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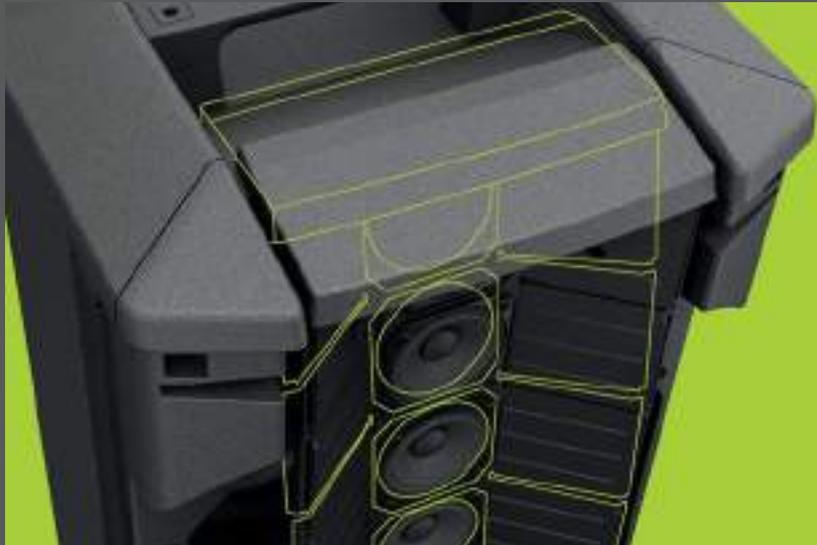
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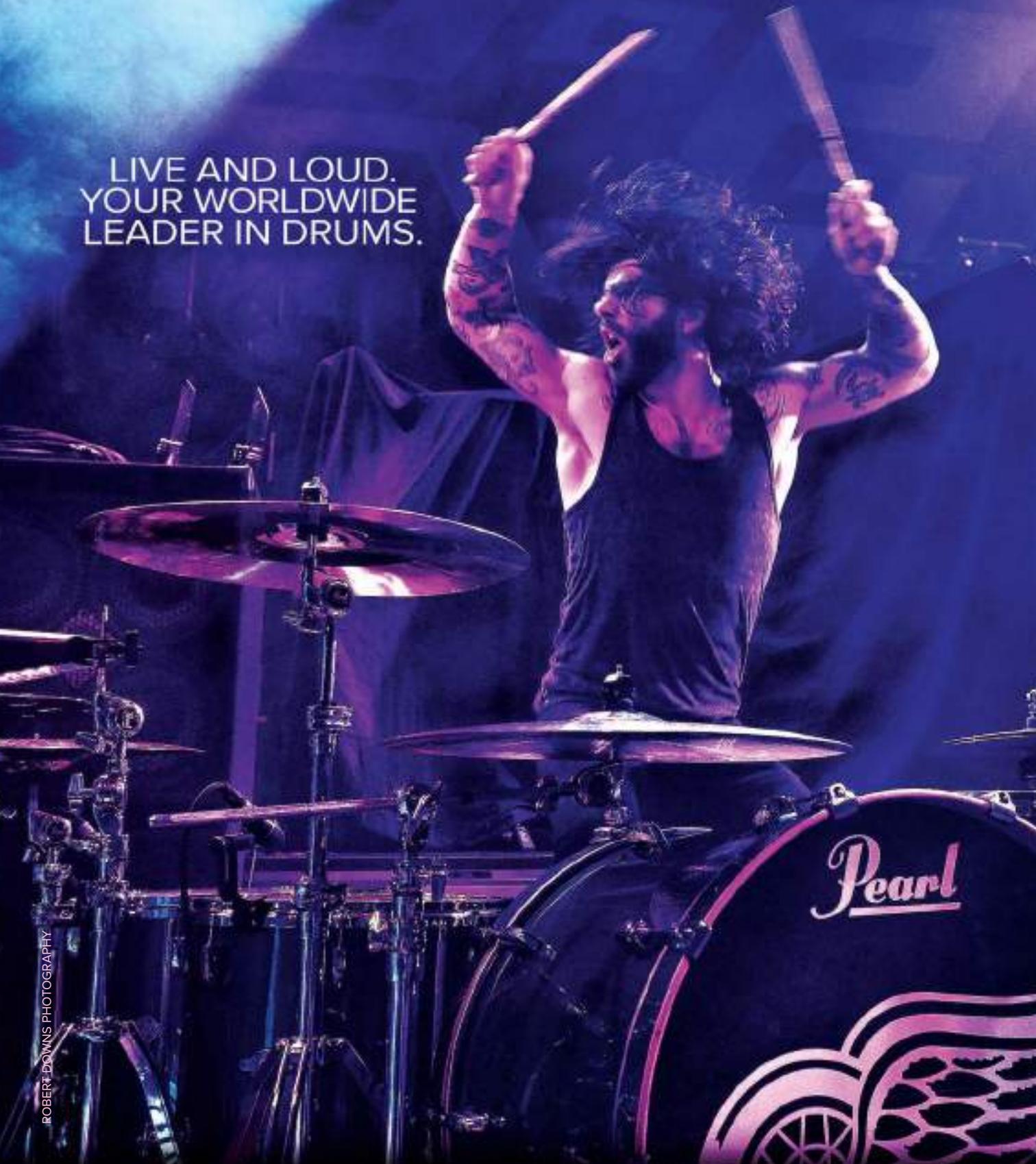
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*Pearl*

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**Dom Famularo**

by Michael Dawson

"If a student isn't getting a technique, it's never that student's fault. It's *my* fault. What am I not doing right to deliver that information in a way that students can understand?" *MD* talks with the most-traveled man in drumset education, and finds that his can-do approach to drumming greatness—for all—hasn't let up one bit.

Cover and contents photos by Deneka Peniston



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# Hey...Teach!

I admit it: When it comes to music education, I'm more than a little jealous of my kids. When I was growing up, my rock 'n' roll records were tolerated, but learning how to actually play the music I loved wasn't possible for me until after high school. In some ways I feel I've been playing catch-up ever since. But in my house today, rocking out isn't just tolerated, it's practically a religion. Though my wife and I try never to equate practicing with doing a chore, by always having the drums and guitars and keyboards set up and ready to play, we've made it possible for each of our kids to discover and stoke his or her own musical passion. Does our family room resemble a band rehearsal space more than a place to entertain friends? Yeah, it sort of does. Does guitar-practicing Jack get aggravated by piano-practicing Luca, who's being annoyed by drum-practicing Hayden? Sometimes—though, it must be said, the arguments are surprisingly infrequent.

Truth be told, the home-as-practice-space lifestyle choice was an easy one. Making the budgetary commitment to private lessons for multiple kids...for many families, ours included, that's when stuff begins to get real. Though there are few things more gratifying to a music-geek parent than watching your kids get obsessive about the same records that changed your life when you were their age, guiding them through their early years of music training is a whole *other* thing, something that for various reasons is best left to other trustworthy adults.

And on that count, my family has been extremely lucky. Drum instructor Karl Latham immediately understood how to get the most out of someone with Hayden's particular disposition, starting him on reading early, leaving him with exercises to practice between lessons that were fun yet challenging, and always encouraging his predilection toward improvising. Consequently, the kid's technique is coming along nicely, but he also happily explores whatever wild ideas he stumbles upon during his free-play times. And Karl is endlessly enthusiastic—practically bursting with excitement when he shows Hayden a live video of, say, Billy Cobham for the first time—but he doesn't succumb to that "buddy teacher" mentality either; Hayden always knows who's boss. Our other kids have had similar experiences with their teachers, and the music instructors in the public schools where they've been studying strings for several years have been uniformly outstanding.

Honestly, I've been in constant awe at how respectful yet effective almost every music teacher we've encountered has been. (*Whiplash?* Never heard of it.) In the least, they've enabled our kids to elicit sounds from their instruments that I, a mostly self-trained musician, would never be able to achieve. But well beyond that, they've helped them understand the depth of their potential creativity, they've helped them make connections between the amorphous world of art and the fact-filled world of traditional schooling, and they've given them many clues about how to become responsible contributors to society.

This month's cover artist, world-renowned drum instructor Dom Famularo, has been called by many "drumming's ambassador," a nickname that Dom proudly wears because he knows just how profound an influence music teachers can have, especially on kids. As you read his story, I encourage you to imagine yourself in such a role, if you aren't already in one; there are few jobs in life that carry so much potential for making a positive change in someone else's life—or in your own.



*Adam Budofsky*

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

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## READERS' PLATFORM

### Drummers You Can Count On

I could not believe my eyes when I read Michael Parillo's editorial about one-off gigs (September 2015). All I can say is amen, brother! I just had this exact conversation with a good friend of mine who is a bass player. We've played many one-off gigs together over the years and were recently lamenting how, more often than we'd like, we find ourselves in these types of gigs that kind of fall flat. We have recently started explicitly asking for adequate rehearsals with music made available ahead of time and other musicians showing up and being "present" while we're all working. It's not perfect, but it's helped. We also started turning the conversation around a bit: Folks need a rhythm section and they don't have a lot of time to put into whatever the project is. They call us because they can count on us. We now take it as a compliment!

**Joe Tymecki**

### Dropped Beats

In Steve Jordan's Catching Up With... in the September issue, the hi-hats from Greg Errico used by Jordan on the Verbs' Cover

### What's Your Favorite Snare for Recording?

*When we asked our Facebook followers to weigh in on this question, we received hundreds of responses, but no drum received as many accolades and "likes" as the Ludwig LM400 5x14 chrome-over-aluminum Supraphonic. We weren't surprised by this choice, given how many top drummers, including Charlie Watts, Keith Moon, Mitch Mitchell, Steve Gadd, and Joe Morello, have relied on the Supra over the years. Here's what a few people had to say about this trusty drum.*

"This snare was the perfect balance between crack, snare sensitivity, and tone. It's durable and easy to tune and is appropriate for all musical styles. Totally agree with its notoriety."

**Michael Campbell**

"I still play my '64 Supraphonic! My first and only snare for thirty-three years."

**Saxton White**

Story were listed as K Zildjians, while in fact they were A Zildjians. And in the August issue we ran a photo of Aerosmith's Joey

"Steve Gadd, Hal Blaine, Earl Palmer, and John Densmore, among others, had great success with a 5x14. Just an awesome drum!"

**Fred Klee**

"I bring three snares to the studio, and the producers and engineers always choose this snare. Mine is an early-'60s model."

**Sandy Greenbaum**

"I bought one fifty years ago by mowing yards. My dad said to buy the best. This was it, and it cost about \$85. I cherish mine."

**Fred Schilling**

"It's my opinion that this snare had one of the first reliable throw-offs, in terms of staying true and adjusted. Because of that, it became very popular, and its sound became familiar and therefore standard. Think about it: How many of your favorite songs were recorded using this drum?"

**Guy Maturo**

Kramer playing a Ludwig drumset (News, page 15), but Kramer recently switched to endorsing Pearl drums.

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### BASICS

Rich Redmond shares practical snare/bass drum patterns that you can put into practice right now.

### IN THE POCKET

Jim Riley offers half a dozen ways to give your grooves greater dimension with ghost notes.

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Watch demos of Zildjian's K Custom Dark 19" and 20" crashes, Hendrix's Archetype snare drum, and the Tru Tuner Rapid Drumhead Replacement System.

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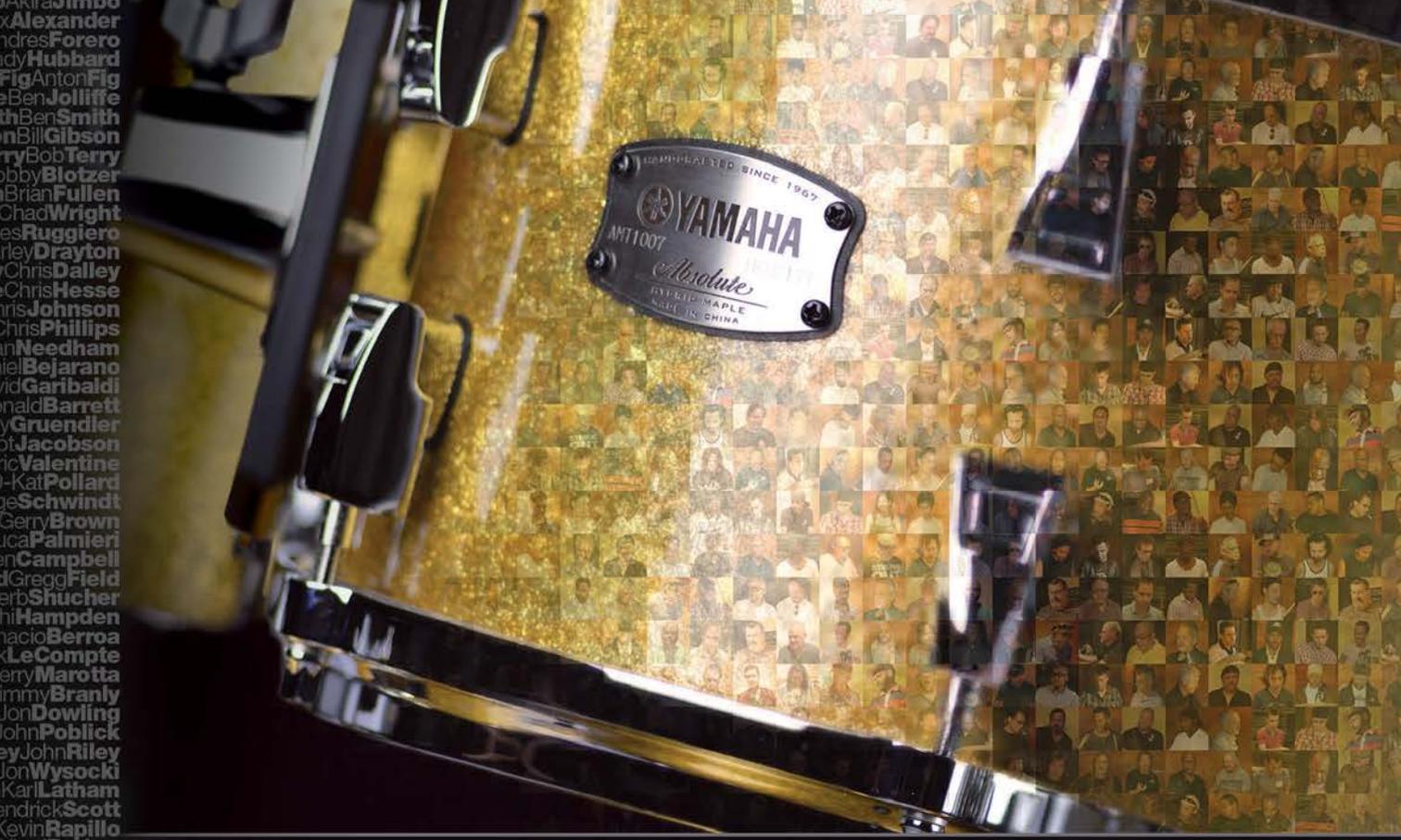
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# NEWS

## Out Now

### Golden Void *Berkana*

"When I write songs for Golden Void," says drummer/composer **Justin Pinkerton**, who's previously worked with the bands Rafter, Eyes, the Finches, and the Roots of Orchis, "I'm hearing the drums as I write the guitar part, so they're usually very much in sync. But that always changes once we get together and play the songs, especially since Isaiah [Mitchell, of Earthless] plays guitar so much better than and different from me. With *Berkana*, we didn't play any of the songs live before recording them, so there's still a lot of spontaneity in my playing on the record. And though we recorded the songs live, everyone else was in isolation, so it basically meant I had to play it perfect and everyone else could slack off—ha!"



Golden Void, from left: Justin Pinkerton (drums), Camilla Saufley-Mitchell (keyboards), Aaron Morgan (bass), and Isaiah Mitchell (guitar/vocals)

### The Wood Brothers *Paradise*

To meet the various needs of his band, drummer **Jano Rix** modified a guitar to incorporate a plethora of percussion options. "It looks like crap," Rix says, "but there's so many hours of research and design in that thing. I started out on the floor with soup-can lids, clothespins, gaff tape, and pickups. It's always evolving." Although the initial intention of the Shuitar was to make for ease of travel and playing small gigs, the Wood Brothers have adopted the instrument as a primary component in the studio and on stage.

The Americana trio's new album, *Paradise*, capitalizes on the raw, gritty vibe of Dan Auerbach's Easy Eye Sound facility, and you can hear the Shuitar featured on tracks like "Heartbreak Lullaby." "The Shuitar just became a part of the band," Rix says. "Now we have one section of the show that's just around one microphone, and it blends perfectly with the acoustic guitar and upright bass."

**Miguel Monroy**



The Wood Brothers, from left: Chris Wood (bass, vocals, harmonica), Jano Rix (drums, vocals, Shuitar, keyboards), and Oliver Wood (guitar, vocals)

### More New Releases

**Santana and McLaughlin** Invitation to Illumination: Live at Montreux 2011 (Cindy Blackman Santana, Dennis Chambers) /// **Pérez, Patitucci, Blade** Children of the Light (Brian Blade) /// **Puscifer** Money Shot (Tim Alexander, Jon Theodore, Jeff Friedl) /// **Jeff Lorber Fusion** Step It Up (Ash Soan, Gary Novak, Vinnie Colaiuta, Lenny Castro) /// **Symphonic Jazz Orchestra** Looking Forward, Looking Back (Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Chris Coleman, Peter Erskine, Wally Snow, Timm Boatman, Scott Higgins) /// **Mose Allison** American Legend: Live in California (Peter Magadini) /// **Stryper** Fallen (Robert Sweet) /// **Here We Go Magic** Be Small (Austin Vaughn, Peter Hale, Luke Temple) /// **Romain Collin** Press Enter (Kendrick Scott, Mino Cinelu) /// **Pete McCann** Range (Mark Ferber) /// **Jon Irabagon** Behind the Sky (Rudy Royston)



# On Tour

**Roger Taylor** is on a world tour with Duran Duran in support of the band's fourteenth studio album, *Paper Gods*. "The general vibe on the new album is electronic," Taylor tells *MD*. "I played a lot of it live on my Roland TD-40 kit with a few samples. On stage, I'm playing my Tama bubinga acoustic kit and my Roland e-kit, which is to the side of my main acoustic kit and which I've loaded samples from the album on. So I'm going back and forth.

"The electronic world never troubled me," says Taylor, whose gear selection is rounded out by Zildjian cymbals, Aquarian heads, and Promark sticks. "It makes it quite liberating. When I was a kid I'd go from seeing AC/DC one week to Kraftwerk the next. It's never concerned me straddling both those worlds."



Stephanie Pistel



**Mark Reznick** (second from right in band photo) is out with the Toadies. The group's recent acoustic-oriented album, *Heretics*, features deconstructed fan favorites along with a few new songs.

### Also on the Road

**Charlie Benante** with Anthrax /// **Paulie Pulvirenti** with Eyelids /// **Russ Lawton** with Trey Anastasio /// **Devin Clark** with Cane Hill, supporting **Matt Traynor** and Blessthefall's *To Those Left Behind* tour /// **Patrick Meese** with Nathaniel Rateliff and the Night Sweats /// **Brandon Mullins** with Beartooth /// **Ryan Wolfe** with Windhand /// **Paul Koehler** with Silverstein /// **Bruce Smith** with Public Image Ltd. /// **Kevin Boutot** with the Acacia Strain



Tommy Moore

## Industry Happenings

This past summer, the Sabian Education Network (SEN) was launched at the Collective in New York City. The event comprised a discussion panel featuring (back row, from left) Mark Guiliana, Jojo Mayer, Dom Famularo, Jim Mola, SEN director Joe Bergamini, Camille Gainer-Jones, Memo Acevedo, Anthony Citrinite, John Favicchia, and Rod Morgenstein, as well as (front row, center) Sabian CEO Andy Zildjian.

Each panelist brought a unique perspective to drum education, leading to a lively discussion among the attendees and other panelists. "It was an honor to be a panelist for this event," Mola says. "To see a room filled with dedicated educators focused on how best to help students and empower other teachers to reach their goals was inspiring."

SEN is open to all educators, from the private home-studio teacher with a handful of students to a music school or educational institution, and provides a welcoming and inclusive worldwide forum to exchange ideas and share skills. To join SEN, go to [sabian.com/joinsen](http://sabian.com/joinsen).



**Musicians Institute vice president of academic affairs and Modern Drummer Education Team member Donny Gruendler has joined the Percussive Arts Society's drumset committee**, one of seventeen PAS committees that address specific areas of percussion performance, research, education, pedagogy, and community. Gruendler's fellow new appointees include Jason Gianni, Keith Dudek, Jennifer Hoeft, Mark Powers, and David Stanoch; among their initiatives will be to create innovative drumset activities for the fortieth-annual Percussive Arts Society International Convention. This year's PASIC, the largest drum and percussion event in the world, is being held November 11 through 14 in San Antonio, Texas.



## Who's Playing What

**Shaun Foist** of Breaking Benjamin has joined the Pearl artist roster.



**Billy Rymer** (Dillinger Escape Plan), **Maya Tuttle** (the Colourist), Gunnar Olsen (Big Data), Tony Leone (Chris Robinson Brotherhood), Daiana Azar (independent), Katie Herron (Starbenders), Frank Ferrer (Guns n' Roses), and Neil Mason (the Cadillac Three) have joined the Vater artist roster.



Daniel Revell



Isaiah Johnson

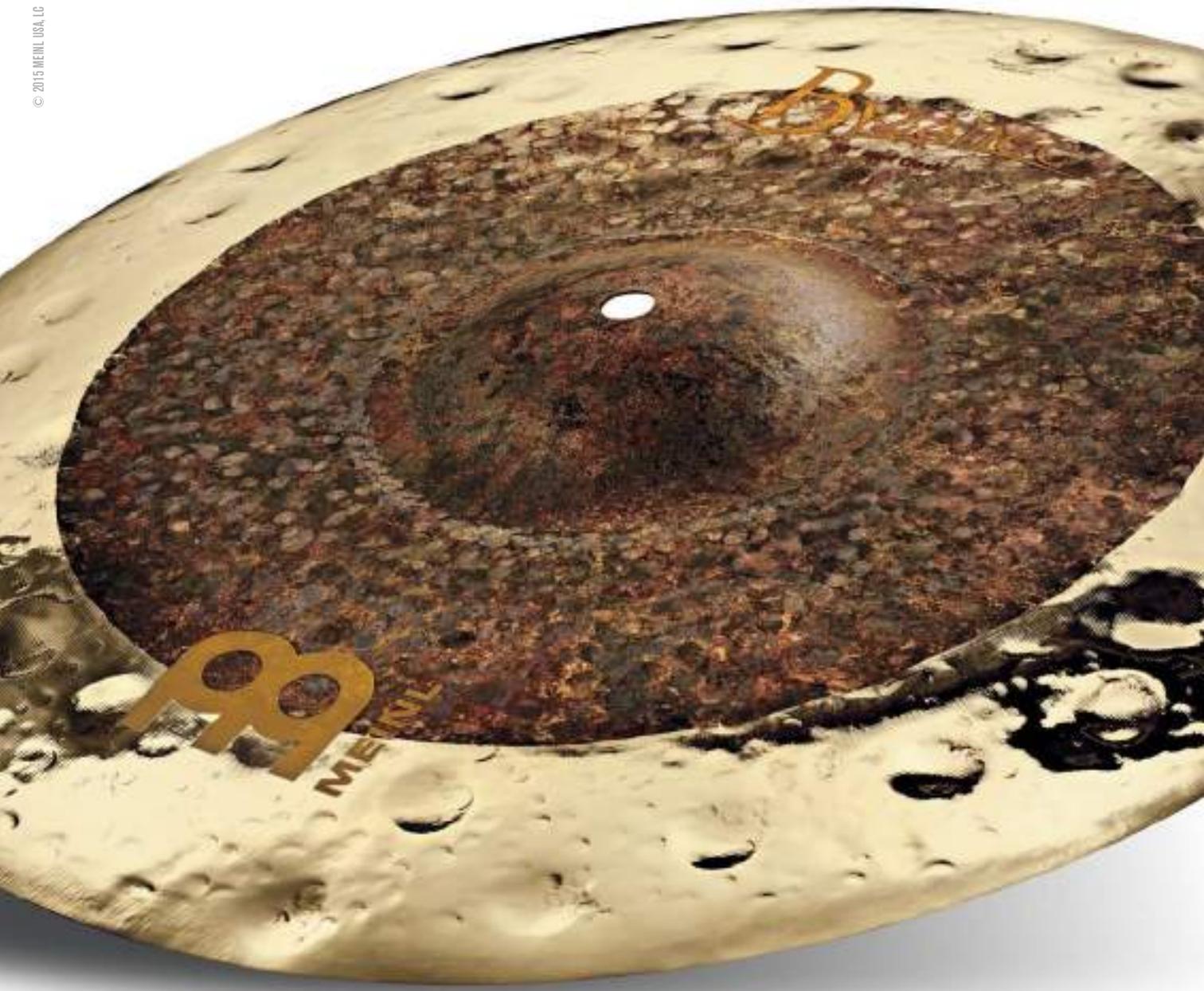


Calvin Rodgers

## Shed Sessions New York Event

Shed Sessions Worldwide, an organization based in the Netherlands and the United States that is dedicated to music talent development, held its first stateside event earlier this year, at the Hotel Courtyard at New York's LaGuardia Airport. Drum clinics featured **Wes Watkins** (Marcus Johnson), **Calvin Rodgers** (Fred Hammond), **Shariq Tucker** (2014 Guitar Center Drum-Off champion), **Shajuan Andrews** (Jason Derulo, Rita Ora), **Sedrick Marsh** (Angie Stone, Patti LaBelle), **Kevin Williams Jr.** (Fabolous), **Jamal Moore** (Backstreet Boys, Natasha Bedingfield), **Isaiah Johnson** (Li'l Kim), **Deronn Woodside** (J. Moss, Andre Byrd), **Dominique Austin** (Kurt Carr, Shirley Caesar), **Darius Woodley II** (50 Cent), **Darion Ja'Von** (Flo Rida), and **Daniel Revell** (David Metayer), among others.





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### Educational Product

Mike Johnston, *Groove Freedom* (app)  
 Benny Greb, *The Art & Science of Groove* (DVD)  
 Dave King, *Rational Funk* (Web video series)  
 George Kollias, *The Odyssey of Double Bass Drumming: The Beginning* (book)  
 Jojo Mayer, *Secret Weapons for the Modern Drummer, Part II* (DVD)

### Recorded Performance, Audio

Keith Carlock, *Toto XIV* (Toto)  
 Questlove, James Gadson, and Chris Dave, *Black Messiah* (D'Angelo and the Vanguard)  
 Blake Richardson, *Coma Ecliptic* (Between the Buried and Me)  
 Antonio Sanchez, *The Meridian Suite* (Antonio Sanchez and Migration)  
 John Tempesta, *Ride* (Motor Sister)

### Recorded Performance, Video

Tommy Aldridge, Mike Bordin, Randy Castillo, Deen Castronovo, Tommy Clufetos, and Lee Kerslake, *Memoirs of a Madman* (Ozzy Osbourne)  
 Tomas Haake, *The Ophidian Trek* (Meshuggah)  
 Mike Mangini, *Breaking the Fourth Wall* (Dream Theater)  
 Robert "Sput" Searight, *Sylva* (Snarky Puppy)  
 John Wackerman and various others, *Drum Duets, Vol. 2*

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# Harold Jones

**His boss, the sprightly octogenarian singer Tony Bennett, is often described as an ageless talent. The same can be said of the drummer, who's still burning it up after more than half a century near the top of the jazz heap.**



**H**arold Jones might be known as a legendary jazz drummer who's worked with icons like Count Basie, Sarah Vaughan, and Oscar Peterson, but this is one seventy-five-year-old who lives and plays in the now. Lately Jones has been touring with the iconic Tony Bennett and pop sensation Lady Gaga, including the delightful duo's string of sold-out shows at New York's Radio City Music Hall. Jones' energy is impressive; when asked about his next break from working, his reply is, "Break? My schedule with Tony is full. We've got forty new dates [booked], including three weeks in Europe that will take us clear into 2016. My golf game's gonna suffer, but I'll make do!"

In reality, we shouldn't be surprised by Jones' easy attitude toward a

seemingly endless workload. The Richmond, Indiana, native's first major gig was with famed guitarist Wes Montgomery in 1956, and he's never stopped performing since. A 1961 move to Chicago proved pivotal when Jones hooked up with Eddie Harris and played on the saxophonist's *Exodus to Jazz*, the first jazz LP to sell a million units. Jones' own life-changing experience came in 1967, when his predecessor in Count Basie's band, Rufus "Speedy" Jones, accepted an extended tour of the Soviet Union with Duke Ellington. "I came up with a trombonist, Harlan Floyd, who was playing in the Basie band at the time," Jones recalls, "and he recommended me because I could read. Those years with Basie remain some of the greatest in my life."

Since then, Jones has backed a bevy of giants, including Paul Winter, Ella Fitzgerald, Nancy Wilson, B.B. King, Natalie Cole, and, of course, Bennett, with whom the drummer has been a permanent fixture since 2004. And, remarkably, Jones seems to have lost none of his fire. On 2014's Grammy-winning Bennett/Gaga release, *Cheek to Cheek*, he's swingin' like crazy—kicking the rhythms, punching the horn lines against the melodies, and showing flawless support on sticks and brushes.

"The reason I can still do this at my age," Harold says, "is because Tony treats all his musicians with respect and dignity. When you join him, you're part of his extended family. Everything from travel to hotels, and naturally the venues, is all top notch."

In 2013, Jones penned his memoirs with the help of friends Gil Jacobs and Joe Agro. *Harold Jones: The Singer's Drummer* is chock full of celebrity remembrances, humorous anecdotes, and quotable quotes, not to mention a serious amount of jazz history. With his long résumé and the rare ability to discuss how music at the highest levels of popularity has changed, the drummer is in the perfect position to offer sage advice to players a quarter his age: "Be prepared" is his first suggestion. "I learned to read music before owning my first drumset. And listen to the singers—don't step on their words or the music. Finally, treat those around you as you would like to be treated."

For more with Harold Jones, go to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

**Bob Girouard**

# Frankie Banali

**Quiet Riot's drummer is a poster boy for pushing through adversity. A new documentary tells the tale, warts and all.**

**W**hen *Well Now You're Here, There's No Way Back*, a documentary chronicling the rise, fall, and attempted comeback of '80s headbangers Quiet Riot, debuted on Showtime earlier this year, there wasn't much buzz. Then, slowly, word of mouth started circulating about the film, which chronicles drummer Frankie Banali's humbling quest to keep the band going following the death of frontman Kevin DuBrow. Now the film can be streamed at [QuietRiotMovie.com](http://QuietRiotMovie.com), releases are pending on DVD and iTunes, and there's renewed interest in the band at the box office.

"It has reinforced the longtime fans—they feel validated," says Banali, who also manages Quiet Riot's business affairs, including grunt work like booking flights. "It's also introduced the band to a



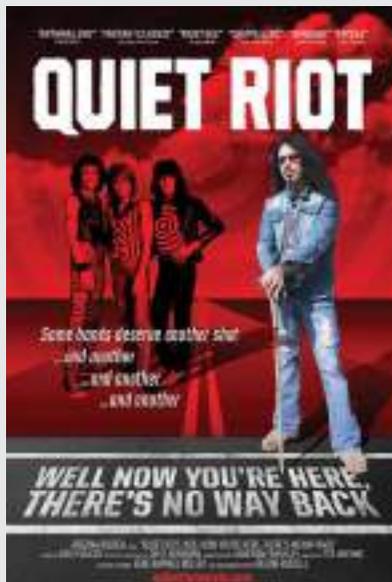
Banali during Quiet Riot's '80s heyday

# John Convertino

**Two and a half decades in, the Tex-Mex-imbued alt-rock vets of Calexico continue to find magical new ways to mix and match sounds.**

lot of people that either didn't care or weren't aware of it. I think you'll see a lot of bands from our era making documentaries now, because it's a good way to promote. Radio won't play any new music from us. And there's no MTV as we once knew it to get the band in the public eye."

Directed and produced by Banali's fiancé, Regina Russell, *Well Now You're Here* has its share of Spinal Tap qualities and cringe-worthy moments, like Banali firing a singer—a middle-age house painter—because he can't remember the words to "Cum On Feel the Noize." But beyond the requisite rock-doc drama, there's substance. Banali's determination to keep Quiet Riot going in the face of some grim circumstances is compelling. And the film's performance sequences show that Frankie remains a big-grooving beast on the drums.



"My passion in continuing Quiet Riot has everything to do with the fact that drumming is what I've always wanted to do," Banali says. "I worked very hard and struggled a lot to get to the point that we did with Quiet Riot. To end up throwing it away was not part of my DNA. That's the thing I wanted most in my life, so I chose to continue.

"I may be doing the business of the band for twenty-two hours a day," Banali adds, "but those two hours on stage, I turn into that kid that still loves to play the drums. It's the most joyous thing in my life, other than my family."

**Patrick Berkery**

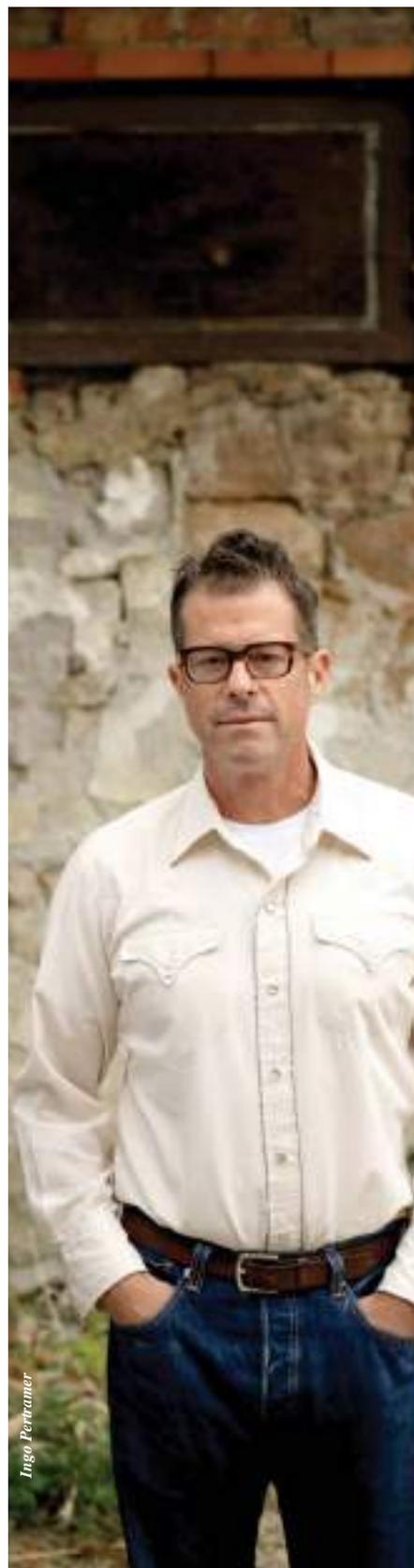
"Songwriting is more challenging now," Calexico drummer John Convertino says. "We've done it so much; it's more difficult to find something new." To Convertino and company's credit, though, any such concerns don't come through when listening to Calexico's ninth album, *Edge of the Sun*. For the past twenty years, the band's creative core has comprised Convertino and vocalist/multi-instrumentalist Joey Burns. Convertino says the key to the group's step forward on *Edge of the Sun* was collaboration on a larger scale than ever before. The album features contributions from guests such as Ben Bridwell (Band of Horses), Nick Urata (DeVotchKa), and Neko Case. Calexico welcomed additional creative input from members of its live band as well.

Keyboardist Sergio Mendoza, who is also credited as a songwriter and coproducer on *Edge of the Sun*, suggested the band retreat to the Mexico City borough of Coyoacán. "We have a very close affinity to Mexico and its music," Convertino says. "There are some amazing artists and really great energy down there, so it was an inspiration for us to be able to live there for ten days and just work on music day in and day out."

The sessions proved fruitful, leaving the band with the difficult task of paring down more than twenty songs to twelve for the album. "My greatest production strength is knowing when to take things away," Convertino says, "whereas Joey's great strength is that he has so many ideas." Longtime fans need not fret, though, as a deluxe, double-LP version of *Edge of the Sun* features six additional tracks. No doubt those Calexico die-hards will continue to want everything the group releases—and it's easy to imagine next-generation followers being just as voracious. "Fans who were in their thirties or forties when we started out are still coming to the shows," Convertino says, "but now they're in their fifties and sixties and bringing their kids."

Convertino adds that he's especially glad that Calexico's music, which has a heavy Latin influence, is resonating with Latino communities. "If you would have told me when I was rocking out with [the pre-Calexico outfit] Giant Sand twenty-five years ago that people would be salsa dancing to my drumming, I never would have believed it. I look out into the crowd and get goose bumps."

**Joe Wong**



Ingo Petrammer



## Mind Matters

# How Do I Conduct an Audition?

by Bernie Schallehn

**M**y bass player and I want to form a cover trio. We're looking for a lead singer who can also handle guitar duties. We've both been on a number of auditions—some tightly structured, others disorganized messes—but we've never run one. Can you offer some tips from a psychological perspective for conducting an audition?

**N.P.**

First, establish who's the bandleader. That person will be responsible for all communication involved in the auditioning process. Should you and your bassist decide to co-lead this project, make sure you clearly define roles and duties. For example, who will be responsible for band promotion? Who will be the musical director at rehearsals? Who will make arrangements for cutting a demo? Who will approach venues and book the band?

Next, decide on an audition site. Some musicians are cool with conducting tryouts in their house, garage, or basement. If you're uncomfortable or fearful about having strangers in your house, you'll need to run auditions elsewhere. Otherwise your mind will be focused on anxious thoughts and fears rather than the task of evaluating the singer/guitarist's performance. Consider renting an hourly rehearsal room and holding the auditions there.

Choose ten songs from your proposed set list. (Make sure you and your bassist have these songs down cold!) Mix easy, well-known tunes with more difficult, lesser-known cuts. In a friendly manner and tone, instruct the prospective band members that they will need to have a minimum of seven songs—of their choice—prepped from the ten on your list. Also ask when they would be ready to come in (two days from now, a week, ten

days?). Offer the option that they can prep all ten songs, but seven is the minimum.

If the auditioner comes in with the songs prepped clean and tight, that's an indication of motivation and a solid work ethic. Conversely, if the auditioner comes in with only four or five songs ready, and those are incomplete or sloppy, you need to remind the person that the required number of songs was seven. Listen to his or her explanation as to why the tunes weren't ready, but trust your gut. If the excuse sounds lame, then that candidate may be a slacker, can't (or won't) follow directions, or is simply an inadequate or inexperienced musician. Move on.

Give each audition an hour. Engage in a little small talk when the auditioner arrives, but keep it short and get down to the business at hand. Leave a half hour between tryouts, which will allow you to chat with your bassist regarding the



audition and make notes about the person.

Make the audition site as comfortable, relaxed, and inviting as possible, even if it's your damp basement with a washing machine chugging away. You've been on auditions, so you know how nerve-racking they can be. By building in structure, you help lower the anxiety level. You established this structure when you gave potential singer/guitarists a list of ten songs and told them to prep seven of them.

I've noticed that some bands call auditions "jams" in an attempt to lower anxiety levels, but this looseness, especially for the auditioner, often results in the converse effect of spiking anxiety levels. The auditioner feels more in control if he or she knows what to expect. Have the PA set up, turned on, and ready to go. Remind people that auditions are always two-way; the candidates are also auditioning you and your bassist. Offer bottled water or a soda. Smile and be welcoming, but maintain a businesslike demeanor regarding time. Your job is to evaluate musicians and see if the fit is right.

Sadly, many players become a bundle of nerves when it comes to auditioning. I've shaken sweaty hands and seen competent musicians tremble when put in such a situation. Often the gig will go to the person who may not be a standout player/singer but can control performance nerves and deliver the goods on a consistent basis.

Be wary of musicians who saunter in for the audition late and offer no reason for their tardiness. Don't extend their audition time. End it at the hour mark. Stay within the boundaries and structure you've set. Stick to your schedule.

Be careful of anyone who arrives visibly intoxicated, even if each song is nailed beautifully note for note. This person has shown you how he or she handled the pressure of the audition situation, but you don't know if dependence on drugs or alcohol is a full-blown addiction. Do you really want to chance it?

Also watch out for the auditioner who talks a lot but performs very little. Remind this individual, politely, that the clock is ticking and you and the bassist have

the expectation to get through at least seven songs.

When the auditions are complete, confer with your bassist. The notes you take during the half-hour interludes should come in helpful. Make your choice and offer that singer/guitarist the gig. But don't be surprised if that person turns you down. Remember: Auditions are two-way. Move on to your second choice.

Lastly, be professional and kind. Send short emails to all auditioners thanking them for their time but stating that you've chosen another person. And be kind to those who, after playing the first few notes of the song, realize that their skill level is way below yours. Who knows...someday it may be you in that situation.

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

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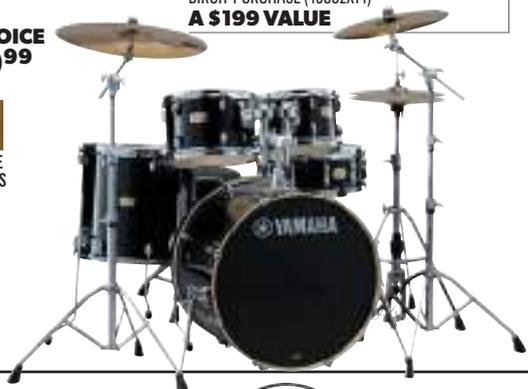
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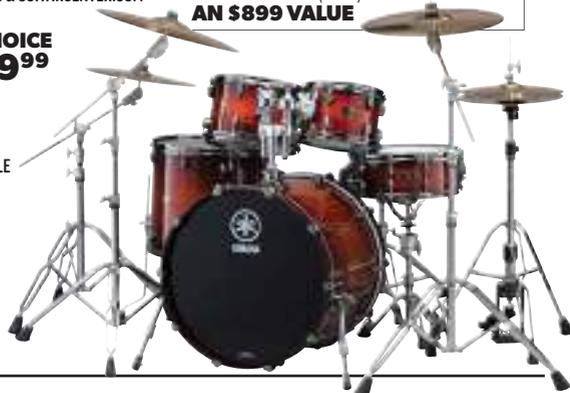
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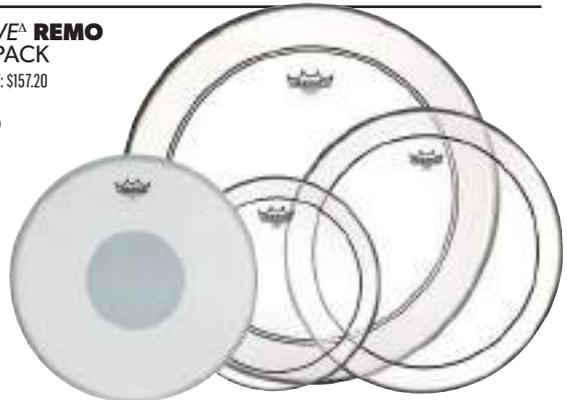
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# Zildjian

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**PRODUCT CLOSE-UP**

Sonor

## Vintage Series Drumset

Commemorating 140 years of business with a forward-thinking kit that sports a classic-leaning tone.



**G**ather enough drummers together, and inevitably the conversation will turn toward the eternal question of whether vintage drums sound better than new ones. The pro-vintage crowd argues that twenty-plus-year-old wood has had time to settle into a reliable, consistent tone. The pro-modern group will counter that their drums are the beneficiaries of a full century of better design and technology, from absolutely accurate bearing edges to modern hardware that can stand up to the punishment it endures gig after gig.

The arguments will shift back and forth until a voice finally says, "I wish someone would come up with drums that have that vintage sound along with the modern advances in design." Well, that day may have arrived with Sonor's Vintage series drumset.

The attention to detail on this kit is impressive. Sonor's distinctive "teardrop" lugs of the '50s and early '60s are back. The Superprofil 2.3 mm triple-flange steel hoops are an exact copy of those Sonor made before the '70s. Vintage series shells are made of handpicked 9-ply beech and are 6 mm thick with rounded bearing edges. The bass drums are 14" deep and range from 18" to 24". Mounted toms are 8" deep and are available in 10", 12", and 13" sizes. Floor toms are 12x14, 14x16, and 16x18. There are two snares in the series, 5.75x14 and 6.5x14.

The drums are available in several shell packs. The Three20 pack has 12" and 14" toms and a 20" bass drum. The Three22 has 13" and 16" toms and a 22" bass. There's also a five-piece configuration that includes 12", 14", and 16" toms, a 22" bass drum, and the 5.75"-deep snare. Three finishes are offered: onyx, natural, and pearl. The wrap is seamlessly adhered to the shell, so that it acts as an additional ply. Standard tuning rods come with the sets, but for vintage purists Sonor also offers its old-style slotted tension lugs (sold separately).

So how does all this merging of old design and new technology translate into sound? We asked legendary drummer and longtime Sonor endorser Steve Smith, who took delivery of a gorgeous Vintage series kit in pearl wrap at the Chicago Drum Show this past May, to offer his take. "They have the tone and depth and the big, warm sound that I hear when I play real vintage drums," Smith says. "They *are* vintage drums."

From our firsthand experience with Smith's Vintage kit, which the drummer allowed us to borrow for a short time, we wholeheartedly agree. The response off the heads was smooth and bouncy, making the set very easy to play. The 14x22 bass drum sounded as if it had two or four inches of extra depth hidden in it somewhere. Its impact and presence were downright dramatic. And as great as the kit sounded and felt from behind, stand fifteen feet away while someone else plays it, and you can really hear the warmth of the beech.

At the same time, the kit exuded plenty of power. Smith chooses to use the 5.75x14 Vintage series snare as an auxiliary to his 5.5x14 cast-steel signature drum, and the two complement each other superbly. "The Vintage snare has a lot of depth to it," Steve says.

Vintage series toms ship with Remo single-ply Coated Ambassador batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms. This is an excellent choice right out of the box. Pricing for Vintage drums is at the professional level, but within the range of what's currently on the market. Depending on the number of drums chosen and whether or not you want the matching snare, you can get a kit for \$2,800 to \$3,700.

**Chris Edwards**





Zildjian

## K Custom Dark 19" and 20" Crashes

Larger sizes and bigger bells for increased volume and sustain.

Zildjian's product catalog already covers a wide swath of tones, from the bright, all-purpose sound of the A series to the deeper, warmer vibe of the K line to the vintage-like complexity of Constantinople and Keropé models. The K Custom series is an offshoot of the basic K and is where the company places its more contemporary and modern designs, like the popular half-lathed Hybrids and unique rides like the Special Dry, High Definition, and Organic.

The K Custom series also includes a full range of more all-purpose cymbals, from 10" splashes to 22" rides. In response to requests from artists and dealers alike, the company recently expanded the K Custom crash collection to include larger 19" and 20" models that offer the same warm, rich, and expressive qualities as the smaller cymbals but with added volume and sustain. These crashes also feature larger bells to help boost their cutting power.

The 19" and 20" crashes are medium-thin (they give a little when you bend them with your hands) and fully lathed, and they feature a lot of extra hammer marks on top. They were highly expressive

at all dynamics, and they opened up quickly, with a full, balanced voice, whether struck lightly with a glancing blow from a thin stick or punched aggressively with a heavy 2B.

Their sustain was long and musical, and their decay was smooth and even. Accented crashes had just enough high-end sibilance to cut through without being piercing. The pitch differential between the two cymbals was about a third, which gave them plenty of contrast while remaining sonically cohesive. Crash-riding them created a warm wash that supported the band without being overbearing, and you could get some convincing ride and bell tones from them for alternate textures in lighter sections of tunes. They recorded great and packed plenty of power for live situations. No doubt you're going to be seeing these big but versatile crashes on a lot of stages and hearing them on plenty of recordings in the very near future.

Check out a video demo of the K Custom 19" and 20" crashes at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

**Michael Dawson**

# Hendrix

## Archetype Series Snare Drum

A versatile, super-thin stave-shell option made from one of the world's premier tonewoods.

**T**he Archetype series from Hendrix Drums is a high-end line of ultra-thin stave-shell snares. The company claims that the drums, with their exotic woods and world-class hardware, are some of the most versatile on the market. The series includes various wood options, including American black walnut, African sapele, and American black cherry. Our review sample is a 6x14 African padauk (\$1,059 street price). We had an incredible time pushing this drum to its limits to hear everything it could do.

### World-Class Features

All Archetype snares come standard with a 6x14 shell. The combination of the 6" depth and the .25" shell thickness helps to provide responsiveness, sensitivity, and resonance throughout the entire tuning range. All of these drums are available in a polyester mirror-gloss or satin finish and include S-Hoops on top and bottom. The S-Hoop is a rolled-steel rim that provides a great balance between the resonance of standard

triple-flange hoops and the solid crack of die-cast, without choking the tone.

Archetype series snares come equipped with other high-end features, such as proprietary solid-aluminum, distance-adjustable chrome lugs, a Dunnett R7 three-position throw-off, twenty-four-strand Fat Cat dual-adjustable wires, TightScrew tension rods, sleeved washers, and vintage-style 30-degree roundover bearing edges.

### World-Class Sound

Padauk has been a wood of choice for high-end marimbas for years because of its crystal-clear tone, and it's favored by African drum makers for its natural resonance. After extensive testing, we discovered that this wood also creates drums with an incredible tuning range. We were able to get eleven unique tunings from this snare with ease, six of which are included in our video demonstration. Regardless of how high or low it was tuned,

the drum maintained sensitivity and tone without fail. Even when the head was nearly wrinkled from detuning, we could still get a funky Motown vibe, like what you hear on Steve Wonder's "Superstition."

The Hendrix Archetype snare came with a Remo Coated CS batter head with a white dot, which helped to provide just enough focus to the fundamental tone without sacrificing too much resonance. Our review drum favored mid to low frequencies because of its depth and shell type. The tighter side of the tuning range still produced quite a bit of depth and body, which we really enjoyed, although some may prefer a shallower drum for a really high-pitched crack. Yet there's no doubt about whether this Hendrix padauk drum can handle a wide variety of musical demands—its sound, at any tuning, was just as world-class as its features.

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

**Miguel Monroy**



# Innovative Percussion Artist Signature Sticks

Top drummer designs with wide-ranging appeal.

Highly regarded for manufacturing some of the finest keyboard and timpani mallets for concert and marching players, Innovative Percussion also offers a range of drumset sticks for jazz, big band, studio, rock, Latin, and other contemporary styles.

The sticks in IP's catalog also include nearly a dozen models designed for some of the finest drummers in the world: Beck's Joey Waronker, Latin-pop icon Sheila E, modern jazz torchbearer Marcus Gilmore, renowned educators Ed Soph and Bob Breithaupt, prog/fusion great Chad Wackerman, Nashville session aces Nir Z and Chris McHugh, and hard rocker Jimmy DeGrasso. Each of the various models has a particular design, feel, and sound, but all of the pairs were consistently straight, pitch matched, and balanced. Below is our assessment, from the thinnest to the thickest.

## JW-2 (Joey Waronker)

This thin, tiny hickory stick is a throwback to old jazz models from the '50s, when drummers had to do whatever they could to control volume so as not to obliterate the acoustic bass and piano. It measures .500"x15.625" and has a long .75" teardrop tip. The taper is quick, to give the stick a bit of forward throw that helps keep it from feeling like a toothpick. This model got sparkling cymbal sounds with little buildup and an articulate response from drums, especially those that were tuned high. This is a stick tailor made for acoustic jazz, theater, light session work, and other music that thrives in the lower dynamics.

## SE-1 (Sheila E)

This hickory stick is designed for drumset and timbale applications. It's the second thinnest of the bunch (.530"), but it's longer than

average (16.25"), to allow for additional reach to play percussion instruments, like timbales and cowbells, placed to the sides of the kit. It has a small modified acorn tip and a medium taper, which provided clean, fast articulation and fast rebound.

## JW-1 (Joey Waronker)

Waronker's second signature model is more all-purpose, measuring .540"x16.125" and featuring a traditional oval tip, skinny neck, and quick taper. It felt like a standard 7A with additional reach and power. Articulation was clean but elicited a wider tone than the JW-2, making the stick useful for light to moderately loud situations.

## ES-1 and ES-2 (Ed Soph)

Famed jazz educator Ed Soph has two signature sticks, one in hickory and one in maple. Both measure .545"x16.125" and have large acorn tips with a medium taper. The maple version was very nimble and light, while the hickory packed more power. Cymbal sounds and buzz rolls were clean and full, and it was easy—to go from whisper-quiet to a full roar without having to clamp down or use too much muscle.

## MG-1 (Marcus Gilmore)

Sporting an unconventional reverse teardrop tip, a long taper, and a skinny neck, Marcus Gilmore's stick measures .550"x16.125". It had a quick response, while also producing great cymbal sounds that were articulate and full ranging. It felt great and could be used for delicate, fast playing as well as for louder, washier textures. Think of it like a faster and more dynamic 5A.



### **BB-1 and BB-2 (Bob Breithaupt)**

Like Soph, Capital University professor Bob Breithaupt has identical sticks in hickory and maple. His pair of pairs measure .570"x16.125" and have a rounded teardrop tip with a medium taper. These are thicker than a standard 5A but not as thick as a 5B. The medium taper gives them extra rebound and helps make them feel lighter and faster. The maple would be great for lower-volume applications, like small-group jazz, while the hickory would be ideal for kicking a big band or steering a larger funk/pop ensemble.

### **JD-1 (Jimmy DeGrasso)**

Hard-rock journeyman Jimmy DeGrasso's stick is the same width as a 5B (.595"), with an extra .5" of reach (16.5"). It has a large acorn tip and wide neck, which helped bring out big drum and cymbal sounds, along with a moderate taper, giving it more rebound and a faster response. It's an all-around winner for rock drummers who require a long, large stick for volume and power but who want something that doesn't feel too cumbersome.

### **NZ-1 (Nir Z)**

The most unusual-looking model in IP's signature series is the one designed for session great Nir Z. This stick is a little thicker and longer than a 5B (.605"x16.1875") and has a sharp jewel-type tip with a smooth, integrated collar and a long taper. The tip produced ultra-clear drum and cymbal sounds, the neck gave the stick a fast response, and the thick shoulder packed a lot of power. The tip was also great for achieving varying degrees of articulation, depending on the angle at which it met the drum or cymbal. Nir is one of the most precise and dynamic drummers on the planet, and his stick is a perfect match for that type of playing.

### **CW-1 (Chad Wackerman)**

Thicker than a 5B but thinner than a 2B, Chad Wackerman's signature stick is made from heartwood hickory, which gives it a reddish color. It measures .605"x16" and has a small, elongated barrel tip and a quick taper, giving it exceptional clarity and power. We were able to articulate fast double strokes between the ride and hi-hat, and we laid into cymbals and rimshots with the shoulder to get as much power as was needed for any dynamic level. Even though it's the second largest stick of the series, it had the same agility as some of the smaller models.

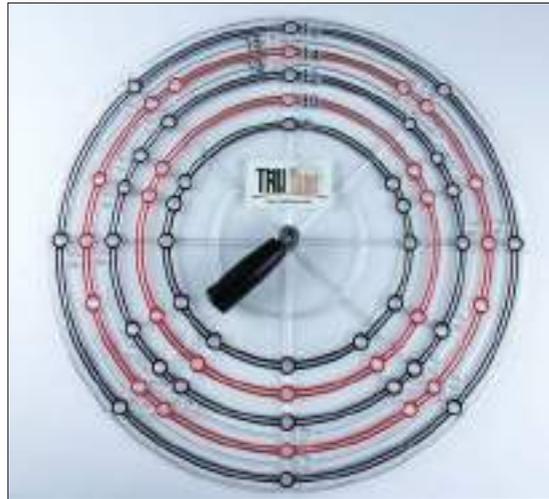
### **Chris McHugh (CM-1)**

Just .005" thinner and .125" shorter than a 2B, Nashville powerhouse Chris McHugh's signature stick measures .625"x16.125" and has a large bullet-shaped tip, a quick taper, and a thick neck. All of its design elements add up to producing a big, authoritative tone that sounds as if every wood fiber and bronze molecule in the kit is vibrating harmoniously with every stroke. Chris is known for laying down massive, no-nonsense beats and fills, and his cymbals are always lush and expansive. Ninety percent of that lies in his masterful touch, but the other 10 percent is in his choice of tools. Want a big sound? Get some big sticks.

**Michael Dawson**

## Tru Tuner Rapid Drumhead Replacement System

A Spirograph-type approach to cranking all the keys at once.



Regardless of where you stand on whether we actually tune or simply tension drums, an indisputable fact is that we have to remove and replace tension rods one at a time, or two if you use two drum keys, when changing a drumhead. And sometimes heads break at the worst time, like in the middle of a gig or recording session. So how can a change be made as quickly and efficiently as possible? The Tru Tuner Rapid Drumhead Replacement System (\$74.99) offers one solution, with a claim that it can help you change a head in just about a minute.

The Tru Tuner is made of a clear, reinforced polycarbonate disc that's incredibly strong and comes with a lifetime warranty. Included are ten chrome-plated keys designed specifically for the Tru Tuner, plus a zippered mesh bag for storing the keys. The handle folds flat, which allows you to easily store the Tru Tuner in a cymbal bag. The tuner is able to function on 8" to 16" drums with most standard lug patterns. The disc includes numbered start holes and lined rings to follow for each size.

Operating the Tru Tuner is as simple as placing a tuning key on each tension rod so that they all face the same direction, then lining up the keys with the corresponding outline for your size drum on the disc, attaching the disc, and turning the handle to loosen or tighten the rods.

After several initial tests with the Tru Tuner on various drum sizes, we averaged head changes in seventy-five to ninety seconds. This time included everything from initially placing the keys on the tension rods to removing the head and replacing it with a new one. Like any new gadget, the Tru Tuner took a little getting used to at first. We had to figure out how much pressure to apply so that the disc wouldn't slide off the keys, and we had to make sure we held the rim securely to the Tru Tuner to ensure that the tension rods remained in line with the lugs when putting the tuner back on. After a little practice, though, we were able to cut down the change time to closer to the one-minute mark.

A couple of additional benefits of the Tru Tuner are its ability to tighten all the tension rods evenly across the drum at the same time, and the fact that it left a tuning key on each tension rod when the disc was removed. This allowed for quick fine-tuning afterward, when necessary. Check out a real-time video demo of the Tru Tuner at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

**Miguel Monroy**



# Handheld Tambourines

## A Roundup of Options From Four of the Industry's Top Jingle Makers

by Michael Dawson

Whether you're an aspiring session musician, a home studio owner, or the drummer in an original band that's about to record its first album, it's very likely that you're going to be asked to layer some percussion over your drum tracks at some point in the process. While it may seem easy enough, it takes a significant amount of practice to get control of even the most basic techniques for frequently overdubbed percussion instruments like shakers, congas, and tambourines. And those instruments come in dozens of varieties, with each offering a unique timbre that can perfectly complement the track—or obliterate it.

There's no single holy-grail shaker or tambourine that will fit every song, so you might want to start building your percussion collection now, before the hard drives are rolling and you're under the gun to get your tracks done. This month we've gathered a sampling of tambourines from four different manufacturers to help you get an idea of what's out there. But don't stop here. After you've read about these models and checked out the demo videos that we've posted to [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com), head over to your local music shop and try out whatever options they have in stock. Start with something classic sounding, but don't be afraid to also pick up things that are funky, cheap, or unusual. You never know what might provide the perfect sound for the song, and you can never have enough choices.

### Cannon Percussion

If you're looking to stock up on low-price, nice-sounding tambourines, you can't go wrong with these. For the classic church-style tambourine, Cannon offers 8" and 10" models with a natural non-tunable head and one or two rows of steel jingles. The 8" versions have twelve pairs of jingles, and the 10" have sixteen. These are great for adding a strong "pop" to backbeats by slapping the head, and their shake sound is clean and easy to control. Prices range from \$12.95 for the 8" single-row model to \$23.50 for the 10" double. If you're looking to get only one, start with either

the 8" double-row or the 10" single-row version; those have the most classic sounds. But since they're so affordable, consider picking up one of each to give you a bunch of options for a very small investment.

Cannon also offers its take on the crescent-shaped plastic tambourine, called the Moonbournine (\$17.50). It's lightweight and fairly sturdy, and it has a padded grip and two rows of six pairs of steel jingles. It offers a basic, bright, short sound that's not too loud. It's not only a good option for laying down subtle, transparent tambourine tracks in the studio, but it's also a perfect choice to take to gigs where it might get tossed around between band members or the occasional guest vocalist.



### Tycoon

The trio of Tycoon tambourines we checked out are variations of the classic round wood and handheld synthetic models. The single-row wood (\$39) is 10" wide and has eight pairs of nickel-plated steel jingles. It provides a subtle, slightly bright tone with clean shakes that allow for even and consistent 8th- or 16th-note patterns.

The 9" Las Vegas model (\$59) has two rows of six pairs of brass jingles and is finished in silver or gold sparkle. It provides a thicker, denser sound with a little more sustain, but it's still easy to control, whether struck for single accents or shaken for 8th- and 16th-note patterns. This tambourine blends very nicely with a medium-tuned snare when struck on backbeats.

Tycoon's synthetic handheld tambourine (\$49) has seven sets of mixed steel and brass jingles and provides a shorter, sharper, brighter sound. It's great for overdubbing on top of dense mixes, and it cuts well in live situations.





### Grover Pro

In the world of high-end handheld percussion, Grover Pro is at the top of the mountain, offering some of the most musical-sounding and carefully constructed tambourines in the world.

Grover Pro first started using beryllium copper jingles for its headed tambourines in 1980, and this unique alloy is designed to produce a rich texture containing both bright and dark overtones. Many orchestral players use this model, the Projection-Plus, and it records brilliantly. With a list price of \$252, the double-row, natural-head tambourine isn't one to take to rock gigs or to beat up with sticks. It's a luxury instrument that produces luxurious sounds, and it should be treated thusly. It comes with a padded bag and a Ring Roll, which is a semicircle of 1" grip tape that adheres to the head to make thumb rolls easy to execute.

While Grover Pro's headed tambourines work great for session drummers needing a lush, symphonic sound, the company also offers 10" headless versions (\$140) with dual rows of German silver, phosphor bronze, or mixed silver/bronze jingles and soft rubber edging. These are used by many top session drummers in Los Angeles and Nashville and provide amazing accent and shake sounds that have just the right balance of clarity and reverb-like decay. The German silver version is brighter and sharper, while the silver/bronze combo offers a darker, wider tone. These also come with padded bags.

### Meinl

Meinl has a ridiculously large percussion catalog that includes seventy-seven different tambourines. For a classic, all-purpose sound, there are the 10" dual-alloy Super Natural (\$57) and double-row stainless steel (\$41.50) versions with wood frames. In the synthetic handheld category, there's a bright-sounding option with brass jingles (\$66), the bright-and-dark Dual Alloy Recording Combo (\$63), and a dry, subtle model with aluminum jingles (\$50).

For more distinct sounds, Meinl offers the 8" Artisan, with three rows of brass or bronze jingles (\$169). These models have a dense but musical tone, with the brass being higher pitched than the bronze. The bronze also has a drier timbre. Both provide controlled, tight accents and clean shakes.

Then there's the Super Dry series, which includes a 10" handheld model with two rows of hand-hammered triangular brass jingles (\$94), and a tiny Compact version (\$69) with two rows of six pairs of hammered steel jingles for a light, fast, and somewhat trashy tone. These are the tambourines to grab when you want something with a bit of grit and complexity.

We've obviously only scratched the surface of what's out there in the world of tambourines. Be sure to check out models from other notable brands, like LP, Rhythm Tech, Pearl, and Black Swamp. You can check out demo videos of the tambourines we reviewed at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).



Artisan



Super Dry

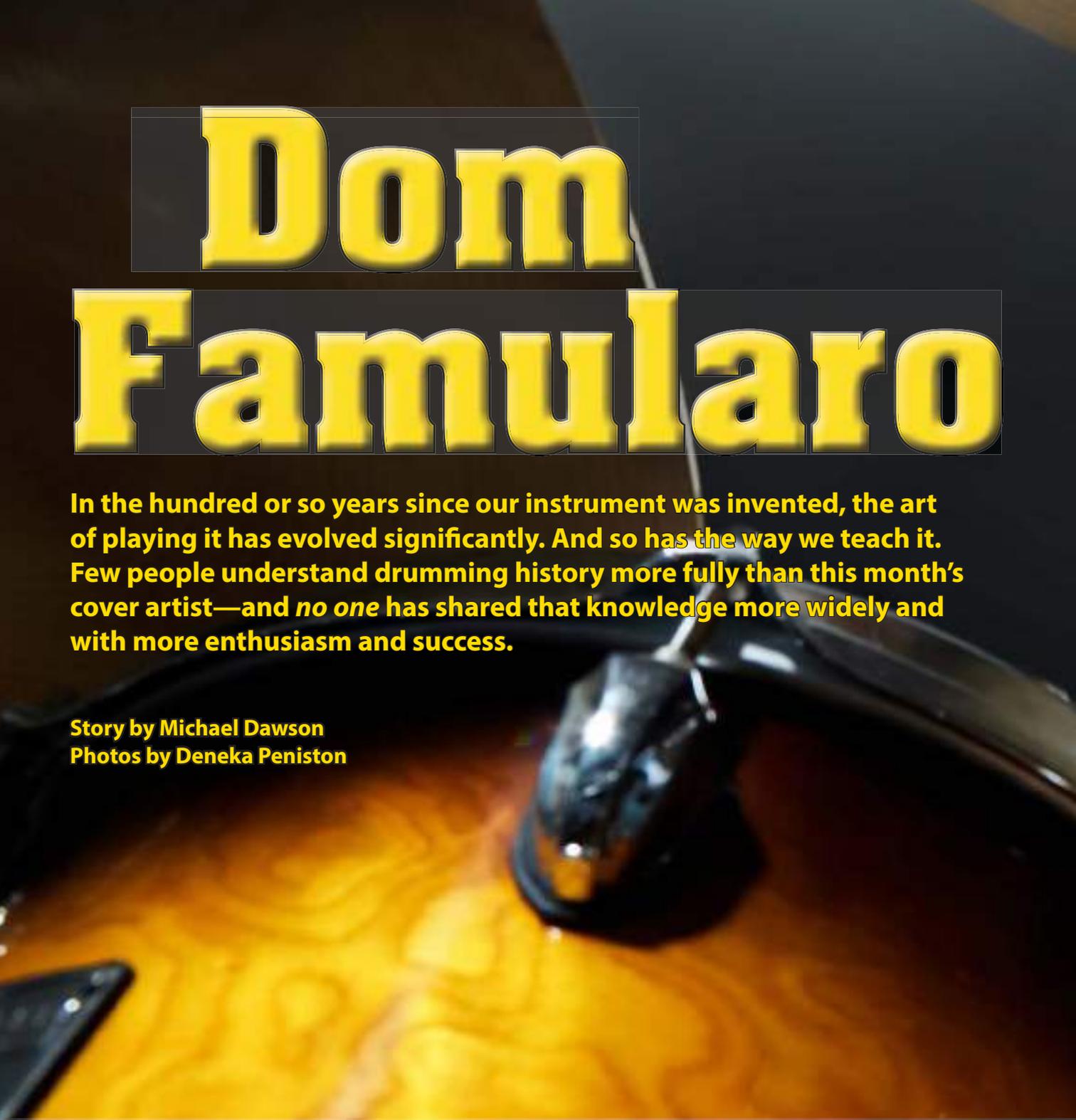


Super Natural



Recording Combo





# Dom Famularo

In the hundred or so years since our instrument was invented, the art of playing it has evolved significantly. And so has the way we teach it. Few people understand drumming history more fully than this month's cover artist—and *no one* has shared that knowledge more widely and with more enthusiasm and success.

Story by Michael Dawson  
Photos by Deneka Peniston

It was at a drum festival years ago when *MD* founder Ron Spagnardi branded the renowned educator/clinician/motivational speaker Dom Famularo with his famous tagline: Drumming's Global Ambassador. "I never wanted to define myself that way," Famularo says with an enthusiastic laugh, "but it friggin' stuck!" Yet if there's anyone in the world who's earned such lofty accreditation, it's Dom.

Who else can lay claim to nearly forty years of tireless travels around the world to present master classes, conduct clinics, and set up lesson programs in far-off

places like the Canary Islands, New Zealand, and China? Sure, there were artists who paved the way in drumset education before Famularo, including the swing-era greats Gene Krupa and Cozy Cole, who started a drum school in New York City in 1953, and Aquarian Drumheads cofounder/big band drummer Roy Burns, who's largely credited with pioneering the drumset clinic format in the United States and for being the first American to conduct drum workshops internationally. But no other drummer's world map displays as many pushpins as Famularo's, marking educational journeys in more than



sixty countries on six continents.

During our visit to the WizDom Drumshed, Famularo's soundproof state-of-the-art teaching facility built just behind his house in Long Island, I joked that I was a bit disappointed not to see any marks in Antarctica. But it wouldn't be all that surprising if one day we were to find Dom teaching the power and efficiency of the Moeller arm stroke to a crop of adventurous drummers aboard a *National Geographic Explorer* expedition off the coast of Petermann Island. Why not, right?

Between gigs and clinic tours, Famularo juggles a

dizzying roster of more than a thousand private students, from more than twenty countries, who either come to Long Island for in-person lessons or connect with him online via Skype. He also authors books regularly for his publishing company, Wisdom Media, which he runs alongside his former student Joe Bergamini, an acclaimed drummer/educator/author in his own right. And Famularo is a consultant for several of his endorsing companies that have created networks for drum instructors, including the Evans D'Addario Education Collective, the Sabian Education Network, Vic Firth's Private Drum Teacher

program, and Mapex's Learning Advantage.

Famularo has franchised his WizDom Drumshed concept, which centers on a highly motivational style of teaching and has a very specific studio setup comprising a practice pad station for technical studies, a snare drum station for reading and rudimental workouts, and two drumsets so the teacher and student can play through exercises simultaneously, plus a high-tech network of HD cameras, flat-screen monitors, and computers so that lessons can be recorded and archived for future analysis or transmitted live to online students via the Internet. Some of Famularo's top international students have opened their own Drumsheds, with several more in the works, further cementing Dom's legacy as one of the most influential drum educators in the world.

Yet when you sit down with him, you quickly realize that Famularo is not simply looking to advance his own brand for personal gains. Yes, his business skills are as sharp as a tack. But his true mission, fueled by his tireless enthusiasm, is to share the insight he's gained over years of traveling and teaching and from studying with some of the most revered drummer/educators of all time, including Joe Morello, Jim Chapin, Shelly Manne, and Papa Jo Jones, so that more and more people are exposed to the ceaseless joy and happiness that come with drumming. During the course of our discussions for

this story, Famularo was adamant that "it's not about me. It's about them—the great teachers of the past and those who are currently out there doing it day in and day out. *Those* are the people who deserve the attention."

We had originally planned to include a listing of the drum instructors Famularo has crossed paths with over the years, in order to provide a vetted source of credible teachers around the world for readers to reference. But there's simply not enough space in these pages to accommodate them all. (We stopped counting at five hundred names.) Still, the fact that Dom took the time to compile such an expansive list, and has made a point to connect with as many teachers as possible during his travels, is a testament to how dedicated he is to drumming education.

Hop over to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com) to peruse the teacher list and see if there's someone near you to link up with for lessons. And if you're an educator, feel free to join our online Teacher's Forum network by filling out a simple questionnaire. That will give you access to some exclusive content, and you'll be included in our free, searchable database of drumset teachers worldwide.

But before you do that, let's sit down with the ever-affable drumming ambassador to find out more about what goes into being a world-class clinician and private instructor.





**MD:** Between flying around the world for clinics and maintaining an intense private teaching practice, you manage a dense schedule. Take us through a typical week when you're not traveling.

**Dom:** Well, this week is packed with lessons here at my studio and online. I had a student drive twelve hours from Toronto for two eight-hour days of lessons. In that amount of time you really get to see where someone's at and what their weaknesses are. And I always ask what students *perceive* their weaknesses to be. Then I hear them play a little, we talk, and I'll add a couple things to work on. Sometimes their concentration isn't that good, or they need to become a better listener. Sometimes I tell stories in a specific way to see how well they listen, and it sure as hell ain't because I want to hear myself speak! [laughs]

I have three students today, two hours each, starting at two o'clock. One guy is from North Carolina. He has his own company selling lawn seed. He has a contact here on Long Island, so he drives up for business and then books time with me. He's a very good

player. It doesn't matter if somebody is an absolute 100 percent professional. That's not really my concern. My concern is to help the drumming industry grow.

And last night I gave a lesson to a seven-year-old in Australia. Once a month we have a lesson, and I give him some fun things to work on to keep his enthusiasm up. He's a gem.

**MD:** How do you deal with younger students?

**Dom:** It's a whole different world. I have to find out how they listen and how they learn. Do they learn by me showing them? Do they learn by watching videos? Some kids want to see things in a book. So I have to find out what key unlocks that student, and every student is different. The student's learning style often evolves too, so I have to stay attuned to get the most out of them.

**MD:** Do you ever find yourself teaching students the opposite way that they want to be taught, just to break them out of a mold?

**Dom:** All the time. My job is to challenge them to widen their learning ability, because not every idea comes through one channel.

If I have a student that says, "I'm not really a book reader," then I go, "Great! We're going to start reading some books." [laughs]

Teachers have to be willing to challenge themselves. If a student isn't getting a pattern, technique, or idea, I feel it's always my fault. What am I not doing right to deliver that information in a way that students can understand?

**MD:** Has your ability to read students' interests and learning styles developed over time, or have you researched different methods?

**Dom:** When I went to school at St. John's University, I was already studying with [legendary jazz drummer/educator] Joe Morello, and I had studied with some great teachers on Long Island. I already had a strong foundation in reading, technique, and playing a variety of styles, so when I went to college I took psychology classes, which is the study of the human mind; business classes, which is about economics and marketing; and communication arts classes, which is about speaking and lecturing. Those were the three areas that I

felt would really help me be a better teacher, while I was also studying with the best drum teachers I could find.

**MD:** What have been the biggest changes in your teaching approach in the past few years?

**Dom:** It's been embracing technology a lot more to communicate with the younger generation, who were born with digital skills. I also have to keep up with the new books. There won't be that many brilliant new ideas, but there are always new ways to express old ideas. If that new book helps an old idea reach someone, then I want to learn it.

**MD:** What are the most recent things you've had to practice?

**Dom:** Independence has been a big one, because it's gone to such a high level. Although I don't play with multiple pedals, I

try to adapt some of those ideas so that I have the ability to teach them. It relates back to the roots of modern drumset playing, which are in tap dancing. The "time step" in tap dancing is the same rhythm as the jazz ride pattern. And most of the early drumset players were great tap dancers: Baby Dodds, Sid Catlett, Chick Webb, Buddy Rich, Roy Haynes, Ed Thigpen, Max Roach, Papa Jo Jones, Louie Bellson....

I learned tap from my sister when I was younger, and I believe that was a big help with my foot technique. When I have heavy metal guys come to me who want to learn more about double bass, I tell them that we're going to work on some tap-dancing steps to help loosen up their feet. They look at me like I'm crazy, but after about a half

hour working on those exercises, they start to feel how their ankles are stretching. Then, when they get back to the drumset, they can fly on the pedals.

**MD:** That's similar to how some NFL players take ballet lessons to be more graceful.

**Dom:** It really is. Before you study a person's patterns, study their movement. Relaxed movement creates relaxed sound, consistent movement creates consistent sound, and fluid movement creates fluid sound. But *tense* movement creates *tense* sound. We want to remove tension with relaxed, fluid, consistent movement. When that happens, your sound immediately gets better.

**MD:** Do you address that on the practice pad or the full drumkit?

**Dom:** It's both. We start on the pad just to

## Dom's Drumshed Setup



### Drums: Mapex Saturn series

- A. 5.5x14 snare
- B. 8x12 tom
- C. 8x10 tom
- D. 16x16 floor tom
- E. 14x14 floor tom
- F. 18x22 bass drum

**Heads:** Evans G1 Coated snare batter, G2 Coated tom batters and G1 Clear bottoms, and EMAD bass drum batter and front head

### Cymbals: Sabian HH and HHX series

- 1. 14" hi-hats
- 2. 10" splash
- 3. 12" splash
- 4. 20" ride
- 5. 16" crash
- 6. 21" ride
- 7. 13" hi-hats
- 8. 18" Chinese
- 9. 20" Chinese

**Hardware:** Mapex, including Saturn IV series stands and Falcon double pedal

**Sticks:** Vic Firth 5B Barrel model and Dom's Pad Stick (for practicing)

**Percussion:** LP Mambo cowbell

**Electronics:** Shure microphones

# FAMULARO AND EVANS

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## Dom Famularo

understand some of the movement of the techniques. But I try to get guys on the drumset immediately so they can feel the results of their hard work. The practice pad is a great invention, in that it helps you develop the muscular ability to play the drumset. But as much as I love practicing on the pad, I've never had someone ask me to bring it to a gig. [laughs]

**MD:** You've been spending a lot of time teaching in China. What's happening over there?

and over 50,000 students. This past May I toured eleven cities in fourteen days. He wants me to eventually visit and perform at every school. In August, he had a camp on a cruise ship, which was a first. We brought in 500 to 700 students, and they took classes in different areas of percussion.

**MD:** Did you always want to be a teacher and clinician, or did it just happen naturally?

**Dom:** Everything in my life has happened unplanned and organically. I started out as a professional performer at the age of twelve.

## 12 Teaching Personalities

Dom Famularo's masterful style of education utilizes different combinations of the following roles, depending on what works best with each student. "For every person that comes in," Famularo says, "I have to figure out which of these needs to be applied to get the most out of them."

**1. Teacher:** This is when you're just giving out information: "Here's the technique, and here's how to practice it."

**2. Motivator:** This is when you figure out ways to inspire the student to practice and improve.

**3. Psychologist:** You have to be able to step into a student's mind to figure out how he or she thinks and learns.

**4. Coach:** You guide them and keep them within the boundaries.

**5. Parent:** You have to understand what the student is going through in the various stages of life.

**6. Cheerleader:** Keep them fired up!

**7. Friend:** You have to feel what the student is feeling. Sometimes a kid comes in a little down. You have to find out what's causing that and

be supportive.

**8. Guidance counselor:** Sometimes you have to give advice about life issues to help the student maintain the desire to make music.

**9. Military officer:** You have to teach students how to discipline themselves so that they understand that when they put in the hard work, they will feel the reward and achievement.

**10. Humorist:** You have to lighten them up. We laugh in every lesson.

**11. Role model:** You have to be the example of what you're trying to teach.

**12. Listener:** A good teacher has to listen—not so much to the words the student is saying but to *how* he or she is saying them.

**Dom:** I've been going to China since 1993 to help set up programs for drumset education. When I first went, many people hadn't even seen a drumset, but we had thousands of people at those first events. Then about twelve years ago I met a gentleman named Mr. Li. He was setting up drum schools, called 9 Beats, and I've been involved with him for several years. They have 310 schools in 180 different cities, with 2,400 teachers

Here on Long Island, in 1965, I had a band with my brothers and sister, and I was working at least two nights a week.

By the time I was seventeen, I was playing with different bands around New York, and other drummers would come up to me and ask how I played certain things. Eventually they wanted to take lessons. So I started teaching out of the basement of my parents' home. I built my teaching practice up to

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## Dom Famularo

about fifty students a week, and I was still playing with bands and doing some jingles in New York City. I wasn't really enjoying the recording industry, though, because at that time there were a lot of heavy drugs involved. I didn't want to get into that, so I pulled myself out and focused on playing with my band and teaching. I started teaching at several different music stores, and I got up to eighty students a week. It was an intense schedule, so my organizational skills developed back then.

At the same time, I kept performing and had the chance to play with many great artists, like [jazz vibraphonist] Lionel Hampton and [guitarist/singer] George Benson. That allowed me to taste what true professionalism was about, while also maintaining my teaching practice. But I never advertised my business. I stayed true to my craft, and people kept coming. This year I'm celebrating fifty years of playing drums professionally and forty-five years of teaching. I still gig regularly with other musicians, and I recently started doing voiceover work for an animated teaching series called *Musimations*.

**MD:** When did you start writing drum books?

**Dom:** It was a natural progression. The books that I've written along with Joe



Bergamini for our publishing company, Wizdom Media, developed as I traveled around the world and began to hear about similar drumming challenges people were having. When I hear about the same obstacles over and over, that's a sign that there's a need for a book. *The Weaker Side* developed that way, in order to give drummers a routine to build strength in their nondominant hand and foot.

Similarly, the concept of the WizDom Drumshed franchise developed as students were coming to study with me and wanted to start their own schools. Now there are schools in Quebec City, Canada, with Stephane Chamberland; Calabria, Italy, with Massimo Russo; Paris, France, with Frédéric Rimbart; Marseille, France, with Rob Hirons; Dijon, France, with Eddy Ros; and others potentially opening in the U.K., Brazil, and



Bob  
Breithaupt  
BB-1/BB-2

Jimmy  
DeGrasso  
JD-1

Shella  
E.  
SE-1

Marcus  
Gilmore  
MG-1

Chris  
McHugh  
CM-1

Ed  
Soph  
ES-1/ES-2

Chad  
Wackerman  
CW-1

Joey  
Waronker  
JW-1/JW-2

Nir  
Z  
NZ-1



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## Dom Famularo

Ukraine. They basically match my studio setup with the three different stations—the practice pads, the snare drums, and the drumsets—and they have cameras, computers, and flat-screen TVs. But they cannot become a franchise until they go through the teaching process with me. They have to have the skills of great motivational speaking, and they have to be positive people. So there are certain books they have to read, like my book *The Cycle of Self Empowerment*, to reprogram their minds to understand what motivation is.

**MD:** Are you mostly teaching teachers?

**Dom:** About 80 percent are teachers, and 30 to 35 percent are online. I record everything to DVD, USB, or Dropbox, so the student has the recording after each lesson. I've been doing that back to when it was Super 8, VHS, and Beta. [laughs]

**MD:** When did you get started doing remote lessons?

**Dom:** I actually started doing overseas lessons thirty years ago, using VHS tapes. At clinics, students often asked me about lessons, but they couldn't make it to New York. So I had them videotape themselves for fifteen minutes and then mail me the tape, along with a blank audiocassette and a check for the lesson. I would watch the video once and make notes, and then I would restart the video, press record on the audiotape, and speak comments and suggestions as the video played. I'd then mail them the audiotape, the videotape, and any exercise sheets that were included with the lesson. I'd sometimes have a stack of thirty videotapes on my desk, so when my family went to bed at night I'd do a few lessons. I've always tried to run my business to a point where I am maximizing my time.

**MD:** What's the difference between an online lesson and an in-person lesson?

**Dom:** The only difference with the in-person lesson is that I can grab the student's hand and show them the movement of the technique. But I have a powerful connection that I send out, and I make sure that the student has a powerful connection as well. I just did a master class in Australia, which is halfway around the world, and the video was crystal-clear. The blending of online and in-person is getting really cloudy. People are now getting degrees from colleges without ever meeting their professors. We have to welcome that blend of technology and humanity.

**MD:** What's the process when you're working with a new student for the first time?

**Dom:** If it's an hour lesson, it's mostly a question-and-answer session. I need to get

as much information as I can, and I have to find out what the student's goals are. And I can't assume that the goal is to be a professional drummer. I had a fifty-five-year-old man come to me recently who's playing drums for his church. His goal is simply to learn the tunes for the Sunday service, so I have to give him just enough technique to be able to play them. After he's playing the songs better, we can work on his confidence and improving his technique so that he has more freedom to try other things.

But in the first lesson, I ask things like: Have you ever taken a lesson before? Who were your teachers? What did they teach

you? What books did you work out of? Did you *finish* any of those books? Is anyone else in your family musically talented? That last one is very important so that you know what influences the students when they go home.

Then I'll ask students to name five drummers, alive or dead, that get them fired up and inspired. From those five, we can widen out to other drummers that would be important for them to listen to. I'll give them listening exercises, and I tell them which books to buy. I also give them a chart of drum-teacher lineage that shows how anything you play is a technique of one of the three pillars of drum education: Billy

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The advertisement features a black and white photograph of Dom Famularo, a man with a white beard and glasses, wearing a white cap and playing a drum set. The text is overlaid on the image in various colors and fonts. The top text reads 'TUNE LESS PLAY MORE WITH THE SONICLEAR™ BEARING EDGE'. The middle text reads 'DOM FAMULARO Global Drumming Ambassador'. The bottom text reads '→ SATURN V ←' and 'www.MAPEXDRUMS.com'. The Mapex logo is also present.



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## Dom Famularo

Gladstone, George Lawrence Stone, and Sanford Moeller. Gladstone had flawless finger technique, and Stone was about the rebound stroke from the wrist. Moeller was all about arm motion. They all used each other's techniques, but they specialized in one area.

In 1971 I tried to track these guys down, but they had died in the mid-'60s. So I sought out their best students. That took me to Shelly Manne, Ted Reed, and Henry Adler, who were students of Gladstone. Shelly opened me up to understanding how my fingers could assist me. Then under Stone were Joe Morello and Vic Firth. Their technique was excellent all the way to the end, which means they had such natural movement that age didn't stop them from having fun playing drums. Then I found Jim Chapin, who was the last living student of Moeller. He also played great right up to when he passed away, which was just shy of his ninetieth birthday. Never once did these guys complain about their hands hurting or any of the other ailments that I hear about almost every day in my studio.

**MD:** What are your primary resources for teaching the techniques of Gladstone, Stone, and Moeller?

**Dom:** There are three main books: *Stick Control*, *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer*, and *Syncopation*. George Lawrence Stone wrote *Stick Control* in 1935, and it's still the number-one technique book. I use it, along with my book *It's Your Move*, which explains the rebounding free stroke and the Moeller arm stroke, as the first book for learning these techniques. We go through *Stick Control* using wrists, fingers, and arms. Then we go into Stone's follow-up, *Accents and Rebounds*, and Morello's *Master Studies I and II*. Morello was one of Stone's top students.

The number-one-selling drumset book, which was written in 1948, is Jim Chapin's *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer*. Chapin dedicated it to Moeller, because he

felt that the Moeller technique loosened him up to be able to play with all this independence. So while we're learning the Moeller arm stroke with *Stick Control*, we use the Chapin book to apply that technique to jazz independence.

The highest-selling reading book is *Syncopation*, which was written by Ted Reed in 1959. Reed dedicated that book to Billy Gladstone, and I use it with almost every student.

**MD:** How did you become a professional clinician?

**Dom:** A lot of the musicians that I was playing with when I was seventeen or eighteen were music teachers. They started asking me to come to their schools to work with their drummers. So I would go to the school, sit down with about eight drummers, and give them the fundamentals of technique, rudiments, and reading. I got to the point where I was doing five schools a week. I scheduled those in the morning before my private teaching, which started at three o'clock.

Then they started bussing in kids from other schools and bringing in the entire band class, so I would talk about more general music terms, like practicing, playing with a metronome, and learning different styles of music. There were times when I was doing two or three schools a day, teaching lessons from three to eight, and then playing gigs at night. So the intensity of my life began at an early age, and it hasn't slowed down *at all*. [laughs]

Then one day in 1982 a gentleman named Al Marinara, who was a rep for Tama, came into the Long Island Drum Center when I was teaching and asked if he could come to one of my clinics. The next morning he was there with Ken Hoshino, the president of Tama. Afterwards we went out for coffee, and Ken complimented me on my ability to play, teach, and motivate, and then he asked me to become Tama's education director and to

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do clinics opening up for their top artists. My first tour was with Simon Phillips. We did twenty-seven cities in twenty-eight days. The summer of that year I had requests from some stores to come back by myself, and in the fall I did a tour with Billy Cobham. We did two major tours every year after that.

**MD:** What advice would you give someone doing his or her first drum clinic?

**Dom:** First you have to work on your communication skills, which includes how to speak and how to use a microphone. Then you have to work on your artistic skills—how well you play. You don't want to go out there and not play well, because they'll never bring you back. You also have to have a plan. If you're not a teacher but you're in a popular group, then just explain some of the grooves

that you play with your band. If you're not a soloist, you can show them things you've practiced over the years.

You also have to have good education skills, meaning you have to have several recommendations when someone asks you a question like "What book should I use to develop my feet?" You can't say, "Just try some different patterns and play along to records." That's not a good answer. I'd say, "Great question! You'll want to use *Stick Control* with your feet, or get Ron Spagnardi's *Building Bass Drum Technique* or Colin Bailey's *Bass Drum Control*, or check out some of the newer books by Virgil Donati and Thomas Lang." Afterwards they'll come up and thank you, and then they'll go out and buy the books. Done!

After you have a plan and your playing is developed, you have to work on your motivational skills. When your clinic is over, everyone in the audience has to walk out thinking, *I'm going to go practice!* When I get to an event, I make a point to shake every person's hand and thank them for coming, whether it's five people or 500. What better way is there to get people fired up than for them to get to meet the guy that's about to go on stage?

**MD:** What keeps you motivated to keep traveling and teaching after all these years?

**Dom:** I often end my seminars with a line about Ponce de León, a Spanish explorer who went searching for the Fountain of Youth but never found it. I tell people, "I've found the Fountain of Youth: It's your *desire* to always want to learn." If you have that desire, you'll remain young. Here I am, sixty-two years young, and I'm in the prime of my life, working at an intense pace, and having a ball!



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# Dom Famularo's Teachers List

Over the course of his forty-year career traveling the globe to teach, perform, and conduct clinics, Dom Famularo has interacted with some of the finest drummers and drum instructors in the world. The following list contains many of those names, organized by country/continent. If you're looking for top-notch drum instruction, find the category for your area and start researching the drummers we've listed.

## Africa

Christian Bourdon

## Argentina

Marcelo Fedler  
Fabián Feld  
Marcelo Fernandez  
Sebastian Mamet  
Fito Messina  
[www.fitomessina.com.ar](http://www.fitomessina.com.ar)

## Australia

Pino Bertolini  
Tim Brigden  
Nicholas Buakey  
Grant Collins  
[www.grantcollins.com](http://www.grantcollins.com)  
Frank Corniola  
John Corniola  
Damian Corniola  
Brian Czempinski  
Alex Deegan  
Rob DiMarzo  
Virgil Donati  
[www.virgildonati.com](http://www.virgildonati.com)  
Jeff Doukakis  
[www.jeffdoukakis.com](http://www.jeffdoukakis.com)  
Darryn Farrugia  
[www.darrynfarrugia.com](http://www.darrynfarrugia.com)  
Gareth Flanagan  
Gary France  
[www.garyfrance.com](http://www.garyfrance.com)  
Andrew Gander  
Cole Gilles  
Andrew Hewitt  
[www.drummerstix.com.au](http://www.drummerstix.com.au)  
Dayne Lawless  
[www.daynelawless.com](http://www.daynelawless.com)  
Thane Mandin  
Graham Morgan  
Pete Neville  
John Perri  
Damian Petrilli  
Jim Piesse  
Steve Pope  
[www.stevepope.com.au](http://www.stevepope.com.au)  
Vince Pruiti  
Chris Quinlan  
[www.chrisquinlanmusic.com](http://www.chrisquinlanmusic.com)  
Gordon Rhythmeister  
[www.gordonrythmeister.com](http://www.gordonrythmeister.com)  
Peter Robertson  
Robbie Sandner  
Lachlan Skinner  
Daniel Susnjar  
[www.danielsusnjar.com](http://www.danielsusnjar.com)  
Shaun Tarring  
Luke Thatcher  
[www.lukethatcher.com](http://www.lukethatcher.com)  
Milan Troha  
Sally Wiggins

## Belgium

Bruno Castellucci  
Mario Goossens  
Dominique Hamet  
Claude Hoffmann  
[claudehoffmann.weebly.com](http://claudehoffmann.weebly.com)  
Bruno Meeus  
Toto PoznanteK  
[www.totopoznanteK.com](http://www.totopoznanteK.com)  
Bram Raeymaekers  
Michael Schack  
[www.michaelschack.com](http://www.michaelschack.com)  
Joris Thys  
Wim Vanderwesten  
[www.wimvanderwesten.wordpress.com](http://www.wimvanderwesten.wordpress.com)

Koen Vanduffel  
Jan Kris Vranken

## Brazil

Alexandre Barea  
Alexandre Costa  
Alexandre Cunha  
[www.alexandre Cunha.mus.br](http://www.alexandre Cunha.mus.br)  
Giba Favery  
[www.gibafavery.com.br](http://www.gibafavery.com.br)  
Vera Figueiredo  
Gerson Lima Filho  
André Gonzales  
[www.andregonzales.com](http://www.andregonzales.com)  
Ze Montenegro  
Nina Pará  
[www.ninapara.com.br](http://www.ninapara.com.br)  
Leandro Pires  
[www.leandropires.com](http://www.leandropires.com)  
Aquilés Priestler  
[www.aquilespriester.com](http://www.aquilespriester.com)  
Cristiano Rocha  
Ebano Santos  
Cuca Teixeira  
Dino Verdade

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Michael Blake  
Dan Bodanis  
[www.dansjazz.ca](http://www.dansjazz.ca)  
Greg Bowman  
Ryan Boyko  
Paul Brochu  
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[www.emmanuellecaplette.com](http://www.emmanuellecaplette.com)  
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[www.mitchdorge.com](http://www.mitchdorge.com)  
Jared Falk  
[www.drumeo.com](http://www.drumeo.com)  
Joel Fortin  
[www.joelfortindrums.com](http://www.joelfortindrums.com)  
Dominic Fournier  
Steve Gendron  
[www.stevegendron.com](http://www.stevegendron.com)  
Brent Gerlitz  
Gary Grace  
Rick Gratton  
Mike Harrison  
Sonny Hogan  
Mark Kelso  
[www.groovydrums.com](http://www.groovydrums.com)  
Floyd Kennedy  
Brad King  
Geoff Lang

Ron Leadbeater  
Chris Lesso  
[www.chrislesso.com](http://www.chrislesso.com)  
Ian Lothead  
Ivo Maarhuis  
Pete Magadini  
[www.petermagadini.com](http://www.petermagadini.com)  
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## Great Educators of the Past

This list comprises some great drum instructors who are no longer with us. Their legacy lives on through their students.

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Louis Bellson	Alan Dawson	Papa Jo Jones	Howie Mann	Ted Reed	Sam Ulano
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# Jason Rullo

For twenty years, the time he's put into improving the things that he does with his hands and feet has continuously elevated the music of **Symphony X**. Recent events have found him working through matters of the head and heart as well, raising his craft in new, unexpected ways.

Story by Ilya Stemkovsky  
Photos by Jeff Hildebrant

Jason Rullo is one lucky dude, getting to throw down technically crushing drumming with the famed New Jersey-based progressive metal band Symphony X. But Rullo's actually lucky to simply be alive.

In 2013, Jason experienced heart failure, sidelining his drumming career with months of rehab and serious soul searching. "In the hospital I had that truthful moment of accepting death," he says. "And there was a shift there. I needed to accept it, and then I could get better. After that moment, all the stuff you think is important gets a lot less important."

With support from his family and the band, plus his renewed interest in non-drumming activities, Rullo has fully recovered and assumed the throne he's sat on for two decades. Symphony X's newest release, *Underworld*, continues the group's eclectic metal style with tourniquet-tight guitar riffage, soaring vocals, entertaining neoclassical elements, and hammering drumset brilliance. Of course there's a generous helping of double bass, with enough varied patterns and fills to keep you busy transcribing and shedding. But there's also a good amount of epic mid-tempo rock to showcase the group's strong songwriting and Rullo's ability to bring the heat with fewer notes.





**MD:** Growing up, did you gravitate toward music that was heavy and more technical?

**Jason:** I come from a pretty musical family. I was raised on Motown and funk and soul. I got into my parents' records, so I discovered Zeppelin and all the classic-rock stuff. Drumming-wise, Van Halen was really my first band, seeing Alex in that "Unchained" video and thinking, *I need to do that*. Then I started getting into heavier stuff.

*Reign in Blood* came out and I got into Slayer. Then I got into Rush and all the progressive, odd-time stuff. I was about fifteen when I heard [legendary Dave Brubeck Quartet odd-time jazz hit] "Take Five." I also heard that [famed drummer/educator] Sonny Igoe was living in my town, though I didn't know who he was at first. But I started taking lessons with him, and that was like starting over. Technique, reading, jazz, independence.... From there I discovered Weckl, Chambers, Colaiuta, and that fusion stuff really became the driving force behind my style of playing. It was more challenging

and more interesting to me.

**MD:** How did those fusion cats inform your metal playing?

**Jason:** All that stuff helps so much. Each style has its own dynamics. I love the independence of the Afro-Cuban style, which I studied.

To me, Symphony X is really just a fusion band. Yeah, we're a metal band, but we have so many styles. It's worked against us sometimes, because people don't know how to label us.

**MD:** *Underworld* features some great production. The drums *hit*.

**Jason:** That goes back to me liking different styles of music. Even live, I don't have the typical metal thing. I just love raw, open drums. Our guitarist, Michael Romeo, loves all the same drummers I loved growing up, so he knows where I'm coming from. Even though it's metal, he helps me find that happy medium.

**MD:** Did you do anything different this time in terms of coming up with parts?

**Jason:** The band is based in New Jersey, so when I was around I'd get snippets of ideas and go back and forth with Mike. Now I live in New Mexico. This time Mike just locked himself away in his studio, the Dungeon, and then all of a sudden he told me he was just about done. So I didn't have nearly as much time.

But the record is really song oriented, and everything flows. So I just made sure all the feels felt good and that I was supporting the tunes. There's some progressive stuff, though it's



## Tools of The Trade

Rullo plays a Tama Starclassic Bubinga kit featuring a 5x14 auxiliary snare; 7x8, 8x10, and 9x12 toms; 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms; an 18x22 main bass drum; and an 18x20 bass drum to the left (operated by a separate double pedal), plus a 6x14 G-Maple main snare. He also uses four low-pitch Octobans (two to the left and two to the right) and a 20" gong bass drum. His Sabian cymbals include a 16" AA Raw Bell crash, a 12" AAX Mini Chinese, a 7" HHX Evolution splash, 8" and 10" Choppers, 14" HHX Stage Hats, a 15" AAX X-Treme Chinese, 16" and 18" Paragons, an 8" AAX splash, a 10" AAX O-Zone splash, a 20" HHX Raw Bell ride, 16" and 18" AAX Chinese, a 17" Vault Saturation crash, an 18" HHX O-Zone crash, and a 20" AAX crash. He uses a Tama Power Tower rack, Star series hardware, and Iron Cobra 900 series Rolling Glide double pedals. His Evans heads include EC Reverse Dots on his snares, EC2S Clear tom batters and G1 bottoms, and an EMAD bass drum batter. He uses Beatnik pads, Cheetah cases, Westone in-ear monitors, and the Kelly SHU bass drum mic mounting system, and his stick is Promark's 101 wood-tip model. This is the setup Rullo used to record *Underworld*. He played the same rig on the road, minus the second bass drum.

not necessarily our most progressive work. There wasn't a ton of technical stuff to work out; it was just about getting the pockets right.

**MD:** Are the first ideas you try usually the keepers? Or are you sketching patterns out?

**Jason:** The first ones, for the most part. But when Mike is doing preproduction, he's programming drum machines, playing keyboards, playing everything. He's so musical that a lot of the meat and potatoes are already kind of there. If it's a slick idea, I might change it slightly—or not at all. I try

certain parts resolve. It's familiar.

**MD:** In 2015, how do you keep things creative and avoid referencing other great players or even yourself?

**Jason:** There are so many killer players now, but I don't listen to a ton of metal these days. When I was younger I'd stop listening to certain drummers, because I didn't want to sound like "that guy." At this stage it happens more by being inspired by life. I've gotten back into mountain biking, and I have young kids. So if I'm out there being inspired by life, when I get back into the

**"Mike's not calling me to ask, 'Can you do 300 bpm?' But we all have our pride, so we put it on ourselves to stay on top of our craft."**

to sit with it and just listen for a week or two. If I have time I'll do rough charts for a more intricate part or fill. Plus we've been playing together for twenty years now, so when he's programming stuff he's thinking about the way I play. It's still fresh, but I almost know what's coming, the way

practice room, that's when things will come to me. It's all about the balance.

**MD:** Is it important for you to pay attention to all these new guys who keep upping the ante?

**Jason:** There's a certain demand for it. In any business you have to keep up with the



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## Jason Rullo



marketplace, so to speak. We listen and try to stay hip to what's happening, but our main thing is to keep growing as a band, whatever that means for Symphony X. There's some faster stuff on this record, so maybe that's a bit of what you're saying, but the second half of the record kind of goes back to our roots with some more ambient and groove-oriented stuff.

Mike's not calling me to ask, "Can you do 300 bpm?" But we all have our pride, so we put it on ourselves to stay on top of our craft. And I'm thankful that we're in the progressive genre, but Mike writes *songs*.

**MD:** There's some cool double bass work before the guitar solo in the middle section of "Kiss of Fire." What do you do to practice that kind of thing and keep your feet and hands solid?

**Jason:** I find that if I haven't played in a bit and it's time to get back into it full force, hands come back quickly, because it's smaller muscle groups. But you can't let the legs go too long, because then you'll have to work that much harder. For me it's about consistency. That's why I got back into mountain biking, because it's so good for your legs. I also have a kick practice pad for the double pedal, and I've put in the extra hours there.

**MD:** How has the live gig evolved over the years? Are you playing to a click?

**Jason:** I don't play to any clicks. I do a metronome blinking-light song starter for myself. We don't use many samples, just one or two spots in the show that have backing vocals that I need to lock into. From years of doing this, I can still be at

the right tempo.

That's the biggest thing for me about maturing as a player live. I used to rush—and it was so hard not to, because you have so much adrenaline and you're playing this crazy stuff and you're just smashing. And you listen back and you're like, *Wow, we're flying*. [laughs] But now I'm more settled in. We've talked about playing to a click when we go out with some more production.

**MD:** Has your gear changed?

**Jason:** Not really. If I'm setting up from scratch, I can do it with my eyes closed. Here's my first air stroke—that's where my snare should be. Here's where my tom and ride should be. So it's ergonomic. I'm not a huge guy, so my setup is real tight. When I'm home I'll set up a four- or five-piece just to keep it fresh, because it makes you play a little bit differently. I'll have a mix of music that I'll play along to, just different styles thrown at me.

**MD:** What kinds of stuff do you enjoy playing along to?

**Jason:** Honestly, I just like to be surprised. That's why I hit shuffle. Some jazz fusion or Latin fusion. I like living in the moment, so I enjoy the spontaneity.

**MD:** Are you working on ghost notes and other little things you don't get to do as much with Symphony X?

**Jason:** I'm actually playing a ton of ghost notes with the band. You just don't hear them. But I work on different techniques. Sonny Igoe taught me the old-school fulcrum wrist snap—George Lawrence Stone stuff. From there, I remember studying the first Simon Phillips video, and

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## Jason Rullo

that's where I got the finger technique. And then I got into all the Moeller stuff. So I look at my technique as a combination of those three techniques. Nowadays I'm working on mostly the Moeller. And lately a lot of Moeller for the feet.

**MD:** How does that whipping motion translate to the feet?

**Jason:** When you're exaggerating and practicing it slowly, your whole leg comes up for that first stroke. Up and down. If you're doing triplets, the second stroke is the tap, and your heel is way up on the third stroke, just like in the hand-technique version, where the stick taps as you're going up. So you're kind of dropping the stick as you go up. It's the same thing with your foot—you're dropping the ball of your foot as your ankle rises, and then your leg rises again to get back to that first motion.

**MD:** So you're playing heel up the whole time?

**Jason:** My heels are always up, but they're lower for the slower-tempo double bass, and as I go faster the heels will come up more. When you're playing it slowly, you feel it more, because you're exaggerating and feeling each stroke. The difference between the accented and the unaccented stroke, if you're accenting the first stroke, is

more significant, and as you speed up it becomes more of a flowing motion.

**MD:** Where are you on the footboard?

**Jason:** I'm pretty much in the middle. On the Iron Cobra, I can look down and see the word *Iron*. I start a little higher, and as I'm speeding up I move down a little further to about there. And there's a difference between the triplet and the 16th-note version of it, because it's a little bit of a different balance thing. Once you get comfortable with it, it feels good. It makes things easier when I'm on the road.

About fifteen years ago Don Famularo turned me on to the Moeller and gave me examples of how to practice it. Eventually I want to put up some instructional material on my site—some Symphony X tunes, but also [examples of] my technique, my approach to odd meters, and some conceptual stuff.

**MD:** Mike Romeo has said that *Underworld* isn't necessarily a concept album, but that you're going for a cohesive statement. How do you keep people's attention nowadays?

**Jason:** It's going to be interesting to see what the feedback is and how many people do listen to the whole record. It's such a crazy landscape right now, and does anyone have the attention span to listen

to the whole thing? I think on iTunes you can buy the singles, but only if you preorder the record, so we're trying to encourage people to check out the whole thing. I hope that works. But you just do your best and hope everybody likes it. The press is one thing, and the Internet, with fans and everybody else, is another. You kind of just sit back and see what happens. And you can still make a living touring, but that's making the touring market saturated. We go away for two years in between records, but we're very lucky, because we come back and our fans are still there.

**MD:** How is your health now?

**Jason:** Everything's great, thanks. I'm not even on any medication anymore. I'm on a yearly checkup at this point.

**MD:** Are you thinking about it while on stage?

**Jason:** If I said I'm not thinking about it, I'd be lying. But it's not in the front of my mind. I'm not worried about it. But there's also hard stuff that goes along with the heart stuff. Just thinking that you may not be able to tour anymore. But there wasn't one moment when I thought I wasn't going to fully recover. I was brought up with a more Eastern philosophical outlook, so I've always meditated. And I was cooking for myself and ended up buying a food truck as a side business, because I didn't know if I could ever tour again.

Once I got healthy and was cleared, all this mental stuff started to mess with me. I lost my income and I had to miss a couple of shows, and that had never happened. It was weird that somebody was going to go and play my gig. A lot of ups and downs. I'd never had that. I was always a consistently positive person. So I realized I was dealing with depression. It took me a year to realize I even had it. A lot of times men who deal with heart issues will get depressed. Maybe it's a macho thing. I never thought I was losing the gig permanently or anything, though. I knew it was on me. I was lucky enough to have supportive people around me—my wife and kids, and the band.

The other thing was forcing myself to go out and live life. Going out on a hike or going camping or just feeling like you're contributing and being a part of something. That was a big part of it for me. Drumming had always been my contribution to society, and if I couldn't do that, how would I be of use? But if you're out there and involved, go help somebody else out. It's all about energy and sharing the love these days for me. I'm happy to be alive, and I'm thrilled to have my seat in the band, of course. But I'm happy to be there for the family.



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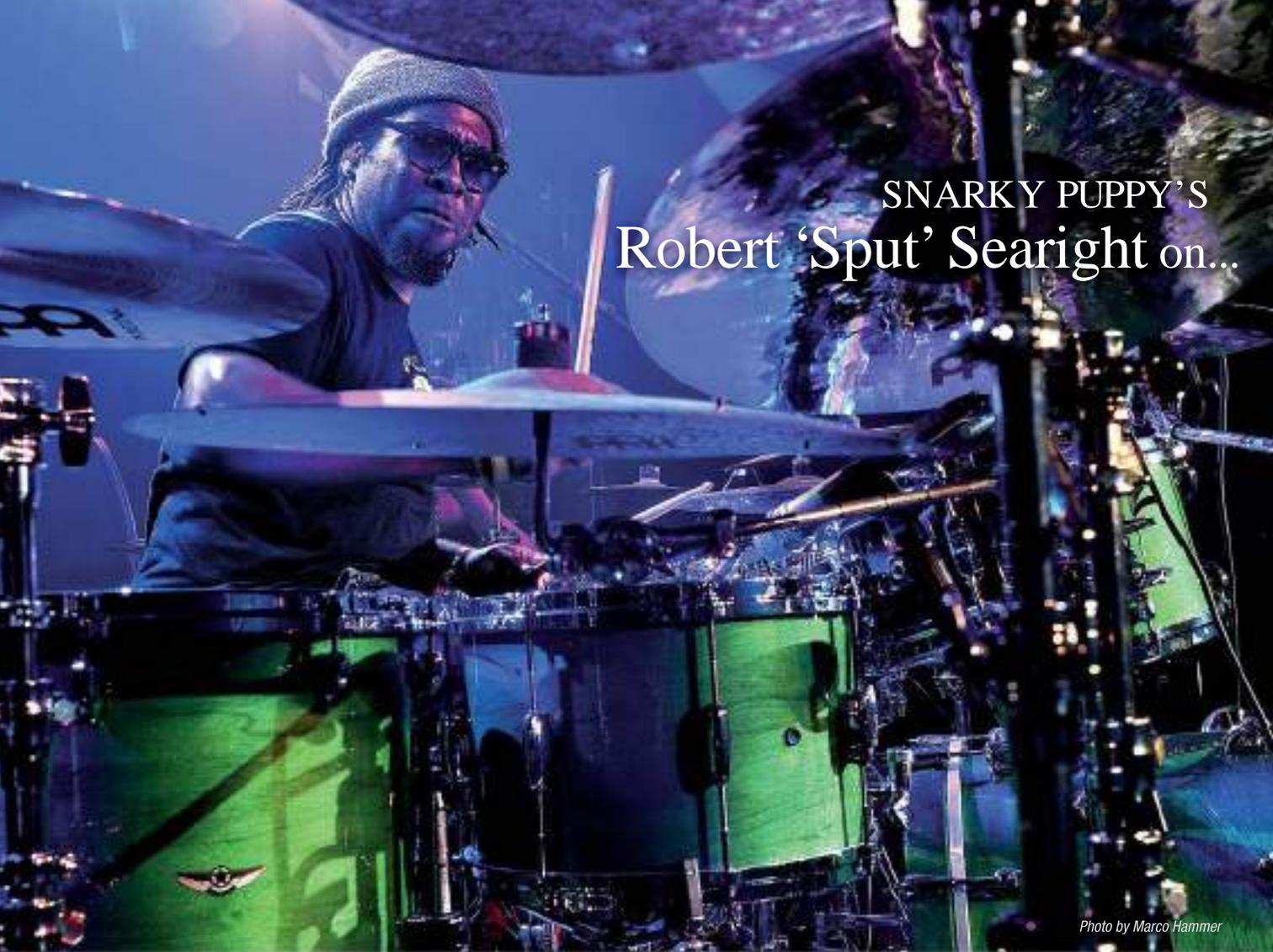


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TAMA STAR DRUMS

# Jeff Plate and of the Trans-Siberian Orchestra

by Aaron Strickland

**D**uring most of the year, Jeff Plate and John O'Reilly are busy with numerous projects. Plate is the drummer for the veteran hard-rock groups Metal Church and Savatage, as well as a cover band, Rust; he also teaches. O'Reilly, whose résumé includes stints with the classic-rock heavies Rainbow and Blue Öyster Cult, is the operator of the Stanley Spector School of Drumming and the author of a new book and online magazine. Any of those projects could easily fill the schedule of most drummers. But every November through January, these two players are dedicated to providing the pulse for the experience that is the Trans-Siberian Orchestra. Two drummers, one band. Well, actually, *two* bands.

We'll explain. In 1995, the Florida-based Savatage, founded by brothers Jon and Criss Oliva and anchored by the recently hired Plate, released the concept album *Dead Winter Dead*. Featured on that album was the instrumental "Christmas Eve/Sarajevo 12/24," a medley of the famous holiday tunes "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen" and "Carol of the Bells." When Jon Oliva's side project with Savatage producer Paul O'Neill, the Trans-Siberian Orchestra, reissued the track the following October on its debut album, *Christmas Eve and Other Stories*, it would change the course of Oliva, O'Neill, and Plate's careers in ways none of them could have imagined.

During that holiday season, "Christmas Eve" spread like wildfire on radio across the country. The immediately recognizable melodies and Plate's thunderous tom patterns provided the foundation of this new yuletide mainstay. While Savatage continued to record and perform, a second Trans-Siberian Orchestra album, *The Christmas Attic*, appeared in 1998. In 1999 TSO began touring, ushering in a new holiday tradition—and taking on an increasingly significant life of its own. The first tour consisted of just a few theater shows in the Northeast, but in time theaters would become arenas, a couple of tour buses would grow to twelve, and two tractor-trailers

would become twenty.

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In 2000 the act introduced two separate versions—an East Coast band and a West Coast band—so that it could cover the entire country during the two-month holiday season. O'Reilly joined the West Coast group in 2002, while Plate continued with the East Coast lineup. Today the act only continues to grow, with Plate and O'Reilly still manning their distinct rhythm sections and on the rare occasion even getting to play the same event, like this year's Wacken festival in Germany. *Modern Drummer* spoke with both drummers about their approach to this highly unusual and remarkably popular act.

# John O. Reilly



Lewis Lee



Jason McEachern

# Jeff Plate

**MD:** What's most rewarding about being a part of the spectacle that is the Trans-Siberian Orchestra?

**Jeff:** Being part of a band that I always dreamed of. Granted, when TSO started, there were more questions than answers. We have now come upon twenty years since the release of "Christmas Eve/Sarajevo 12/24" and twenty-one years since our first album, and we're on our sixteenth winter tour. TSO keeps getting bigger, and there's no end in sight. It's a testament to the music of Paul O'Neill, Jon Oliva, and Bob Kinkel and the drive and decisions of the entire organization. The greatest reward for me is the audience that comes to see us year after year, and their response at the end of our shows.

**MD:** You're from Horseheads, New York. What was your biggest challenge as a musician growing up in a small town?

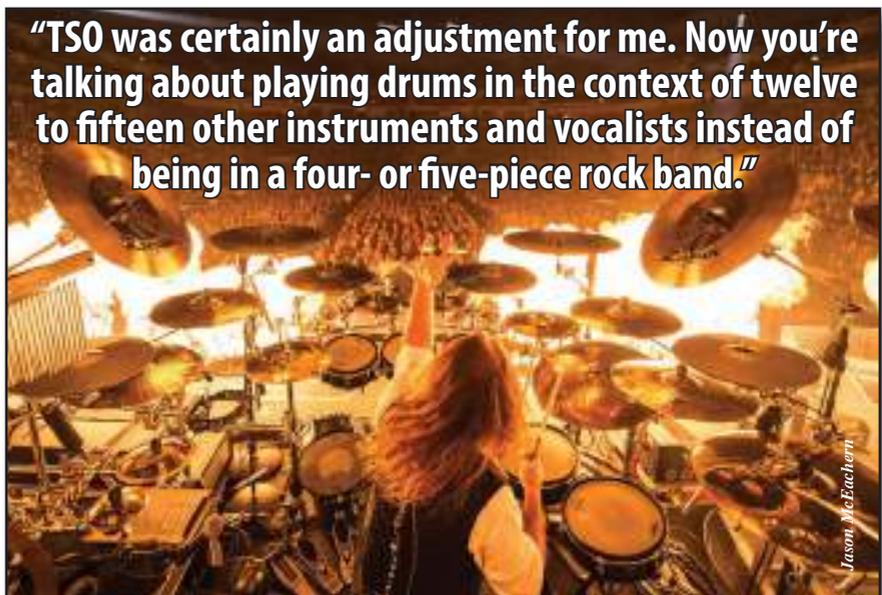
**Jeff:** The main restriction was not being exposed to people who were really writing and playing original music on a higher level. The good part was that I lived in the country. There were no cell phones, no computers, only three television channels, and I had all day to practice.

I had a great drum instructor, Bobby Williams. He turned me on to two teaching programs, one by Sam Ulano and the other by Joel Rothman—great instruction books that I still use today. By the time I was about sixteen years old, I knew that this was what I wanted to do for a career. I also knew Horseheads was not the place where that was going to happen.

**MD:** You made moves to Tampa and Boston. Most notably during your time in Boston, you joined the band Wicked Witch. Zak Stevens, who later left the band to sing for Savatage, recommended you in 1994 when they needed a new drummer. What were the difficulties of entering an established band that had just gone through the death of a founding member? [Guitarist Criss Oliva was killed when his car was struck by a drunk driver.]

**Jeff:** When I met these guys, I could just tell how devastating this was. Jon, Criss's brother, and bassist Johnny Middleton, Criss's best friend, were still kind of in shock about the whole thing, and rightly so. Criss

**Jeff Plate continues on page 62**



Jason McEachern

**"TSO was certainly an adjustment for me. Now you're talking about playing drums in the context of twelve to fifteen other instruments and vocalists instead of being in a four- or five-piece rock band."**



**MD:** On the 2014 winter tour, the East and West bands traveled a total of 22,175 miles to perform 122 arena concerts, and in doing so visited seventy-one cities in thirty-seven states. How do you prepare yourself for a tour of that magnitude? Describe what it's like being a part of the TSO.

**John:** It's a dream come true. That's what we all dream about when we're starting in the business. To get to do what I love to do, which is playing drums in a band that is growing constantly, is a dream. There's no other way to describe it. I don't take it for granted. This is something that not many guys are ever going to be able to experience. In my opinion, this is the best gig ever.

Besides just practicing on the kit here at home, my main preparations are watching what I eat and working out. You don't want to go on the road and start eating better or practicing there. My preparation starts in late May or early June.

**MD:** What's your practice routine?

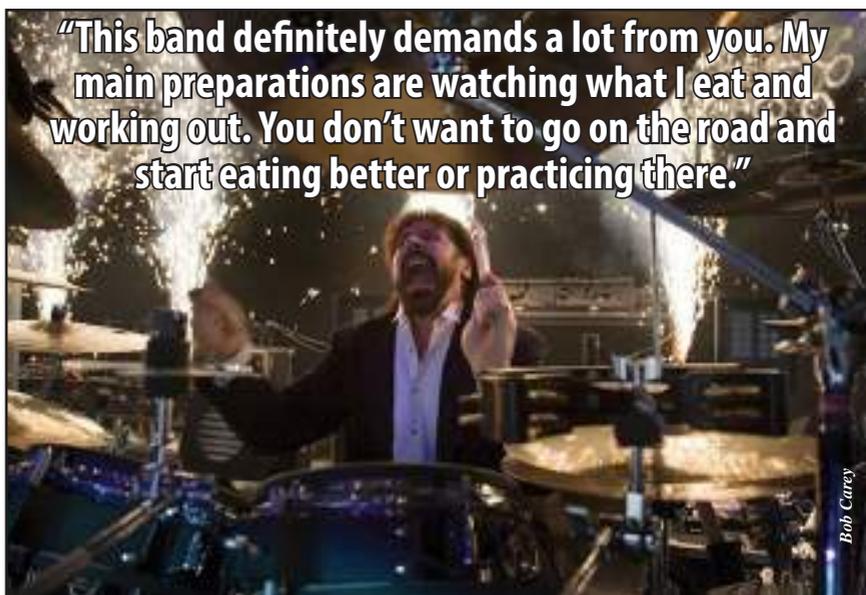
**John:** I just get familiar with playing the material again. At rehearsals, it takes us maybe a day or two to get into the swing of things; then you fall right back into it. The main thing is to be in shape to get there and start running the show down twice a day for fourteen or fifteen days. This band definitely demands a lot from you, but it's fun. Being ready is paramount.

**MD:** Before the Trans-Siberian Orchestra, you played for a number of household names, live, in the studio, or on video, including Blue Öyster Cult, Geoff Tate, Joe Walsh, and Ritchie

Blackmore and Rainbow. What experience stands out the most?

**John:** My God, there's so many of them. When I was playing with Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow, during that first week of rehearsals, Ritchie wrote "Black Masquerade." Right away that song just fell into place. It was one of those magical things. From the moment he played the riff, it was like we'd been playing it for a week. We just followed him. There were a few little changes, and the song was written on the spot. It was really that fast. That was a real memorable track and a memorable experience. It's one of my favorite tracks on the record, *Stranger in Us All*.

John O'Reilly continues on page 64



## Jeff Plate, continued from page 60

was an incredible guitar player. I came into something that was really very fragile at the time. So my approach was to learn everything as well as I possibly could and keep my mouth shut. I needed them to trust that I was the right drummer, a great bandmate, and a professional. I couldn't give them any reason to doubt me or not believe in the band as it was at that point. The lineup had changed a lot. And I had to fill the shoes of original drummer Steve "Doc" Wacholz, and this was no small task.

**MD:** How did your style help with transitioning from Savatage to the Trans-Siberian Orchestra?

**Jeff:** To begin with, Paul O'Neill and Jon Oliva were developing this before I ever joined Savatage. When Paul joined Savatage as producer and member of the songwriting team of the Oliva brothers, the band became one of the very first heavy metal/prog-rock bands. Paul brought in a lot of his classical influence. You can hear the classical/prog direction on the *Gutter Ballet*, *Streets*, *Dead Winter Dead*, and *Wake of Magellan* albums. Savatage was progressing in the direction of what we now know of as TSO. There was certainly an adjustment for me, because now you're talking about playing drums in the context of twelve to fifteen other instruments and vocalists instead of being in a four- or five-piece rock band.

**MD:** The 2014 show, the live debut of "The Christmas Attic," was over the top. Most drummers will never know what it's like to be part of such a massive production. Describe that experience.

**Jeff:** Like I said before, it's something that I've always dreamed of. At every show I look around me and can't believe what we've become. Our first show was forty lights, a fog machine, a couple of trucks, and an audience of 1,500. Now we have twenty trucks full of lights and production and an audience of 10,000-plus at every show. We know how fragile this industry is, so I appreciate every show I play.

**MD:** Let's talk about your early influences.

**Jeff:** My parents encouraged me to play an instrument, and drums just seemed like the natural thing. I saw the band Chicago on the 1974 television special *[Meanwhile Back at the Ranch]*. I loved the music and Danny Seraphine's drumming. So *Chicago VII* was the first record I ever bought. I was twelve years old at the time. Then, a year later, I saw a commercial for *The Midnight Special*, and Kiss was advertised. I talked my parents into letting me stay up late and watch the show. I sat there in front of the television with my G.E. cassette recorder held up to the speaker of the television. It just blew my mind and put me into orbit. That's the moment that I knew this is what I wanted to do. Kiss and Peter Dinklage were a great platform to learn how to be a rock drummer.

Later, Rush's *2112* fell in my lap, and then all of sudden Neil Peart was one of my biggest influences. Along with this, I started playing with some better musicians locally and was turned on to bands like Return to Forever and Jean-Luc Ponty, with Lenny White and Steve Smith on drums, respectively.

There were also two local drummers who really influenced me. One was Carl Canedy, who played with the Rods, and the other was Frank Briggs, who played in a band called 805. Where Carl was the monster metal drummer and showman, Frank was the technician. I would go see those two play every chance I could, and they really influenced me so much.

## Tools of the Trade

**Jeff Plate** uses a Roland KT-10 trigger pedal; snare, tom, kick, and cymbal pads; and TD-10 sound modules with TSO. With Metal Church he plays a Pearl Masters Custom Maple kit (and a Reference Birch set in his home studio) and two 14" SensiTone snare drums. He plays Zildjian cymbals and uses Remo heads, plus a Pearl Icon rack, chimes, and hardware, including an H-2000 hi-hat stand and PowerShifter Eliminator P-2000C bass drum pedals. He plays Vater 3A nylon-tip sticks with grip tape and keeps his gear in TKL cases.

Another major turning point for me was a Simon Phillips clinic that I saw around 1986, 1987, in Worcester, Massachusetts. I walked out of that clinic with my tail between my legs. He was so ambidextrous. He was playing a different rhythm pattern with every one of his limbs while telling the audience what he was doing. I decided at that point I was either going to think about doing something else or I was going to get a drum teacher and make myself as good as I could be. So I ended up taking lessons from Dave DiCenzo in the Boston area. He really straightened out a lot of things in my drumming.

So that's the list of people that really made it happen for me when I was young. And of course there's a long list of drummers that I admire and learn from today.

**MD:** In TSO you play a hybrid kit made of up Roland pads and acoustic Zildjian cymbals. How did that decision come about, and why?

**Jeff:** When I was in Savatage, I acquired an endorsement from Pearl drums. I played Pearl for a number of tours with Savatage and the first two tours with TSO. In the theaters, we were playing to an audience that varied from eight years old to eighty. We were trying to be sensitive about volume, but we had a problem controlling the drum sound. So the suggestion came up to try electronic drums. It was Paul's decision ultimately, but it was also a production necessity. This gave us the ability to control the sound of the band and gave Dave Whitman, our sound engineer, the ability to mix the band as it should be.

The electronic kit has made the life of my drum tech, Imy James, and production crew so much easier. With three double-show days in a row every week, setup time is critical. For my Savatage and Metal Church tours, I've always got the Pearl drumkit out there. On the Trans-Siberian Orchestra tour, I'm still using the Pearl hardware. On top of that are Zildjian cymbals. The live TSO setup consists of twenty-five pieces of brass. I've also used Vater 3A drumsticks for over twenty years. I'm very proud to endorse all of these companies.

**MD:** What do you think John O'Reilly brings to the West Coast band? How would you describe him?

**Jeff:** A veteran. A class act. A world-class drummer. A powerhouse drummer who is smooth as silk. John is the epitome of a team player. He and guitarist Al Pitrelli had worked together in the past, so those two getting back together was pretty seamless. The selection of John was perfect. I always enjoy listening to John play, and I couldn't be prouder of him.

**MD:** Is he expected to play your parts note for note, or is he able to insert some of his own uniqueness?

**Jeff:** We all interpret things a little bit differently, and he is obviously playing with a different set of musicians. So, in the case of the drumming, I'll be listening to the West band rehearse, and John may do something and I'll be like, *Wow, that was cool. I'm gonna steal that.* And he may do the same thing. There is a great deal of respect between us. The production can dictate a little bit of what's going on within the band, and things change a little bit back and forth, but in the end we're both playing what is best for the show.

**MD:** What advice would you give to aspiring drummers?

**Jeff:** Well, you've got to get your head wrapped around the idea of practicing a lot—as in hours a day. You've got to get off your cell phone, get off your computer, and you need to find a good instructor who can teach you right from wrong. Your instrument is expensive, so you better be prepared to get a job and make some money. And you may need a vehicle that can haul your drums. To say it's a lot of work is an understatement. If you look at drumming from a distance, you wonder why in the hell anybody would want to do this. It's because the end reward is like nothing else. There is no better feeling than anchoring the greatest show on earth.

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**John O.Reilly, continued from page 61**

**MD:** What about Joe Walsh, Geoff Tate, and Paul Rodgers—were those studio engagements?

**John:** Actually, those were special appearances they made with TSO. One of my favorites was with Paul Rodgers. That was a rip. He was such a genuine man and a great guy. He and his wife, Cynthia, were so gracious. Afterwards we stayed in touch on and off over that year, because Cynthia was very concerned about Cathy [John's wife, who passed away in May of 2015] and her multiple sclerosis. At that time, and we were so lucky for this, Cathy was able to travel with

us for the last seven days of the tour. Being out there was some of the best times of her life. The TSO organization let that happen for her and myself, and I can never repay them for that.

**MD:** You started playing the drums at age ten. You turned pro at twenty, making your first recording with jazz great Earl "Fatha" Hines. You have a history that covers everything from jazz to rock. You're known for your solid time and uniqueness. Are you able to apply any of that in TSO?

**John:** Absolutely. It's all about meter. It comes down to generating good, solid time,

## Tools of the Trade

With TSO **John O.Reilly** uses Roland TD-10 sound modules and snare, tom, kick, and cymbal pads, with a Pearl H-2000 hi-hat stand and PowerShifter Eliminator P-2000C bass drum pedals, plus a Gibraltar rack, cymbal and tom arms, snare stand, and throne. On all other gigs he plays Mapex Saturn series drums with a Mapex P900 double pedal and hi-hat stand. He uses Sabian cymbals, Vic Firth American Rock Classic wood-tip sticks, and Rhythm Tech mounted tambourines.

especially in a band as big as TSO—and on a stage as big as the one we use. You also need the ability to make something swing. If you listen to any of the great drummers—John Bonham, Ringo, or Buddy Rich—there's an inherent sense of swing with everything they do. That's really what I try to inject in anything I do.

**MD:** Just like Jeff Plate, you're playing a hybrid kit with electronic drums and acoustic cymbals. Did that take some getting used to for you?

**John:** Oh, yeah. It still does. My kit up on the main stage has got the subwoofer, my two spot monitors, and my in-ears, and I've also got two thumpers mounted underneath my throne. Yeah, believe me—it's kind of like prostate surgery sometimes.

**MD:** So you've got your in-ears kicking, a sub behind you, two monitors in front of you, and two thumpers?

**John:** Yeah, you bet. I want this shit to seem as real as possible to me.

**MD:** Switching gears, many years ago, you studied under New York City drum instructor Stanley Spector. You recently digitally restored all of his material. What inspired you to resurrect the Stanley Spector School of Drumming?

**John:** An accident in my basement, actually. I was making room for a set of drums, and I almost broke my neck tripping over a box. In that box I found a bunch of cassettes, workbooks, and handwritten notes. I thought I had completely lost these tapes from when I had first studied with Stanley. I opened up the first page of his workbook, closed it, and I was able to play it from memory. I hadn't seen that stuff since 1969. It brought back such great memories.

Stanley had such a unique method of teaching, where he would teach you how to visualize. His school closed in 1988, about a year after his passing. I found the phone number at the bottom of the book, called, and spoke to his widow, Astrid. I explained to her the whole story. I gave her my address, and then a package showed up about ten days later. She sent me the advanced home-study course, lessons 1 to 10, on

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cassette. Over a period of time, I struck up a conversation with her. I wrote Astrid a nice letter explaining that I'd like to archive Stanley's material, so that it could be saved. It's Stanley's life's work and should be preserved. So she decided to give me a shot. I archived three years of Stanley's lessons. It's a work of love.

**MD:** You've taken on the role of teaching this material?

**John:** Yeah. Right now, there are about sixty-five students. I'll teach through Skype. I teach the way that Stanley taught. He would present a problem and then ask you to try to solve it. He really made you think about stuff. And as simple as some of these lessons are, it takes extreme focus.

**MD:** You've also been doing some writing. You released a book, *The High Paid Musician Myth*, this year, and you have *Maverick Musician Magazine* online. What was the motivation behind these projects?

**John:** The real motivation and inspiration had come from my brother, who passed away suddenly last year. The plan with both projects is to inspire other musicians to realize that this is more than just a music business now. You can't really depend upon the music business to make a living. You need to be able to have other sources of income. There are examples in the book of some guys who I've studied with—Frank Kern, Eben Pagan—who are brilliant marketers. These guys were musicians starting out. They've parlayed what they've done into some pretty successful businesses, and there's no reason why any musician out there can't do the same thing.

**MD:** In your book you talk about the decline of the music business and the trickle-down effect it's having on musicians. Can you elaborate on that?

**John:** The trickle-down effect is the lack of work. It's harder and harder to get really great gigs. Maintaining gigs is getting harder. Not to say that it can't happen, because it definitely can. As a matter of fact, one of Jeff Plate's students that he mentored, Elijah Wood, landed the Shania Twain farewell tour. You have to be prepared. You have to be at the right place at the right time. If you want anything bad enough, you have to persevere. And it doesn't hurt to know somebody. Just because you get a great gig, that doesn't mean that you're going to have it next year. You have to think outside the box. For example, the cover story for the debut issue of *Maverick Musician Magazine* was [TSO guitarist] Chris Caffery. He's done very well with his Tears of the Sun hot sauce. Plus he's working on a cooking show.

**MD:** What qualities do you think Jeff Plate

brings to the East Coast band? What makes him unique?

**John:** His musicality. He's a world-class player. He's got great meter. He knows how to operate within the TSO structure. I've learned from Jeff. I've learned from *watching* Jeff. He and I will play the same song pretty much the same way. We might do a couple of things a little bit differently. I may hear something that he does and go, *Oh, I'm going to take that*. And he'll do the same thing with me. He brings the ease of his style. He makes everything just sit in the right spot, and that's hard. Jeff's got the ability to put everybody

at ease when he's playing. He's dependable. There's no looking over your shoulder and wondering what's going to happen next. Jeff is consistent about everything that he does.

**MD:** What's next for John O'Reilly?

**John:** Now it's the winter tour. I'm also going to be hosting a series of live webinars, promoting the book, and in general just starting to get my act together here. The weeks after my wife's passing really took the wind out of me. I'm just trying to make her as proud of me as I can. I'll give it my best shot. Next year is going to be real busy. People are going to start to get sick of me. [laughs]



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# Gerry Gibbs

Usually the hippest music happens when nobody in the room is consciously trying to sound hip. Drawing inspiration from an oft-derided genre, this drummer/leader has made another unexpected—and, yes, *hip*—addition to his already eclectic body of music.

Story by Jeff Potter

Photos by Paul La Raia

When Gerry Gibbs tries something different, it shouldn't surprise. After all, the drummer/composer/arranger's career includes sideman stints with giants of straight-ahead jazz, avant-garde, fusion, R&B, and funk. Case in point: At age nineteen he performed with Woody Shaw, Alice Coltrane, and Parliament Funkadelic in one manic ten-day stretch. His own nine discs, which include *Live at Luna* by the eighteen-piece Thrasher Big Band, have explored diverse acoustic and electric formats. And recently he introduced his alter ego, Reni Beats, an electronic music forum for which he serves as mastermind/composer/programmer and video animator.

But Gibbs' newest release, the third album by his Thrasher Dream Trio, will assuredly trigger some double takes. "I

wanted to do a record of elevator music," Gerry explains without a flinch. The result is *Live in Studio* (Whaling City Sound), a swinging, spontaneous, and spirited disc featuring well-known, robust melodies, many of them from movies, including "The Summer Knows," "Theme From a Man and a Woman," and "More."

The trio's "dream" moniker is no exaggeration; Gibbs is joined in the group by jazz mega-greats Ron Carter on bass and Kenny Barron on piano. Raising the ante are star guest vocalist Cassandra Wilson and trumpeter Roy Hargrove. The trio's self-titled 2013 debut featured jazz standards, while its Grammy-nominated follow-up, *We're Back* (2014), offered jazz interpretations of '60s and '70s R&B classics. For this latest departure, Gibbs opted to

record a live performance at Systems Two studios in Brooklyn.

Undeniably, Gibbs is an artist who trusts his intuition. Once inspiration strikes, he's unstoppable. With his new disc barely wrapped, he says, "I've got fifty records in my head that I want to do before I die." Again, that's no exaggeration.

MD jumped at the invitation to attend the Systems Two session and spoke with Gibbs soon after.

**MD:** Your aim was to approach this record differently from the previous two.

**Gerry:** The initial idea with this recording was to do it in a looser way, where everyone's not buried in the arrangements. I decided I wasn't going to arrange the tunes; I would just come in with lead sheets,

and whatever happens, happens.

Then I decided to do it live, with a selected audience, and play all “elevator” songs that I grew up listening to. I didn’t want to pick typical standards that these guys have done a million times, or the normal “hip tunes” either—Wayne Shorter or Herbie Hancock.

I’m a huge lounge-music fanatic—music that I heard in elevators and in dentists’ or doctors’ offices growing up. There’s a station in Palm Springs, KWCY, that I listen to constantly. They play this kind of music. It’s like a time warp. They’ll go from playing Gene Autry to the theme song from *M\*A\*S\*H*. It inspired me to do this record. Since I’d been listening to so much Dean Martin and Doris Day, I just thought, *That’s what I’m going to do!* I could have made an avant-garde record if I wanted to, but I wanted to do this right now. I picked a very weird lineup of tunes: Mancini, Burt Bacharach—tunes that are really beautiful but still have strong melodies and chords for blowing.

**MD:** Was the “winging it” approach a factor in your guest choices?

**Gerry:** Cassandra Wilson is one of the singers. There’s almost nothing she can’t do. She can even sing the most angular, bizarre music and nail it.



Roy Hargrove, Kenny Barron, Gerry Gibbs, Cassandra Wilson, and Ron Carter take a break during the recording of *Live in Studio* at Systems Two studios in Brooklyn.

Roy Hargrove and I have a long history of running into each other at jam sessions over twenty years. We’ve liked playing with each other in those situations because we both know a million tunes, including a lot that people don’t know. He’s perfect because of that: This record was conceived as a jam session with friends. That’s why I wanted a live audience—not an audience of strangers, but musicians, because of the energy you get. I wanted an audience that knows and plays this music so that the energy would

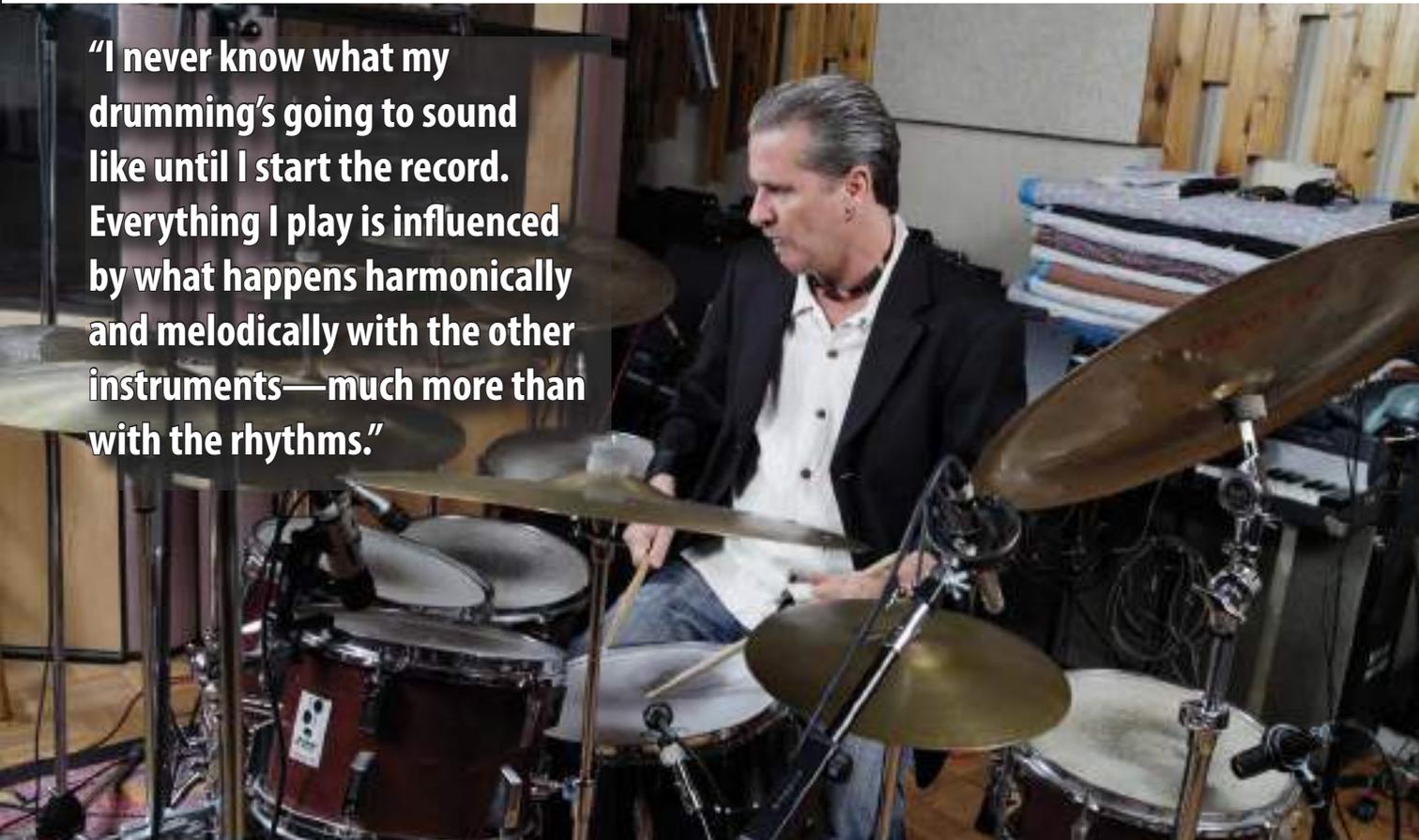
be even deeper for us.

Also, I wanted a very soulful sound for this record. Roy is one of the more soulful trumpet players today, and Cassandra is one of the more soulful singers. There’s nothing academic in either of them.

**MD:** Did the looser format result in some surprises for you?

**Gerry:** I didn’t find any big surprises, because I knew exactly who was on the record and what they would bring to it. But actually, every time I play, I never know what’s going to happen with *me*. Many

**“I never know what my drumming’s going to sound like until I start the record. Everything I play is influenced by what happens harmonically and melodically with the other instruments—much more than with the rhythms.”**



drummers I've talked to have a lot of things worked out that they want to showcase when they're doing a record. I *never* think like that. I've had people comment that I didn't do a certain thing on a record that they've heard me do before. Well, if it didn't happen *musically*, then I didn't go there. So I never know what my drumming's going to sound like until I start the record, because everything I play is influenced by what happens harmonically and melodically with the other instruments—much more than with the rhythms.

Harmonic and melodic ideas are what influence everything I play, no matter how simple or complex. When I write or arrange music, it never comes from the rhythm first. Never. Most drummers' records I hear today sound like they are much more influenced by rhythms first, and the harmonic and melodic ideas get put on top. I can't conceptualize like that, because using harmonic and melodic ideas first will give me so much more to work with, to react to

rhythmically. It will dictate a wider palette of dynamics, sound, colors, and, most important, the feel I put behind the music.

**MD:** For a straight-ahead session, you were using quite a large kit with a huge array of cymbals. And you had two snares at the ready.

**Gerry:** The other snare drum was tuned really low so it sounded like the heads were all bent up. I've used it with Ron and Kenny before. But this time it was never touched. The music didn't go there; nobody played anything harmonically or sonically that dictated its use.

There were eleven cymbals, including hi-hats. I used several kinds of China cymbals and a few styles of rides. Actually, only two cymbals were crashes. Two or three cymbals never got used, because, once again, the music didn't go there. If, for instance, Ron took a solo where a thinner cymbal might have worked, I would have used it—but he didn't do that.

People commented about the setup on

Facebook: "Geez! Gerry, could you have added more cymbals or drums?" Then I played the record for someone and he said, "It sounds like you're just playing on a small drumset." It's like the parts of the piano that never got played: It was *there*, but the pianist didn't go as high or low as he could have. And I'm sure Ron didn't play every note available to him on the bass.

**MD:** You played your kit outside the booth, wide open on the floor. Was that a "live" sonic choice, or was it for better personal connection and interplay?

**Gerry:** Mostly the latter. I knew we would play differently hearing all of the instruments in one room—especially *dynamically*. Also, it was really important to capture the sound of Ron's bass playing live.

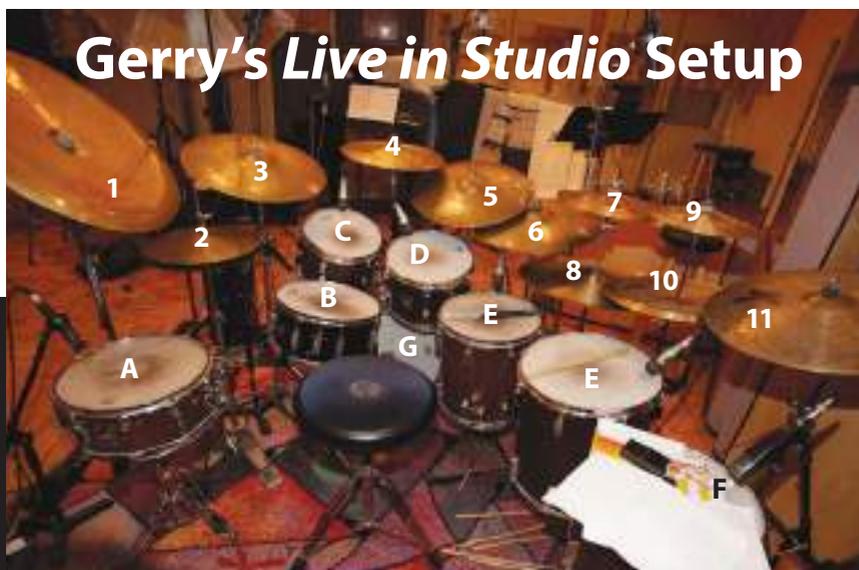
With Ron and Kenny, we all have a sound that may be a little bit different when we record, but we're all very sound conscious when we play, using dynamics. So it was actually easy to record this way, because dynamically it's not about us *separately*. It's about us creating a sound together, so it doesn't matter how it's recorded. We're all very capable of controlling our instruments to have a cohesive sound.

**MD:** Would recording out of the booth always be preferable to you?

**Gerry:** They're just different [settings], so you have to play differently. I don't mind wearing headphones and being locked in a corner. Each situation brings out something different in your playing.

Whatever adjustments I have to make, I don't feel limited by that. Even if I don't hear the music that great on my headset, it's easy for me to adjust based on intuition. Either you're an extension of the music or the music is an extension of you. I've always looked at it that music is an extension of me—which is either good or bad, but that's just the way it is. So nothing can really throw me. If the room's really echo-y, I'll play in a way that makes it work. If the room is dry, I may have more options. To me, it doesn't matter. Making adjustments is a skill in itself.

I look at drumming as something that's always going to be influenced by everything around me—it's not about trying to control everything. If you play like that, you can hear it in the music. The drums are just an extension of what I'm hearing, what I'm feeling emotionally and psychologically. I use that and it comes out in the drums. That way, it's never the same.



Gibbs picks and chooses drums and cymbals for each gig he does; here's the setup he brought to Systems Two studios in Brooklyn to record *Live in Studio*.

**Drums:** 1980s Sonor

- A. 5.5x14 snare
- B. 1933 Slingerland Radio King snare
- C. 8x12 tom
- D. 9x13 tom
- E. 14x14 floor tom
- F. 16x18 floor tom
- G. 18x20 bass drum

**Heads:** Remo Coated Ambassador tom and snare batters, Diplomat snare-sides, and Coated Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter

**Sticks:** Vic Firth 7A nylon-tip, Zildjian brushes

**Cymbals:** Zildjian

- 1. 22" Oriental China Trash
- 2. 14" 1950s hi-hats
- 3. 20" 1930s K ride with rivets, owned by Tony Williams (with his signature on bottom) and given to Gibbs by Jim Keltner (with his signature on top)
- 4. 16" Paper Thin crash
- 5. 20" 1930s K ride with rivets
- 6. 20" 1950s A ride with rivets (from Billy Higgins)
- 7. 15" Custom Hybrid Trash crash
- 8. 22" Swish Knocker
- 9. 13" Re-Mix Jungle hi-hat top
- 10. 20" prototype China
- 11. 22" K Custom High Definition ride with rivets

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Interview and photos by Miguel Monroy

# Gary Clark Jr.'s Johnny Radelat

**Drums:** Gretsch Catalina Club in white marine pearl finish

- A. 7x13 Brooklyn series chrome-over-steel snare
- B. 14x14 floor tom
- C. 16x18 bass drum

**Cymbals:** Sabian

- 1. 15" Artisan series hi-hats
- 2. 18" Hand Hammered Mini-Bell ride (19" HHX Omni crash/ride swapped in for different songs)
- 3. 22" HHX Omni ride

**Heads:** Evans Power Center Reverse Dot snare batter, Onyx tom batter and Genera Resonant bottom, and EMAD Clear bass drum batter and EQ3 Reso Black front head

**Hardware:** Gibraltar cymbal stands, Pearl hi-hat pedal, DW 9000 series bass drum pedal, Roc-n-Soc hydraulic throne

**Sticks:** Promark 526 "the Bulb" Billy Ward hickory signature model, 5A Pro-Round wood tip, and stick wraps

**Electronics:** ddrum Chrome Elite triggers and DDTI trigger interface

**Mics:** Audio-Technica 4040 large-diaphragm condensers, Telefunken M80 dynamic (snare top), various others



venues, from arena shows to festivals to small clubs. I feel like different drums do different things in different rooms. Being that I have my kick monitored so well, I don't really need the size in a room like this amphitheater.

"When we first started out, we were playing small clubs where sometimes your kit is barely miked. I used to use bigger drums to get bigger sounds, to compete with loud guitar amps and to get sound out to the back row of the room. Now that we upgraded venues, I don't need to rely on the acoustics and size of the drums as much. I don't need to push as much air from the drum, as everything is miked and monitored correctly. Sometimes a smaller, tighter sound is better for rooms like this. It's natural to think the opposite: bigger drums

for a bigger room. But that's not necessarily the case once everything is miked and running through a sound system with subwoofers."

Radelat finishes up by talking about his snare choice for the evening. "I usually sit down with our front-of-house sound engineer. I like to bring at least two or three drums with me. We'll check the acoustics of the room and see what sounds best. Today we went with a Brooklyn series 7x13 chrome-over-steel. It's got a lot of depth and fatness to it. What I like about the 13" diameter is that it gives me a little more legroom. It makes for comfort behind the kit, which is one of the most important things to me. And the depth of it gives me the bigness I would get from a 14" snare."

As much as we love checking out giant kits, it's nice to see someone walk on stage in front of thousands of people and make some incredible music with nothing more than three drums. Gary Clark Jr. drummer Johnny Radelat welcomes us to the Iroquois Amphitheater in Louisville for a tour of his kit and shares why he transitioned to fewer and smaller drums. "The bare minimum always makes me play better, because it makes me focus on the snare/kick/hi-hat groove—the meat and potatoes," he explains. "Throughout the [show], I switch out the crash. I'll switch it out from song to song sometimes. That's something I got from watching Steve Jordan. People always ask, 'Why don't you just set up another stand?' Well, the more things you have up here, the more distractions, and the more likely I am to tinker and do more than I need to be doing."

Radelat also addresses using a small bass drum in such a large venue. "A lot of people have seen me play a 26" drum," he says. "I like to change it up. We play so many different kinds of



For a video tour of Radelat's kit, visit [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

# Practi-Patterns

## A Dozen of the Most Common Kick/Snare Figures

by Rich Redmond

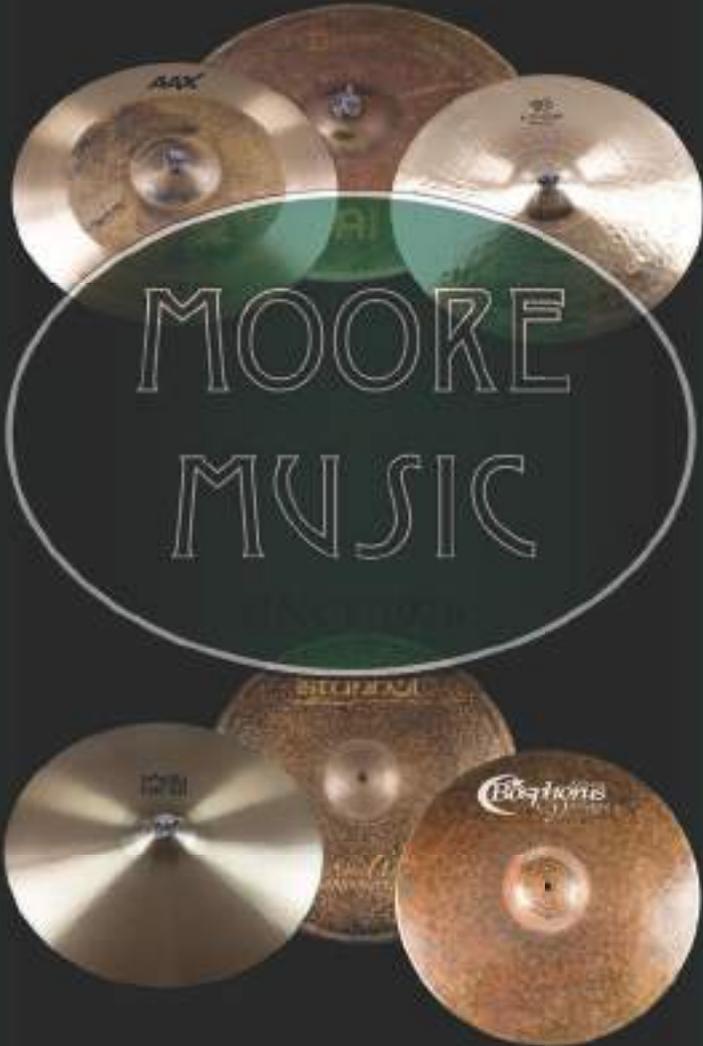
MUSIC KEY	
R.C.	✕
S.D.	●
B.D.	○
H.H.	✕
w/foot	

One of the best things you can do in your drumming study is work on practical techniques, stickings, grooves, and fills that can be applied in real-life situations on the bandstand and in the studio. After playing a wide variety of music in my formative years, and then becoming part of Nashville's touring and recording scene, I've made note of a handful of these "practi-patterns" that have shown their face time and time again.

These patterns are based on a specific relationship between the kick drum and snare. Variations in feel can be created by applying a variety of rhythms with your right hand and left foot; the right hand can create different textures on, for example, the ride cymbal, cowbell, or floor tom. Be sure to practice the exercises at all dynamic levels (soft to loud) and at many different tempos. Also play them straight and swung. Playing with a metronome or click track will help you to further lock in a solid time feel. Try experimenting with colors on the drums as well. Play the snare part as rimclicks, and also try playing 8ths or 16ths with a tambourine, shaker, or maraca instead of the ride. Have fun!

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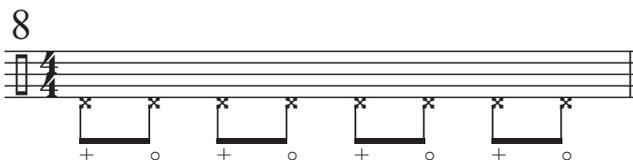
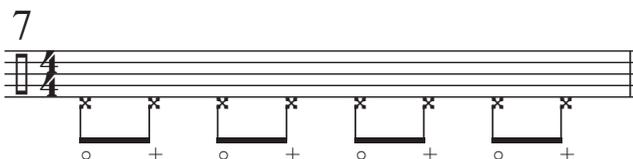
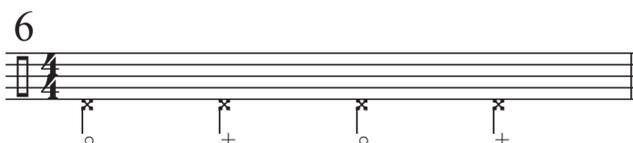
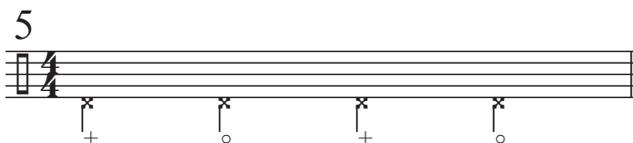
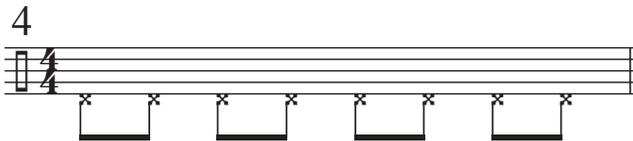
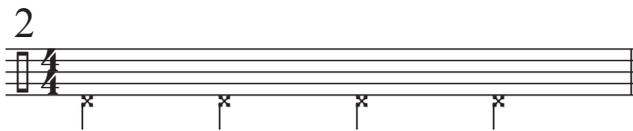
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For a video demo of these examples, visit [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).





# Ghost Notes 101

## 6 Approaches to Give Your Grooves Greater Dimension

by Jim Riley

**MUSIC KEY**

H.H. x  
S.D. ( )  
B.D. ( )  
Ghost note ( )

One thing that separates the novice drummer from the professional is the ability to play grooves that have dimension. Ghost notes are a great way to achieve this, but first you need to understand, on an elemental level, how to create them. In this lesson I'm going to show you the six ghost-note elements that I use when playing music that's based on a 16th-note subdivision.

When implementing ghost notes, I recommend playing a rimshot on the backbeats (the snare hits on beats 2 and 4), while making sure to play the ghost notes in the center of the drum at a low volume. The wide dynamic range that those two techniques create will give your grooves greater depth and dimension.

The first ghost-note approach is the single tap. These notes fall in between where the hi-hat is played. This first example has the single tap being played on the "a" of beat 4.

Here's how I might expand the use of the single tap within one measure.

The next ghost-note element is the drag, which is positioned in the groove between the hi-hat notes, similar to the single tap. The drag can be performed by playing a buzz in the center of the snare, but I often prefer to play it as two distinct notes. Here's the drag played on the "a" of beat 4.

This is how I would typically combine the use of single taps and drags in a measure of groove.

One of my favorite ghost-note elements is this next one, which I call the "backbeat stutter." It employs a ghost note immediately following the backbeat. The challenge is to be

able to play a rimshot on the backbeat and immediately transition to playing a light tap in the center of the drum. This will take some practice, but the payoff will be well worth it. Here's a simple example using the backbeat stutter.

This groove uses the three ghost-note elements we've covered so far.

The last ghost-note element I want to show you is what I call the "middle two." It places the ghost notes on the middle two notes of a four-note grouping (the "e" and "&" of the beat).

This example combines all four ghost-note elements (single tap, drag, backbeat stutter, and middle two) in a one-measure groove.

Shifting gears, we can also apply the ghost-note concept to rhythms played on the hi-hat. There are two variations that I commonly use. The first places an additional hi-hat note on the "e" of the beat to create a three-note figure on the hi-hat.

The following example shows how you can combine the hi-hat ghost notes with some of the previous ghost-note approaches for the snare.

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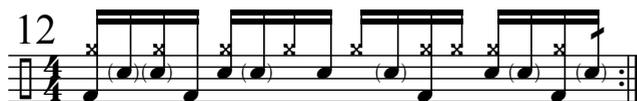
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Our second hi-hat variation adds a note on the “a” of the beat.



Our final example combines the second hi-hat variation with all of the snare ghost-note elements. I hope these ideas help open you up to a wider world of groove possibilities.



**Jim Riley** is the drummer and bandleader for Rascal Flatts. He is an endorsing artist for Ludwig, Sabian, Remo, Shure, Gibraltar, Vater, and Latin Percussion.

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# The Reeducation of Drumming Education

## Stop Teaching and Become a Mentor

by Ben Sesar

**M**y ongoing journey as both student and teacher has been a struggle, to say the least. As a student, it's easy to get caught up in the abundance of general information, well-meaning advice, and obligatory shoulds and should nots for achieving proficiency on the instrument. Now that I've sorted out this mess for myself, the teacher side of me strives to do the same for my students. They all want the same thing I've always wanted: to be great. I've made it my mission to carve a straighter path to greatness, not only for myself but also for those willing to learn. In doing so, however, I've had to question the current standards regarding the way we educate ourselves and our students.

The saying goes: Those who can, do; those who can't, teach. I'd like to think of myself as proof that this statement is false. I've been fortunate enough to achieve heights in the music industry that my friends and I only dreamed of as kids. While I take a great amount of pride in the accomplishments of my career, I've always measured true success in terms of mastering my craft. Always a student of drumming, I still come home from the road or the studio and go to work, vigorously striving to learn and improve my skills, rather than sit back and just collect my check. This dedication to self-improvement allows me to transition into teaching naturally as I refine my catalog of knowledge gained through decades of experience and keen observation.

### Teachers Versus Mentors

Music isn't like other areas of study such as math or science. Those subjects deal strictly in facts and formulas. Music does have formulaic aspects, but due to its creative nature, a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work. There needs to be some customization, especially for intermediate and advanced students. I've lost count of the number of students who have come to me with the desire to grow but can't get past this wall of confusion built by the white noise of recycled drum jargon.

My travels as the student/teacher have led me to a profound realization: There's a huge difference between those who teach and those who impart wisdom. My assertion is that teachers are people who recycle knowledge passed on to them by an outside source. Many teachers get by without firsthand or personal experience with the material. A teacher may be well read and conceptually in the know, but it's uncommon for him or her to have gone through the experiment of being a practicing musician.

On the other end of the spectrum is the mentor. Mentors tend to be those who know things on a deeper level. They earn their knowledge through practical and personal experience rather than through books and theories alone. A mentor is capable of spinning these personal experiences into inspiring lessons that resonate in the minds of students throughout their lives. A mentor not only presents the material but can also make the case as to why and how the material will nourish the student's growth.

### The "Take Your Medicine" Approach

As a young adult, I studied with a variety of teachers. They were all great people who meant well, but unfortunately the lessons had one thing in common: They felt less like we were working toward my personal goals and more like a prescription for a sinus infection. In most instances my teachers neglected to make clear how the lessons would impact my development on the instrument. I'd leave knowing that the material was good for me but unsure of why.

There is so much jargon in the education community that's been recycled for so long. Few know where it originated, let alone how it helps build a path to greatness. I challenge all teachers out there to reevaluate the material they put forth and define the objective of each lesson. Be sure to convey this objective to students so that

they know how and why the material will foster their growth.

For example, don't just show a student how to hold the sticks. Explain why holding the sticks a certain way will either increase or decrease fluidity on the drums. Many times students come to me and don't know why they're doing the things they do. I've gotten into the habit of making a case for every lesson I teach. My students leave knowing how and why the lesson will contribute to their musical goals.

### Practice What You Preach

It's not enough to rely solely on a verbal method when conveying lessons to students. In addition to knowing the material conceptually, I find it necessary to put everything I teach into practice and demonstrate mastery over it. Not only does this solidify my credibility as a teacher, but it also benefits the student tremendously by delivering the finished product. This tactic puts the material into proper context while offering the student something tangible to work toward. A masterful demonstration poses the promise of a reward for hard work and has the potential to fuel a great deal of inspiration. As a student, I've always related better to teachers who possess a firm intellectual grasp of the lesson and can also demonstrate physical command on the instrument. The marriage of these two components will likely invoke long-lasting trust, respect, and loyalty.

### Use Analogies

One of the most effective yet most overlooked teaching techniques is to use analogies. When implemented correctly, analogies offer an easy way to communicate complex or unfamiliar ideas, making them simple for students to understand. The basic idea is to relate the material to something the student already knows. For example, when I'm asked about increasing hand speed, I relate it back to learning to ride a bike. Most of us couldn't pedal fast at first,

because we were too busy learning to control and balance the bike. Once we gained control and balance, we could pedal all over the neighborhood as fast as possible. The same thing applies in drumming. You can't have speed if you don't develop precise control and balance over your movements.

In addition, many drummers attempt to develop speed by adopting a weight-lifting approach where they practice on pillows or use ultra-heavy sticks. To this, I would continue with my bike-riding analogy: No weight training is necessary when learning to ride. The repetitive motion of the activity itself develops all the muscles necessary for speed. Drumming mirrors that concept. My students benefit greatly from analogies like these, because they demystify the process.

### Setting Goals: The Blueprint for Success

Whether you're a teacher, a student, or both, studying music can feel like a never-ending quest. It's overwhelming when you think of all the stuff out there to learn. The process of sifting through this information tends to lead many students on a path of confusion and uncertainty, prompting questions such as: Where do I start? What do I learn next? What's most important?

One way to simplify the process is to have your students set some very clear goals. Think of practice like constructing a complex building one brick at a time. Setting goals is like drawing the blueprint. Once the goals are set, you simply need to follow the blueprint, so that you always know where you are and where you're going next. A lot of drummers get bogged down at this stage because they're uncertain about what they're trying to achieve. Ask some questions, like: What styles of music do you love? What bands or artists would you want to play with? Who are the drummers you want to be like? What qualities of these drummers would you most like to embody?

As a student, you are the general

contractor of your craft. It's critical to keep the how, what, and why of everything in constant focus. Make sure the material being studied directly relates to specific musical goals.

### Final Thoughts

Hopefully some of this information can guide you and your students onto a straighter path toward achieving particular goals. Over the years I've seen an increase in the amount of information but a decrease in mentorship to help sort this information into proper context. At times it's necessary to step back and revisit the basics of how we go about teaching and learning.

**Students:** When you're searching for someone to study with, be mindful of the teacher-versus-mentor disparity I defined earlier. I believe it's more rewarding in the end to study with someone who can summon personal experience and drive to inspire and motivate students. And it's okay to ask questions about the lesson material your teachers put forth. Make sure the lessons relate to your personal goals in some way, but keep an open mind to trying things that seem outside your comfort zone.

**Educators:** Take a deep look in the mirror and assess the type of educator you tend to be. There's always room for improvement when it comes to impacting the lives of your students. Becoming a mentor involves making a choice. You can choose to simply pass along information during the lesson, or you can invest further by harnessing your personal experiences as you journey with your students through music. These personal experiences should be the backbone of what you impart, because *you* are the living proof of everything you teach.



**Ben Sesar** is the drummer for the multi-platinum-selling country artist Brad Paisley. He offers private online lessons and prerecorded video packs through his website, [bensesar.com](http://bensesar.com).

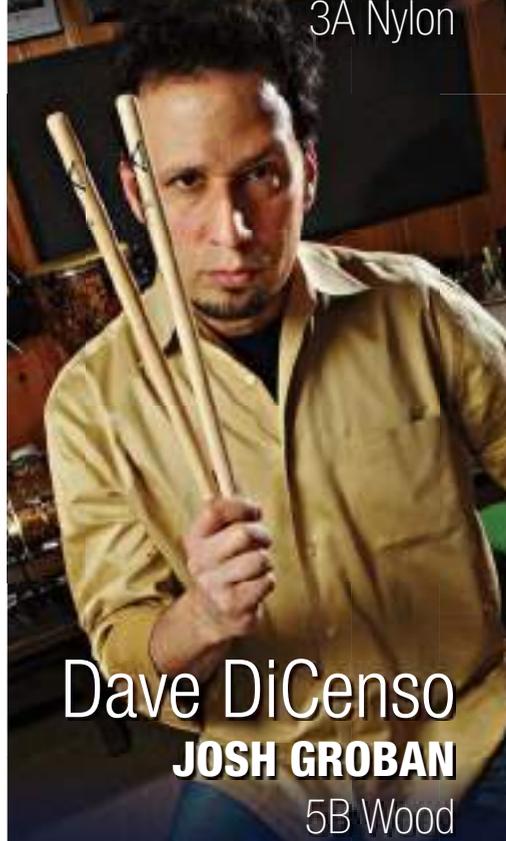


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# Raw Speed Bass Drum Workout

Increase Your BPM With a Focused 12-Minute Routine

by Mike Johnston

MUSIC KEY	
H.H.	x *
S.D.	•
B.D.	•

This bass drum workout is all about developing your raw speed. Raw speed is very different from pattern speed. Pattern speed requires your brain to keep track of a specific sequence of rights, lefts, and kicks, and you have to play a sequence for a long time while your brain memorizes it before you can speed up. Raw speed is referring to how fast you can physically play something that doesn't require a lot of thought or pattern memorization. Think of it like this: Maybe you can play singles and doubles at 160 bpm but you can play paradiddles at only 110 bpm. That drop in speed doesn't make sense, since paradiddles are made up of singles and doubles. But the problem isn't with your raw speed; it's with your brain's ability to keep track of the patterns.

Now let's get your foot blazing with my personal raw speed workout. This twelve-minute program uses four exercises that are played for three minutes each. Each exercise focuses on a different aspect of your bass drum development, including singles, doubles, triples, and mixed subdivisions.

When you begin each exercise, start a timer. The first minute should be played at about 60 percent of your

maximum speed, and your focus should be on clarity and absolute perfect execution of the exercise. For the next minute, push into the 80 percent range of your max, but still focus on clarity and being conscious of your technique. Ask yourself: *Could I exert less effort and get the same output of speed and clarity?* The third minute is all about maxing out. Use 100 percent of your speed—everything you've got! This minute will get a bit sloppy, but the goal is to tear down the fast-twitch muscle fibers so that they're forced to rebuild faster and stronger in the days to come.

I would recommend doing this workout at least five times a week for at least three months. Make sure to write down your maximum bpm for each of the exercises. That way you'll have something to compare your growth to at the end of each month.

Exercise 1 focuses on single kicks. The great thing about this exercise is that your bass drum speed is not the only thing being developed. You'll also develop independence and overall clarity when playing singles between your hands and foot.

1

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

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

The goal of Exercise 2 is to help build the raw speed of your double strokes on the bass drum, but there's an added bonus of tightening up your doubles with your hands as well.

2

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

R L R L R L R L R/L R/L R/L R/L R/L R/L R/L R/L



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Exercise 3 focuses on triples by using a looped right-hand paradiddle while your bass drum foot mimics the right hand. Once your right hand and foot get the pattern on autopilot, you can start messing around with left-hand variations.

3

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

Exercise 4 combines singles and doubles into mixed subdivisions. This ensures that your foot is responsive to changes in the rhythm and is not just gliding through a repetitive motion.

4

R R R R R R R R R R R R R R R R

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

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# Triplet Fill Concepts

## Part 1: Three Over Four

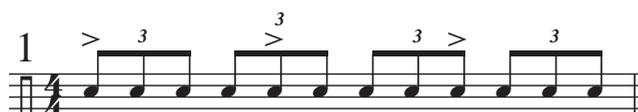
by John Xepoleas

MUSIC KEY

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

Welcome to the first of three lessons in our "Triplet Fill Concepts" series. In this part, I'm going to show you how to play some simple three-over-four ideas using accents over triplets.

Here's the basic pattern. Notice that there are three accents evenly placed over the four quarter notes of the measure. This is what we mean by the term *three over four*. Practice the pattern until you're comfortable, and be sure to use a metronome.



1

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

Now add a bass drum to the pattern on each quarter note. This helps give you a deeper understanding of how the triplet accents land with the beat.



2

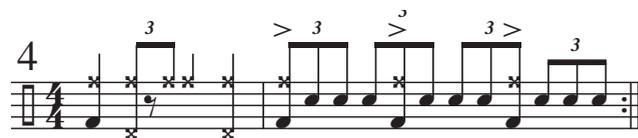
Here's the first version of the fill. To start, use an alternating (RLRL) sticking, and play the accents using the ride cymbal and bass drum.



3

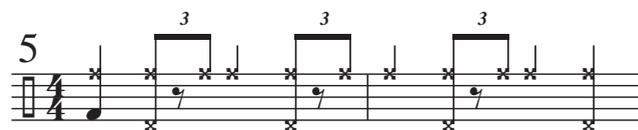
R L R L R L R L R L R L

Now let's play one bar of swing time into one bar of the fill.

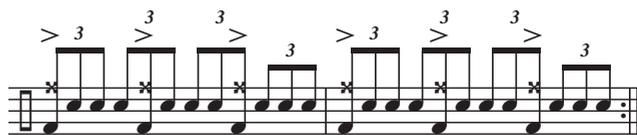


4

Next, play two bars of swing time into two bars of the fill. (Practice all of the fills in this lesson series in similar two- and four-bar time/fill formats.)



5



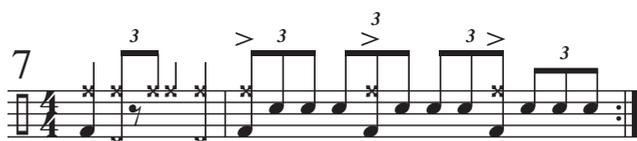
Now play the fill using an RLLL sticking.



6

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

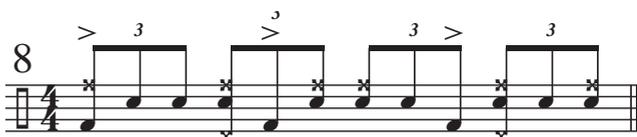
Here's that version played after a measure of time. Do the same thing in the four-bar format as well (two bars of time and then two bars of fill).



7

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

In this next example, use the RLLL sticking from the previous example, but maintain a swing ride pattern as you play the fill.



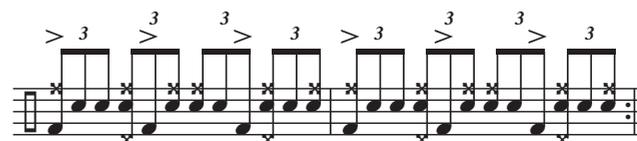
8

L L L L L L L L L L L L

Practice that version coming out of one and two bars of time as well. Here's the four-bar version. See you next time!



9



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

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# Endorsements

## Part 1: Let's Get Real

by Russ Miller



**E**ndorsement contracts with instrument companies is a hot topic. Covering the subject has been requested so much, and I've been asked about it so often, that I decided to do a two-part column. To get the truth out, I enlisted three of the top artist-relations directors in the drum world to help this month. They were very candid! Their input will help shed some light on the top questions regarding endorsements.

**"People who want the most approval get the least, and people who need approval the least get the most."**

—Wayne Dyer,  
American psychologist and author

### How Endorsement Deals Work

The job of the companies is to sell drums—not to give them away. The only reason for a company to offer something at no cost, or for less money, is marketing. If an artist of prominence is seen or heard playing a particular company's instruments, the public may be sparked to purchase the same or similar gear. This plays to the consumer's hopes of sounding or looking like that artist. That's why you often see athletes endorsing shoes, clothes, golf clubs, and so on—these are great marketing deals for the company. Top players in any field help validate the product. The company wants the customer to think: *If she digs it, then it must be good.* Instrument manufacturers are no different.

The first level of confusion is in regard to how some people feel that having an endorsement with a company somehow validates them or makes them a "famous" artist. The truth is the exact opposite. If you're not already visible or influential, there's no reason to give you an endorsement deal in the first place. If an artist *does* have influence on a great number of people, it can be cheaper and more effective for a company to give that person an instrument than to invest money into other forms of marketing. In that scenario, both the artist and the company win.

I asked the veteran player and artist-relations manager Bob Terry (Line 6, Yamaha DTX, and now NFuzed Electronics) about the usefulness of artist programs these days. "They are still very effective if used properly," he says. "It has to add to the bottom line for the company. Both sides need to profit. Too many artists only think about what they are getting out of it. How many people are going to buy this equipment just because you're using it?"

Joe Testa (Warner Bros., Yamaha Drums, and now director of artist relations for Vic Firth) answers similarly when posed this question. "The economy has changed the game in endorsements," he explains. "Artists want to save money by getting a deal, but the company needs to make money by giving the deal. We are dealing with the same economy."

### How Endorsements Have Changed

I recently said in an interview: "The term *endorsement* has totally flipped meaning in the past ten years or so. When I was a kid, Buddy Rich endorsed Slingerland drums. This meant if Buddy says they're

great, then they're great! It surely didn't mean, 'Slingerland says Buddy Rich is great.'" Buddy validated the product—not vice versa.

Somewhere in the past ten to fifteen years, though, the meaning of endorsements has flipped in the eyes of the artists. There is a running theme of, "I'm endorsed by so-and-so company, so I must be good." That change in perspective from artists has led to the downward slide of this arm of company marketing. Industry veteran Joe Hibbs (Promark, Tama, Premier, and now Mapex and Sonor) says, "There's almost an expectation from younger players that they need an endorsement as a part of their résumé. You are not going to get hired for a session, tour, or band because of what kind of drums you use. Your playing level, sound, and professionalism are the key."

Earning an endorsement deal should not be about becoming famous or getting things for free. To be honest, when I worked my way up to a position where I was getting free gear from the companies I endorsed, I could have afforded to buy it. I was already making a good living playing. When I was a kid, I couldn't afford an 8" splash cymbal. I sold toys at yard sales to buy cymbals and drums. But even though I didn't have any money for equipment, I would never have dreamed of contacting Yamaha to try to get an endorsement. Steve Gadd and Vinnie Colaiuta were Yamaha endorsers, and they represented the best of the best in the drum industry. I never looked at it like Yamaha would validate me. I knew I would need to be in an influential place as a player for something like that to happen.

Companies should *want* you to endorse their products because it will affect their sales and their perception by the buying public. They're not in business to affect the public's perception of you.

### Types of Deals

Yes, there are different levels of endorsement deals. A smart company will not hand out gear to a player right out of the gate. There are commonly four levels of endorsements. I've had deals on each rung through the years. This is how it usually works, from high to low.

**The marquee artist:** This is the top of the list and represents the company's image and direction globally.

**The international artist:** You are recognized internationally in the business and are a crucial part of the company's roster.

**The national/domestic artist:** These are the top players in their country. They are not well known internationally but have a big influence on their country of origin. They can also be players in highly visible, national-level bands.

**The regional or developing artist:** These players are influential in a regional market. They can be college percussion-department heads, top teachers, or great players in an emerging band or local scene. The companies will look for some of these types of players to invest in for long-term development.

An effective artist roster for a company should include players at each of those levels. If the roster starts to bloat with too much of one category, there will be problems. Too many marquee names will kill the budget. Too many international players will put a lot of pressure on global branches, regional budgets, and resources. A large number of national-level artists will be very difficult for the country's staff to maintain. National deals aren't handled by the

company's main international office, so they can load down a smaller country's staff. And having too many developing artists makes a company seem desperate. It also dramatically affects sales to the dealers, because it's essentially turning the dealer's customers into "artists" who are now buying direct from the company.

"Some of the companies out there take too many regional players out of the retail cycle," Hibbs says. "Having too many regional or non-national-level players on a roster hurts the dealer base. We should all know when it's time to take the artist out of the retail purchase circle. A local retailer can't support a national or international artist's needs. *That's* when we take over. Doing that too soon hurts everybody."

Most regional endorsement deals allow the artist to buy equipment at the same cost as a dealer (aka "dealer cost"). National deals usually include one free set of hardware and maybe a free snare, and then the artist buys drumsets at dealer cost. Only when you get an international-level deal will you be offered higher-price equipment, like drumsets.

There are also two types of endorsements that are seldom talked about publicly. They're what's known as "branding" and "influencing" deals. Branding artists are ones that might not be at a high level of playing but are extremely visible. They put the company

logo on television frequently, play large tours and award shows, and so on. They aren't going to get drummers to run to the store to buy drums, but they give awareness to the brand name. These types of artists, usually in famous bands, will sometimes get national- or international-level deals because of the band's fan base and visibility, and not necessarily because of their playing ability.

Influencing artists are great players who have a national or international name. They validate the product and will make consumers pay attention to the company's products just by playing them. Some of these artists might not have near the global visibility of a branding artist, but they are the best in the field and will have a much bigger effect on the bottom line for the company. The best-case scenario for a company is to sign an artist with both facets: a terrific player who knows the equipment, gets great sounds, works a lot, has a long-term career, and is very visible. These are the marquee candidates.

Join me next month for part two of our discussion on endorsements. We'll talk about how to know when you're ready for an endorsement, the qualifications for getting deals, and why some drummers have more than others. See you then!

**Russ Miller** has played on recordings with combined sales of more than 26 million copies. For more info, visit [russmiller.com](http://russmiller.com).



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[zildjian.com](http://zildjian.com)



## Vic Firth Steve Gadd Limited Edition Products

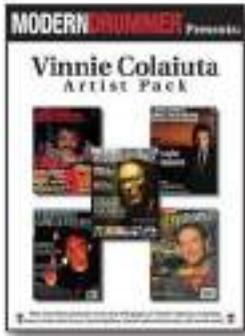
To commemorate Steve Gadd's seventieth-birthday milestone, Vic Firth is launching limited edition products, including the Gadd Padd and signature sticks and brushes with new design features. The single-sided Gadd Padd has a .1875"-thick black silicone rubber pad mounted to a round 8" wood base and is decorated with a special logo. Steve Gadd barrel-tip signature sticks now feature an improved black finish and are labeled with a special chrome-colored logo. The 15.75" x.550" sticks are available with wood or nylon tips.

Years ago, Gadd put out a set of wire brushes designed to prevent snagging on coated heads by slightly angling the wires at the playing end. He recently refined the design with a new angle that allows the wires to glide even better across the head. The retractable pull rod now includes a third crimp for more control of the spread.

[vicfirth.com](http://vicfirth.com)

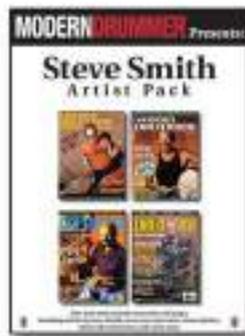
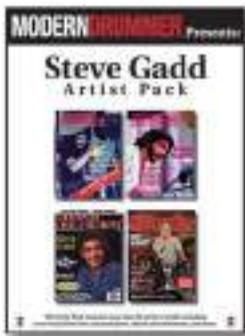


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# COLLECTOR'S CORNER



## William F. Ludwig II's

### "DFS" Black Beauty Snare

by Harry Cangany



A little over twenty years ago, I saw this snare drum for the first time. It was sitting on a shelf in the basement of William F. Ludwig II's home in suburban Chicago. He and I had lunch that day in one of his favorite restaurants, and afterward we went back to his house. In the basement I saw keepsakes from his and his father's career.

Bill told me to pick out three drums for purchase, and I couldn't believe my good luck. The choice was hard. I decided on the Tom Mills metal snare that started the Ludwig company, a gold-plated and engraved Triumphal, and this 6.5x14 Black Beauty, with the letters "DFS" engraved on the shell.

Bill explained that those letters were the initials of a former employee who wanted his own Ludwig Deluxe, the original name of the model we now call the Black Beauty. The employee wasn't a drummer, but he wanted a fine, personalized example of the Deluxe, so he had the engraver add the initials inside one of the six-leaf designs. Bill told me that the process of finishing this particular drum stopped production—there was probably some gawking going on. And when his dad, the president of the company, William F. Ludwig Sr., found out, he was not happy and let everyone hear about it.

We don't know who DFS was, and Bill couldn't remember his name, but one day the former employee contacted Bill and

gave him the drum. It had never been played. For fifty years, it lived in a closet.

Bill used the drum. He outfitted it with plastic heads and gut snares, because he played percussion with a symphonic orchestra. The original wire snares under the top head are still there. This is a classic Ludwig Super Sensitive snare with a two-piece soldered shell. Unlike many other Deluxe/Black Beauty snares, the DFS has chromed metal parts. It was built about 1930, at a time when the standard art-gold Deluxe finish, with a tinted lacquer sprayed on buffed-brass parts, had begun to fall out of favor. Chrome didn't tarnish, discolor, or chip off, so it became much more popular.

The DFS is a beautiful, unrestored snare that was probably built in the months before Ludwig owner Conn moved its factory from Chicago to Elkhart, Indiana, to join Leedy in the Buescher building.

Over the years, Ludwig has used pictures of the DFS snare when advertising the company's heritage, as it was William F. Ludwig II's personal Black Beauty. The Tom Mills snare is now in the National Music Museum in Vermillion, South Dakota, along with other drums gifted by Ludwig. The engraved Triumphal now belongs to Bun E. Carlos. But this, the unofficial king of the Black Beauty line, still lives with me.



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# CRITIQUE

## RECORDINGS

### Sopko Laswell Pridgen *Sopko Laswell Pridgen*

**Three players meet in mind, body, and spirit on this improvisational, all-fingers-flying recording, strutting wildly without regard to convention.**

For fans of **Thomas Pridgen's** work with the Mars Volta, the Memorials, and Suicidal Tendencies, this album is a chance to hear the thirty-two-year-old drummer in an open-ended situation where anything goes. Though the music was entirely improvised in the studio, some of the tracks here are the result of guitarist Mike Sopko's computer arrangements, in which he combined individual parts that weren't necessarily recorded at the same time. Remarkably, it's impossible to tell the true improvisations from the computer-assisted tracks, so unrestrained are these dudes. But the cuts are by no means unorganized. This is big-ears territory, with each musician stretching madly, but only in relation to the others' output.

"Airplane Mode," one of the few tracks to ride an even 2-and-4 pulse, finds Pridgen punctuating as Sopko and bassist Bill Laswell float and fly. The drummer starts to blow freely midway through, his long streams of cymbal-tom combinations and hyper snare attacks driving the trio to absurdity. Pridgen slams another killer pocket on "MJ," nailing



unison figures with Sopko in a brash metal style before he jettisons his mates for a minute and a half of mind-bending hi-hat punches and tom rolls. Pridgen is ferocious throughout the track, gleefully filling every possible space as the others play a more atmospheric role.

"Buddy Rich" is another atmospheric foray, with Laswell and Sopko wailing like banshees as Pridgen maintains a groove of burning odd-meter groups, illustrated by snare/hi-hat/bell combinations and, amid the din, a full-set assault recalling Billy Cobham's kinetic drumming on Mahavishnu Orchestra's "Noonward Race."

"Detroit" is odd-meter-pocket terrain, with Laswell and Pridgen locking in as Sopko drapes guitar tapestries. Pridgen slowly expands the beat to include over-the-barline bass drum pistoning, before a straight 4/4 groove emerges and then is slowly disassembled.

Elsewhere, Pridgen plays through "Grazin" with one of his patented tom-heavy, pile-driving rhythms, as Laswell and Sopko ride the tumultuous beat like a two-headed cowboy busting a bronco. Laswell's beautiful if ominous electric bass opens "Shades of Sunny Days," roving formless with Sopko throughout, and sets up the 16th-note hi-hat pattern and shrapnel guitar intro of "Praxis," not coincidentally the handle of Laswell's long-running noise/art band.

Everyone's good name is upheld on this blitzkrieg release, opening the door for the follow-up recording already in the works. (mikesopko.com)

**Ken Micallef**



Sopko (left) and Pridgen: anything goes



**Tony MacAlpine**  
*Concrete Gardens*  
**Another ball of fire from one of the finalists in the Dream Theater drum chair sweepstakes of 2010.**

Those looking for their guitar-shred fix will surely find satisfaction from Tony MacAlpine's latest effort of prog-leaning instrumental rock. **Aquiles Priester** is

more than simply along for the ride, bringing muscle and a focused precision to the constant barrage of technical guitar wizardry throughout. The double bass work is freakishly tight (check out "Man in a Metal Cage"), and complex passages have interesting cymbal accents and offbeats, making it clear that Priester composes musical parts for the hands, even though the feet are providing the fire and drawing the attention. Some brief mid-tempo power-ballad grooving on "Napoleon's Puppet" offers a nice breather, but Priester keeps things mostly in the red on the majority of the tracks. The package includes a live-in-the-studio performance DVD, further proving Priester owns this material inside and out. (Sun Dog Records) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



**John Scofield** *Past Present*  
**The awesome power of four musical minds in total sync.**

John Scofield's previous quartet records with tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano and drummer **Bill Stewart** had a huge impact on post-bop performance writ large, and the guitarist's many collaborations with Stewart remain

go-to jazz recordings. While we await Stewart's next solo record (in the can), *Past Present*, on which Sco, Stewart, and Lovano are joined by upright bassist Larry Grenadier, is an excellent reminder of why the drummer remains such an incredible force. If anything, he's only improved. His touch is more badass and nasty, his swing feel somehow lighter yet more burning, his solo commentary an irresistible combination of itchy Roy Haynes ruffs, powerfully ascending tom fills, and heated vibrations, like dragon's breath roaring through his entire kit. Brilliant. (Impulse!) **Ken Micallef**

## MULTIMEDIA



●●●●●  
**Steps Beyond for Drum Kit**  
by Richard Jackson

*Steps Beyond* is a drumming math textbook dealing with familiar subjects like syncopation and metric modulation. It does this by way of subdividing pulses within a "rhythmic scale" based on numbers one through nine (essentially, nine different rhythms that the book references). Further sections superimpose that scale and imply different time signatures, leading into exhausting and exhaustive studies outside the norm, such as "512 Options of a Group of Nine," so you definitely won't be home for dinner. And while the info is neatly spelled out for you, advanced drummers with initiative can figure out some of this stuff before spending an eternity getting through hundreds of examples, simply by adding and removing rests and using a bit of imagination. The rest of us can use the book as a guide to shaking things up before eventually moving beyond the page. (\$24.99, richardjacksondrums.com)

**Ilya Stemkovsky**



●●●●●  
**The Drummer's Play-Along**  
by Cristiano Micalizzi

There's hardly a dearth of play-along books on the market, so the main question is, what makes *The Drummer's Play-Along* unique? The bulk of the material concentrates on forty songs of varying styles, including funk, jazz, and Afro-Cuban. Each style gets a detailed intro description and a full chart to help you fine-tune your reading. For instance, the section on rhythm and blues has four charts, gradually gaining in complexity. An MP3 CD is included with two tracks for each chart, one featuring all the instruments and the other with a click and without drums, so you can spend a while digesting small pieces of any given segment. The focus seems to be on all-around reading and execution without author Micalizzi delving too deep into any genre, so this would be handy for the weekend wedding band warrior looking for fresh ideas to apply throughout an eclectic set, or someone hoping to expand his or her studio work. (\$24.99, Alfred) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

## TAKING THE REINS



**Yonrico Scott** *Only a Smile*  
**The veteran Atlanta drummer ventures into fusion territory with compositions that are melodically engaging and always grooving.**

The latest solo album by the former Derek Trucks Band and current Royal Southern Brotherhood drummer opens in fine form with a pair of originals—"Swish," featuring an edgy staccato sax line percolating over a smooth rhythmic veneer, and "Dance of Life," on which Kofi Burbridge

(Tedeschi Trucks Band) handles the keyboards and crafts a gorgeous flute solo over a 7/8 pulse. (Bassist Todd Smallie, Scott's longtime foil in the Derek Trucks Band who provides sterling support throughout the album, also gets a moment in the sun here.) Next up, Scott tacks an abstract intro onto the set's only cover, Buddy Miles' classic "Them Changes," before having some fun with the vocal over a more syncopated beat than Miles originally created on his 1970 album of the same name (and subsequently on Jimi Hendrix's *Band of Gypsies*). Back to the originals, "Out of the Madness" recalls Chick Corea's classic Latin-fusion album *Leprechaun* and ends with a dynamic solo from Scott. The sinister vibe of "Crazy" spotlights the drummer's control and creativity, while the 6/8 "Ode to Ricky" takes a brief but welcome detour into Latin territory. The album closes with the title track, a contemporary R&B groover abetted by a strong vocal turn by Ronda Scott. *Only a Smile* is a drummer's record that drummers and non-drummers alike will dig. (Blue Canoe) **Robin Tolleson**

### Other Drummer-Leds to Check Out

**Rayford Griffin** Reflections of Brownie /// **Jerry Granelli** What I Hear Now /// **Phil Maturano** At Home Everywhere /// **Manu Delago** Silver Kobalt /// **Simon Phillips** Protocol III /// **Tim Kuhl** 1982 /// **Skoota Warner** Vignettes /// **Stephen Chopek** Things Moving on Their Own Together /// **Snorre Kirk Europa** /// **Phil Haynes** Sanctuary /// **Barry Altschul's 3Dom Factor** Tales of the Unforeseen /// **Steve Olson** The Ruthless Shapes of Paradise



# Dave DiCenso's *Rhythm and Drumming Demystified*

The dynamic, highly animated Boston-based drummer Dave DiCenso has earned a reputation as a masterful player with artists including Josh Groban, the Steve Morse Band, Hiromi, and Duran Duran. DiCenso, an associate professor of percussion at the prestigious Berklee College of Music, is also highly regarded as an educator and clinician—his performance at the 2006 Modern Drummer Festival, for instance, is considered by many as among the most musical in the event's history. In his new Alfred instructional book, *Rhythm and Drumming Demystified*, DiCenso aims to offer a strategy for developing a deep vocabulary on the drumkit, no matter the style or time signature.

Master educator Gary Chaffee and Dave's father, Dick DiCenso, a renowned teacher in the Boston area for more than fifty years, helped inspire and lay the groundwork for the concepts in *Rhythm and Drumming Demystified (RADD)*. "There are two primary concepts addressed in the book," DiCenso explains. "One is the idea that rhythm and time are better mastered with the mind than the body. It suggests that the role of the limbs is largely passive and submissive, that the mind is the master, the intelligence, and the generator of the time.

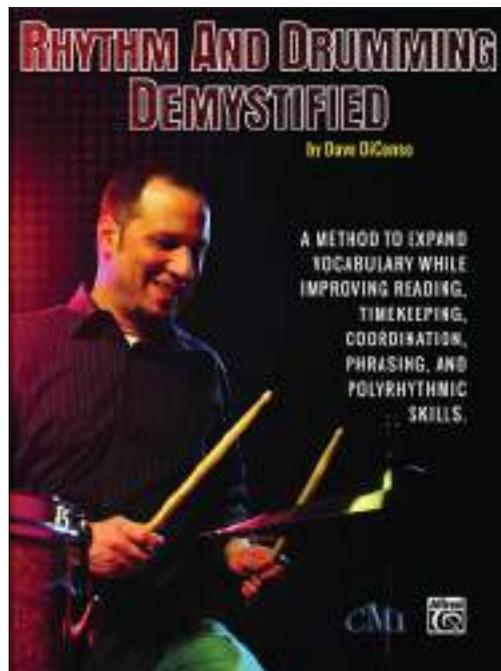
"The other concept is the permutation of basic rhythmic figures—a quarter note, for example—based on different grids, or subdivisions,

to create related figures that, when combined and interpreted, make it easier to play longer, more musical phrases."

What level of drumming proficiency is needed to get maximum results from the book? "A solid understanding of basic rhythmic theory is essential," DiCenso says. "Good hand and foot technique is going to help a lot too, though students should know that good technique does not guarantee good execution. Attention to posture is very helpful, and proper balance is essential to consistent execution."

Applying the book's ideas helped DiCenso when he joined Groban's band mid-tour. "I had to chart out all of his tunes, do one rehearsal, and play the next night for 10,000 people," the drummer says. "There was one big and essential fill in 5/4 in one of the songs that I absolutely had to count through for the first several shows or I would not have gotten it right. My ability to subdivide saved me on that one. The work I've done personally with the *RADD* concepts has helped me be able to hear and process more information at once. I call this aural/cerebral coordination."

DiCenso's motivation to publish



*RADD* was to give drummers a framework in which to apply the drumming vocabulary. "It's all about context," Dave says. "If you aren't aware of the rhythmic context in which you're playing, you're apt to sound more like you're reciting rudiments than playing music. The systems in this book give drummers a means to increase the fluency and flexibility of any sticking or groove, by giving them different contexts to run their vocabulary through.

"The goal is to think and speak the language of rhythm, not drumming," DiCenso adds. "Rhythm is the common language. It's the language all musicians speak. Drummers should not be speaking in five-stroke rolls and flam taps any more than a guitarist should be speaking in scales. These are a means to an end. The rudiments, etc., are the little picture. The goal is to think in terms of figures, which are the big picture. Much like when we learn a non-musical language, we have to focus on the letters and words until we reach our goal of being able to forget about these and focus on the topic we're speaking on. *RADD* gives drummers a means to do this." **Mike Haid**

## Study Suggestions

According to Dave DiCenso, the work required of the student is largely about applying "above the neck," or ATN, disciplines—vocalizing practices offered at the front of *Rhythm and Drumming Demystified*—to the rhythmic information found in the lessons.

"I like the student to take two approaches in tandem," DiCenso says. "First he or she works toward mastering all of the figures in the rhythm codes and groove applications with ATN disciplines one, two, and four. These are voice- and handclap-only routines, which students should make a regular part of their routine, like they would, say, technique or coordination. It's a fantastic way of developing our internal clock without the distraction of simultaneously playing.

"The second approach requires students to work toward mastering each step in each lesson with ATN disciplines three and five. These involve the drumset and require us to vocalize as we play. As a safeguard approach, when working through the multiple steps of a given lesson, I would suggest students ask themselves, *Can I do this step with each of the ATN disciplines?* This way all of your bases are covered."



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# Musicians Institute E-Books

The longstanding Los Angeles-based vocational school Musicians Institute has always been on the cutting edge of real-world education for the working musician. Since the early '80s, MI has developed comprehensive courses for drums, bass, guitar, keyboards, and vocals, and in recent years it added recording and business curricula to help players build a well-rounded career.

Recently MI's vice president of academic affairs, Donny Gruendler, announced an online curriculum that allows enrolled students, as well as non-enrolled ones, to access and study the core competencies developed by MI. The newly revised drum curriculum, written by MI instructors, takes students from beginner to advanced levels across several series of eText books available at [musiciansinstitutebookstore.com](http://musiciansinstitutebookstore.com).

The fourteen e-books for drums include four-book programs for each of

the three core competencies (technique, reading, and performance) plus two books for project recording. For non-enrolled students, the books can be purchased and downloaded by accessing the MI bookstore app, available for Windows, OS X, Android, or iOS. For enrolled students, the books line up perfectly with MI harmony and theory studies.

"Everything you study corresponds with the math and science of the MI disciplines," Gruendler says. "And everything you learn is applied immediately, 24/7, on campus. Our program is designed to get the musician fully prepared to get out into the real world and begin a career as a professional as quickly as possible." **Mike Haid**



## Study Suggestions

"As technique, reading, and performance are the core competencies of any musician—and the foundation of how MI teaches," Donny Gruendler says, "the e-books are designed to work together. It's therefore important to [approach them] as an entire series."

# Bill Bachman's DrumWorkout.com

From deep in the heart of Texas, Dallas-based drummer/educator and *MD* contributor Bill Bachman has gathered his years of experience in drum instruction to develop a full-service website, [drumworkout.com](http://drumworkout.com), dedicated to building hand technique for players of all levels. The site is designed for students to focus on weaknesses or techniques they're especially motivated to develop, and every key hand motion and tempo range is addressed.

Bachman launched [drumworkout.com](http://drumworkout.com) in 2013, focusing primarily on the twelve "gateway rudiments" from his educational series in *Modern Drummer's* Strictly Technique column and subsequent *Stick Technique* book. Since then, the content has grown to more than sixty hours of lessons and workout videos. "I decided to turn my drumming knowledge into a business, since there was nothing like it on the market," Bachman says. "I knew it would make a big difference in helping drummers play more relaxed, efficiently, musically, and faster, and prevent injuries."

## Study Suggestions

"Most subscribers are very loyal and continue cycling through the material," Bill Bachman says, "as a drummer is never 'done' with calisthenics and technique maintenance. Others treat it as a very inexpensive lesson with a full month's access."

Bachman says that what sets [drumworkout.com](http://drumworkout.com) apart from other lesson sites are his workout videos, where students play along as he coaches them through the material. "The exercises are intentionally simple to learn by rote," Bachman explains. "Many have PDFs as well, and they all start at slow tempos for the beginner."

The site is structured around Bachman's twenty-six-step Extreme Hands Makeover Plan, which systematically rebuilds hand technique from the ground up. "I take all of my students through this," Bill says, "from young beginners to hobbyists to touring professionals. Every struggle a drummer has with his or her hands comes right back to a basic fundamental technique. We dial in the mechanics step by step so that drummers are then free to make music without any technical thoughts or obstacles." **Mike Haid**



“I am relatively new to DW and, from a distance, I held an image of John Good as someone who sits about in a laboratory tapping and listening to the voices of wood; diverting, bending, curving the grain. He and his technicians, in a sense, playing with nature. I discovered it was all true! I really enjoy playing these drums!”

– Virgil Donati



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## 2015 DCI World Championship Results

The Blue Devils prevail for the second consecutive year.



California's Blue Devils opened their program with the snare line perched high atop ladders in the center of the field.

Winning their seventeenth world championship and third title in four years, the Blue Devils, from Concord, California, took Drum Corps International's gold medal on August 8 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. Their final score of 97.65 capped a tumultuous season of upsets and changing placements, from their first defeat in over a year, when the Cadets, from Allentown, Pennsylvania, beat them at the first regional of the season in Minneapolis, to 2013 champion Carolina Crown, from Fort Mill, South Carolina, beating both of those corps in the southeastern regional in Atlanta before capturing the silver medal in Indy. The Bluecoats, from Canton, Ohio, consistently held on to third place during finals week and ultimately claimed the bronze medal.

The Blue Devils were stunned by a fourth-place finish at prelims (due to a half-point penalty for a warm-up infraction), before moving up to second in the semifinals. "It was one of those weeks where we just had to keep pushing," Scott Johnson, BD director of percussion, says. "The whole season had been like that. The recaps were crazy this year, and the numbers have been all over the place. There was no favorite at all. Our show [at the finals] was just unbe-

lievable. The maturity of the performers came out, and that's what I think set it up for us."

BD's program, "Ink," featured music from the Stephen Sondheim musicals *Into the Woods* and *Sweeney Todd*. "We try to

always do something different," Johnson says. "What else can be done on the snare drum that hasn't been done yet? For example, we had a sextuplet figure—where people usually play a triplet roll with a diddle sticking, or with a straight or



In the shadow of Lucas Oil Stadium, Connecticut's 7th Regiment won the open-class division and the overall "Battle on Georgia Street" title in the third-annual DrumLine Battle.



**Brandon Olander, a second-year member of the Blue Devils, earned Best Individual Snare in the Performers Showcase in Indianapolis. A senior at Tucson's University High School, he played an original solo, "Backseat Freestyle."**



**The Blue Devils won their thirteenth High Drum award in addition to their seventeenth world championship title in Indianapolis.**



**Zack Hudson, the drumset player in Spirit of Atlanta's front ensemble, won Best Individual Multi-Percussion. The sophomore at Western Carolina University played the original solo "Jacob French Is My One True Love."**



**Paul Rennick (left) warms up the Santa Clara Vanguard drum line at a drum corps show in Denton, Texas, in July. SCV had the highest drum score during prelims but could not defend its 2014 High Drum title in Indianapolis.**



**Gold's drum line (San Diego), featuring a rotating drumset on a cart, won its first round in the DrumLine Battle.**



**The Oregon Crusaders, last year's battle champs.**

paradiddle-diddle sticking—but we used a two-four sticking with two right hands and four left hands. And it's fast! Our opening snare feature [with nine drummers on ladders in the center of the field] ended with three of those in a row, which is extremely difficult. Sometimes they nailed it; sometimes they didn't. But we kept it in because it pushes the activity in the direction we want to see it go." With a grin Johnson adds, "We're just trying to figure out new ways to have rudiments sound different."

In keeping with the constantly changing corps positions, a different drum line won that caption each night of championship week. Last year's winner of the Fred Sanford Best Percussion Performance Award, California's Santa Clara Vanguard, won Thursday night (and ultimately placed fifth overall), followed by the Cadets on Friday (who placed fourth). But the Blue Devils scored a 19.7 out of 20 points on Saturday night to win the High Drum trophy with the best average score from the three days. "I'm just glad that we stayed in second those first two nights and then won on the last night," Johnson says. "It was an incredible year." This was the Devils' thirteenth drum trophy and the tenth time, dating back to 1976, that they won both corps and drums.

With such an impressive record, what does Johnson suggest to future corps members? "Pay attention to the quality of sound. Accents are easy, but concentrate on those tap sounds. If you listen to drum lines warm up in the lot, the more you can focus in on those lower notes, the more you can hear the clarity there. It's all about those low notes."

DCI also hosted the third-annual DrumLine Battle on Georgia Street during championship week, featuring fourteen squads competing in a tournament-style bracket. Following each ninety- to 120-second battle, one drum line advanced to the next round. After four rounds of competition, the 7th Regiment, from New London, Connecticut, was crowned champion.

**Text and photos by Lauren Vogel Weiss**





# Sk8 Rock



**"A**fter rebuilding a secondhand kit," Scott Loyst of Pickering, Ontario, says, "I decided to try another that combined my other favorite pastime, skateboarding. The 'Sk8 kit' features a grip-tape-wrapped snare, Independent Trucks chop block, recycled skateboard badges, bearing air vents, a skate-wheel bass beater, and bushings on the hi-hat clutch. There's also grip tape on the bass rims and pedals. A custom black cherry/chocolate stain and a white stripe finish off the job.

"The inspiration came from Travis Barker's kit from his perfor-

mance with Skylar Grey at WrestleMania. It took about twenty days, working in my spare time, to complete. The kit came out awesome, and it cuts. The chop block works like a charm."

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



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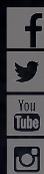


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