as trashy as a stacker, but they had a short, explosive sound that could be made tighter or washier depending on how tightly I held them closed. I placed the 16" models on the right side of the kit, where a second rack tom would typically be located, and used them as X-hats for more aggressive ride patterns.

The Swiss line is rounded out with a 14" Flanger Stack (\$302) that comprises a brass Swiss-crash-type top and a bronze Flanger crash bottom. The combo is designed to be mounted with the bells facing up, and it sounded best when the two cymbals were held together fairly loosely so that they complemented the dry, tight tones of the PSTX hi-hats with a bit more rattle and sizzle.

The outliers in the PSTX series are 9" (\$97) and 10" (\$106) Pure Bells, which are made from aluminum (a first for Paiste) and produce a warm, pure, meditative tone with a long and even sustain. I liked hitting them once or twice after exploring the more tension-laden textures of the Swiss crashes, hi-hats, and stacker. Talk about contrast!

Michael Dawson





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

Craviotto Johnny C. Series Snare Drums

"A~ ordable" was never a word associated with the king of steam-bent shells...until now.



When it comes to high-end, ultra-sophisticated, custom-made drums, there's no name quite as ubiquitous as Craviotto. Company founder Johnny Craviotto has been building the very best of the best single-ply, steam-bent snares and drumsets for decades, and collectors and drummers alike swoon at the thought of owning some. Studio legends Matt Chamberlain and Chris McHugh, rock greats Ronnie Vannucci and Jason McGerr, and jazz stars Marcus Gilmore, Billy Martin, and Matt Wilson are proud endorsers, and many more top players have at least one Craviotto snare in their arsenal for sessions and live work.

While such quality and notoriety often come with a hefty price tag, the company recently developed a line of more affordable snare drums, dubbed the Johnny C. series, designed to be dependable instruments for everyday working drummers. The snares are available in 4x13, 5.5x13, 6.5x13, 4x14, 5.5x14, and 6.5x14 sizes and come with a natural-satin-finish single-ply maple shell, 45-degree bearing edges, a black Trick GS007 three-point throw-off, Remo drumheads (Coated Ambassador batter and Clear Ambassador bottom), twenty-strand Craviotto-branded wires, and ten Diamond Cast lugs. The MAP (minimum advertised price) is \$649, which is about half the cost of a Craviotto custom-shop snare. We were sent 5.5x14 and 6.5x14 models to review.

Both drums were beautifully and meticulously constructed and had a universal look that would blend with the aesthetic of any drumset, whether you prefer classic pearl, a flashy modern paint job, or anything in between. The Diamond Cast lugs aren't

as unobtrusive at the company's flagship tube lugs, but they're elegantly designed and not just a typical off-the-shelf variety. The interior of each shell is signed by Johnny Craviotto, which is a nice reminder that even though the price might be lower than that of pieces from the custom shop, these still get the stamp of approval by the man himself.

The 5.5x14 Johnny C. series snare had the trademark warmth and richness that solid maple shells provide, and the snare response was crystal clear. The overtones were nice and musical, and they didn't linger for long, which I assume is thanks in part to the ten slightly chunkier cast lugs restricting the shell vibrations a little bit more than tube lugs would. The drum had a wide tuning potential, but it really excelled in the medium to tight range. I could get it to go super-low too, but when compared with the 6.5x14, which *killed* at low-mid and low tunings, it lost just a touch of personality.

The 6.5x14 Johnny C. series drum was my favorite of the pair; it was more versatile (it had a great tight pop as well) and had a broader, fatter voice that occupied a sweet space in the mix at any tuning, whether it was struck lightly at the center of the head or pummeled with full-on rimshots. So if I had to choose a workhorse among these workhorses to rely on for all my gigs, which include delicate singer-songwriter sessions as well as hard-hitting modern rock and country showcases, the 6.5x14 would be it.

Michael Dawson



Check out video demos of these drums, showing their entire tuning range, at moderndrummer.com.



Creative Compression Techniques

4 Ways to Pump Up the Excitement in Your Drum Tracks

by Mark Parsons

If I were limited to a single tool for processing drum tracks, I'd pick the compressor over equalizers, reverbs, gates, delays, and other effects. There's so much that compressors can do to tame, tighten, or just plain twist your performances. Yet I often see drummers avoiding them, unsure of how to best use compression to improve their recordings.

At its most basic, a compressor is a device designed to limit the dynamic range of the signal passing through it. It was originally

used as a utilitarian tool to prevent the music from overdriving the tape. But engineers soon realized compressors could do more than just control levels for technical reasons, and they began to use the devices creatively, to change the sonics of their tracks and add a feeling of energy and excitement. Let's take a look at some different ways to use compression on drums, both in an everyday fashion and for more adventurous sounds.

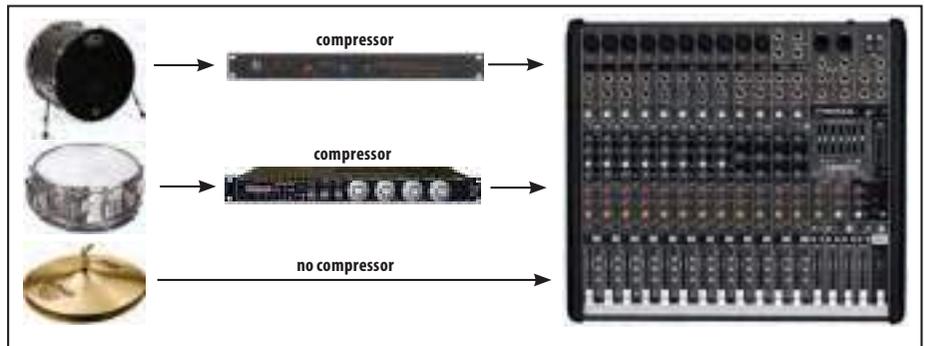
Serial Approach

Serial compression simply means you're processing the entire signal. To get a feel for how this works, add a compressor to your snare track and dial up the different parameters. You'll want to experiment, but good starting points might be a fairly fast attack (around a millisecond), a fast release (100–200 milliseconds), and a medium ratio (4:1). Pay close attention to the processed signal, and gradually lower the threshold (the control that determines how much compression you're applying). Listening for how the leading edge of the attack pops up and is followed by the compressor clamping down on the signal to give you a fuller, fatter, longer fundamental sound. Lower the threshold until you get a sound that excites you.

Once you find the tone you want, add make-up gain to get the level back to where it belongs. (Part of the magic of compression is that it allows you to raise the perceived volume of the signal, because there's less discrepancy between the peak and the average level.)

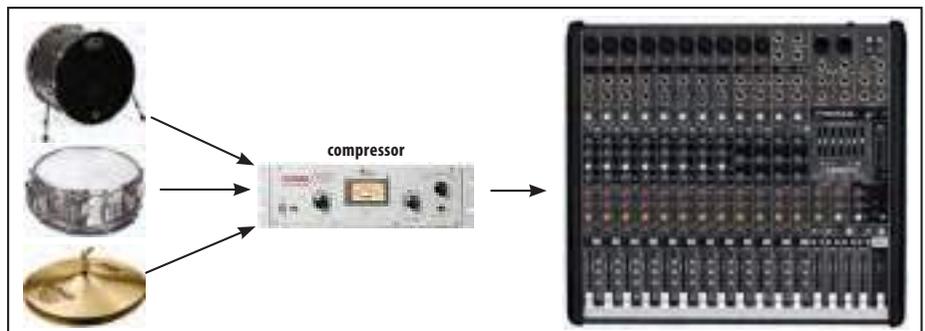
You can apply the same methodology to

your kick drum signal. You may end up with slightly different settings and perhaps less overall compression than you used on the snare, since you're looking to retain more of the point of the beater attack while keeping the boom under dynamic control, in order to get a punchier and more consistent sound.



Buss Compression

There may be times when you want to pump up your entire drum sound. Rather than individually compressing each separate track, try inserting a compressor across a stereo mix of all the drums. Again, you'll likely not want your settings as aggressive as they were with just the snare—try a slightly slower attack and a lower ratio. Your snare and kick will still get the lion's share of the processing, as they tend to poke out from the rest of the kit. But buss compression can help glue the entire drum sound together and make it feel more like



a single instrument. And if you really push the compressor, you can get the cymbals to breathe a little as they come up after

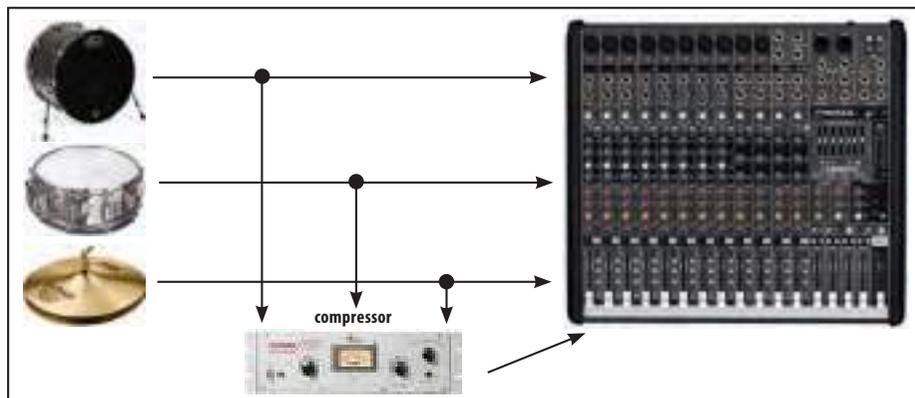
the compression clamps down on the kick and snare.

Parallel Chain

This technique has been around for a while but is becoming more and more popular, especially in harder-hitting situations. (Parallel compression was once called “New York compression,” as it was used famously by East Coast engineer/producers like Ed Stasium, who worked on Living Colour’s *Vivid*, among many other albums.)

In parallel compression, you’re sending some of the signal to be processed (compressed) while leaving some of it untouched. You then blend the wet signal with the dry to taste. The advantage of parallel compression over serial processing is that you’re able to retain the original dynamics of the uncompressed signal while also being able to add the fuller, fatter sound of the compressed transients. This allows you to have an infinite variety of choices between a fully realistic and a completely crushed sound, while maintaining the best qualities of both.

There are multiple ways to accomplish



parallel compression. If you’re working in a computer, you can simply clone the parts you want to parallel process, squash the cloned parts with a compressor, and combine that with the dry tracks. Another option is to set up an effects channel with a compressor, buss your tracks over to be compressed, and use the effects-channel fader to blend in some of the effected signal.

Regardless of which technique you

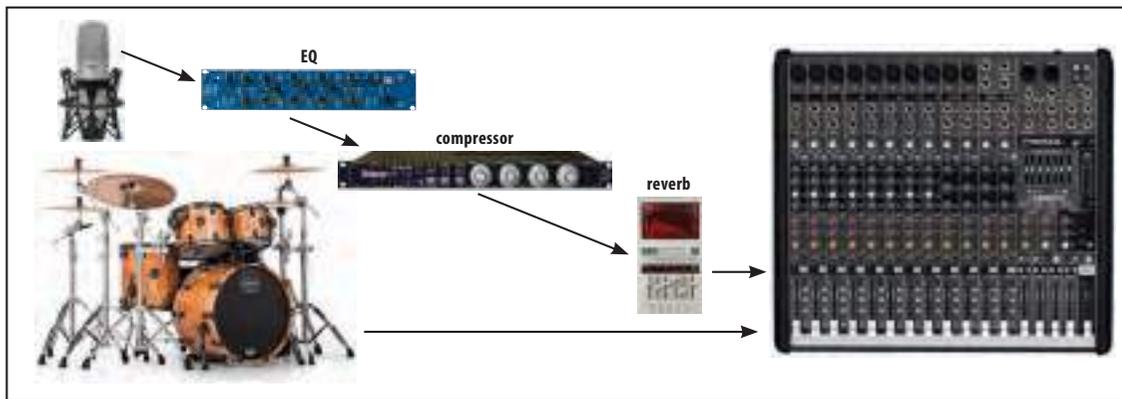
use, the overall methodology will be a little different from using serial compression. When you adjust the amount of compression on the wet side of the equation, you’re looking for qualities that—when added to the dry signal—will yield the overall tone you’re after. This means that instead of going for a moderate amount of compression, you may choose to go for a seriously slammed sound to blend with your dry tracks.

Squashed Room Mic

Among other things, compression brings down the transient (initial drum hit) in comparison to the sustain. Bringing up the shell tone on a close-miked drum can thicken a snare, for example, but if

you want to have the room itself come up in the mix after the initial note, the best way is to apply compression to a room mic so that the room “blooms” after the initial strike. This will make your room sound much bigger and energetic—it’s one of the secrets to the coveted Led Zeppelin drum sound.

Experiment with the mics you have available, but I’d ultimately recommend



using a large-diaphragm condenser or a ribbon mic. Walk around the room and listen while someone else plays the drums. You’re looking for a spot where the reflective buildup is prominent. Place the mic there, and track it along with your usual close mics and overheads.

Slam the heck out of the room-mic signal, and then add that to your overall mix as a spice. The difference between this

and the methods already discussed is that the room-mic compression will sound almost like adding a special kind of reverb to the mix that ducks down the instant a drum is hit and then adds some boom as the room rings. If you tweak the attack and release settings a bit, you can even get the compression to pump in time with the music.

Electronic Insights continued

Tweaking the Tone

Okay, so you have your over-the-top smashed drum tracks starting to happen, but as you add more of the processed signal to your mix, you may notice the addition of some annoying tones in the overall drum sound. What's going on?

Compression can actually accentuate the inherent harshness in those signals. The fix is to start with subtractive EQ. The way to find the annoying frequencies is to dial up a parametric equalizer, set a midrange band to boost, and start sweeping the mids until you find something really ugly, usually between 350 and 700 Hz. Then change the boost to a cut and vary the bandwidth and attenuation until you've removed the annoying tones without killing the overall body of the kit. Now you can crush the signal to your heart's content without those annoying frequencies poking through.

Two other potential problem areas are the very top and bottom of the frequency spectrum of the smashed track. If the cymbals are really dominating the compressed signal, roll off some high end to tame the splatter. Likewise, check the bottom octave if you're getting too much boominess.

If you find that the crushed room tone still doesn't sound big, consider sending some of the room signal to a reverb that has the

characteristics your room is lacking. You'll likely want to go for a warmer reverb sound with a longer decay. Just be sure to use the reverb judiciously—you're looking to enhance your natural room tone rather than drown it.

Finally, if your kick drum is causing the compressor to clamp down too much on the entire signal and make it lose energy, you can roll out the lower frequencies from the detector circuit that triggers the compressor. Many compressors—software and hardware—have this function built in, typically called "side-chain high-pass" or something similar. Experiment with the cutoff frequency until the bottom end is still coming through strongly and not ducking the rest of the kit.

Keep in mind that there are no cut-and-paste solutions when it comes to getting a great drum sound. What works for one genre, or even one song, may be a mess on another, depending on the tempo, dynamics, instrumentation, and density of the mix. But once you start experimenting with some of the more creative uses of compression, you'll find that they can really help make your tracks more energetic and unique sounding. Good luck!

An audio demonstration of these techniques is posted at modern drummer.com.



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Interview by John Martinez • Photos by Alex Solca

Ariana Grande's Keith "Stix" McJimson

Drums: Yamaha Oak Custom in black shadow sunburst finish

- A. 5.5x14 Oak Custom snare with Roland RT-10S trigger and Tuner Fish lug locks
- B. 5.5x12 Musashi Oak snare with Tuner Fish lug locks
- C. 6x14 Absolute Hybrid Maple snare in polar white finish with PHX lugs
- D. 7x8 tom
- E. 7x10 tom
- F. 8x12 tom
- G. 15x16 ° oor tom
- H. 18x22 bass drum with Roland RT-10K trigger
- I. 14x18 remote bass drum
- J. 5x14 Maple Custom Absolute snare (spare)

Heads: Aquarian Triple Threat batter on main and far-left snare, Super-2 batter on Musashi snare, Classic Clear snare bottoms, black Force Ten tom batters, and Super-Kick 10 bass drum batter

Hardware: Yamaha HexRack II with short and long boom arms, SS950 snare stands, HS650A hi-hat stand, DFP9500C double pedal, and DS950 bench-style throne

Cymbals: Sabian with Cympad Chromatics white felt washers

- 1. 17" AAX V-Crash
 - 2. 14" HHX Evolution hi-hats
 - 3. 17" HHX Evolution crash
 - 4. 8" HHX splash
 - 5. 20" AA Raw Bell crash
 - 6. 17" HHX Legacy crash
 - 7. 10" AAX splash
 - 8. 12" HHX Legacy splash
 - 9. 19" AAX X-Plosion crash
 - 10. 21" HHX Groove ride
 - 11. 18" HHX O-Zone crash
 - 12. 15" HHX Evolution China
- Not visible:** 19" HHX X-Treme crash (under O-Zone)

Electronics: Yamaha DTX-MULTI 12 percussion pad with Boss FS-5U footswitch to advance patches, JH Audio JH16 Pro in-ear monitors

Sticks: Vic Firth X5A and 5A Dual Tone sticks, T1 timpani mallets, Stick Caddy, and Marching Snare stick bag

Percussion: TreeWorks Tre35 Classic chimes

MD met up with McJimson on the West Coast leg of Ariana Grande's Honeymoon Tour. "I got ten shows out of a set of heads before I had to change them," the drummer says. "The Triple Threat is probably the most durable snare head out there. My main snare is tuned at a medium tightness; it has a lot of body to it but is very poppy at the same time. The Oak Custom snare is tuned very low for the ballads, and the bottom is very loose. We have a lot of songs that have low 808 snare sounds, so I play this snare. I'm matching the high-pitched 808 sounds with the Musashi snare. If I'm going for a tight sound, I'm going to tighten the bottom head as well, just to match

the tuning and not get so much ring. "When I hit my toms, you're going to hear them in the front of house," Stix continues. "I don't put any mu, e on them; I like them to sing. They're tuned evenly, top and bottom, for a nice open tone. The 8" is very high and cuts through everything. Here's a tip: On my ° oor tom, I put a Force Ten on the top and the bottom. It makes it very boomy and big. You'll get body, and it falls o" quickly because of the thicker bottom head. It doesn't resonate as much as when I use Classic Clears. I need my high three toms to resonate, but for the ° oor tom I need that big thunder."

Discussing cymbals, McJimson explains, "Every one has a purpose. The 17" Legacy crash is my favorite. All my HHXs are darker cymbals. I like to use those when I hit beat 1, and I want them to fall o" immediately. The AAX are brighter. The 20" Raw Bell is my go-to on all ballads because it's so big and brassy sounding, and when the whole band is hitting hard I need that power.

"Ariana calls the wind chimes 'twinkles,'" Stix adds. "They're a very important part of the show, and I use them on about half the set. With all the ballads we do, it adds a nice ° avoi."







Gil Snararo

Many have been seduced by his mind-boggling drumming excursions with Dillinger Escape Plan, Team Sleep, and Stolen Babies. Others know him as the creator of the *Wicked Beats* DVD, the most insightful and pragmatic methodology available on playing Jamaican drum styles. Still more have been moved by his gargantuan beats on Marilyn Manson's excellent new album, *The Pale Emperor*, and the way he's been bringing them home with power and panache in arenas across the continents.

And to think, he's really only getting going.

It's 2011, and a group of drummers has gathered in a hotel lobby during a music trade show. The conversation turns to new-wave music, and, as if on cue, Tears for Fears' "Everybody Wants to Rule the World" kicks in over the hotel's sound system. Gil Sharone jumps at the opportunity to point out the killer yll Manny Elias nails going into the guitar solo, and his excitement about the simple genius of Elias's part—o° beat quarter-note triplets on the snare followed by three 8th notes ending with a snare/crash—is visible.

It's the kind of passion every drummer understands—Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" or Deep Purple's "Smoke on the Water" comes on the car radio, and in our mind we're immediately transported to some big arena, perched on the drum riser, awlessly playing Dave Grohl's hand/foot combos or Ian Paice's dancing hi-hats and making 20,000 screaming fans pump their ysts in time. Sharone's enthusiasm is all the more illuminating given the fact that it's coming from a guy who'd already slayed the most demanding rhythmic complexities imaginable with Dillinger Escape Plan, a band whose name has become synonymous with extreme modern rock, and with whom Gil recorded and toured behind the 2007 genre classic *Ire Works*. Yet there he is, practically leaping out of his stool in anticipation of a relatively simple rhythmic device—though, it must be said, one that's played impeccably.

And there's the crux of the matter. Like all successful musicians, Sharone instinctively understands that playing seemingly simple parts impeccably is no small thing. In fact, in many scenarios—his current gig with Marilyn Manson, for instance—it's a huge thing. Heck, it's practically *the* thing. And, as we'll learn more about later, in this drummer's hands, simple is rarely as simple as it seems.

Sharone has certainly delved into the topic before in these very pages. In our Jamaican-music issue from August 2012, he talked about the underestimated demands of holding a 16th-note hi-hat groove with reggae legends like Eek-a-Mouse. And if you survey his recording career, whether it's the Dillinger album; Morgan Heritage's new single, "So Amazing," which was topping the reggae charts at press time; or the progressive goth-metal sounds of Stolen Babies, the band he founded with his twin brother, Rani, you'll ynd that Sharone has proven his mettle when the drum parts need to be clear, powerful, detailed, and full of life. That they're sometimes also the kind of thing that would make your printer cry for mercy if you tried to run o° a transcription is almost incidental; as Sharone consistently demonstrates, if the beat doesn't hit you in the gut, even a barrage of 32nd notes won't hurt a y.

For his yrst *Modern Drummer* cover story, Sharone speaks with us via Skype from his rehearsal studio in L.A., which serves as Stolen Babies HQ as well as his preproduction and teaching studio. The space is set up with a full Pro Tools rig, a live room, and a vocal/guitar-amp isolation booth, and houses Gil's signiycant collection of drums, including an impressive cymbal vault organized by size. As the drummer gives us a virtual tour, he points out yve bags yllled with more cymbals. "When I get called for a session, I don't want to spend hours looking for one cymbal," he explains. "And because I'm particular, I know exactly what gear I want to use for whatever the project is, and this makes it quicker—I know my go-to choices."

Besides getting a taste of his working environment, speaking with Sharone at his studio allows us to ask him to demonstrate certain concepts that come up during our conversation. You can watch clips of him playing some of his Manson and Team Sleep parts at moderndrummer.com. But yrst things yrst. Like so many drummers out there, we want to know just what's involved in playing with Marilyn Manson, one of the most notorious drum seats in modern rock....

Story by Adam Budofsky
Photos by Clemente Ruiz

ME

MD: What's the job requirement of the Manson gig?

Gil: To rock it hard every night. To provide the power and feel that makes the crowd move. There's a lot of programming going on, and pretty much every song is to a click, so your playing has to be rock solid and tight with all of the parts. It's a really fun gig.

MD: Did Manson ever ask for anything specific from you playing-wise?

Gil: One thing he said to me was, "Don't confuse the strippers." That basically means to keep the pocket strong and steady, and not do any fills that would interrupt the groove and make strippers fall over. [laughs] The first time I met Manson was when I was tracking *The Pale Emperor*, and he said to me, "You're the drummer I want in my band. You have the attitude, the right feel." There wasn't much direction other than that, because we were on the same page and I know my role in this setting.

MD: Compared to some of the work you're known for, the grooves on *The Pale Emperor* could be described as more basic. But basic doesn't mean easy, does it?

Gil: Exactly—just because something is basic doesn't make it easy. When [Manson producer/collaborator] Tyler Bates called me for the session, right off the bat he said, "Look, this isn't going to be a flashy drum record. It's all pocket, it's feel, it's sexy, but it also needs to be behind it." Manson and Tyler are very aware of what I'm capable of on the drums, but there's a time and place for more extreme playing. I aim to play what's appropriate for the gig.

Most uneducated players automatically think a drummer is shitty because he's playing a simple beat or his fills aren't busy. My response to that is, sit down and play this beat the same way, with the same intensity, and the same passion, and the same feel, and don't stop the groove for even a *millisecond*. I don't care if you have a sneeze attack—you keep that groove and that tempo and that

“Sitting behind the drums, whether it's live or in the studio, that's my element. It's probably the most natural state I can be in.”

touch and that dynamic range and that pocket consistent, and *don't make it move*. Most average drummers will find that much more difficult to play than a busy part, because you can hide behind a busy part. Letting the music breathe and providing the space is key in any style. Blowing chops...everybody has chops today. What separates you from someone else is how you make the music feel and sound.

MD: Is it a different headspace playing Manson grooves versus playing in Dillinger Escape Plan or Stolen Babies?

Gil: Not really. Whether I'm playing something more straightforward, like Manson, or something like Dillinger, which is some of the toughest music a drummer can ever be asked to play, I don't "switch gears," like I'm in easy mode here and advanced mode there. It all feels natural. Also, playing with Manson is just as stressful, if not more so, as playing in Dillinger—I'll tell you that right now. The pressure isn't necessarily because the parts are difficult. It's everything else that's happening on stage; it's having

to react in an instant when Manson wants to change something on the fly or cues something. You have to stay on your toes at all times. When I started playing certain songs that have been in Manson's catalog for years, Twiggy [Ramirez], who's back on bass, said to me, "Wow, these songs have never had this bounce to them before! I'm having so much fun playing bass again!"

SHUFFLES AND THE POWER OF UNISON PARTS

MD: One of the not-so-simple things you get to play with Manson is shuffles.

Gil: Yes, a lot of shuffles. Shuffles are near and dear to my heart, and I feel that I specialize in them. It's cool, because producers are beginning to know me for that. Shuffles mean a lot to me because I play them in so many different applications, whether it's reggae or rock or jazz or blues—even metal. Shuffles swing, and I feel that all drummers need to learn how to swing.

MD: There is such a huge variety of approaches you can take with shuffles. How do you decide how to apply them?

Gil: I pay attention to the vibe of the song. As soon as I hear two bars of something, I immediately internalize how I want to play it—super-lazy, a little ahead, a little behind, straight with just a little swing on it.... Some drummers say that there's no such thing as playing behind the beat or ahead of it, that you're either on it or off. But there is a way to play behind the beat or ahead of the beat while keeping the same bpm. I do it all the time, and it's obvious when you play to a click. The space in shuffles or any kind of groove is also a factor.

I try to put my stamp on everything I'm playing, no matter how stripped down and basic it might be. Take "Third Day of a Seven Day Binge." It's the same pocket through the whole song, but that 8th-note space we put in on the hats, that breath, the way I'm touching the hi-hats, that's very signature to me. I recognize myself in that when I hear it. I'm dancing on the hi-hats a certain way—the amount of pressure I'm putting on the hi-hat cymbals changes as every 8th note goes by.

MD: The consistency of the drums on that track also comes from your resisting the urge to play variations of fills.

Gil: Definitely. I like to find a hook in the drums, though not necessarily something that sticks out. I could have changed fills during each transition from the verse to the chorus, but I didn't, for a reason. By purposely repeating that fill, it becomes a hook and a cue for listeners to feel that section change. It's also the way Tyler and Manson felt it should be. When we do that song live, it has a different intensity, so I build it differently.

MD: You still make these beats your own, though, largely through





the way you layer different parts of the kit. Can you give an example of that?

Gil: Even if I'm playing in unison to a programmed track, I still like to find a way to make it interesting by orchestrating the part on the kit a certain way. I have a gong floor tom on my left side and regular floor toms on my right. For "Cupid Carries a Gun" and "Slave Only Dreams to Be King," for instance, there's a way I'm using the floor toms and the bass drum, all playing in unison. By layering those hits with other drums, it adds power. A lot of people hearing the record might think I'm just doing this [plays simple version of the beat], but I'm also shutting my foot along with the floor tom. The execution, the tightness, that's very much a part of the feel, and the hits have to line up. They can't jam!

MD: Playing things in unison can be really hard, especially with patterns that we're not used to playing that way.

Gil: Most definitely. It's difficult even for a lot of session players—that consistency. I think of it as another level of independence.

When drummers think about independence, they think about polyrhythms and extreme limb independence. But there's that other side of independence where you're not playing things against each other but with each other. I've noticed players struggle with this and their notes jam, then the engineer has to edit their performance and line up the hits. I love jams to death, but this isn't the instance to use them.

You can also use independence in service of dynamics. I play with dynamic independence in mind, like having built-in faders for each limb. If I'm playing jazz and everything's at an equal dynamic, that's like a rock drummer playing jazz. There has to be touch. Same with reggae. You can't underestimate this approach.

THE MANSON FACTOR

MD: Does Manson pick up on everything you're playing?

Gil: Every note. On stage he hears everything, and I know what he wants from me, so I give him that and there's never

any guesswork. Even if it's a subtle cue or something he's used to hearing, I make a mental note and I never forget it. I only need to be told something once, if at all. That's my philosophy, and I put that pressure on myself. Whether it's an arrangement that's changed five minutes before we go on stage or new songs added to the set list last-second, it's about being able to roll with the punches. I've been in so many situations outside of my comfort zone; that's normal to me.

MD: Does Manson use any visual cues on stage?

Gil: They can be visual or something he says. Early on in the rehearsals he never mentioned cues, so at one point I asked Twiggy, "Dude, is it going to be obvious where he cues?" And he was like,

"Just go with it." Manson might have said once, "If I do this, go; if I do this, hold on." He might also throw his hands up in the air James Brown-style, and we have to hit that cue. That's why you just have to be on full alert at all times and not let the anticipation of what you *think* might come next distract you.

MD: What extramusical things do you have to contend with on stage?

Gil: This gig is totally unpredictable, which I feel makes it exciting, not only for me but for the audience as well. You really don't know what you're going to get from one minute to the next. It keeps it wild and exciting. Manson is the real deal, and he knows how to put on a show.

Gil's Setups

Team Sleep Kit

Drums: DW Jazz series with custom liquid gold finish and nickel hardware

- A. 5x13 snare
- B. 6x14 snare
- C. 8x10 tom
- D. 8x12 tom
- E. 16x16 floor tom
- F. 16x18 floor tom
- G. 16x22 bass drum

Heads: Remo Coated Emperor tom and snare batters and Coated Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter

Hardware: DW 9000 series, including double pedal

Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1. 19" K Custom Hybrid Trash Smash (prototype)
- 2. 20" A Custom EFX with 10" China on top (prototypes)
- 3. 16" K Light hi-hats
- 4. 24" K Light ride
- 5. 22" A Custom crash (prototype)
- 6. 14" A New Beat hi-hats
- 7. 18" FX Oriental China "Trash"

Sticks: Vater West Side model



Manson Kit

Drums: DW Collector's series in satin gun metal metallic gray finish with black chrome hardware

- A. 16x20 gong drum
- B. 6.5x14 black-nickel-over-brass snare
- C. 8x12 tom
- D. 9x13 tom
- E. 16x16 floor tom
- F. 16x18 floor tom
- G. 16x24 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1. 19" K Custom Hybrid Smash Trash
- 2. 19" A Ultra Hammered China
- 3. 16" K Light hi-hats
- 4. 19" A Custom Projection crash
- 5. 24" A Medium ride
- 6. 15" K Light hi-hats
- 7. 20" A Custom crash
- 8. 19" K Custom Hybrid China
- 9. 17" K Custom Hybrid China

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

Sticks: Vater West Side model



Hardware: DW 9000 series, including double pedal

Regarding the double pedal and two bass drums in the Manson setup, Gil says, "I knew I wanted my Manson kit to have two bass drums, and I have no problem playing two single pedals versus one double pedal, so it's not a

performance issue. But I use a double pedal in this setup for two reasons. The main reason is that in case my second bass drum gets thrown off the drum riser, I can still play any double bass parts. Second, our soundman asked if I wouldn't mind just using one bass drum to have one less thing for him to worry about."

MD: There are notorious stories of things getting hairy at a Manson show.

Gil: Yup. I wasn't oblivious to the history of Manson's onstage antics. You just have to stay on your toes.

It's funny—somebody sent me this thing on Facebook and said, "Is this true? Are you okay?" And I was like, "What do you mean, am I okay?" This writer at one of the shows wrote, "He hit drummer Gil Sharone in the head with a glass bottle and they stopped the show. Gil was able to finish the show like a true champ." That didn't happen. We stopped the show because of a technical issue. And yeah, we finished it, but he's never thrown a glass bottle at my head. I'm okay, you know? [laughs]

Manson can throw my drums and cymbals. He'll climb up on my gong drum and on my double bass and have his face this close to me and yell things at me, like, just having fun. The interaction is cool. It keeps things exciting. I like being in those situations where I'll be super-distracted like that but I won't get thrown off. It's part of staying focused. I want to be this solid rock that everybody can depend on, every night. If anyone on stage were to get lost, all they'd have to do is look at me and they'd know *exactly* where they are. And that will make them play better. Other musicians love to play with a drummer who makes them feel like they don't have to think about anything.

A NATURAL STATE OF SELF-AWARENESS

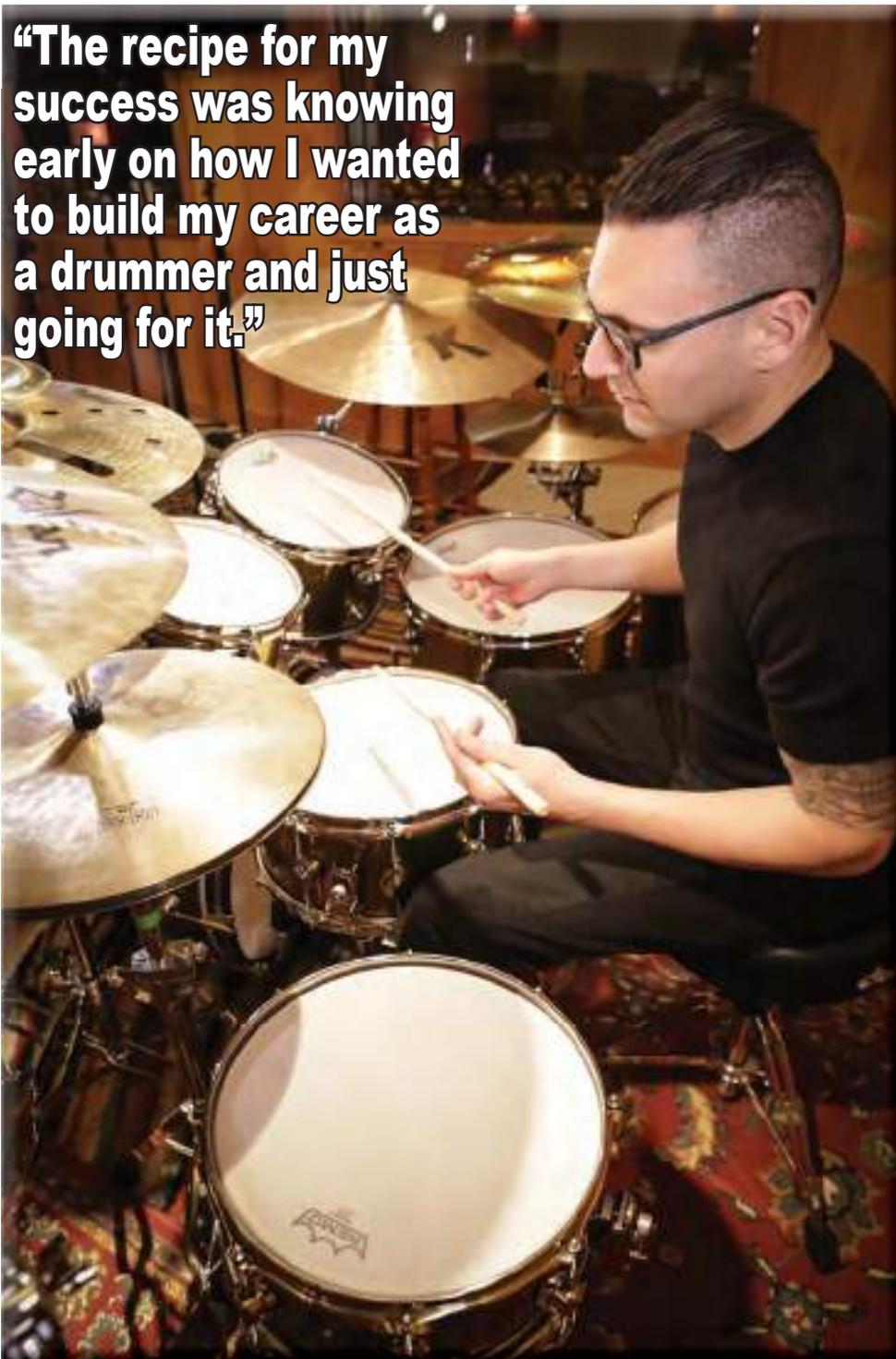
MD: How much attention do you pay to the way you're moving behind the drums? You're so deliberate, like you're literally dancing back there.

Gil: One hundred percent. This is *such* an important topic to me. The two biggest things that factor into my drumming as an outside influence are dance and martial arts. I don't actively dance now, but before I got interested in playing an instrument, I was that kid who was dancing at all the middle school dances. I listened to a lot of groove music, especially funk, R&B, and hip-hop, and I just felt the funk right away. That definitely translated into my drumming. No matter what

style I'm playing, if it's not making me move, if I'm not convinced, why should I expect it to make other people move?

Part of what you *have* to do is internalize how the music makes you feel, and how you want it to feel. Once it's internalized and natural, it's a given. I'm feeling it before I even touch drums. If I'm about to play anything, right away I know what that's going to feel like, what it's going to sound like, how the snare is going to crack—it's built in; I don't even have to think about it. I got that approach from the jazz great Carl Allen.

MD: Where do martial arts come in?



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Gil: There's a physical and mental connection to drumming from breathing, posture, power, speed, fluidity of motion, sensitivity, focus. There are drummers who hold their breath when playing, and that can hinder you. There are drummers who lean or slouch so far over because it's their style—y'ne, but maybe their spine or sciatic nerve starts to give them trouble twenty years into their career.

I want to have a healthy, long career. My practice and my beliefs outside of drumming, especially with martial arts and that whole world, make me grow not only as a drummer but spiritually and in terms of connecting with music on another level. Doing the live Team Sleep record, there were moments when I felt like I transcended out of my body. To be able to get to that plane, you can't be restricted by anything. I try to be in tune enough that even if I'm forced to play on someone else's setup, I won't make excuses and say, "Oh, I wasn't used to the setup." I just sit down and throw down. That's what I had to do for the live Team Sleep session.

MD: Your personality comes across in your drumming. You have opinions, you're confident, but you genuinely listen when other people speak—you enjoy the give and take.

Gil: For sure. I'm glad you see my personality in my playing. I notice that too with any great player on their instrument. Their musical expression is an extension of their personality. I want to command confidence and authority when I'm behind the drums, in any musical setting. I don't have to overthink it and get myself into a mental

state to click into that. Sitting behind the drums, whether it's live or in the studio, that's my element. It's probably the most natural state I can be in. I don't have to talk or use words. Any kind of mood will be reflected, and the confidence and passion will always be there.

That factor, to me, is one thing that separates pros and amateurs. When I work with students one on one, I'll notice that. Some players I'll look at and say, "You have the tools and the facility, but when you play that groove, you're not convincing me. The confidence isn't there." You should always own what you're playing. Stand behind it. And even if you're making a mistake, someone with good confidence can roll right through it and no one will notice anything was wrong.

MD: What if you're not a confident person by nature?

Gil: I've noticed that those subtleties come from real-life experiences. The more you do it, the better you get. It's about getting in there and being around people who are better than you, and really facing your fears. Whether it's going to jam sessions or putting yourself in a studio environment, or even approaching people to jam with when it might be a long shot getting to play with them. People will grow through that. That kind of experience will produce confidence with anyone.

NO SLEEP TILL WOODSTOCK

MD: Say you're meeting a group of musicians for the first time at an audition. Do you consciously size up stuff like the tone in the room, the way people relate to



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Gil Sharone

each other, even the way they're dressed? So many pieces of unfamiliar information come at us at times like these that it's easy to be distracted.

Gil: Over the years I've learned to not let outside factors affect me. Focus on the task at hand. That's my job, even if I come into a situation where it's my friends. Take the Team Sleep *Woodstock Sessions* record. I've been playing music with them for two years. We love hanging together, and there's a musical chemistry. They were going to record this live album with their original drummer, Zach Hill. I was going to be on tour with Manson during that time, and that was going to be a chance for the original lineup of Team Sleep to do one more thing. But three days before that session was scheduled to happen, I got a call saying that Zach couldn't do it, and they asked me to come out. I was able to jump in since I ended up not being on tour then.

So instead of the new music that we'd been working on together for the past two years, now we're playing stuff he first record, which I'd never played or heard before. But I didn't worry about any outside factors. I just focused on the music, stepping up, and having everyone be stoked. I pride myself on being able to handle situations like that. I'm not going to fold. And everyone is going to talk about things like that. That's the kind of thing that's going to get you that next big gig.

MD: How did you approach playing Zach Hill's original parts?

Gil: I didn't want to approach it exactly the way Zach did, because Zach's Zach and I'm me. But as a listener I did notice certain cool parts that Zach played that felt like hooks to me and that I thought needed to still be there because the fans would expect to hear them. So I would take some of those hooks and put them in what I was playing.

MD: What about the new Team Sleep material—when can we expect to hear that?

Gil: Hopefully toward the end of this year. We have a lot of tunes written and recorded, so it's just a matter of us figuring out how and when we want to release it. Everybody's really excited about it. Team Sleep gives me the perfect platform to combine all of my different styles and influences. There's plenty of groove and room to stretch out, and everyone gets to bring in ideas that we all vibe off of.

On Stolen Babies and Stealing the Scene

MD: What's going on with Stolen Babies now?

Gil: We're switching gears in terms of our vision for the band, and going back to our roots. Years ago, before we started Stolen Babies, we had a ten-piece band called the Fratellis. It was very theatrical, with life-size puppets and a story line. It was actually the birth of Stolen Babies—one of the Fratellis songs was called "Stolen Babies"—when we downsized members and the theatrics. We're going back to the seeds we planted early on and embracing that theatrical element in a multimedia platform, which is what we've been dreaming about.

Even with all these other killer things going on, I'm probably most excited about Stolen Babies, because not only is it something that I've built with my brother and our singer from the ground up and invested in all these years, it's something I've *always* believed in. And musically the new material is more than people would expect, especially fans that love our first album, *There Be Squabbles Ahead*. It's like that on steroids. The arrangements are really fun and there are tons of time changes, but at the same time it's all groovy. They're compositions—basically each song is a score to pieces of the story line.

MD: Tyler Bates brought you in to do the *John Wick* soundtrack. What was that session like?

Gil: Tracking for *John Wick* was a blast. But it was a high-pressure situation, with Hollywood execs in the control room.... When Tyler called me for the session he said, "We only have a day to do this, and we have a ton of cues to do." And he wasn't lying. Most of the score was pretty straightforward as far as the drums, but there were some really difficult cues that I learned on the fly, and there were no charts.

There was a fight scene with Keanu Reeves and [Adrienne Palicki], a really fast, cut-up drum 'n' bass cue, and I listened to what the composer [Joel Richard] had done as a reference. He was like, "I'm not a drummer—is it even possible for a live drummer to play this? Maybe you could just give me your version of it." And I was like, "No, what you programmed is sick—I'm going to play this shit note for note!" [laughs] So they played it for me a few times and I just went in there and rocked it exactly like he programmed it, but I put my



Gil Sharone

MARILYN MANSON

West Side



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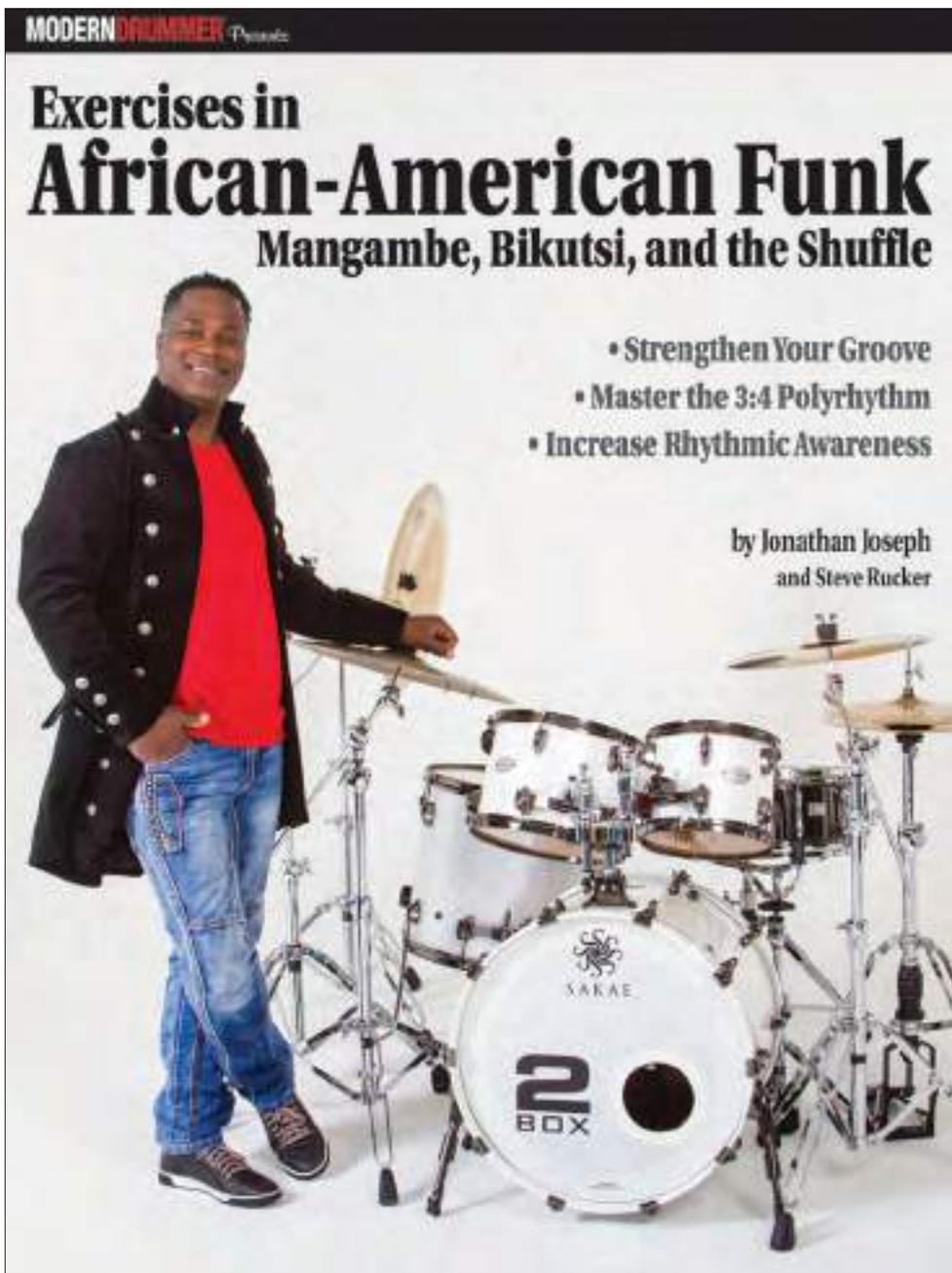
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The series of exercises contained in the book guide you through a fusion of African and American elements. On the American side, we have shuffle and shuffle-funk. On the African side, we have the rhythms from Cameroon known as mangambe and bikutsi. Mastering these exercises will strengthen your groove, provide you with an understanding of the three-against-four polyrhythm, give you an awareness of the second partial of the triplet, and introduce you to a fresh new way to hear and feel music.



Chapter 4: Half-Time Shuffle-Funk

In this chapter, we stress the backbeat of the shuffle groove over to beat 3. What this does is transfer the shuffle into a half-time, triplet-based funk groove, which we'll call "shuffle funk." The Pacific shuffle, made famous by the legendary 1940s drummer Bernard Paganin, is one variation of this type of groove.

The first hand pattern contains no ghost notes. The grooves become more and more dense as we add ghost notes, as in the previous exercises, the ghost notes should be played extremely soft. The primary focus of the groove is on the bass drum and the backbeat.

As mentioned before, it's very helpful in your practice to alternate between a simple groove and the more difficult exercise. For instance, you can switch between each line of the exercises and this traditional mangambe groove.

Although these exercises are written with six-note triplets for consistency, you might also conceptualize them as fifth-note triplets. That interpretation would put the backbeat on beats 2 and 4 of a bar of 4/4. So Hand Pattern 3 would look like the following.

As before, we'll start with a simple hand pattern and gradually add ghost notes. Practice the exercises between 70 and 100 bpm.

Hand Pattern 1

Here are some exercises that use Hand Pattern 1 with different bass drum variations.

Chapter 6: Bikutsi

In this chapter, we introduce the African rhythm known as bikutsi. Bikutsi is a traditional genre from Cameroon that features the 4:4 polyrhythm. It has roots in the traditional music of the forest people, who live around the city of Yaoundé, along with various elements of the pop-rock idiom.

The characteristic rhythm of the bikutsi is a grouping of eighth in a four-note pattern. Elements of this chapter are directly related to Chapter 1's 3:4. If you aren't clear on the 3:4 polyrhythm, please review those chapters.

Here's an example of a bikutsi-pop drumset rhythm.

By moving the stress accent to beat 3, we can create a simple bikutsi shuffle-funk pattern.

Here's a shuffle-funk variation with the bass drum on the first beat only.

We can also open the hi-hat where the accents occur.

Here's the same variation with the bass drum on the first beat only.

Check out a video of concepts and exercises included in the book at moderndrummer.com, and order a copy today—for only \$14.95.

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Gil Sharone

feel on it. And he was excited: "Dude, that totally made that scene come to life."

MD: Do you normally have the kind of freedom to choose what you're playing in a situation like that?

Gil: Depends on my relationship with the producer or composer and how specific a part is. I always like to add some creative input when the vibe is right. It's also great when they ask me what I'm thinking. That opens the door for me to jump in.

MD: How about drum sounds? When you're a member of a band, you know how you want them to be in the final mix. With soundtrack work you have to let that go, right?

Gil: Yeah, that's kind of out of my hands. Usually the composer knows exactly what they want something to sound like, and I try to give them that. Bringing in the right gear is where it starts.

MD: Do you have go-to sounds?

Gil: Yes, but it's on a case-by-case basis. It's something I'm aware of immediately, though; it's not an afterthought. I know what kind of gear I want to use as soon as I know what the gig is for. Even yesterday for the photo shoot for this story, even though I wasn't recording anything, I set up that drumset a certain way, with a certain sound in mind. I would use that setup for Team Sleep.

I do have my go-to templates. If I know what kind of music it's going to be, even just a rough vibe, I can narrow it down to one or two different drum and cymbal setups. I've also done plenty of sessions where I'm using the producer's drums, which are tuned already, and the cymbals are already up. I literally walk in only with drumsticks. And I'm totally okay with that. Then there are times where, if I'm bringing my gear in, I'll notice them say something like, "Nice ride cymbal—it really makes that chorus happen now." There's a big difference between what a 24" A Medium ride sounds like versus a 20" K Custom ride, and you have to know when to use what. That comes through experience, trial and error, and knowing the music you're playing.

MD: When you're working in high-pressure situations like the *John Wick* session, knowing the hierarchy of the decision makers in the room must be very important.

Gil: You have to know your place. You can't walk in like you're the shit, putting in your two cents where it doesn't belong. There's a million drummers who would kill for all of these gigs. Some of my earliest session

work was because a producer got rid of a drummer who was either drunk or showed up at a session and refused to...take orders, basically. Because that's really what it is: You're providing a service, which is to play the drums. That doesn't mean you have to kiss everybody's ass and be phony, because people see through that as well. Things go a lot better when you're a cool person to work with.

Learning Opportunities

MD: Are there specific drummers you've looked up to in terms of how they've handled their careers?

Gil: Definitely. The first two names that come into my head are Steve Smith and Vinnie Colaiuta. As a teenager I noticed Steve's career. He was in one of the biggest rock bands ever, Journey, playing amazingly creative drum parts, but at the same time he's constantly growing and evolving as a player. He does sessions. He tours the world. Plus there was the educational side—he's a clinician, he's done videos, he's a historian doing amazing projects and giving props to the legends before him. So early on I was like, *I want a career like that*. I want to be in a successful band and get the taste of all that, but at the same time I want to do sessions, drum clinics, a DVD—multiple DVDs. I want to share the knowledge and the legacy of everybody who made me the kind of drummer I want to be. That's why I did my DVD, *Wicked Beats*. Steve is also who connected me with [famed drum teacher] Freddie Gruber.

And then Vinnie, not only for his technical and musical ability, but he plays with everybody and plays every style of music. When I was thirteen and just starting, I noticed that I have this natural ability to feel certain styles right away. It wasn't forced. Just like I was saying about being phony on a personal level, people will see through it if you're trying too hard to come across like you have a feel that you haven't developed yet. But it was never a chore for me to make something feel a certain way. Vinnie was a prime example to me of sounding authentic in any situation.

I also have to give props to one of my earliest influences, Phillip "Fish" Fisher. He made his mark in Fishbone when they were just teenagers, playing stuff that was killing. Every song was a completely different genre, but it still sounded like Fishbone. And talk about versatility and *owning* it. It was some of the best drumming I heard in whatever style they were playing. And then after Fishbone he went and played with

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some of the biggest acts in the world, like Justin Timberlake. He also got into the business side of the industry, which is another important role for me. I like to be involved, especially in my own projects. I produced and self-funded the *Wicked Beats* DVD. And the vision I had for that when I first chicken-scratched an outline was exactly what I made happen. Even down to having Hudson distribute it.

MD: Things don't always go as we plan.

Gil: No, but you grow a lot by figuring out ways to make a plan come together. Sometimes you have to stray off the path to get back on the path. Half the stuff I learned that's extremely valuable is because of mistakes or experiences that didn't go the way I planned. There's no such thing as learning something and now you're bulletproof. We all fall; we just need to get back up.

MD: We've all met musicians who have a problem admitting their mistakes.

Gil: Pride is a very dangerous trait. I've seen a lot of very talented players lose gigs over not being able to admit when they were at fault for something. It's important to stay humble in any professional environment.

MD: You've come a long way in your career.

Gil: There's one side of me that's like, *Is this real?* But there's another side that's like, *Hell yeah, this is real—why are you surprised?* I don't want to call it ego...it's fact. You see a goal, you work hard to get the skills, you travel in the right circles.... The recipe for my success was knowing early on how I wanted to build my career as a drummer and just going for it. I know that I wasn't in control of the ultimate path, but I knew how I wanted to steer the ship when things were coming at me. My parents were always very supportive of my brother and me, which was also a great help. I don't take any of it for granted.

MD: We measure where we are in our career by defining certain steps we've taken up the ladder. What were some of those steps for you?

Gil: When I started getting paid gigs during high school. Then, around the time I graduated, I got to play with some of my biggest influences, like Fishbone, Dave Wakeling of the English Beat, HR of Bad Brains, and Eek-a-Mouse. After that things just started to snowball, like getting the call to fill in for Travis Barker in +44, Puscifer, Dillinger Escape Plan.... Doing clinics and drum events were defining for me too. Getting that recognition from the industry meant a lot.

MD: Were there particular industry people

who helped you early on?

Gil: One of my earliest supporters was my artist rep at Promark, Kevin Radomski. Kevin and I just hit it off. We became good friends, and we'd hang at all of the big industry events. I got to be included in these artist dinners with veterans and heroes of mine, talking to them on a personal level. Don Lombardi from DW is another guy I have a real strong connection with, and he's been very supportive of me. He's a total visionary, and I have so much respect for him.

I also got to have some really special hangs with the late Lennie DiMuzio. Talk about a behind-the-scenes hero. Lennie helped choose cymbal setups for all of the greats, like Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa, Louie Bellson, Philly Joe, Tony Williams, Weckl, Vinnie.... I play the way I do because of the influence of those guys. So to hang with a guy like Lennie was special.

MD: Part of your story is the variety of gigs that you've been able to work on. Are there styles that you'd like to rock that you haven't gotten to yet? Or do you just take it day by day, wherever the wind blows you?

Gil: At this point I've kind of branded myself as a drummer that people can call on to play any style at the last minute. I like that I don't have to start at square one as far as proving that I'm capable of doing a jazz gig or a pop session or a metal gig or reggae.... So since I'm at a point in my career where people are at least aware of my versatility and my background, it's just a matter of where the wind blows me.

I would love to put a bebop group together. I'm very passionate about jazz and passing on that legacy. During my time in Dillinger, all these hardcore or metal drummers would talk to me about this guy or that and I'd be like, "Dude, I don't know any of these bands you're talking to me about." They thought I was listening to hardcore, but I was listening to Charlie Parker.

Just yesterday I actually got asked to do some gigs with a jazz guitar player, but I had to turn it down because I'm going out with Manson. I feel very fortunate that I could be called to do big rock gigs or any kind of gig. Tyler just called me for a project that involves some high-level session guys, and that's great, because I've worked really hard to get in that world. So that's another branch of the tree of where my career's going.

I feel very satisfied with what I have on my plate—and then not knowing what's going to happen tomorrow. It's fun not knowing.



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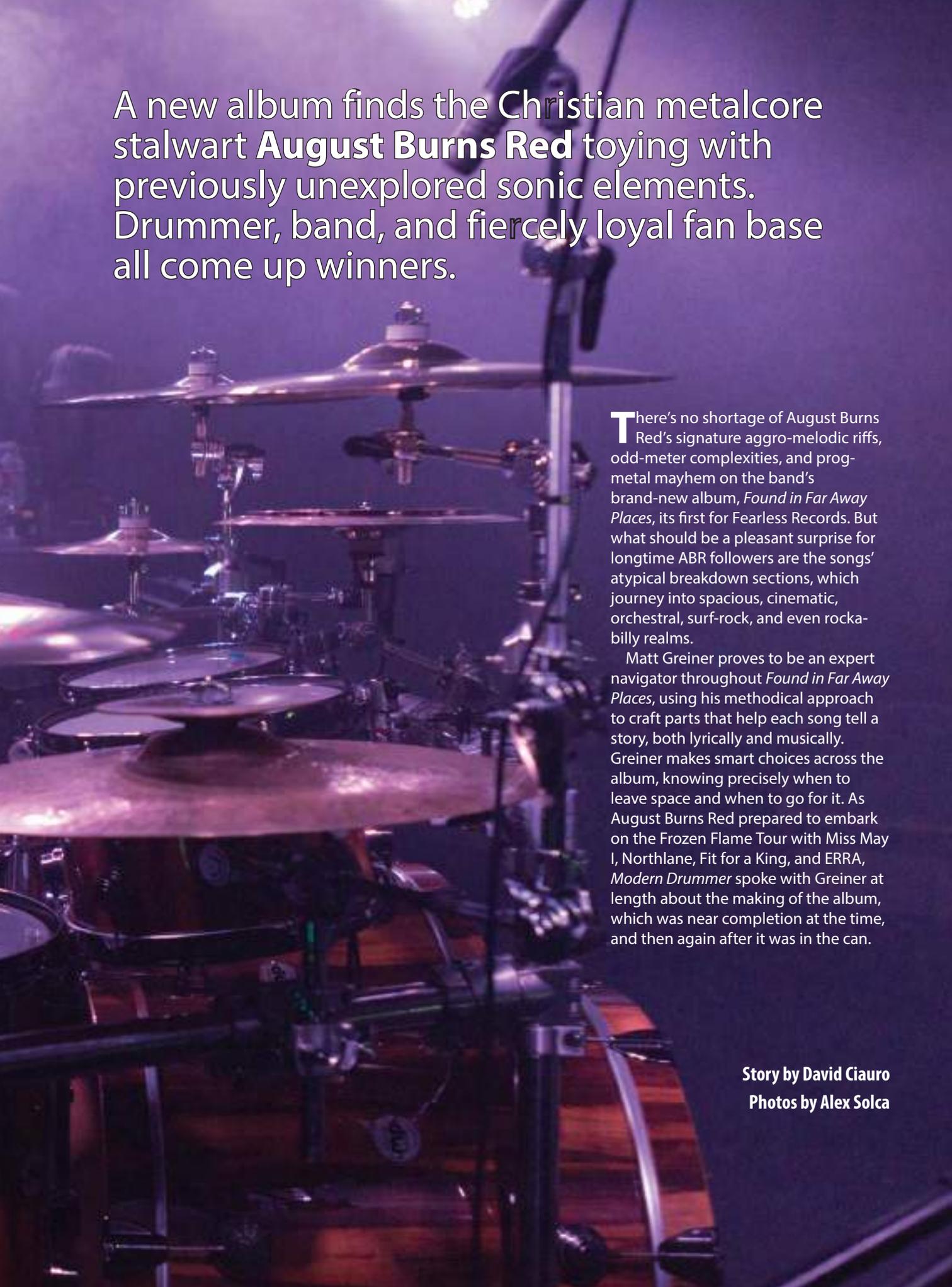
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Matt Greiner



A new album finds the Christian metalcore stalwart **August Burns Red** toying with previously unexplored sonic elements. Drummer, band, and fiercely loyal fan base all come up winners.

There's no shortage of August Burns Red's signature aggro-melodic riffs, odd-meter complexities, and prog-metal mayhem on the band's brand-new album, *Found in Far Away Places*, its first for Fearless Records. But what should be a pleasant surprise for longtime ABR followers are the songs' atypical breakdown sections, which journey into spacious, cinematic, orchestral, surf-rock, and even rockabilly realms.

Matt Greiner proves to be an expert navigator throughout *Found in Far Away Places*, using his methodical approach to craft parts that help each song tell a story, both lyrically and musically. Greiner makes smart choices across the album, knowing precisely when to leave space and when to go for it. As August Burns Red prepared to embark on the Frozen Flame Tour with Miss May I, Northlane, Fit for a King, and ERRA, *Modern Drummer* spoke with Greiner at length about the making of the album, which was near completion at the time, and then again after it was in the can.

Story by David Ciauro
Photos by Alex Solca



MD: When did you start writing the new record?

Matt: We started early last year. JB [Brubaker, lead guitarist] began writing while we were on tour, and I started writing drum parts at the beginning of September and finished at the end of October.

MD: Being that the new record is being analyzed now, will you be playing any new material on the Frozen Flame Tour?

Matt: We aren't playing any new songs on this tour, which is funny, because I feel I have a better grasp on the new songs since I spent the past few months working on them. We're playing fifteen songs, a few dating all the way back to [2005 debut] *Thrill Seeker*. We had six full-lengths to choose from, so it was hard to come up

with a set list that we're not sick of and that the fans are going to love. Hopefully we've hit that balance with this list.

MD: Are you refraining from playing any new material because you don't want the first impressions of the songs to be cellphone-quality audio from the shows that fans post on YouTube?

Matt: [laughs] That's exactly the reason! In addition, people won't know the songs yet, so it won't translate as well.

MD: Has the writing process always been the same for the band?

Matt: The process has been the same on the past four records, going back to [2009's] *Constellations*. Prior to that, on *Thrill Seeker* and [2007's] *Messengers*, I had written with JB in person in our practice space. But that

changed as we progressed as musicians.

We've found a lot more success when we write separately from each other. It's a very efficient way for us to write. So now JB will write the guitar parts for a song in its entirety and then email it to me. I'll download it and open up a program called *Tablet*, which allows me to visualize all the notes and all the rhythms, which is helpful because I've always been a visual learner.

MD: What do you do from there?

Matt: The first thing I do when I'm writing drum parts is get to know every part of the song. It's a lot less frustrating for me that way. If I can memorize each part before writing my parts, I'll have a better feel for the flow of the song and where it's going. Then I can write accordingly. Typically I





don't go with the first idea I have. I usually just play something until I think it suits the part well, and then I build it into my muscle memory. When I'm finished, JB comes over and listens to me play it, and together we analyze each song.

I treat writing my parts like it's a job. I'm not always excited to be writing. It's a lot of work. I'll set up my drums over at my parents' farm, which is ten minutes from where I live. I'll drive over there around 9 A.M. and write until lunchtime. I force myself to write, and I find that driving away from home helps me treat it more professionally and not walk away from it.

MD: Since you're so prepared ahead of time, how long does it take you to get your tracks done once you're in the studio?

Matt: As the first person to record, I want to get in and get out and let everyone else get to work building the songs on top of my

parts. I was in the studio for about nine days to finish all the songs and percussion parts for this record.

MD: Do you prefer to be by yourself when you're recording?

Matt: JB likes to be there, because he knows I can get frustrated if I finish my parts and then he comes in and changes a bunch of stuff. I've gotten better at it over the years; I think I've grown up a little. Then the whole band comes in at the end and listens to everything I recorded, and if there are

any changes to be made, I'll make them.

MD: The new record sounds great. There are a lot of unexpected genre-meshing twists and turns. Did JB specifically set out to inject these musical departures into the breakdowns?

Matt: JB doesn't really like to have a formula or a plan when writing. I love those parts the most, because they provide the variety that keeps things interesting for me as a drummer. I think JB had more headroom going into this record, and that's how

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Matt Greiner

those parts came about. After having done so many records, experimenting and taking risks so many times and seeing things work out, it's a lot easier for us to swallow those new sounds and new styles, whereas before we may have been a little more afraid to step out of the box.

MD: "Identity" has an almost surf-rock vibe to the breakdown.

Matt: When I wrote drums for it, [I found that] there were only so many beats that fit a "surfy" part, which makes my job a little bit easier and makes the song flow really well. The part after that is heavy, but it works, because the melody is still there and there's a dynamic build into it.

MD: "Everlasting Ending" is another song with an interesting dichotomy. It's a heavy song, but it's got a sparse breakdown reminiscent of the guitar solo in Don Henley's "Boys of Summer," with the steady rimclicks going throughout the part.

Matt: That's a song that I actually wrote a lot of my parts for in the studio. All I had to know was the time signature. In other words, at what point does that riff r guitar melody start over? It has a very fluid sound, and I just played whatever came to mind. You can hear a musician's influence in "Everlasting Ending." That's the kind of song where you can really hear someone's playing, because there's that space—it's slower and allows for a lot more interpretation. I'd say that's my favorite song on the record. I wrote the lyrics for that song, and they mean a lot to me.

MD: There's a lot going on in "Ghosts," with a moody intro that leads into a linear tom pattern. Then it gets real heavy and later adds a melodic chorus with help from Jeremy McKinnon from A Day to Remember.

Matt: That beginning is really slow and quiet, with a lot of space, so I knew not to overplay. The tom groove was actually something that I'd initially written between the hi-hat, snare, and kick, but I changed up the instruments I was hitting. I do that a lot. If I come up with a beat or a sticking that I think fits well somewhere, JB and I will go over it, and instead of changing the part, I'll change where I'm playing it [on the kit] to change the sound of the beat, but still keep the sticking the same. I find that goes a long way when I come up with a cool sticking that helps the song along but that's too intense—or not intense enough—where I initially played it.

MD: In 2011 you started a drum company, Greiner Kilmer. What made you want to start your own company?

Matt: I was on Warped Tour with Kaleb [Kilmer], who I had met at church right before Warped began, and we started scheming up the idea to build drums. His father owns a furniture-repair company, so he has endless tools at his disposal. Kaleb is an engineer and is able to figure out how to make things work. He'd made a snare drum out of drumsticks, and he showed it to me and I couldn't believe it. So he started making handmade stave and segmented

Tools of the Trade

Greiner plays a DW Collector's series drumset with cherry shells and a Mexican Chechen veneer. The kit is composed of 7x10 and 8x12 toms, a 14x16 floor tom, and an 18x20 bass drum; the snare is a 6x14 Greiner Kilmer Custom Pioneer Walnut stave-shell model. Matt's Zildjian cymbals include 14" K Custom Session hi-hats, a 16" A Custom crash, an 18" A Custom Projection crash, a 20" K Heavy ride, an 18" Oriental China Trash, a 9" Oriental splash, 6.5" and 9.5" custom bells, and a 13" Oriental China Trash stacked with a 10" A Custom splash. He uses a Remo Coated Ambassador snare batter, Clear Vintage Emperor tom batters, and a Clear Powersonic bass drum batter, plus Vic Firth Matt Greiner signature sticks, DW 9000 series hardware and double pedal, and Ultimate Ears UE18 custom in-ear monitors.



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Matt Greiner

snare drums. A couple of years later, we had sold quite a few, and this year we started making full drumkits. Adam Gray from Texas in July is one of our main artists now.

MD: What are your goals for the company?

Matt: I would say that it's a company aimed at employing Kaleb. As far as financial gains for myself, the band has been my main career, and that's where I put a lot of my time. Greiner Kilmer is definitely something I have time for when I'm home, and something I can promote on tour, but as far as the size of the company, I don't have any particular goal in mind. As long as we're making a quality product that our clientele wants to hold on to forever, I'll be very happy with it.

MD: The band has a strong Christian message, which runs counter to what some people think about heavy metal in general. How did you first discover metal?

Matt: When I was sixteen I went to a Christian festival called Creation, and there was a stage where they played heavy screaming metal, or metalcore music, that was still Christian, and I was just thrilled by the drumming in it. So I bought a couple of CDs, started playing drums, and wanted to play in that style. It's funny—I called my mom last year when we played this festival in Germany, and I told her that I couldn't find a single band on the roster that she would have let me listen to while growing up. Simply put, music is just music, and it

“I'll often change where I'm playing a part on the kit. That goes a long way when I come up with a cool sticking that helps the song along but that's too intense—or not intense enough—where I initially played it.”

can be used to glorify yourself or glorify God, or send out negativity and instill fear in some people. It's a powerful medium, for sure, but I don't think it can be just boxed up and categorized. I'll listen to anything that is edifying and musically tasteful.

MD: The band has a clear message, and you're particularly involved in cultivating a sense of community with your fan base—for example, with HeartSupport.

Matt: Yes! HeartSupport is an online community where our fans or anyone can come and read about other people's stories and hopefully be inspired. Our singer is the leader of that organization, and he'll occasionally ask me to write something for it or stand at our merch table and talk to fans after the show. I think a lot of people that come to our shows want to be able to meet us in a way that's more than just a handshake and a picture. They have something to say, and HeartSupport is the conduit through which I can be there for the fans, to listen to what they have to say. A lot of people want to talk about our lyrics—what they mean to them and how they relate to them—so it's an affirmation to keep writing lyrics, playing drums in a band, touring, and working hard, because we're helping people through playing music.

MD: Where will the remainder of 2015 take you?

Matt: We're on the Warped Tour this summer on the main stage, and I'm teaching drum lessons for up to thirty people almost every day at the TEI [the Entertainment Institute] tent. When Warped is done, I'll have about a month at home, and then we'll be doing some international touring this fall. I'm very excited for people to read the lyrics and see the artwork for this record. The message of August Burns Red is as important to me—if not *more* important—as my drumming.



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Steve Clifford



The drummer with the modern prog-metal act Circa Survive has never shown much interest in repeating ideas—his own, or anybody else's.

Modern rock bands sometimes fall victim to the “bigger, faster, more” syndrome, as if they're involved in a competition decided by the number of notes they can squeeze into a song and how loudly they can play them. For the past decade, Philadelphia's Circa Survive has been plying a brand of melodic hard rock that, though featuring unexpected shifts and odd time signatures, always puts technique in service of the song.

Don't be fooled, however; each member of Circa Survive is highly accomplished, including drummer Steve Clifford, who brings a big beat and the kind of flavorful parts that prick up ears all around. On the band's latest record, *Descensus*, Clifford attacks songs with a measured conviction, often avoiding predictable kick/snare parts and judiciously sneaking in fills that are fun but not distracting—and that always rock.

Clifford is also involved in a number of extracurricular activities that focus on ideas even further afield, including his solo project, Door Open Door Close, whose self-titled EP is an accomplished amalgam of cut-up drums, percussive vocal samples, and electronic mayhem. *MD* recently spoke with Clifford about the varying demands and approaches he takes to these projects.

Story by Ilya Stenkovsky

Photos by Alex Solca



MD: Your drumming approach is atypical. What about your introduction to the instrument—were you playing Mom's pots and pans?

Steve: I started when I was eleven or twelve. I found a drumset in my neighbor's garbage, but it didn't have cymbals, so I banged on an old doorbell. I'd have friends come over from school, and I played double bass all the time. I was into hardcore bands that I don't really listen to anymore. But I wasn't really influenced by other drummers at first. I took lessons for a summer, and the guy started me out doing rudiments. I don't think he could even do them fast or anything...but I had no interest; I was twelve. It was just about my friends coming by and making stuff p. Learning drum covers isn't something I've ever done much of.

MD: How did Circa Survive form?

Steve: I was in a band called Reflux and then a bunch of other metal bands. Circa Survive's guitarists, Brendan Ekstrom and Colin Frangicetto, were in a band called This Day Forward with Vadim Taver, who knew me and also knew I wanted to stop playing metal. This Day Forward broke up, and Vadim told me I should try out for their new band. Eventually I went and jammed with them and Circa singer Anthony Green, and they told me I was in the band.

MD: What drew you to them? That it wasn't metal and constant double bass?

Steve: It was pretty much exactly what I wanted to play. At the time my favorite bands were Sunny Day Real Estate, A Perfect Circle, Radiohead, and Further Seems Forever. And that's what Circa Survive sounded like in the beginning.

MD: You've mentioned Josh Freese as a drummer you admire.

Steve: I use him as an example when someone asks me what drummers I like, because every time I hear him play and someone points out that it's him, I think,

Tools of the Trade

"I have two awesome SJC kits," Clifford says. "One 3 mm brass—the kick drum is seventy-five pounds—and one steam-bent single-ply cocobolo. My favorite setup that I tour with has the 8x14 brass snare, the 16x24 cocobolo kick, the 8x12 brass tom, and the 13x16 brass fl or tom." Clifford's Sabian cymbals include 14" AAX Stage Hats, 19" and 20" HHX X-Plosion crashes, and a 21" AAX Stage ride. He uses Vic Firth Rock sticks with Yonex tennis grip, Remo heads (Vintage Emperor snare and tom batters, Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter), and Tama hardware, including a Speed Cobra pedal.

I like that.

I'm also really into percussion and electronic music. Currently my favorite stuff is Flying Lotus, Four Tet, and Caribou. At this point there's a kick drum and a snare drum and a hi-hat and ride and crash cymbals, and every time you play drums you have to come up with something using those. But with electronic music, the rhythm could be anything. When I'm playing, I don't think that I'm playing this type of beat or that type of style; I'll try to do something I haven't done before.

MD: *Descensus* features a number of odd times and grooves that change within the songs. "Only the Sun" is a good example of this. How do you come up with parts?

Steve: It's different every time. We talk a lot. We'll jam on parts. Sometimes one of the other guys will program something on a demo and I'll try to play something like it but make it my own. But we're a very collaborative band, especially this time. We ended up writing a lot in the studio. The process for most of *Descensus* was that producer Will Yip—who is the *man* and the best dude to record with—would go with Anthony in one room and cut up the song that we made, and they'd write vocals to it. Then, when it was time to record, we'd discuss if a part should go longer or have a solo or something percussive added to it. And now with computers, even at our practices we're constantly multitracking everything. So when we write in our rehearsal space, we go back and edit things and arrange a song from pieces we were jamming on.

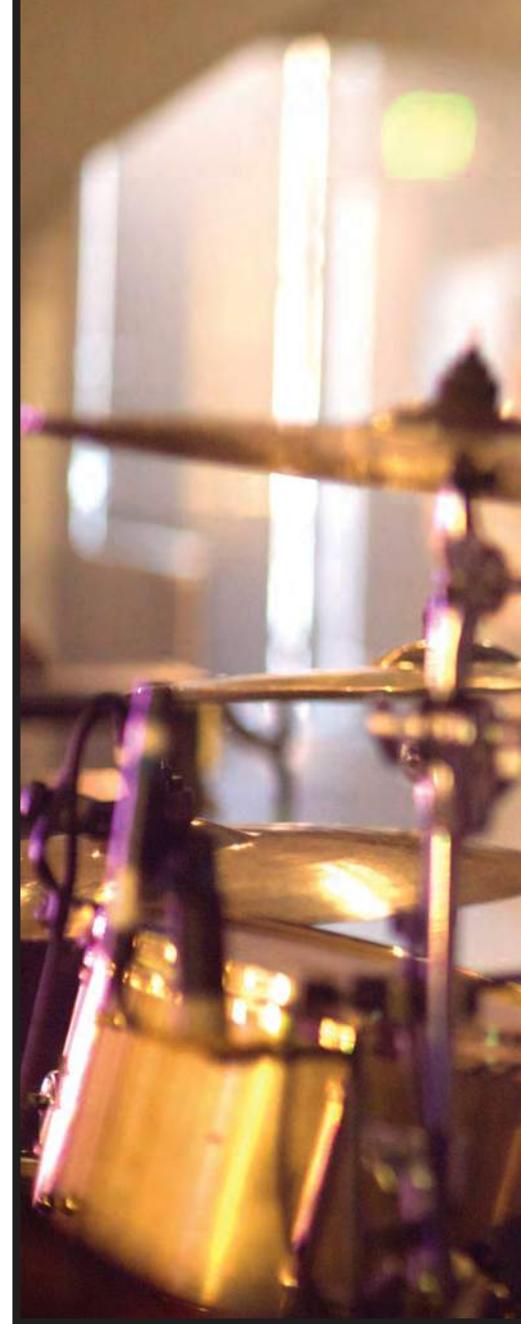
MD: Are you open to drumming suggestions from Will or your bandmates?

Steve: Totally. If I don't like what Will's suggesting, then we'll come up with something different. But Will's a great drummer himself. He played with Lauryn Hill for a while. He's awesome. So I value his opinion on the parts I'm playing, even fills. And I value the opinions of my bandmates.

Recording *Descensus* was also fast. On [2010's] *Blue Sky Noise*, we spent more than a year just demoing song after song. This was the first time we were in the studio with a lot of unfinished songs. So we really wrote the record with Will. He was a part of the band when we did it.

MD: In that rehearsal space, are you coming up with parts while listening to the guitars or vocal rhythms, or just what you feel fits?

Steve: My favorite thing is when a song is created from nothing, like "Always Begin" or "Descensus." Those two in particular started with me playing a drumbeat and Colin or Brendan playing a riff. After doing that for a



while, we'd stop, then go back and forth with suggestions on how to change something. If I spend a bunch of time and come up with a real techy beat or something really cool, by the time I bring it to them and we mess with it, it's not the same anymore. So I prefer to work on the drums with everybody there having their input.

Also, I play differently in this band than I did in any other band I've been in before. Colin and Brendan play with a lot of pedals, and they don't really play chords that much. At the same time, both are playing leads that have a lot of delay and are high and washy. So [bass player] Nick Beard and I have to fill up all the space to make the band as heavy as one with a lot of power chords. He'll have a lot of distortion on his bass and a thick, awesome tone.

MD: Anthony Green says *Descensus* is the



“When I’m playing, I don’t think that I’m playing this type of beat or that type of style; I’ll try to do something I haven’t done before.”

most aggressive record the band has done. Was that conscious? And is that even true?

Steve: It’s definitely not a conscious thing, and I don’t really know if it’s even true. Maybe he’s singing more aggressively than he has before. “Schema” does have some of the most aggressive moments we’ve ever recorded. But a song like “Phantom” is really mellow; it’s one of my favorite songs on the record.

MD: “Phantom” is a nice change of pace. Did you record that with brushes or rods?

Steve: I actually did that in Ableton. It’s samples of rods. There’s this really cool Ableton controller called Push, which has electronic pads on it, and they’re touch-sensitive if you press or tap on them. The way you can make rhythms and come up with chord structures is so much fun. When we went to record, I intended to rerecord

the drums with brushes, but it didn’t sound right. I was obsessed with Ableton Push and was trying to get the band to use it as much as possible. I’d like to continue to do that in the future—use more pads and get into things other than drums.

MD: Do you use that stuff in the live show?

Steve: I run Ableton on the road, so I pretty much use a click the whole time, except for a couple of songs. There are tempo changes within the songs too. When we’re preparing for a tour, sometimes we’ll write a jam that connects two songs. We got this guy Lee Duck of Duck Lights to program lights along to the click to specific versions of songs we would be playing on the tour. So every night the lights would be the same. Strobes were programmed along to drum fills, and colors would change [along with section changes]. Everything was automated to the click. We

also have a guy named Jay Wynne who made visuals to all the songs with these projections. Lee and Jay worked together before the tour.

We have this awesome in-ear rig with a Behringer X32 digital mixer, and we can control our in-ear mixes separately, all through an app on our iPhones. And Ableton hooks into it, so I can access any mic that’s on stage and put an effect on it. I don’t do much of that, but when we start writing again I’ll definitely mess with some loopers for the drums and maybe some delay.

MD: That sounds like a lot of stuff to keep track of while you’re trying to rock.

Steve: Yeah, we have people helping us. But it’s really less to keep track of. I just press a button, we play along to the click, and we have a crazy light show! [laughs]



Jonathan Schang

District 97 and its one-of-a-kind drummer/bandleader steer modern progressive rock to some very unlikely places. Of course, it never hurts one's sense of adventure when a couple of classic-prog heroes offer their emotional—and vocal—support.

Chicago-based District 97, led by thirty-one-year-old drummer Jonathan Schang, puts the lie to conventional wisdom that progressive rock is more for the mind than the body, and it may be unlike any modern prog band you've ever heard. Metallic-tinged compositions from the Kickstarter-funded *In Vaults*, the group's latest studio recording, brim with vitality and boast shifting feels, clearly delineated melodies, and, of course, head-bobbing if at times complex grooves tattooed by the sting and ping of Schang's throaty snare. District 97 also possesses a sense of social consciousness, a trait not commonly attributed to prog acts. Although the band has provided social commentary in the past, most notably with the animal-rights anthem "Termites" from 2010's *Hybrid Child*, *In Vaults* explores a wider range of pressing topics, from motherhood ("Handlebars") to China's Great Leap Forward ("Learn From Danny") to gun control ("On Paper").

Further setting D97 apart in the world of prog is the band's instant familiarity and accessibility, due in large part to the sex appeal of its lead singer, Leslie Hunt, a former *American Idol* contestant who anchors the versatile quintet musically and visually. Her emotional vocal pleas transcend even as they complement the intricate rhythms and interlocking guitar lines weaving their way through many of the songs.

Undeniably, though, D97's bedrock is Schang, who oversees the group's everyday business affairs. With the band's popularity rising and word spreading about Schang's drumming abilities—he was nominated in the Up & Coming category in this magazine's 2012 Readers Poll—the enterprising bandleader is a busy young man. When not active with D97, Schang, who resides in the Chicago suburb of Oak Park (home to the elementary school district identified in the band's name), accompanies troupes at the Dance Center of Columbia College, the Hyde Park School of Dance, and the Academy of Movement and Music; he has also composed commissioned work for Deeply Rooted Dance Theater and Thodos Dance Chicago. Area residents can even catch him and D97 bassist Patrick Mulcahy on the second and fourth Sundays of most months at the "jazz Mass" at St. Peter's in the Loop.

"Jonathan sets up a little hybrid drumkit adjacent to a piano," says Schang's friend Ed Clift, a Paiste cymbal specialist whose knowledge of sound design has been a valuable in-studio resource to the D97 drummer. "He plays the drum parts with his feet and right hand and the piano parts with his left hand. I mean, I've worked with some of the finest drummers and percussionists alive while at Paiste, and in some ways Jonathan is in a league by himself."

Story by Will Romano • Photos by Gene Ambo







MD: At a young age you're the leader of a group signed to a serious progressive-rock label, the Laser's Edge. That's a lot of responsibility. What's your approach to managing District 97?

Jonathan: Rather than delegate different tasks to each person, I would rather just do it in the method that I've found is most effective. If anything gets screwed up, then I won't be angry with anyone else. A lot of what I do now is figuring out budgets and how we can generate revenue in other ways.

MD: Have you reached out for advice from veteran drummers who've led bands? I know you're a Bill Bruford fan....

Jonathan: I only ever met Bruford once. He did send me a very nice email and essentially told me, "You know what you're doing. I'm sure it's all going to be fantastic." As far as anyone else, my mom and her husband have been very helpful. Also Ken Golden at Laser's Edge.

MD: How has Ken been helpful?

Jonathan: By helping to ground me in reality as far as what I should expect from the group. He's good at not blowing smoke up your ass to give you the impression that

you're going to get a lot more than what's feasible. There are some other people too. Charles Snider, who wrote the book *The Strawberry Bricks Guide to Progressive Rock*, has been a huge fan of ours for years and is an executive producer of *In Vaults*. And Victor Salazar of Vic's Drum Shop, here in Chicago, has been a never-ending font of knowledge when it comes to gear and just about everything else.

MD: You funded *In Vaults* through a Kickstarter campaign. What was the final tally?

Jonathan: We were asking for \$12,000 and ended up with just over \$20,000. The campaign ran from August 25 through September 30, my birthday. Because we had some latitude we were able to bring in a string quartet on the song "Blinding Vision," which is not something we've done before. Rob Clearfield, our keyboardist, did the arrangement for that. We had a cellist, Katinka Kleijn, in the band for a while, but we never had a full-on ensemble of outside musicians. I can't thank our fans enough for stepping up to the plate to make sure we made a new record.

MD: When you write music, do you envision

rhythmic patterns and then layer on melody or chords?

Jonathan: Most of the time I write at the keyboard. There have been some exceptions. The song "Termites" from our first album, *Hybrid Child*, was built around a drum pattern I'd worked up. I work as a dance accompanist, and that involves a lot of keyboard playing. It's sort of a laboratory in which I can develop ideas. For the [*In Vaults*] song "Takeover" I wanted a quasi-Bonham drum feel and a quasi-Jimmy Page guitar riff. Led Zeppelin's "Black Dog" was definitely the kind of thing I was channeling.

MD: The drum overdubs on "All's Well That Ends Well" are reminiscent of some of the conceptual ideas Eddy Offord employed for the early-'70s Yes productions.

Jonathan: I was heavily influenced by a band from L.A. called Knower. The drummer, Louis Cole, is one of my favorite drummers out there right now. All the arpeggiated synth stuff in the song, as well as the overdubbed drums that are panned to either side, were kind of inspired by some of the things Knower does. Rich Mouser, who mixed the album, did a really



Jonathan's Setup

Drums: Tama Starclassic Performer Birch/Bubinga in smokey indigo burst finish

- A.** 5.5x14 snare
- B.** 7x8 tom
- C.** 8x10 tom
- D.** 9x12 tom
- E.** 12x14 fl or tom
- F.** 14x16 fl or tom
- G.** 18x22 bass drum

Heads: Evans Genera HD Dry snare batter and G1 bottom, G14 tom batters and G1 bottoms, and EQ2 bass drum batter and Inked by Evans front head

Cymbals: Paiste

- 1.** 14" Signature Dark Energy hi-hats Mark I
- 2.** 6" 2002 Accent
- 3.** 20" 2002 crash
- 4.** 10" Rude splash
- 5.** 12"/14"/14" Noiseworks Triple Raw Smash
- 6.** 19" 2002 crash
- 7.** 7" 2002 Cup Chime
- 8.** 20" Signature Dark Energy ride Mark II
- 9.** 18" Dimensions Power China
- 10.** 5.5" 2002 Cup Chime

Hardware: Tama Speed Cobra double pedal and hi-hat stand

Sticks: Promark Pro-Grip 5A wood-tip

great job bringing that to life. [MD asked Mouser about his work on the *In Vaults* track. "When I opened the file," he says, "there was a massive amount of drum tracks. At one point there were three kits playing at once. Some of them were just overdubbed snares and toms and things, not necessarily full kits. There was a reprise at the end of the song, but none of the earlier drum parts were recalled. I saw my opening. What I did was take the drum performances from the end part, cut them up, and create new fills."]

MD: In the fall of 2014, District 97 released an album of King Crimson covers, *One More Red Night: Live in Chicago*, featuring onetime Crimson singer/bass player John Wetton, who also appears on your second album, *Trouble With Machines*, on "The Perfect Young Man." How did all of this unfold?

Jonathan: We had a show booked right around the time the band U.K. had their reunion tour in 2012, which opened in Chicago. I asked John, if we moved our show to accommodate his schedule, would he be able to sing "The Perfect Young Man" on stage with us. He managed to squeeze it in. Since he was going to be here, we all



"The first time I heard John Wetton's voice booming out of my monitor was one of the most thrilling moments in my life."

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BY D'ADDARIO

thought: Shouldn't we also do a Crimson song? Everyone agreed that that was a great idea, and we settled on "Lament" from *Starless and Bible Black*. The first time I heard Wetton's voice booming out of my monitor was one of the most thrilling moments in my life, for sure. So we did the show, the crowd loved it, he loved it, and we loved it.

When we were in England in May 2013, we got in touch with John again. We played four shows with him in Europe, expanding upon the Crimson repertoire we did in Chicago. He came back through Chicago in October, and that's when we recorded *One More Red Night*, at Reggies Music Joint.

MD: What was your approach to these Crimson songs?

Jonathan: My thinking was: We have John, who sang some of the stuff originally, and we should give the audience as faithful a rendition or re-creation of these songs as we can. The track "One More Red Nightmare" is a good example, because I'm sure [Bruford] just improvised all those drum fills in the studio. But they are so iconic, like little compositions, that I decided I was going to learn them practically verbatim. I allowed myself some leeway, but the various characters of those solos I tried to leave intact.

MD: Your drums seem to have extra ring. Did you tune them in any particular way?

Jonathan: I was still using a DW jazz kit, and maybe it lent itself well to this kind of thing, because Bruford is such a jazzy player. I use a Tama kit now, so that tour was the last hurrah for that kit. I think I probably did tune everything up. If you listen to [Crimson's 1974 studio album] *Red*, Bruford's kick sounds like Max Roach's or something. I think I was going for that as well.

MD: Let's return to the new record. You told me that you're really excited about a few songs, in particular "Death by a Thousand Cuts."

Jonathan: That one is really a no-holds-barred, all-guns-firing type of song. It's kind of the successor to "Termites," which has become a fan favorite. It has some cool musical devices in it as well, like two guitars bouncing off each other, playing a 5/16 pattern. I come in with a straight 4/4 beat under that, but I also play their pattern on the bass drum.

MD: You're using polyrhythms?

Jonathan: Yeah. I'm in 4/4 with my hands, and the bass drum would be in 9/8, I believe. It's a fun one to play.

MD: What other songs were challenging to perform?

Jonathan: The middle section of "On Paper," which our guitarist [Jim Tashjian] wrote, has a guitar-based unison thing going on; I play the same pattern on the drums. It has some tricky double bass stuff in there, so it's a blast-beat sort of thing. There's a song that Patrick Mulcahy wrote, "Learn From Danny," which is definitely one of the more complicated ones on the album. It's almost like a soul song that veers into what I call a "prog circus" feel.

MD: Prog circus?

Jonathan: Meaning it has a lot of stuff going on, a lot to remember. I tend to heavily orchestrate my parts.

MD: Seems like you're performing a kind of Bruford beat in "All's Well That Ends Well." It's similar to something we've heard in his track "Beelzebub."

Jonathan: I actually had "The Cinema Show" by Genesis in mind, because they're both in a quick 7/8 kind of feel. I was sort of trying to channel Phil Collins a bit. The song also has a "Los Endos" kind of vibe.

MD: Some have compared District 97 to Dream Theater and other progressive metal acts.

Jonathan: I was pretty obsessed with Dream Theater for a while, especially the album *Metropolis Part 2: Scenes From a Memory*. I took lessons with Paul Wertico at the Chicago College of Performing Arts, and that influenced me as well to get into double bass. The first outlet I had for using double bass consistently was with a band I was in prior to District 97, Braintree. I guess my use of the double bass drum has always been dictated by whatever music I was playing at the time.

MD: Do you use a double pedal with a single kick?

Jonathan: Usually there's barely enough space for the band as is, so trying to add another bass drum would be problematic. I haven't felt that the music was lacking in any way, so it's never been at the top of my priority list. I do have a 20" and 22" now, so I might set up both in our rehearsal space and check that out.

MD: What's on the horizon?

Jonathan: Leslie's pregnant and due in September, so we're not really going to be able to do any heavy touring until 2016. That's unfortunate, but I think people can forgive us that, under the circumstances. Having said that, we haven't abandoned live performance altogether. [When this issue hits newsstands] we will have done some Milwaukee and Chicago dates in July, and we'll be playing at Reggies in Chicago in August.



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A DIFFERENT
VIEW

Steven Wilson

The modern-prog giant has the skills and musicality to manipulate sounds like it's no one's business. Which makes it all the more wondrous—and honorable—how little futzing he actually does with the drum tracks on his records. Of course, as every great chef knows, it pays to use the best ingredients.

by Will Romano

One of the most significant modern progressive rock bands was once merely a figment of a shy young man's imagination.

In the late 1980s, with his bedroom doubling as a recording studio, British multi-instrumentalist Steven Wilson mimicked the psychedelic and art-rock sounds he loved as a teenager. Operating in virtual anonymity under the banner of Porcupine Tree, Wilson distributed his music on cassettes featuring liner notes crediting fictional band members and detailing fabricated discographies.

Over the course of the next two decades, however, Porcupine Tree would evolve from the mad musings of a single composer to a (semi) collaborative four-person musical entity, boasting a drum god named Gavin Harrison. The group's music would morph considerably as well, into a sonic beast with a post-rock edge that retained aspects of Wilson's early sonic experimentations. Wilson continues to develop his songwriting and sound-design skills as the leader

of a powerhouse group under his own name, featuring German drum master Marco Minnemann, bassist/ Stick player Nick Beggs (Kajagoogoo), keyboardist Adam Holzman, and guitarist Guthrie Govan.

Although he had once shunned the "prog rock" label, Wilson is today the uncontested crown prince of the genre, having recorded and/or performed with the movers and shakers of the art-rock drumming community, including Harrison, Minnemann, Chad Wackerman (Frank Zappa, Allan Holdsworth), Pat Mastelotto (King Crimson), Steve Jansen (Japan, Rain Tree Crow), and many others.

"I think guys like Gavin and Marco are much more than drummers; they are multi-instrumentalists," Wilson says. "It's really interesting to work with a drummer who understands melody, harmony, and the texture of different sounds. It's not just about rhythm. That's why it's been such a pleasure working with these guys."

This may be one reason why the drum tracks seem so lively, so unadulterated throughout the PT canon and a

solo output that includes *Insurgentes*, *Grace for Drowning*, *The Raven That Refused to Sing*—which spawned a Wagnerian stage production—and this year's *Hand. Cannot. Erase*. The latest collection is a concept album inspired in part by the mystery surrounding Joyce Carol Vincent, a thirty-eight-year-old Londoner who died in her apartment and went undiscovered for three years, the television still running in her rented room....

Themes centered on isolation, regret, apathy, and creeping alienation—threads running through many of Wilson's songs—never detract from *Hand. Cannot. Erase*'s surprising warmth and emotional impact, byproducts of a seamless fusion of cutting-edge recording technology, bittersweet melodies, analog instrumentation, and virtually unblemished and

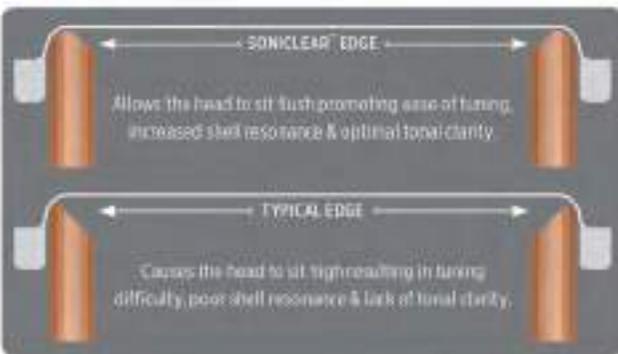
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often daring drumming performances by Minnemann and Wackerman.

"I like drummers who are very much lead drummers, you might say," Wilson explains. "Drummers who almost take the band by the scruff of the neck and drag everyone along with them. It's what people might call the Keith Moon factor."

Seemingly impervious to the recording industry's recent economic downturns, Wilson has moved hundreds of thousands of units while his largely conceptual works have consistently entered the *Billboard* charts. In addition, Wilson has worked tirelessly on 5.1 surround remixes of titles by prog forefathers Yes, Jethro Tull, and King Crimson, earning kudos from pros of all stripes in engineering circles. "What can I tell you?" Wilson once admitted to this writer, with a spot of dry British humor. "We fiddle while Rome burns."

As of this writing, Porcupine Tree was on hiatus, but Wilson continues to plug (and plug-in) away, navigating the industry largely on his terms—and with brilliant drummers by his side.

MD: Why is Marco Minnemann such a good drummer for your style of music?

Steven: I didn't know Marco, but my manager, Andy Leff, who is based in New York, saw him with Eddie Jobson [U.K., Roxy Music] at a club there. At the time I was looking for a live band for my first solo tour, and I wanted a drummer who could light a fire under the band. When I looked at YouTube clips of Marco, I just immediately loved the way he played with a big grin on his face. He played with a lot of sensitivity for the material, but he also has a fire and energy that pushes everyone up to a higher level.

MD: How much input does a drummer like Marco have in shaping your music?

Steven: I do demos, and when I do my demos I program drum parts. I like [creating] interesting layers to the music so much that I end up programming drum parts that I find stimulating, interesting. Marco makes these parts more "human" and finds ways to use [programmed drums] as a reference point and turns them into something more organic. I guess what I'm saying is I'm sending him rather stilted

programmed parts and he's adapting them and saying, "That's not how a drummer would play. He would play it like this...." It's like giving him the words and letting him arrange them in the most logical way in which to speak.

MD: What software do you use for drum programming?

Steven: Logic these days has some phenomenal stuff built into it. I use samples I've had for years, which are samples of Gavin Harrison, actually. Gavin has a beautiful-sounding kit. We sampled it about ten years ago, and I loaded the samples into Logic's EXS24 software. I tend to program with Gavin's drum sounds, just as a starting point.

MD: Gavin is there in spirit no matter what project you're working on.

Steven: Kind of, yeah. But I should point out that it's my patterns, of course. I mean, all programs sound ridiculous and maybe not even possible to play. For my band Marco is adept at making the drums feel much more natural.

MD: How long did *Hand. Cannot. Erase.* preproduction last?

Steven: It's difficult to be specific about

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these things these days. When I'm working in my own studio, a lot of the stuff I'm doing, whether it's vocals or even guitar parts, quite conceivably could end up in the final mix. Marco has his own studio at home as well, so when I have a track at a fairly reasonable stage, I send it to him, and usually within a day or two he sends back his first live interpretation. At that point we're not thinking about sound so much, the tone of the drums, the style of miking, and all of that stuff. That obviously will take place when we get to the studio.

MD: How do you know you have a good drum take?

Steven: I sift through the material and choose the takes I like, and do very little editing. I don't like to edit, particularly with the drums, and I don't like to edit the drums between takes. I think there's something about a complete take that's always special, even if it's not "perfect." It's a shame to have to start chopping takes together. Editing might make the track more technically perfect, but I don't think it makes it better, if you see what I mean. But, you know, every time Marco does a take it's fantastic. [laughs]

MD: Do you use Beat Detective or analyze a drum track on purely visual terms? I'm getting the sense that you don't like quantizing drums.

Steven: You're absolutely right. The simple answer is that I don't use any Beat Detective. Of course, I'm saying this from a very privileged position, because I'm working with some of the greatest drummers in the world right now, whether it's Gavin or Marco or Chad Wackerman. I really don't like the kind of approach where you start looking at how a bass drum is falling on a grid. To me the point is: If it sounds right and it sounds good, leave it.

I don't even like to do triggering these days. Occasionally I might tuck in another bass drum or snare drum underneath the live drum on a particularly dense section, just to make it speak a bit more. But the last couple of records, what you're listening to is very much the sound of real drums as played by a real drummer in real time.

MD: You've used rhythmic loops in the past. Does *Hand. Cannot. Erase.* contain loops?

Steven: I do use loops and electronic drums on the new record. One of the tracks, "Perfect Life," is almost entirely composed of drum programming and some loops. It's all very processed, put

through amps, fuzz boxes, some other stuff. Even when I use a drum loop, it seems, I end up putting it through a Korg Kaoss pad to try to get back that kind of random human element that you lose with programming.

MD: Marco and Chad both play on the album. Who will be touring with you?

Steven: The touring will be handled firstly by Marco on the European leg. But then Marco and Guthrie [Govan] have their own tour with the Aristocrats, so I'm replacing Marco on the U.S. leg of

the tour with Craig Blundell. Fantastic drummer. Craig seems to be a lot closer to the Marco approach. It's interesting, because in many respects the two guys I used on the record are two guys I used on my previous tour: Marco and Chad. For me they are almost like polar opposites. Marco is like this ball of energy, and Chad has this more Californian, laid-back thing going on, which is also fantastic.



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A Step-by-Step Approach to Creating Interesting Grooves

by Rich Redmond

MUSIC KEY	
open	○
H.H.	○
T.T.	○
S.D.	●
F.T.	●
B.D.	●
Add'l	△
T.T.	△

Over the years, my experiences as a teacher have taught me to always start simply. I like to build a strong foundation with a student before increasing the level of complexity. After all, you have to bake a cake and make it taste great by itself before adding the frosting or sprinkles.

When it comes to building drumbeats, I usually start with a basic rock/pop feel with 8th notes on the hi-hat and 2-and-4 backbeats on the snare. This serves as our foundation (the cake), which we slowly add to with bass drum syncopations, extra subdivisions on the hi-hat and snare, and open notes on the hi-hat (the frosting). The later variations make use of the toms and take on an almost linear feel, meaning that no two limbs strike simultaneously. Using this basic build-a-beat method, you can create millions of rhythmic and sonic variations. Get going!

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

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

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Grooving in Form

Part 2: AABC

by Mike Johnston

MUSIC KEY	
H.H.	⊗
S.D.	●
B.D.	⊙
H.H.	⊗
w/foot	

In our previous lesson (July 2015), we learned how to use the simple song form AABA to create some hip triplet-based grooves. This month we're going to push the concept further by using three components in our four-beat form. Beats 1 and 2 will serve as the A section, beat 3 will be the B section, and beat 4 will be the C section, which gives us an AABC form.

The purpose of learning grooves this way is to give you 75 percent structure with 25 percent left over for improvisation and creativity. When working on this, I think to myself, *Okay, it's a one-measure groove built out of 16th-note triplets, so that gives me a total of twenty-four notes. If I predetermine beats 1, 2, and 4, then I need to create only six notes to fill beat 3.* Spontaneously creating a twenty-four-note groove can be a daunting task, but six notes? We can all do that.

For the A section on beats 1 and 2, play a paradiddle-diddle between the hi-hat and snare, making sure to bring the right hand down to the snare on 2 and 4 to create the backbeats. The B section of the groove is the variable—this is where you get to be creative. I've given you six options, but make sure you push yourself to create new B sections once you've tried these. The C section is back to a predetermined set of notes, which in this case is the sticking LRLRL.

Here are the six B-section options.

1 R R R R

2 R R L R

3 R R L L R R

4 R L R

5 R L R

6 R L R

These grooves work best in situations where you would typically play a half-time shuffle. If you feel that a normal half-time shuffle just isn't spicy enough, plug in one of these bad boys to bring a bit more creativity and texture to the music.

Here are the complete patterns.

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

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

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

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

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

6 R L R R L L R L R R L L R L R L R L L R L

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

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



Practical Single Strokes

Exercises for Rolling in Time

by Jeff W. Johnson

Many single-stroke-roll exercises consist of a continuous stream of notes. But we rarely have the opportunity to play never-ending single strokes in everyday situations; most often we must roll for a predetermined amount of time. Therefore it would only make sense to practice single-stroke rolls of a variety of durations.

One method is to phrase roll exercises contained in any snare drum method book as 32nd-note single strokes. The exercises can come from any beginning to intermediate title, such as *Alfred's Drum Method, Book 1* by Sandy Feldstein and Dave Black or *Snare Drum Method, Book 1* by Vic Firth. In the following examples we've notated the roll exercise on the left and the single-stroke-roll variation on the right.

Original exercise

Variation - played as single strokes

1

R L R L R L R L R L

Original

Variation

2

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

Original

Variation

3

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

Original

Variation

4

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

This concept can be applied to rolls of longer duration, as seen in the following exercises. The hands should be loose and free of tension. If tension occurs, stop and rest. Then resume at a slower tempo, increasing the speed only after you can perform the exercise comfortably.

Original

Variation

5

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

Original

Variation

6

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

Swing Style 101

Part 1: Avoiding the 1

by Justin Varnes

MUSIC KEY

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

Chances are, not many of us launched into a career in drumming after hearing a Papa Jo Jones record and asking our parents for a set of brushes for our birthday. Coming from the world of rock, I know I didn't. But somewhere along the way, it's possible that you've been bitten by the jazz bug, like I was. Maybe it's because as you've gotten better, you've sought new challenges. Or maybe it's because the band you play in gets asked on occasion to play a set of light jazz during cocktail hour. However it happens, there are a few big obstacles that can stand in the way of sounding like a "real" jazz drummer, and that's what this three-part series is designed to address. We'll begin with one of the more challenging concepts for drummers with a background in rock, pop, or R&B: avoiding the downbeat.

A crucial difference between jazz styles and most contemporary popular music is the way beat 1 is treated. When you play with a proper swing feel, you need to have a delicate balance of downbeats and upbeats. The groove can feel overly heavy if you land on the downbeat too often, particularly at the end (the resolution) of key phrases. In the places where the listener is expecting to hear a big downbeat, jazz musicians often anticipate it by resolving on either beat 4 or the "&" of 4. This provides syncopation and keeps the music from becoming predictable.

Let's take a look at a melody from the classic Neal Hefti swing tune "Cute."

Notice how each phrase ends on the "&" of 4. That anticipation keeps the momentum going, which is necessary for a good swing feel. So let's steal from the best. We'll take the first two-bar phrase of "Cute" and voice it in different ways. Here are four options for orchestrating the rhythm between the snare and bass drum while the ride and hi-hat remain steady.

Now let's do the same with the one-bar phrase in measure 9 of "Cute."

Here are some rhythmic phrases that resolve on beat 4 or the “&” of 4. Practice them using a combination of snare and bass drum sounds, and by adding a crash. Changing up the orchestration is what keeps these common rhythms from sounding the same every time you play them. Remember to keep the ride cymbal and hi-hat steady throughout.

3



Practice Tips

Try creating four- and eight-bar loops with these rhythms, where you play basic time, with a metronome, for the first three or seven measures and then play each of the figures at the end of the phrase, varying the orchestration each time you repeat. As you get more comfortable with phrasing rhythms that avoid beat 1, try improvising your own ideas in the bars leading up to the ending figure. With diligent practice, you'll be swinging hard in no time!



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The Cumbia

Drumset Adaptations of a Traditional Colombian/Panamanian Rhythm

by Steve Rucker and Carlomagno Araya

Cumbia is a musical style that comes from Colombia and Panama and has a rich and diverse history. It's closely connected to some of the social rituals and dances of the people of those countries. Typical of many Latin genres, cumbia represents a synthesis of African and European roots, and there are versions in other countries, including Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Argentina, and Chile.

The percussion instruments used in cumbia are African in origin. The primary ones are as follows.

Tambora: A low-pitched, two-headed drum played with sticks on the head and shell. It's from this drum that we get the primary quarter-note/two-8ths pattern played on the rim or shell, which on the drumset can be transferred to the hi-hat, floor tom rim, or woodblock. The tambora drummer improvises in conjunction with the tambor alegre player.

Tambor alegre: This middle-pitched hand drum is usually played more freely and is the main improviser of the percussion section.

Llamador: A high-pitched drum traditionally played only on the upbeats or on beats 2 and 4.

Maracones: The literal translation is "big maracas." The open/closed pattern used on the hi-hat in drumset applications is derived from the rhythm of this instrument.

Guache: A variation of the maracones, made of metal in a tubular shape. It plays the same patterns as the maracones.

Traditional Rhythms

Let's take a look at traditional cumbia drum rhythms. The most dominant pattern is the one played by the tambora.

Shell of drum:

Open note:



The llamador plays this simple quarter-note rhythm, with the primary notes being on beats 2 and 4.

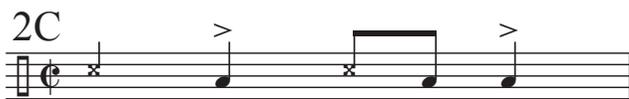
Slap Open



Here's a variation often played by the llamador.



The next two patterns demonstrate what the tambor alegre might play.

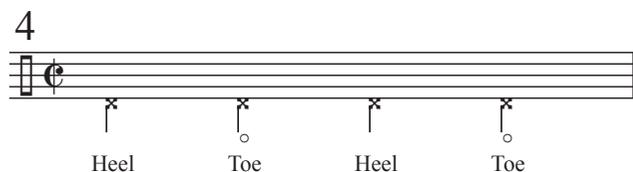


The maracones play a short/long pattern. The long notes, which are notated as rolls, are achieved by extending the arm.

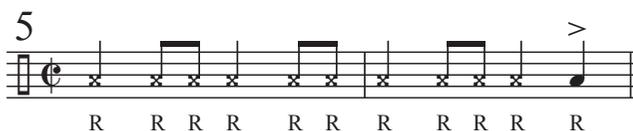


Drumset Adaptations

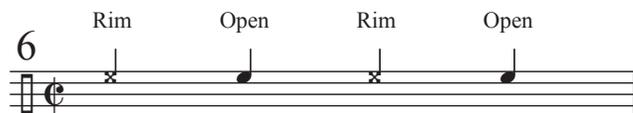
In our drumset adaptations, the underlying closed/open rhythm of the maracones or guache is replicated on the hi-hat with the foot. The closed sound is made with the heel, and the open "splash" is made with the toes.



The quarter/8th tambora rhythm can be played on the floor tom rim or a woodblock. For a more traditional effect, place a towel or fabric over half of the floor tom's head to drastically dampen the sound.



The llamador rhythm can be played on a smaller tom, using the rim and an open sound.



Next, play the bass drum on beats 3 and 4.



MUSIC KEY

open	rim-
H.H.	click
T.T.	
S.D.	
F.T.	
B.D.	
H.H.	rim of
w/foot	F.T.

Combine that with the closed/open hi-hat pattern.

8

Adding the floor tom rhythm, you get a complete cumbia drumset groove.

9

R R R R R R R R R R R

If you add the llamador rhythm with the left hand on a small tom, you get the following.

10

Here's a variation of the previous example.

11

Now let's add some embellishments to the tambora rhythm. Patterns like the following can be improvised freely.

12

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

13

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

14

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

15

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

16

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

17

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

18

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

Finally, here's a funk version of cumbia that has the snare added on beat 3 to create a backbeat.

18

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

Spend some time listening to traditional cumbia music as you work on these exercises, and then feel free to create your own interpretations and variations. Three cumbia artists that we recommend checking out for ideas are Totó la Momposina, Petrona Martínez, and Estefanía Caicedo.

Steve Rucker is the director of drumset studies at the University of Miami. He has played or recorded with the Bee Gees, Michael Jackson, Paquito D'Rivera, Jaco Pastorius, Joe Sample, Johnny Cash, Gloria Estefan, and Ben Vereen.

Carlomagno Araya is a doctorate student at Miami and has played or recorded with Rubén Blades, Willy Chirino, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Eddie Gomez, Randy Brecker, and others.



Progressive Drumming Essentials

Part 3: Polyrhythmic Patterns

by Aaron Edgar

MUSIC KEY

H.H.
T.T.
S.D.
B.D.
Ghost note

Last month we learned some of the theory behind polyrhythms, along with how to play these patterns in their most basic form. The next step is to learn how to use polyrhythms in grooves. Doing so will further ingrain them into your vocabulary while developing your pocket and internal pulse at the same time.

Example 1 has 16th notes on the hi-hats and four equally spaced bass drum notes in a bar of 3/4. This gives us a basic phrasing of the four-over-three polyrhythm.

It's important that you feel the quarter note as your pulse, which is outlined by the accents on the hi-hats. If you're feeling the bass drum as quarter notes, then you're actually playing a different polyrhythm: three over four (Example 2). Our rhythmic perspective is just as important as being able to play the notes correctly, if not more important.

Thinking of the bass drum as the polyrhythmic layer, add the snare on every other quarter note to imply backbeats in a 4/4 groove. You'll need to play the polyrhythm twice in order for it to resolve back to the beginning.

If we add a snare backbeat to Example 2, the result is a three-over-four polyrhythm over a four-on-the-floor triplet groove, with the hi-hat supplying the polyrhythm.

Now let's embellish the last two patterns to make them a little more interesting. A combination of singles and doubles turns the three-over-four polyrhythmic groove into a super-funky, triplet-based, four-on-the-floor pattern. Dynamics are key to making this groove sound great. Focus on playing quiet ghost notes and solid, consistent accents.

This next variation uses paradiddles to embellish the hand pattern from the previous four-over-three rhythm. Using different sticking patterns is a great way to voice the numerical groupings of the polyrhythms.

Resolutions: To Force or Not to Force?

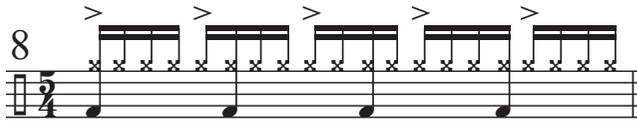
More often than not, polyrhythms won't fit evenly into a single bar of 4/4. This doesn't mean that we can't use them in 4/4; we just need to get creative. With Example 6, the first option is to simply take the first four quarter notes of the pattern and loop them (Example 7). When you do that, the polyrhythm occurs in the first three beats of the bar. The final quarter note is an incomplete piece of the rhythm. This is one of the ways we can force a polyrhythm to resolve in 4/4. It should be noted that the final quarter note doesn't need to follow the pattern, so feel free to embellish it however you'd like.

Another option is to let the rhythm resolve itself naturally in 4/4. Since the main pattern in Example 6 takes six beats to complete, playing the cycle twice takes up twelve quarter notes, which divides evenly into three bars of 4/4. That's great in theory, but music tends to be phrased in multiples of four measures. Because the groove in Example 6 takes three bars of 4/4 to resolve naturally, we can continue playing the pattern for one more bar to complete a four-bar phrase.

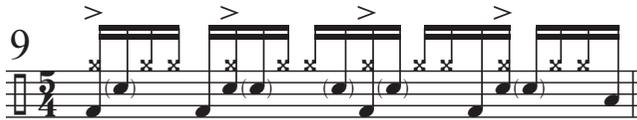
Another way to use polyrhythmic patterns is to treat them as groove-based fills. This can be done with a polyrhythm of any length. Just count how many beats it takes to complete the polyrhythm, and start the fill that number of beats from the end of the phrase.

Let's demonstrate this fill concept with another polyrhythm that works great in a groove setting: four over five. Example 8

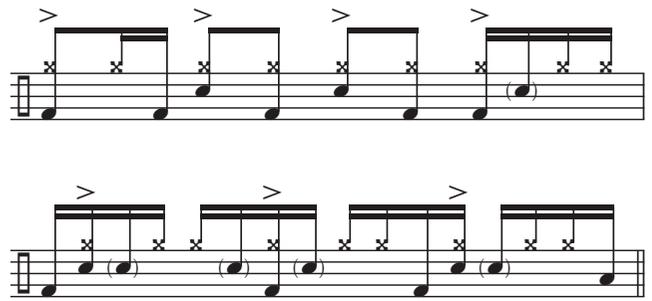
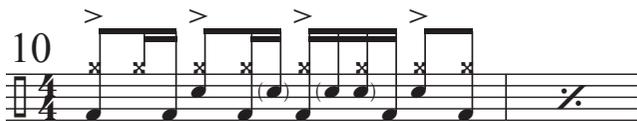
is a basic phrasing of the polyrhythm, where we have four bass drum notes spaced evenly across a bar of 5/4 time.



In Example 9, we've embellished that spacing into a syncopated groove.



Since our polyrhythmic groove from Example 9 takes five quarter notes to complete, we can start it on beat 4 of the third bar of a four-bar phrase in 4/4.



When trying to create your own polyrhythmic grooves, be sure to start with the basic phrasing and then embellish it. The polyrhythmic layer can be phrased on any instrument or combination of instruments, like the kick drum, the snare, or the hi-hat played with the foot.

It's also good practice to transcribe your own ideas to help you internalize them much faster. Seeing how various polyrhythms work in different time signatures will help you gain a much deeper understanding of them.

Aaron Edgar plays with the Canadian prog-metal band Third Ion and is a session drummer, clinician, and author. You can find his book, *Boom!!*, as well as information on how to sign up for weekly live lessons, at aaronedgardrum.com.



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



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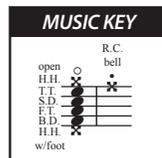
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Mr. Big's Pat Torpey

Breaking Down the Quasi-Linear Beat to "Take Cover"

by Matt Starr



This month we're going to look at a unique beat performed by Mr. Big drummer Pat Torpey for the song "Take Cover," which appears on the band's 1996 studio album, *Hey Man*.

When I first heard this groove, it sounded like a series of 16th notes played on the toms with the snare on beats 2 and 4. But being that I was familiar with Torpey's unique playing style, I knew there was little chance that it would be that easy. According to Pat, the groove was actually created by guitarist Paul Gilbert. If it takes a while for you to master this beat, don't feel bad. Pat says he spent "a few hours a day for about a week" to get it studio ready.

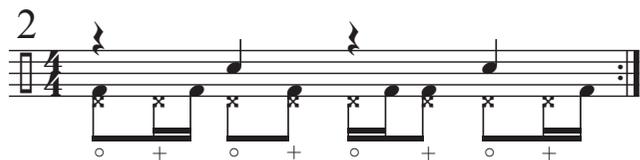
Torpey's introduction to the linear-type drumming heard in "Take Cover" was via David Garibaldi with Tower of Power, on tracks like "Soul Vaccination," "Oakland Stroke," and "Squib Cakes." Prior to Mr. Big, Torpey played with Robert Plant, the Knack, and David Lee Roth. When he joined Mr. Big, he was allowed to explore nontraditional rock drumming within the arrangement of four-minute commercial songs.

"Take Cover" is a great example of a musical-sounding beat that's much more complex than it appears on first listen. Yet it's designed to support the vocal melody. The core of the groove is built around a linear pattern between the kick, snare, and floor tom. The 8th-note hi-hat pattern is played with the toes in the chorus and with a heel/toe motion in the verse.

We'll break down the beat into its individual parts, and then we'll begin combining the limbs to create the full pattern. Let's start with the kick-and-snare part. This pattern remains constant throughout the song.



Now let's add the hi-hat as it's played in the verse, which involves the heel/toe 8th-note motion. The heel plays on the downbeat to create a splash sound, and the toes play a chick sound on the offbeats.



Here's the chorus pattern, which has consistent 8th-note chicks on the hi-hat that are played with the toes.



Now let's look at the floor tom part. It's filling in every 16th note where there's not a stroke on the kick or snare.



Before you put everything together, work on combining different limbs to see how each part locks in with the others. A great way to do this is to play the patterns on a practice pad while tapping your feet on a hard floor. Listen for flams. I've used that technique often, and it's very revealing.

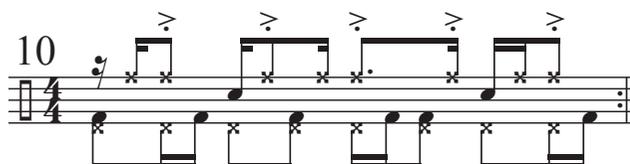
Here are the two-limb combinations.



Now let's put them all together.



The only variation occurs after the solo section. The floor tom pattern moves to the ride; it's the same part, but with a series of accented and unaccented notes on the bell. Live, Torpey would leave out the hi-hat during this section. Try playing it both ways.





For another variation, try switching the kick and floor tom parts.



Pat plays a similar groove on the song “Spit It Out,” from his 1998 solo release, *Odd Man Out*. In this track, the snare hits a 16th note earlier, creating a Bo Diddley-type feel between the kick and snare, with the floor tom again filling in the rest of the 16ths.

Have fun, stay relaxed, and keep the notes consistent.

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



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Stone Custom Drums

The Niles Shell Returns!

by Harry Cangany

Vintage drum enthusiasts are an interesting lot. Some of us rank our favorite drum companies in order. Others like them all. And then there are the collectors and players who choose one company and stay with it forever. If you look on Facebook, you'll find that all the major American manufacturers from the 1960s, including those that have gone out of business, have fan appreciation pages.

I've been invited to a number of those pages, and on Slingerland's I read something very interesting. First of all, when I started playing drums, in 1964, it seemed that all the attention was directed at the rivalry between the two largest companies, Ludwig and Slingerland.

Now I see reverence for Slingerland, Ludwig, Rogers, Gretsch, Camco, Leedy Chicago, Kent, and Premier. Five of those companies are gone. But maybe more than memories live on—at least for the Slingerland true believers.

Asian manufacturers today have re-created Slingerland Sound King— and Radio King—era lugs, the inward-angle Stick Saver hoops, and the Radio King three-point strainer. But what about the Niles-era Slingerland shell, which was maple and poplar in 3-ply and 5-ply configurations with reinforcing hoops? It now exists.

But those replica shells aren't being created overseas in modern molds; they're made on the actual Slingerland Uni-mold machinery that was installed in the Chicago plant in the '50s and moved to Niles in 1960. The machines are not in Illinois anymore; they're in Fort Wayne, Indiana. They are up and running to build shells from 6" to 28", and they're owned and operated by veteran drum restorer Bernie Stone, under the name Stone Custom Drum Co.

I recently visited Bernie, along with director of sales Kenton Snyder and factory operations manager Jeff Degitz, at the Stone Custom Drum facility. The company produces complete drumsets and snares for public consumption, via its own brand, and orders shells to other drum makers.



During my visit, Stone told me how the Reeve RF machines had traveled from the closed Slingerland factory to the Gretsch factory, where they were stored for years before coming into his possession in Fort Wayne. Drum history buffs will remember that Fred Gretsch bought the Slingerland and Leedy names and all assets in the '80s and later sold the Slingerland name to Gibson for a short-term effort of resuscitation.

I visited the Gretsch factory in the '90s, and I remember seeing barrels of Slingerland parts and the shell-making equipment, which featured burlap pieces anchored to two-by-fours, which were used for applying plastic wraps.

Stone has been a restorer, technician, and repairman at Columbus Pro Percussion and at the Percussion Center in Fort Wayne, where he worked on customizing drums for Neil Peart and other famous players. After the Percussion Center closed, Bernie did custom repair in a home workshop, and that was when he found out that the Slingerland equipment was for sale.

With a loan from a friend and a twenty-four-foot-long rental truck, Stone picked up the machinery and brought it back to Indiana. He didn't even know if the machines would work, or, if they did, *how*

to work them. There was no owner's manual, and there were no schematics. Reeve, which made the machines, had had an office years earlier, so its files were gone forever. Luckily, with the help of electrical engineers and friends, and after conducting as much research as he could, Stone got the machines to run. And then he was connected with a retired Slingerland employee who ran one of the RF units; that former worker filled in all the missing knowledge to bring the machines back to life.

Today, Stone Custom Drum is making what it calls the Niles shell, which is a maple and poplar Slingerland-style model. The company also works with other woods and exotic veneers. Bernie told me he particularly prefers the wood of trees from the Great Lakes region of the U.S.

Lucky for us, the machinery that made sets for Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Louie Bellson, Neil Peart, and many others is now purring along smoothly at the hands of some very skilled craftsmen and drum lovers, sixty-plus years after its maiden voyage at Slingerland. So, does Stone Custom Drum enjoy linking itself to the glory days of American drum manufacturing? Well, one look at the black-and-silver oval badge should answer that question.



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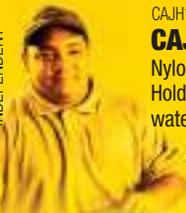
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Between the Buried and Me *Coma Ecliptic*

Each and every song in this episodic modern-rock opera proves that Blake Richardson can expertly navigate the most intricate labyrinths of progressive music.

For BTBM's seventh full-length release, the musicians' sonic evolution is as evident as their adulation for the forefathers of the progressive genre. *Coma Ecliptic* is a concept album about appreciating life in the moment instead of chasing unattainable notions of perfection. Although perfection may be in the eye of the beholder, when it comes to **Blake Richardson's** technique, this recording offers concrete evidence of perfectly crafted drum parts. Among Richardson's most obvious skills is how well he designs his fills as transitions to pivot the arc of the music. (Check out 0:56 to 1:30 on "Option Oblivion.") But, really, Blake handles it all with equal mastery. Through the epic terrain of "Memory Palace" to the hypnotic mood of the synth-laden "Dim Ignition," he's in complete command. (Metal Blade) **David Ciauro**



Aaron Goldberg *The Now*

Yet another opportunity to hear a brilliant drummer show how it's done in a small-group setting.

Is there anything **Eric Harland** can't do? He can funk it up, swing extremely hard, take it out, and be unbelievably sensitive in any configuration. Pianist Aaron

Goldberg, bassist Reuben Rogers, and the drummer are old mates, and on this latest trio recording they tackle up-tempo burners

("Background Music"), backbeat ballads ("Trocando Em Miudos"), and snares-oo Latin escapades ("Yoyo"). Harland is *always* playing something—riding a weird cymbal here, rucking on the snare there—but his dynamic sense is so exceptional, you never feel that he's out to show off anything other than his ability to comp like a master. Also, the recorded drum sound is so dry that you might think he's barely playing at all. Remedy that by checking out his fantastic solo trades on "One's a Crowd." Technical skill for miles, and massive ears. (Sunnyside) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

Clang Quartet *As a Thief in the Night: Live at Ende Tymes Festival*

Lightning Bolt *Fantasy Empire*

**Two drummers,
one working in light,
the other in darkness,
bring da noise!**



Alex Markow

two-track offering. Although clear sticking patterns can be detected throughout the record, on the whole we're confronted with amorphous amplified buzzing, screeching feedback, and disturbing dentist-drill-like whirring. Irving's art and faith make strange and often uncomfortable bedfellows, yes, but the almost apocalyptic aural vortices the drummer pulls you into allude to spiritual longing, catharsis, and enlightenment—a process that may well have been guided by a higher power. (silbermedia.com)

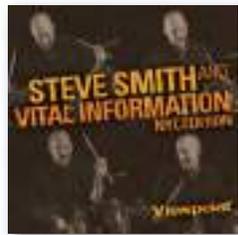
If Irving channels light through noise, then Lightning Bolt's *Fantasy Empire*, a slab of supercharged experimental post rock, plays like a dark descent into a psychopath's subconscious. Drummer/vocalist **Brian Chippendale**, who appears masked for the band's hyperkinetic live performances (think Darth Maul

meets Leatherface), is an absolute speed demon whose barrage of precise fills locks into the distortion-laced riff's pumped out by pick-less bassist Brian Gibson. This loop-heavy and surprisingly well-constructed music might possess medicinal qualities, but it seems better suited for whipping people into a frenzy. (Thrill Jockey) **Will Romano**



Don't adjust your CD player. There's nothing wrong with the disc drive in your laptop. The sounds you hear on *As a Thief in the Night* were intentionally produced by **Scotty Irving** (aka Clang Quartet) on two separate occasions at the Ende Tymes Festival of Noise and Abstract Liberation. Irving, whose Christianity plays a large part in his art, apparently practices some form of sonic exorcism, judging by the holy racket that bursts forth from this

TAKING THE REINS



Steve Smith and Vital Information NYC Edition
Viewpoint
Decades into Vital Info history, the group's leader keeps things fresh and urgent.

The latest lineup ("NYC Edition") of Steve Smith's enduring institution Vital

Information delivers with attitude aplenty in a vibrant intersection of acoustic jazz and fusion/funk. As always, expect virtuosic chops, tight grooves, and high energy from Smith, longtime bassist Baron Browne, keyboardist Mark Soskin, guitarist Vinny Valentino, and alto saxophonist Andy Fusco. In a quest for "live" energy, Smith recorded this disc in a scant day and a half, and the gamble pays off. Opening with "Bemsha Swing," the quintet revamps the quirky Monk classic into a fun, funky throbber. Smith pays homage with several drummer-signature tunes here, burning on the breakneck Buddy Rich bopper "Time Check"—including a dazzling solo—and putting his own footprint on Joe Morello's sacred ground during "Take Five." Smith links the set with three short solo interludes that emphasize melodic mallets-on-toms phrases. (BFM Jazz) **Je Potter**



Dafnis Prieto Sextet
Triangles and Circles
The Latin-jazz yrebrand brings explosive drums and writes all the tunes on his latest.

Dafnis Prieto is all over the kit on his sixth album as a leader, constantly switching

ride sources and supplying a steady dose of rhythmic commentary on eight of his own Latin-avored compositions. "Back and Forth" is all lithe chatter, the o-beat bell pattern and piano line twisting into each other before Prieto moves to the rims and then opens up. The snares- solo beginning the title track is beautifully controlled, leading into more involved syncopations and accents underneath great tenor and alto playing, then returning to polyrhythmic ylls and bass drum assaulting. No one-trick ponies here, though. "Blah Blah Blah" is a second-line-inspired workout in 9/4, with the drummer smoothing out the feel with a dance-y, free-owing cymbal approach and carefully crafted punctuations. Prieto has always been a yrst-rate sideman, but it's leading his own crew where he really shines. (Dafnison Music)

Ilya Stemkovsky



Curtis Nowosad *Dialectics*
Fresh slants on classics and spirited originals deyne this drummer/leader's sophomore outing.

Curtis Nowosad's yne debut, *The Skeptic & the Cynic*, featured inspired jazz takes on sources from 2Pac to Pink Floyd. This rousing follow-up ynds the same core

quintet steering closer to its hard-bop in- uences, and the results swing with a premium on hungry up-tempo energy. On Wayne Shorter's "Speak No Evil," Nowosad injects a funky asymmetrical

groove beneath the head. While some bands might force-yt hip new grooves into classics, the drummer's arrangement truly works, popping the melody forward. His driving, crisp chops inform the ensemble's tight sound throughout, and on "Gleaning & Dreaming" he delivers a sensitive seamlessness to the shifting three and yve meters. Supported by trumpeter Derrick Gardner, saxophonist Jimmy Greene, pianist Will Bonness, and bassist Steve Kirby, Nowosad's music intuitively and potently melds tradition with the new. (Cellar Live) **Je Potter**

MULTIMEDIA



Claus Hessler's Drumming Kairos

Kairos is described in the Greek language as the "opportune split second for decision and action." On this yve-hour, two-DVD set, Claus Hessler goes into complex Moeller technique discussion and performance examples, describing the "sweet spots" and other in-depth concepts. Included is a lot of talking from Hessler, along with video statements from Alex Acuña, John Riley,

Steve Smith, Todd Sucherman, and others. Those greats don't play, but their insight is a welcome addition. When not philosophizing, Hessler demonstrates superb open-handed solos, ostinatos, and odd-time patterns that aren't quite so simple. Then there's talk of "reverse-syncopation inverted double strokes" and "collapsed rudiments," so study the limb relationships at your own pace. An overhead camera, foot-pedal-view inset, and visual metronome are excellent production choices as well. Perhaps it's not the place to start, but this set can be the next step to unlocking the mysteries of the Moeller method. PDF booklet and poster included. (\$35.99, Alfred) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Quintin' Time: Applying the 5-Note Phrase by Gary Rosensweig

The eighth installment in drummer/educator Rosensweig's *Progressive Drummer Method* series, *Quintin' Time* is a detailed look at quintuplets and septuplets and how those odd-note groupings can be applied to patterns and ylls. The author acknowledges that the material is "suited for unique syncopations that can create

tension, surprise, and movement," so students delving into these notated solos and groove studies can get a ton of ideas focusing on just one thing at a time, such as ghost notes, alternate stickings, or incorporating the bass drum into the phrase. It all gets thick toward the end, when the yves and sevens are combined with polyrhythmic subdivisions and "elastic diddles," so take it slow and steady for the best road to results. No play-along disc or MP3s here, just shedding material to challenge yourself.

(\$15, grdrumming.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



In Memoriam

A.J. Pero

On March 20, while on the road with Adrenaline Mob, long-time Twister Sister drummer A.J. Pero suffered a fatal heart attack while asleep on his tour bus. He was fifty-five. According to Twister Sister frontman Dee Snider, Pero had advanced heart disease, but this wasn't discovered until after his untimely death.

Anthony Jude Pero was born in 1959 in Park Slope, Brooklyn, and his family moved to Staten Island when he was four years old. He gravitated toward the drums at a very early age, playing a set owned by his uncle Carmine. When he was six years old, his father bought him a Ludwig kit; later that year the young drummer began playing professionally, doing gigs with the Buddy Russell Trio, whom his family met while on vacation in the Bahamas. "I had begged my parents to let me sit in with the group one night," Pero told *Modern Drummer* in February 1986. "I ended up playing with them every night of the week. They started to fly me out to do weekend gigs all over the country when I was seven."

Although he was known as the hard-rocking heavy hitter who crafted the simple yet unforgettable head-banging drum intro, complete with cowbell, to Twister Sister's biggest hit, "We're Not Gonna Take It," from its most commercially successful album, 1984's *Stay Hungry*, Pero was influenced by jazz and big band drummers, including Sonny Payne, Gene Krupa, and Buddy Rich. It wasn't until Pero turned fourteen and began hanging out on street corners that he started listening to bands like Led Zeppelin, the Who, Yes, and ELP.

After high school Pero played in a few bands and worked three jobs in order to survive. He even stopped



taking wedding gigs in order to stay true to the mission he originally set out on. Although he knew of Twister Sister from the '70s New York club circuit, it wasn't until 1981 that he learned the band was looking for a new drummer. He auditioned twice and joined the group in 1982, in time for its debut recording, *Under the Blade*, which was released that same year. Pero played on the band's next three albums before departing in 1986. After participating in various projects, he rejoined Twister Sister for its 1997 reunion, remaining with the group until his death. In 2013 A.J. replaced Mike Portnoy in Adrenaline Mob, playing on the band's second album, *Men of Honor*. Portnoy in turn took the drum chair in Twister Sister after Pero's death.

"A.J. was not only a great, truly underrated drummer," Portnoy says, "but an incredibly kind soul who was taken from us way too soon. It's my

honor to help out his band Twister Sister in their time of need, just as he did with Adrenaline Mob after I left."

Throughout his life, Pero was active within his community; in recent years he participated in 2009's March of Dimes Bikers for Babies event and Staten Strong's fundraiser for Hurricane Sandy victims. For five years Pero also took part in the Bonzo Bash tributes to Led Zeppelin drummer John Bonham.

"It was an honor to have A.J. be a part of it," Bonzo Bash founder Brian Tichy says. "He brought huge power to the stage with every performance and left the drums in a smoky haze! This past May's Bonzo Bash was in his honor, and we gave him the Legend Award. We all want to acknowledge his mightiness and impact on the world of rock drumming, as well as showing us that hard work and tenacity with a passion can pay off."
"Pistol" Pete Kaufmann



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Lennie DiMuzio

When Lennie DiMuzio died this past March 7 after a long battle with cancer, the phrase “end of an era” was truly appropriate. During his decades working at Zildjian and then for Sabian, DiMuzio defined what *artist relations* could mean. “You weren’t just clients who played their cymbals,” Kenny Aronoff says. “Lennie really cared about the endorsers.”

DiMuzio was born on May 4, 1933, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. After high school he studied at the New England Conservatory and the Schillinger House. He was drafted into the army during the Korean War and sent to Germany. After he returned, he was working as a drummer when Armand Zildjian heard him playing in a Boston bar. “He was a damn good drummer,” Armand told *MD* in 1986. “He knew what he was doing, and he was a very likable, affable fellow.”

DiMuzio spent over forty years working for the Zildjian company, where he started in 1960 as a cymbal tester before becoming artist relations manager. For the past ten years he was a consultant with Sabian. In 2010 he published his memoirs, *Tales From the Cymbal Bag*, cowritten with his friend Jim Coffin.

Drummers could tell that DiMuzio knew what he was talking about when it came to cymbals and drumming—and it wasn’t just talk. “One favorite memory I have of Lennie took place in a hotel room after a Zildjian Day,” Steve Smith says. “The room was packed with hotshot drummers demonstrating their chops for each other on a practice pad. After a while Lennie said, ‘Let’s see who can play the quietest press roll.’ He played a beautiful triple-pianissimo roll. We all gave it our best attempt, but none of us had the control to play as quiet as Lennie.”

However much drummers respected DiMuzio’s musical knowledge, it was his personality that endeared him to so many players. “It’s almost impossible to think of Lennie and not smile,” Peter Erskine says. “The man’s limitless joy and love transcend all that I know about grief. Lennie was always there for us, whether in the form of kindly assistance, encouragement, or the best, worst-timed, politically incorrect joke he could manage to pull out of his hat or his pants or God only knows where else. Lennie opened our eyes and hearts to the big cosmic joke of life’s absurdities, and in doing so he bestowed that gift of the gods: insight into our own foibles and compassion for the idiot artist in all of us.”

In a note that was read at DiMuzio’s funeral, Vinnie Colaiuta said, “He always made you feel good about yourself. That was a great gift of his: He made *you* feel good—made you feel better—all the time. He could attend to someone in any



DiMuzio with, from top, Buddy Rich, Vinnie Colaiuta, and Chad Smith

Photos courtesy of Therese DiMuzio

way: If you were sad, he’d be a balm; if you were happy and joking, you’d feel even happier; and he’d be so funny that he could put you on the floor. I have so many fond memories of him imparting cherished wisdom, making me laugh until my stomach hurt, and just making me feel better after being around him and better for having known him.”

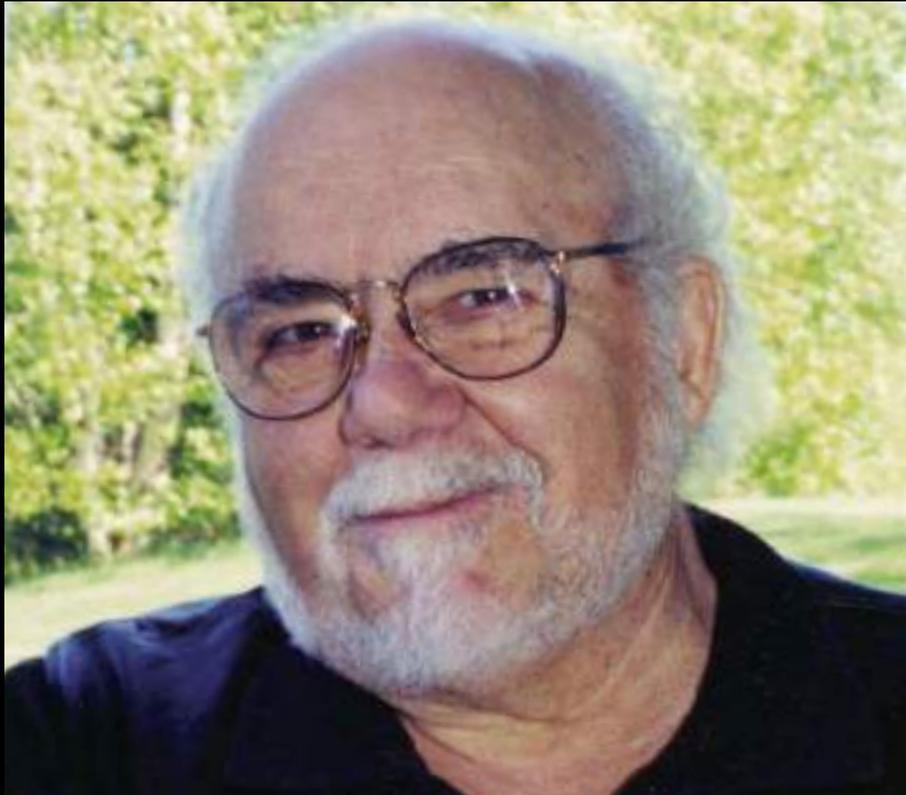
DiMuzio’s speech was punctuated with hipster lingo from the 1950s, delivered with a distinctive Boston accent, but he could relate as well to young rock drummers coming up as to the older jazz players he had grown up with. “Lennie saw the drum industry as one big family,” Colin Schofield, who worked with him at Zildjian, says. “If you were a drummer at any level, to Lennie you were part of the family, even if you endorsed a competitor’s product. He loved the drum community, and everybody loved Lennie and wanted to hang out with him. As his daughter Cecelia said so eloquently at his funeral, ‘What do you do when your father is more fun to hang out with than your own friends?’”

Like many drummers, Steve Gadd especially appreciated the relationship between DiMuzio and Armand Zildjian. “Armand and Lennie worked great together, and we had a lot of good times,” Gadd says. “They took their work seriously, but they had a lot of fun. They knew the importance of enjoying what you do and doing what you love.”

“To say his passing marks the end of an era is an understatement,” John DeChristopher, who worked with DiMuzio at Zildjian, says. “If ever there were a Mount Rushmore for the drum industry, Lennie’s smiling face would surely be included.” **Rick Mattingly**



CELEBRATING A LEGEND



The world of Percussion lost a friend, a leader, a legend, when Lennie DiMuzio passed away. We'll miss hanging with Lennie – we'll miss his jokes, idiosyncrasies, props, stories and infectious laugh.

What a cat. What a life!

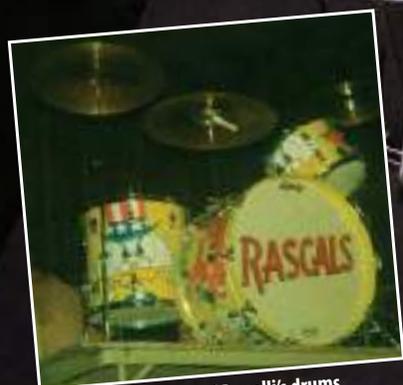
RIP LENNIE DIMUZIO
"JUMP BACK, BABY"



Sabian.com

Big Rascals

Beqir Brijic



Lumpp's 1968 photo of Danelli's drums



Signed by Dino himself

“After seeing the Beatles in August 1966,” Mick Lumpp of the Bronx, New York, says, “what’s a thirteen-year-old drum-obsessed boy to do next? I went out to my local W.T. Grant store and bought the Young Rascals’ *Collections* album. Who was this drummer, Dino Danelli? His drumming was on yre, sticks twirling everywhere, plus he looked like the coolest person on planet earth.

“Then, in June of 1968, the Rascals were coming to Cleveland, and o° we went. When the road crew started setting up Dino’s drums, I wondered what was painted on the shells, but from my seats I couldn’t tell. I snuck down to the stage and took a picture of the drums, and I vowed that one day I’d have a set just like it. Well, it took me forty-some years, but I did it!

“I bought a Yosemite Sam DayGlo poster on eBay and continued to search for a Scrooge McDuck poster for another two years. One day, a friend, Jessica Cangelosi, said, ‘I can draw Scrooge McDuck

for you—I majored in art!’ She also drew Yosemite Sam so they would match. I took the drawings to my friends at Color Group Imaging Labs in Hawthorne, New York. They blew them up to the appropriate sizes, put adhesive on the back and a UV protector on the front so the colors will never fade, and wrapped them around the shells, which I had stripped. They’re the exact size of Dino’s drums and were made in 1967. I also found white felt pads for the cymbals, to emulate Dino’s. I believe he tore apart mallets to get this look. I’m so happy I’ve ynnally completed this lifelong quest—and in 2015, the Rascals’ yftieth anniversary! It’s never too late to fuly!l a childhood fantasy.”

The epilogue: “Through a mutual friend,” Lumpp adds, “the man himself, Dino Danelli, saw my drums and signed every one of them for me. He said, ‘They look great!’ They’ve been blessed by my drumming inspiration!”

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



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