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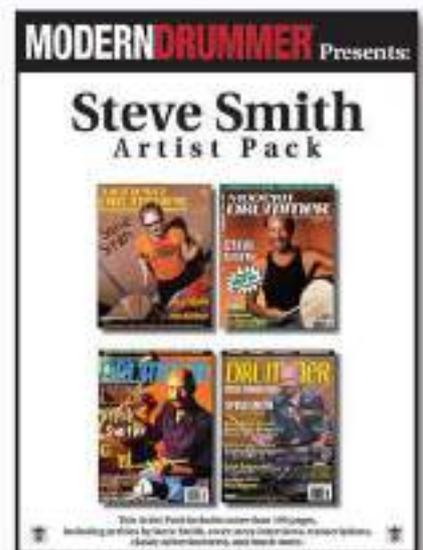


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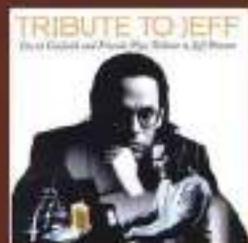
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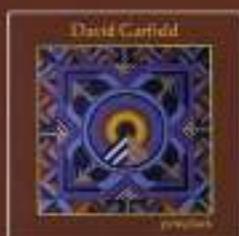
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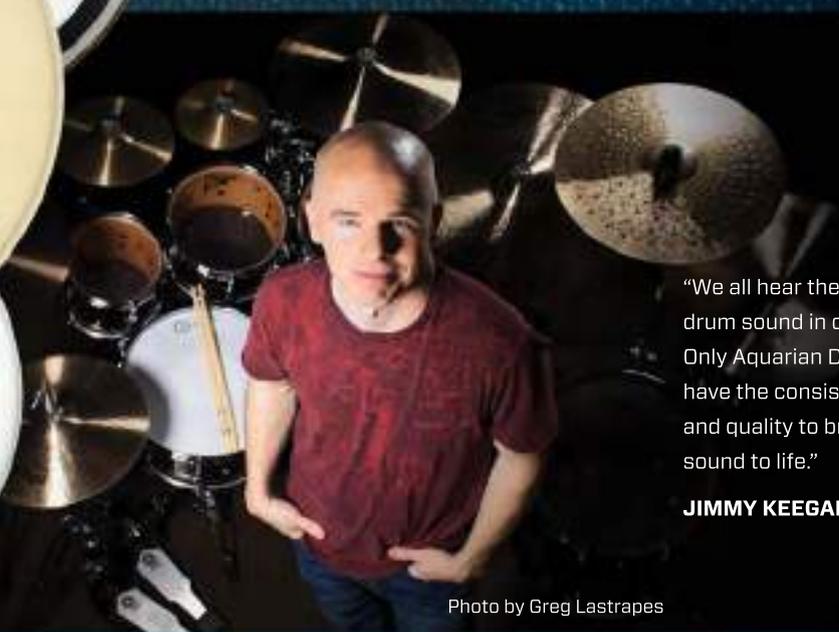


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34 **On the Cover**

Neil Peart

by Ilya Stemkovsky

“There are things in my solo that have been there since I was sixteen, that always thrilled me—and still do.”

As the members of Rush close their celebration of forty years at the top of the prog-rock heap, the band’s drummer reflects on what has changed in his playing and in his gear choices—and what will likely remain in perpetuity.

Cover and contents photos by Richard Sabbald



FEATURES MD AT 40

Neil, Alex, and Geddy aren’t the only ones celebrating forty years together—so is the staff at *Modern Drummer!* As we prepare to begin our fifth decade as the world’s number-one drum magazine, we take stock of the major changes that have gone down—and imagine the evolution of our art as we move forward.

18 Catching Up With... **ZACH DANZIGER** and **TRAVIS ORBIN**. The future is now for these two pace-setters.

47 **40 YEARS OF INNOVATION** Drum gear has evolved dramatically since *Modern Drummer* hit the newsstands in 1977. Here’s how. by Rick Van Horn

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58 **THE FUTURE STATE OF THE ART** Jojo Mayer, Stella Mozgawa, Matt Garstka, Mark Guiliana, and seven more of today’s most cutting-edge drummers peer into their crystal balls, laying out a variety of issues that every drummer today should think long and hard about.

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This Is 40

There are forty-year periods...and there are forty-year periods.

Back in the Paleolithic era, all we managed to accomplish in a few million years was figuring out how to knock out some basic stone tools. The big headline between 11,000 and 9,000 B.C.? Some dude in Mesopotamia learned to domesticate sheep.

Of course, change has sped up exponentially. Anyone who began working with technology forty years ago, in nearly any discipline, used tools that would be considered antiquated today. Scanning my desk as I write this, there's an iPhone, the computer I'm writing this editorial on, and my personal laptop—which, during my lunch break today, I'm going to use to make some edits to a podcast I started working on at home last night... in bed. Now glance at the opening photo of this month's feature story "Modern Drummer: The First Decade" on page 53. See *anything* digital in publisher Ron Spagnardi's office?

And not only have we changed our tools—they've changed us. In 1977, when *MD* began publishing, drumming was a purely physical activity, and the sounds we made pretty much resembled what people heard. Go back forty years before that, to the days of Gene Krupa and "Sing, Sing, Sing," and it was basically the same scenario. Today, all bets are off. That pristine shimmer of a 20" ride cymbal coming through your earbuds? It's actually a sample played on a Roland pad. Similarly, technology has brought us from taking one-on-one lessons and playing along to LPs to participating in overseas Skype lessons and downloading apps.

Perhaps all of this isn't as important as we make it out to be. After all, the core job description of being a drummer hasn't changed: We keep time, we react artfully to the lyrics and arrangement, we make people move. For many of us, that's where our interests begin and end. Fair enough.

But for others among us, there's always some young rhythm wizard whose drum-cam videos we're obsessing over, or some new snare drum or sample pack that we're dying to check out. To read about the development of the drum gear that's kept us salivating all these years, check out the feature "40 Years of Innovation," starting on page 47. And to learn how the most famous living drummer on earth, Neil Peart, dealt with the issue of making room both for "classic" drums and the latest in gear design on Rush's R40 tour, check out his *MD* interview, beginning on page 34.

Perhaps most important, many of us are constantly in search of new ways to exercise control over what listeners hear and feel. In 2015, no other musical element is more vital than rhythm, so who better to lead culture forward than us? To learn how some of today's most thoughtful players envision the days to come, check out the "Future State of the Art" feature on page 58. It's fascinating stuff.

One last note. Longtime readers will notice something familiar on the cover of this issue: the original *Modern Drummer* logo. Think of it as our way of reminding ourselves—and our readers—that no matter how boldly we forge ahead, it's always wise to remember where we came from. Enjoy the issue.



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

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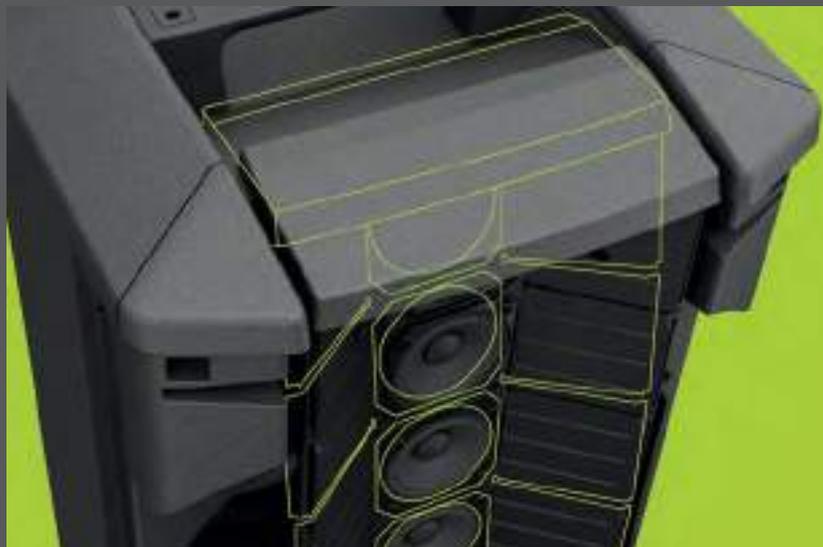
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READERS' PLATFORM

Oscar Seaton

Thank you so much for the feature article on Oscar Seaton in the October issue. Oscar is a monster player who has been under the radar for far too long. It's nice to see him getting the recognition he deserves.

David Alexander



Feeling Odd Subdivisions

Aaron [Edgar]'s articles have been extremely helpful. I've always had a mental block when it came to properly feeling odd groupings, and his step-by-step process (including the Indian vocalization) has helped demystify these concepts.

Facebook

Dropped Beat

In the September 2015 Craviotto Johnny C. Series snares review, we incorrectly stated that the drums were available in several different sizes. They are currently only offered in 6.5x14 and 5.5x14.

What's Your Favorite Drum Book?

Thanks to all of our Facebook followers who participated in our poll on their favorite drum books. *Stick Control*, *Progressive Steps to Syncopation*, and *The New Breed* topped the ranking with an overwhelming majority of the votes, and we received a ton of great suggestions for other books that didn't make the full list. Here's what a few people had to say about their favorite books:



I remember listening to "Sober" by Tool in the 9th grade and swearing the hi-hat was overdubbed. Then I read the [June 2001] *Modern Drummer* article where Danny Carey said he worked out of *The New Breed*. That book opened up the world of coordination to me.

Matt Curl

Stick Control is the most important. It's an endless cookbook if you are creative enough with it.

Andrew Greer

I've been teaching for more than half of my life. The only book that I can't do without is Haskell W. Harr's *Drum Method, Book One*.

Brandon Barnes

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NEWS

Out Now

Converge

Thousands of Miles Between Us

Metalcore pioneer Converge is dropping the multi-format audio/video release *Thousands of Miles Between Us*, the centerpiece of which is a full twenty-song show filmed in HD on the *All We Love We Leave Behind* tour at Union Transfer in Philadelphia. A three-disc Blu-ray version includes more than fifteen hours of additional footage,



while a box set includes a double-LP vinyl release, a turntable slip mat, and more. Multiple camera angles and a 5.1 surround sound mix bring fans up close with timekeeper **Ben Koller**, who says he's stoked for the well-produced video document. "On our first DVD [2003's *The Long Road Home*] there was a ton of material," Koller tells *Modern Drummer*, "but it was pretty rough, and there was no taking it to the studio to mix. So it's cool to have a couple of full shows with really good video and audio—we've never had that before." **Stephen Bidwell**



Converge, from left: bassist Nate Newton, vocalist Jacob Bannon, drummer Ben Koller, and guitarist Kurt Ballou.

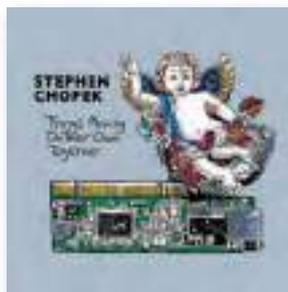


Max (right) and Mike Portnoy

Next to None

A Light in the Dark

Next to None, a Pennsylvania-based progressive metal band made up of an unusually talented group of teenagers, has released its debut album, *A Light in the Dark*. At the kit is **Max Portnoy**, son of Winery Dogs drummer **Mike Portnoy**, who produced the album. "It was a great feeling of pride to see Max and the rest of the band take to the studio so well," Mike says, describing the record as Slipknot meets Dream Theater. "It was really nostalgic, bringing me back to the days of doing my first album, twenty-five years earlier." The younger Portnoy takes a logical yet advanced approach when it comes to his drumming. "We'll work on a riff," Max explains, "and I'll do my best to match the drums to the guitar and bass, because I think it sounds more full if I have the kick and snare synchronized. The rest comes naturally." **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Stephen Chopek

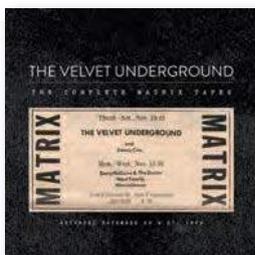
Things Moving on Their Own Together

Stephen Chopek, whose drumming has graced the music of John Mayer, Charlie Hunter, and Nora Jones, among others, plays all the instruments on his new solo album. Melodic bursts of punky guitar and controlled vocals color the disc, as does the tight, supportive drumming. "Being a drummer is a big part of how I approach guitar playing, really as a rhythm instrument," Chopek says. "So the drummer and songwriter are both scratching each other's back." And delving deep into constructing his music has given Chopek an appreciation for his role behind the kit. "Focusing on writing songs has given me insight into being a drummer for other songwriters, and serving the songs as a drummer," he says. *Things Moving on Their Own Together* is available at stephenchopek.bandcamp.com. **Ilya Stemkovsky**



More New Releases

The Velvet Underground The Complete Matrix Tapes (Maureen Tucker) // **the Katie Bull Group** Project All Hot Bodies Radiate (George Schuller) // **Robin Eubanks** Mass Line Big Band More Than Meets the Ear (Nate Smith, David Silliman) // **Fourplay** Silver (Harvey Mason) // **Baroness** Purple (Sebastian Thomson) // **Billy Gibbons and the BFG's** Perfectamundo (Greg Morrow, Billy Gibbons) // **Gilad Hekselman** Homes (Marcus Gilmore, Jeff Ballard) // **Michael Cain** Sola (Billy Hart, Renaldo Elliott) // **Fiction Plane** Mondo Lumina (Pete Wilhoit) // **Deerhoof** Fever 121614 (Greg Saunier) // **Love** Reel to Real reissue (Joe Blocker) // **Fuzz II** (Ty Segall) // **the Flaming Lips** Heady Nuggs 20 Years After Clouds Taste Metallic 1994-1997 (Steven Drozd) // **the Family Silver** Electric Blend (Steve White)



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Nick Wilkerson has been out with White Reaper.

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Tom Nugent

Industry Happenings

Meinl has announced that the total proceeds from the ticket sales of the company's 2015 Drum Festival, plus voluntary contributions, is 20,000 euros. The money will be donated to two charitable organizations. Percussion instruments will go to the Danilo Pérez Foundation in Panama, which offers free scholarships to children and young people who have a talent for music but are at social risk, and to the Károly István Orphanage near Budapest, Hungary, where music therapy plays a big role in the educational program, including work with physically and mentally handicapped children.



Shure associates, friends, family, and vendors came together recently to raise money for the Merit School of Music at the Second Annual Shure Invitational Golf Outing. Held at White Pines Golf Club in Bensenville, Illinois, the event included a round of golf followed by a dinner banquet, a raffle, and a live auction for a framed poster signed by Roger Daltrey and Pete Townshend of the Who. The mission of the Merit School, which was founded in 1979, is to provide high-quality music education to children all over Chicago, with a focus on underserved communities. By offering low-cost lessons and the chance to be a member of the 350-person, tuition-free Alice S. Pfaelzer Conservatory, the school inspires Chicago youth to achieve their musical and personal potential.



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Pictured: Florian Alexandru-Zorn with the New Split Brush SB
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Musik im Spiegelbild Muri

Zach Danziger

Where this sonic traveler wants to go, there are no maps, and operating manuals only provide clues.

Throughout the arts there are the trailblazers who establish the paths that others follow. Beginning in the mid-'90s, Zach Danziger began exploring and building what he calls his "hybrid electronic drumkit." Many drummers have augmented acoustic drums with electronics, but no one has gone further than Danziger in developing a unique language that merges the rapidly advancing field of computer-enabled music-making electronics with traditional drums.

"My current electronics setup consists of four triggers going into a Roland TM2 trigger module, an RME Fireface UCX audio interface, a Novation Launch Control XL, and Ableton Live software on a MacBook Pro," Danziger explains while busily preparing for gigs in Korea with Jason Lindner's *Now vs. Now*, in Europe with Belgium's *Aerobe*, and in London with *Mister Barrington*. "I have a variety of soft synths and samplers in Ableton, and through piezo triggers attached to my drums and cymbals I can trigger electronic drum samples, as well as create synth melodies and harmonies from scratch. My acoustic drums are Gretsch, which I love, and my Zildjian cymbals are an array of synthetic-sounding, odd-sized stacks and traditional cymbals. I use a lot of the Zildjian Kerope line, which I helped develop."

Also currently working with Donny McCaslin, Edit Bunker (a duo project with *Mister Barrington* bassist Owen Biddle), and his own *Test Kitchen*, Danziger and his electroacoustic language can be heard in numerous online videos with the various aforementioned groups, where his computer mind-meld is absolutely Mr. Spock-like.

"The great thing about Ableton is its ability to automate parameters," Danziger says. "I usually set up whichever sound palette I'd like to use for each song in a live set, and link that to a key command. In addition, I can program Ableton to allow the various samples and synth patches to respond to dynamics in a variety of ways. Depending on how hard I hit a drum or cymbal, it can do things like lengthen or shorten reverb time, raise the pitch of the samples and synths, and activate a compressor or gate."

While *Aerobe*—which also features Adriaan van de Velde on keyboards, Andrew Claes on EWI, and Owen Biddle on bass—readies an album for 2016 release, Danziger remains busy with soundtrack work, including the George Clooney-produced *Our Brand Is Crisis* and HBO's *Last Week Tonight* with John Oliver. He also spoke in Berlin late last year at Ableton's *Loop: A Summit for Music Makers*. Danziger goes wherever the hybrid wind blows, which increasingly takes him beyond U.S. borders.

"*Aerobe* is an ideal musical platform for my hybrid setup," Zach says. "The guys understand what I'm hoping to achieve with my rig, and they're taking the same approach on their instruments. For years I've felt alone in my travels. Because of the Frankenstein nature of my rig, I can't turn to one specific book or reference manual to find the answers when the technology stumps me. Not a lot of guys are rigging all of these components together in this way, so it's great to work with like-minded musicians who can help me navigate this terrain." **Ken Micallef**

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Travis Orbin

This is the modern drum world: flawless, continually bar-raising performances, captured on video for posterity and dissection.

The greatest session drummers of yesteryear would dart from one legendary L.A. or New York studio to the next, where they'd crank out smash hits that the world would be singing along to a few short weeks later. Today's busiest recording drummers are more likely to be found in their own tricked-out home studios, experimenting with unheard sounds and challenging themselves—and listeners—with increasingly demanding feats of limb independence.

Since the late 2000s Travis Orbin has tracked sessions with a remarkable roster of boundary-pushing acts, including Periphery and Sky Eats Airplane (both as a member), Simbelmynë and the Countdown Starts Now (2011), Us & Them and Of Legends (2012), Ruemora, the Gabriel Construct, and Its Teeth (2013), Robar and Cyclamen (2014), and, in 2015, Amidst the Withering, 55 Cancri, Coat of

Arms, and Cartoon Theory. A couple years ago Orbin joined Darkest Hour and recorded the veteran metalcore band's 2014 self-titled album. But he still finds time to cut solo tracks in his home studio, most recently producing the EPs *Projects* and *Silly String*. And for the benefit of the "Orbinator" faithful, Travis captures every performance on video for free online distribution.

"When I was coming up, practicing and honing my craft, if you'd told me that there were videos of Dennis Chambers and Virgil Donati online for free, I would have been all over it," Orbin says. For *this* generation's drumming upstarts, *Silly String's* accompanying seventeen-minute performance video provides the same level of excitement. Opener "Lollygag" taps Frank Zappa with Dream Theater keyboards; "From Riches to Rags" traces maddening odd meters over zigzagging melodies; "Hold





On" hammers prog-rock methodology over weirdly muted drums; and "Desensitization" rips out your jugular and stomps on it in odd-meter-thrash bully time. For all of *Silly String's* burn, Orbin plays only one solo, on closing track "Watchpork." As on all of the EP, the roller-coaster goodness of the piece benefits from close-miking of every drum and cymbal, with nothing left to chance.

"I don't do many solos," Orbin admits. "But [with 'Watchpork'] I wanted to write a solo that was completely mapped out. I wanted to formulate a barrage of ideas, everything from syncopated fills to metric modulation to triplets, and it all fits within the ostinato that's repeated throughout the piece. If I ever played it live, I would play the same solo."

At press time Orbin was forming a band for his upcoming *Projects II* release. You can be sure to see each song dissected, detailed, and performed in high-res glory online, where Orbin gives away his hard-earned expertise for free. "With my solo material," the drummer explains, "and especially on sessions where the mix may not favor the drums and detail can be obscured, having a visual component clears things up and demystifies what I'm playing. And frankly, it helps draw a fan base. *And it's fun!*"

Ken Micallef



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Evan

According to Norbert Saemann at Meinl, "We introduced this particular cymbal in 2002. The Byzance Dry series was what is now our Byzance Dark series. The logo placement was different back in those days. In 2004, Byzance Dry became Byzance Dark. Nowadays, this cymbal equals our Byzance 21" Dark ride. It's the exact same cymbal, just with a different name and logo design."



Mind Matters

I Want My Old Drums Back

by Bernie Schallehn

I recently received a promotion at my day job, so I decided to treat myself to a new set of drums. My old kit had big, deep power toms with a 24" bass drum, and they had started to look outdated. The local music store took the set, plus a bunch of cash, for a brand-new set of high-end drums. I was thrilled at first, but then I started to wish I hadn't sold my old kit. I even went back to the store to buy it back, but it had been sold. I now find myself disinterested in my new high-end kit. What's going on here?

R.M.

You have a combination of seller's and buyer's remorse. Both are an emotional reaction to the choice you made, and both involve a strong sense of regret about your decision. You had grown attached to your old kit, and perhaps you feel a little guilty about spending a significant sum of money on your new drums.

You're also going through a grief process. Life is a series of hellos and goodbyes, and you've just said "adios" to your old kit. On conscious and unconscious levels your old kit is associated with good times and fun experiences making music. However, we're all prone to engage in revisionist history, remembering events in our mind more fondly than they necessarily deserve. As you move through your grief process, in addition to sadness you might feel some disbelief in your decision and anger regarding your choice. You went back to the music store in an attempt to buy back your kit, but that failed. Short of trying to track down the new owner, which I wouldn't suggest, eventually you will move into a mode of acceptance.

All Things Must Pass

Eventually everything will pass away. Your old drums are gone for good. But there are lines in the George Harrison tune "All Things Must Pass" that are bright and hopeful: "Daylight is good at arriving at the right time. It's not always going to be this gray."

In Buddhism, a mandala—usually a circle enclosing a square, with a deity on each side—is a symbol of the universe. When Buddhists want to meditate on the concept of impermanence, the monks spend days or weeks creating an intricately patterned mandala made of colored sand. The monks carefully and gently blow the sand, often using small straws, into a formation. When this beautiful piece is complete, the monks unceremoniously sweep the sand into a pile and sprinkle it into a body of running water. To witness this is to experience a graphic display of the impermanence of life.

As drummers, we break heads, cymbals, and possibly even kick drum pedals. These are all examples of the impermanence of things in our lives. We get into trouble when we form unhealthy attachments to people, places, and things. The more attached we become, the harder it is to let go when something or someone passes away. The key is to let go and move on.

Your Creative Voice

As a drummer, your creative voice is your drums. You speak through your drumming. I've seen videos of street kids in third-world countries playing "drums" made from junk. Two bicycle sprockets serve as a hi-hat. Twigs become drumsticks. Tin cans serve as the snare and toms. Other cast-off items are jerry-rigged to form a bass drum, pedals, and cymbals. These kids play with pure spirit and from deep within their heart and

soul. They don't care if they're not making rhythms with "real" instruments, and they're not attached to what they're playing. If a tin-can tom becomes battered beyond repair, they just replace it with another. And the best part of this whole scenario is that their music sounds awesome!

The Eye Is Drawn to Beauty

Advertisements for drums, cars, houses, expensive clothes, and so on will always feature the item in the best lighting possible and from the best angles. This is because we have an inherent propensity to be drawn to visual beauty. Think of the hours people spend in art museums and the thousands of dollars invested in cosmetic surgery. But beauty fades over time. We tire of our possessions and long for something new, shiny, and bright—something *different*.

To continue working your way through accepting the loss of your old drums and embracing your new kit, I suggest that you push yourself to find time to spend with the new set. Polish the chrome on the rims and lugs. Apply a protective finish to the shells. Experiment with different tunings. Get to know them! Enjoy the beauty of your new drumset without becoming too attached. Keep in mind that it's the vehicle through which you express your own unique creative voice. But also remember that someday the drums may no longer hold the appeal they once had, and you'll likely want to replace them with another kit. They too will pass away.

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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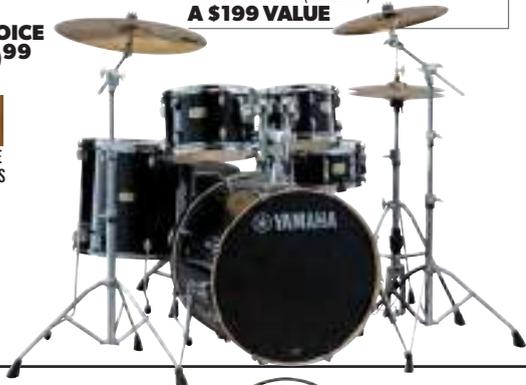
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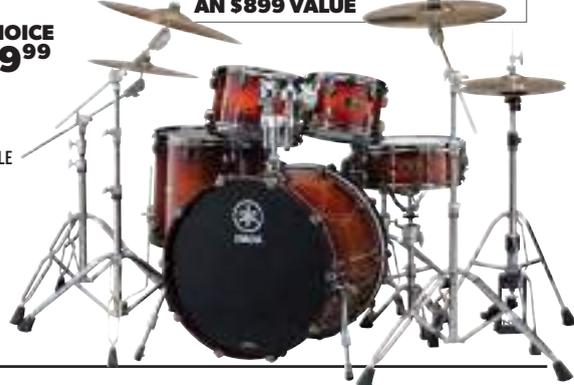
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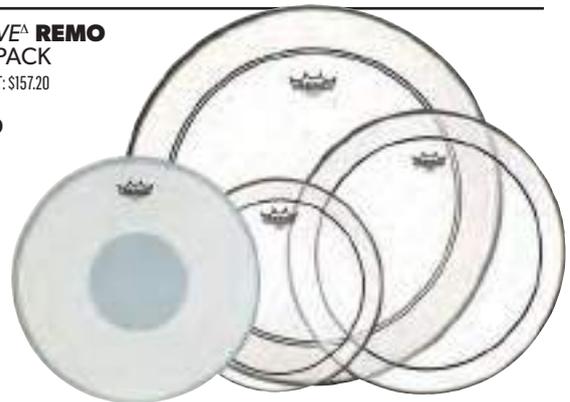
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Yamaha

Stage Custom Birch Hybrid Kit

An all-in-one setup for blending acoustic and electronic elements.



Being that it manufactures acoustic drums, electronic pads, sound modules, drum triggers, and a full range of hardware, Yamaha is in a unique position to offer complete setups for modern players in contemporary situations that require them to start and stop loops, trigger one-shot samples, and layer electronic

sounds on top of their natural drumset tones. The configuration that we have for review this month, the SCH2HP587, is the company's most extensive package in this new acoustic/electronic category and offers more than enough to get you up and running right out of the box.

What's in the Box?

In order to give the SCH2HP587 hybrid setup the biggest bang for the most reasonable number of bucks (street price: \$1,599.99), Yamaha includes a professional-quality/entry-level-price Stage Custom Birch five-piece acoustic kit, the compact but feature-packed DTX502 sound module, a

three-zone silicone-based XP80 DTX-PAD, a TP70 single-zone rubber pad, two stick-on DT20 acoustic drum triggers, and a complete set of lightweight 700 series hardware.



The Acoustic Side

The Stage Custom Birch is one of Yamaha's most popular series—and for good reason. Although priced in the upper entry-level category, these drums are constructed with the same quality and many of the same high-end components as the company's more expensive lines. The shells are made from six plies of 100 percent birch, and the plies themselves get thicker as the drum sizes increase, which is a concept borrowed from Yamaha's professional Live Custom series.

The bearing edges of Stage Custom Birch drums are rounded for more head-to-shell contact, which helps fatten the sound. For increased resonance, they also feature Absolute-style lugs that attach to the drum with a single screw to minimize the number of holes drilled into the shell. The bass drum features strong die-cast claws and sturdy spurs with a stopper to make consistent positioning easier. Stage Custom Birch snares feature ten lugs, which allow for more precise and stable tuning. The snare and toms come with 1.5 mm triple-flange steel hoops.

The rack toms have YESS (Yamaha Enhanced Sustain System) mounts that connect to the drum with minimal hardware placed at strategic points on the shell in order to maximize vibration. These mounts are compact and discreet, so you can place the toms very close together, and they don't get in the way during drumhead changes. The toms come with

Asian-made UT clear single-ply drumheads on top and bottom, the snare has a UT coated single-ply batter and a clear bottom, and the bass drum has a UT clear P3 batter and an Ebony UT P3 front head (no hole).

The Stage Custom Birch setup included in the hybrid pack comprises a 17x22 bass drum, 7x10 and 8x12 rack toms, a 15x16 floor tom, and a 5.5x14 snare. Because the drums are birch, they had a strong, snappy tone at all tunings, making them an excellent choice for combining with electronic elements and for close-miking. The clear, single-ply batter heads on the toms required a bit of tuning finesse to bring the pitch into focus; you might want to consider muffling them with tape, rings, or gels to maximize punch and minimize sustain.

The bass drum needed to be dampened considerably in order for the trigger to

WAV or AIFF files up to twelve seconds in length. The module has a USB port for use with sequencing or sample software on a computer. Yamaha also created a free iOS app, DTX502 Touch, to allow users to configure the module and assign sounds more easily from their iPhone.

The three-zone XP80 pad has a silicone surface that felt close to an acoustic drum and performed flawlessly when used to trigger samples and loops at a wide range of dynamics. The single-zone rubber TP70 had a firmer feel but was still responsive at various dynamics. I tended to use the TP70 more for triggering single accents (like a sub-bass drop or handclaps) or for starting and stopping loops, while the XP80 excelled when I played more dynamic or intricate parts.

Yamaha's DT20 acoustic drum triggers

TECH SPECS

Drums: 5-piece Stage Custom Birch kit with matching snare

Electronics: DTX502 module, XP80 pad, TP70 pad, two DT20 triggers

Hardware: double-tom holder, two straight/boom cymbal stands, hi-hat stand, snare stand, bass drum pedal, two pad holders, and three clamps



function properly, so we tossed in a basic bedroom pillow. We also swapped out the solid front head for one with a microphone port. The result was a big, punchy tone that hit hard and got out of the way quickly.

The snare sounded the most mix-ready when tuned medium-tight or tight and when muffled with a couple of gels or a ring.

Electronic Elements

The DTX502 sound module is a compact, easy-to-use brain with 691 onboard sounds. It's compatible with most electronic drum pads, pedals, and triggers and is small enough to be mounted just about anywhere on the kit (under the hi-hat is the recommended position). The SCH2HP587 hybrid pack comes with two pads and two triggers, but the module has space for up to nine inputs and a hi-hat controller. To create completely customizable kits, you can import up to twenty of your own samples into the module, as 44.1kHz/16-bit

adhere directly to the drumhead, either with the included sticky pads or with your own gaffer's tape, and they performed very well with the DTX502 module for layering samples on top of the acoustic drum sounds. I preferred to increase the threshold on the snare trigger so that it fired samples only when I hit loud accents. This provided my ideal blend of the nuance you get from acoustic drums (ghost notes, rolls, etc.) and the consistent, hard-hitting impact of electronic samples.

Given the trend toward live bands incorporating more loops and samples into their performances, it's no surprise that drummers are now looking for easy and efficient ways to handle both acoustic and electronic components from one setup. Yamaha's various hybrid configurations, which are also available in simpler setups and as separate packages containing just the electronics, are a great entryway.

Michael Dawson



Amedia

Kommagene Series Cymbals

Dark-finish cymbals with appropriately dark yet cutting tones.

Kommagene is the name of an ancient civilization that existed from 163 BC to 72 AD in a region of Europe that now comprises south-central Turkey. Amedia, whose factory is based in Turkey, with a U.S. office in New Jersey, recently designed a line of cymbals to pay tribute to the historic kingdom, calling it Kommagene to reflect the Turkish spelling.

These new cymbals are distinctly old-world in appearance, featuring flat profiles, unhammered bells, light and wide lathing, hand-hammered bows, and a proprietary aged finish, but they're built for modern strength and stability. We were sent a set that included 15" hi-hats, an 18" crash, a 22" ride, and a 20" flat ride. Let's check them out.

15" Hi-Hats

Kommagene hi-hats were firmer and heavier than I expected, given that most vintage or vintage-style pairs I've played have been very light and papery. These have a medium-thin top and a medium bottom with high, round bells and relatively flat profiles, which translated into a crisp foot chick, low-pitched and metallic splashes, and chunky, clean stick articulation. The finish helped to tamp sustain, so these hi-hats didn't get overly washy when played partially or fully open. On a low-volume gig in a rather cavernous room, they ended up having a bit too much presence. (I probably should've opted for a pair of the aforementioned light, thin vintage hats for that particular gig.)

But they produced strong, musical, and expressive tones that were dark yet evenly balanced, and they blended well with the other cymbals in the series. Think more Jack DeJohnette than Papa Jo Jones.

18" Crash

Like the hi-hats, the Kommagene 18" crash had a firmer feel than I expected, given its relatively light weight, with a controlled sustain, which would come in handy in lighter situations where you don't want accents to obliterate the band with excessive wash. You could lay into it pretty heavily and get back down to a very soft pianissimo dynamic almost immediately. The crash tone was evenly balanced and slightly shimmering. It wasn't overly dark, so it

TECH SPECS

Model: Kommagene
Weight: medium-thin
Sizes: 15" hi-hats, 18" crash, 20" flat ride, 22" ride
Finish: proprietary process to darken
Lathing: wide
Hammering: wide, deep, asymmetrical

didn't disappear in a dense mix, which is sometimes the case with paper-thin, trashy, vintage-style crashes. You could also get plenty of articulation by playing on the bow if you want to use the crash as an alternate ride source for a breathy timbre, and the round, non-hammered bell offered a nicely integrated but clear tone.

22" Ride

Softer and more expansive than the hi-hats and crash, the medium-thin 22" Kommagene ride features a wider, flatter, non-hammered bell and had a more complex and smokier tone that recalled the expressive and multi-textural sounds heard on classic bebop records of the '50s and '60s. Again, the finish helped to control some of the wash so that the ride had a lot of clarity, but there was a longer sustain and a bit more rumble lingering in the dark overtones. The wide bell had a fully integrated tone, so you could go to it in the middle of ride sections for bursts of color without sounding jarring. I ended up adding a small strip of tape to the underside of the bow to get the sustain to match better with that of the crash and hi-hats.

20" Flat Ride

The medium-thin 20" Kommagene flat ride provided a cooling contrast to the washier, smokier timbre of the 22", while remaining consistent with the dark yet crisp vibe of the entire series. As expected, this ride had little sustain (because of the bell-less design), controlled volume, and a sparkling, woody stick click. It didn't have as many high-end overtones as the flat ride that modern jazz legend Roy Haynes made famous on Chick Corea's classic album *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs*, but it's a close cousin to that archetype.

Michael Dawson

Check out a demo video of this Kommagene setup at modern drummer.com.

Provenance 4x14 VW Snare

From the scraps of a funky old work van to one of the funkier-sounding snares around.



The U.K.-based Provenance Drums specializes in repurposing materials from specialty vehicles like Jaguar sports cars, racing yachts, and military airplanes. Back in May 2012 we reviewed a 5.5x14 F4 Phantom cast-aluminum snare that the company made from a fighter jet, and we were knocked out by its versatile, high-end tones and flawless craftsmanship.

This month we have another unique drum with some historic mojo: a 4x14 steel snare built from the side panel of a 1962 Volkswagen van. The shell is largely untouched, so it has the original paintwork on the outside and a black under-seal rust-prevention treatment on the inside. The 45-degree edges, which were rolled, are the only parts that have been lacquered, to prevent further corrosion.

Visually, the VW drum has a ton of retro-cool vibe. Sonically, this snare was no kitschy gimmick—it was a true dynamo. Tuned medium (batter head at 85 on a DrumDial), it had a super-fast response, supreme sensitivity, a bright but not abrasive attack, very clean overtones (i.e., no muffling required), and a surprising amount of depth. It was reminiscent of the popping snare Matt Chamberlain used on the Wallflowers' hit single "One Headlight." Tight tunings had an ultra-bright snap along with full-bodied tones, while lower tunings had more smack and punch without losing brightness or the quick snare response. Medium to medium-tight was the range that brought the old, rusty VW materials back to life, but the drum's versatility across all tunings was quite exceptional.

Michael Dawson

Check out a video demo of this snare at modern drummer.com.

TECH SPECS

Shell: repurposed steel from a 1962 VW Type 2 panel van
Size: 4x14
Bearing edges: rolled to 45 degrees
Lugs: chromed brass tube
Hoops: 2.3 mm triple-flange steel
Throw-off: Gibraltar Deluxe Classic-Style Piccolo
Wires: 16-strand PureSound Custom
Heads: Aquarian Texture Coated batter and Classic Clear bottom



TECH SPECS

Size: 14.25x15.25x22

Weight: 13 pounds

Faceplates: dark ebony (with snares), red oak (without snares), and beech (for bongo-cajon tones)

Tycoon
Triple-Play Cajon

Three distinct playing surfaces for ultimate tonal variety.

For thirty-plus years, Tycoon has been manufacturing top-quality hand percussion instruments at its own factory in Thailand. The company's expansive catalog includes authentic representations of Latin American congas, bongos, timbales, and cajons; African djembes and talking drums; Middle Eastern darbukas; Asian ashikos; Brazilian pandeiros and surdos; and a variety of handheld rattles, triangles, tambourines, and shakers.

One of the more innovative items from Tycoon is the Triple-Play cajon, which features three different-sounding playing surfaces. The left side has a dark-ebony faceplate and comes with snare wires underneath to create a traditional cajon sound with a lot of snap and rattle. The right side has a red oak faceplate and no wires, so it offers a traditional Peruvian tone. Both sides produced great bass tones and crisp edge slaps. There was decent isolation between the two, thanks to a system of internal baffles, so playing on the red oak side didn't activate the snares on the ebony side to the point of destroying the earthy warm tones that are expected from Peruvian cajons.

The front of the Triple-Play is the most interesting portion. It's constructed from beech and features three tones of its own. The upper portion is designed to provide high and low bongo-cajon sounds, while the lower section is used for bass hits. Playing on this side of the Triple-Play was a nice, clean-sounding contrast to the more aggressive, earthy tones of the other two sides. I found that when grooving on the oak or ebony side, it was easy to shift one hand over to the beech side to layer in some bongo-cajon sounds. This was a great way to change up the texture of my patterns during different sections of songs.

The one thing I felt the Triple-Play was missing was a padded seat top. Its top is flat wood, which isn't very comfortable to sit on for multiple hour-long sets. But for a portable, all-in-one multi-tonal instrument that can stand on its own for acoustic duo or traditional percussion gigs, the Triple-Play cajon is a great choice.

Michael Dawson



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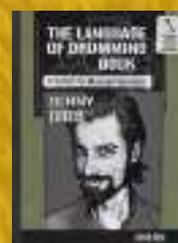
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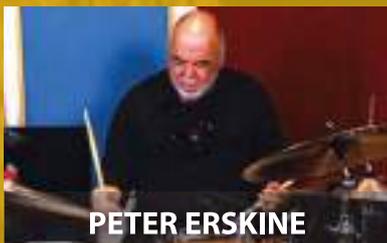
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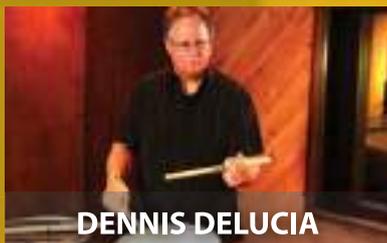


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Neil Peart

For his (record) ninth *MD* cover-story interview, Rush's drummer holds a typically fluid and intense discussion of soloing and set lists, the very real differences between his drumming past and present, and the much-speculated topic of his band's future.

Say it ain't so!

When Rush announced that its 2015 R40 run would likely be the "last major tour of this magnitude," fans mused about the whys and hows as they snatched up tickets to see their heroes for perhaps the last time.

To celebrate forty years and counting, guitarist Alex Lifeson, bassist/vocalist Geddy Lee, and drummer Neil Peart conceived an elaborate reverse-chronology theatrical experience, where over the course of two sets the group would explore its deep catalog, beginning with its most recent material and working backward. Peart would even use two separate setups—his modern, fully realized kit for the first set, and a replica of his legendary late-1970s kit for the epic progressive pieces occupying the second set.

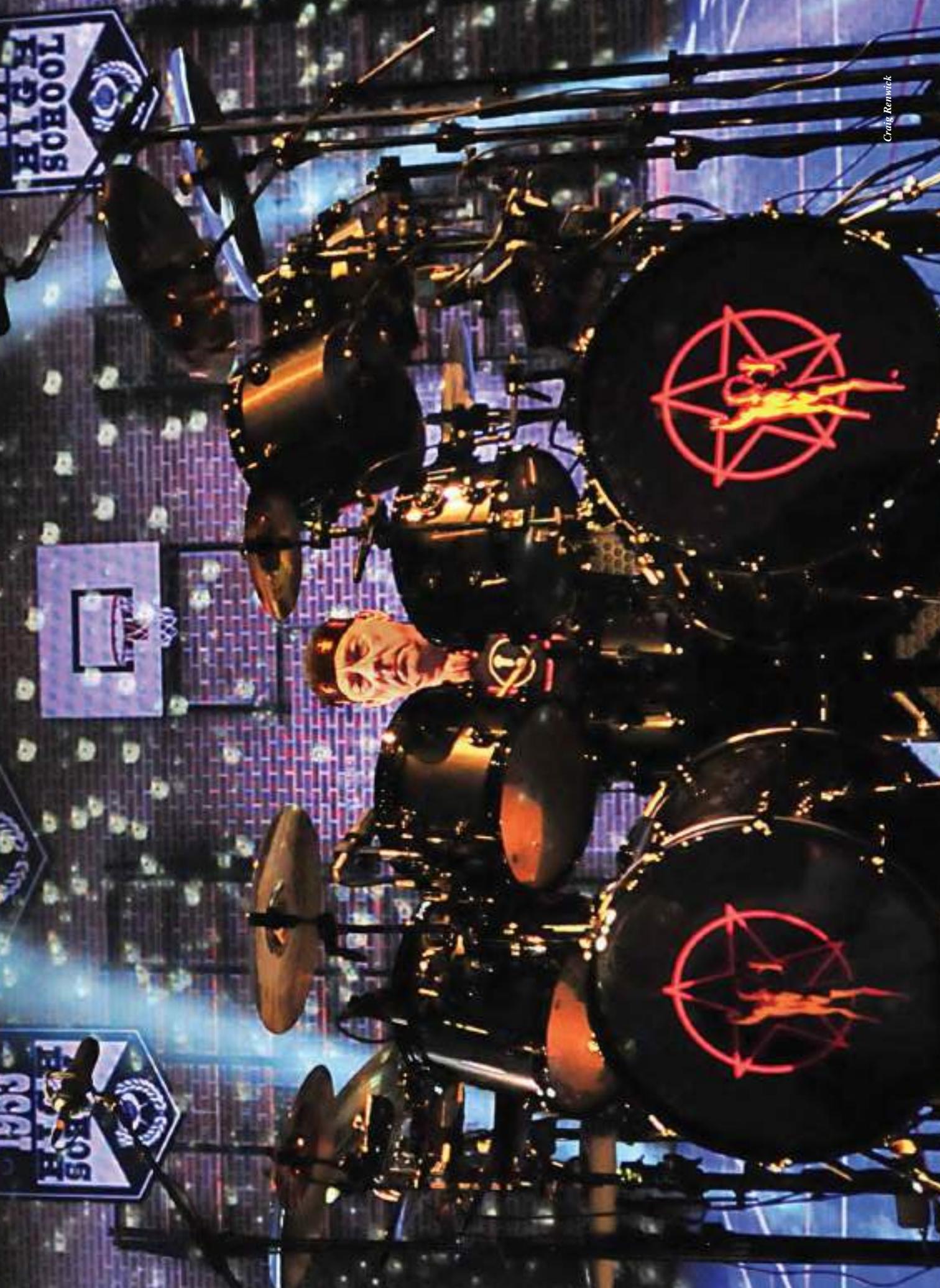
Years after being universally recognized as the world's preeminent progressive rock band, Rush's profile has only continued to rise, with recent documentaries, feature-film

cameos, a first *Rolling Stone* magazine cover, and—finally—induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Through it all, Peart has continued to progress as a player, even though he's got nothing to prove. Now in his sixties, Neil is still devoted to his craft, still hungry, still practicing, still learning, and still expanding his creative boundaries through continued lessons.

"The audience doesn't need to know all the technical stuff," Peart says. "They just need to know that I went through the trouble. Care has been taken. And that's the nature of our band and the nature of each of us individually. So our audience can trust that aspect of it."

Modern Drummer meets Peart backstage in his dressing room at the New Jersey stop of the R40 tour. The drummer greets us and apologizes for being sock-less. He lies on the couch and points to his feet, which look like Father Time-affected, wear-and-tear evidence of half a century of bringing the power night after night.

by Ilya Stemkovsky



“I always say this about old cars and motorcycles, and old drums: I love them, but new ones are better.”



Sustained Impact

Neil: [After discussing his injuries] At this point in the tour, you have no reserves. So a thing like this attacks, and it wears down your resistance in every other way too. And there's no getting better. I got tendinitis in one elbow on the '96/'97 *Test for Echo* tour, and then I didn't have it again for fifteen years—and it was the other elbow. For the rest of the tour I have to wear a brace to play, and I wear a brace at night. People say, “Oh, you just need to rest it.” Ok, I'll do that. We'll just send these ten thousand people home tonight while I have a rest.

MD: You're certainly not back there playing “Peaceful Easy Feeling.”

Neil: [laughs] As you can see, I often refer to what I do as athletic. It's not low impact. And through the teachings of Freddie Gruber, and through my own physical regimen and yoga, I've been able to sustain my peak for a long time and continue to get better and continue to study.

It's a revelation for me that at age sixty-two I can still be getting better and feel it and know it deep down. And move into a new area. Freddie had a

transformational effect on my playing. When I worked with him in the mid-'90s, he said, “You're a compositional player.” And it's true. My drum parts all through the '70s and '80s were very carefully refined, partly by the nature of the way we worked in those days. We were all in the studio together, learning the song, playing it again and again, and one time I'd put in a little figure or accent and think, *This would go with that*, and, piece by piece, the architecture, the composition, would come together.

But when Freddie pointed that out to me, I thought, *That's nice, but I want to be an improvisational player*. So I set out a bit on my own to work more in that direction and to use motifs in my solo and ostinatos that would allow me to expand more. I still have a framework, because I always felt a responsibility to present a composition.

When I was growing up in southern Ontario, the climate of the time was so healthy; I was seeing great drummers all the time. I loved the way some drummers played accompanying the band, but I didn't

love their solos, because they had no vision, they had no story to tell. Some other drummers I'd watch solo, and I could see it was a composition, a performance.

Every band I was ever in, I've always played a solo. It became a part of my performing life from the beginning. It was such a great vehicle to learn, because there are so many technical aspects that I learned from soloing without the responsibility of supporting a band and being in the rhythm section. That was just exploration. The same as my little warm-up drums here backstage. I can experiment on them without any consequences whatsoever. And I might think, *Oh, I'm going to put that in my solo tonight*. And I couldn't have known what Freddie was going to give me. I just surrendered myself to him and basically started all over.

MD: And Peter Erskine has helped continue your learning?

Neil: I loved the way Steve Gadd played “Love for Sale” on the Buddy Rich tribute album that we made [*Burning for Buddy*], and Dave Weckl playing it live. So I made



Craig Remnick

that my summit. I wanted to aspire to that performance.

Don Lombardi from Drum Workshop and I agreed that Peter Erskine would be the right teacher to take me in a better direction for big band drumming. And he lives ten minutes from me. So I started going to his house for lessons, and he started me on a course of practicing with the Quiet Count feature in Roland's V-Drums brain, which is a metronome that gives you two bars of click, then two bars of silence, and [so on].

So my assignment was to set that to a slow tempo and then a fast tempo and play to it, just hi-hat. And then he gave me some play-along stuff to enhance the feel and understand the swing drumming, people like Sonny Payne with Count Basie. So every single day I sat at the hi-hat and set a very slow tempo. At first...impossible. And I didn't want to keep time [with the rest of the kit].

Practice doesn't have to be tedious. So I never got bored with the hi-hat, for months. I was riffing on it, learning things

inside the time strictures and gradually learning to hear what wasn't there: the click. So when those two bars went away, I could still feel them.

Eventually I surprised myself by coming back in on time. The fast ones are a little easier. I've heard from other prominent drummers that when they first tried to do it, it was like, *There's something wrong with this thing.* [laughs] What it gave me, unexpectedly, was the confidence of time that freed me to be improvisational. Because I could feel that pulse, organically.

Freddie was about motion. He'd say that when you hit the cymbal, it was that, but he also liked these gestures. And Peter had studied with Freddie too. Peter asked me to play quarter notes on a ride, and I was putting in this little curl. He asked what that was, and I told him it was timekeeping. He said, "No," and pointed at my chest and told me the time is *there*. He wanted me to play those quarter notes with laser accuracy and linear motion. And he had transcended Freddie's teaching, as I learned to. That feeling, that curl that Freddie had put into timekeeping, I intuited it. And I worked on it for months and went back to Peter to play those quarter notes. Like any student, I was nervous about the teacher. And at the end he said, "Perfect," and I was so happy.

MD: Did you feel your internal clock change?

Neil: Rush was on a hiatus and I had a year and a half where I could practice. Later, when the three of us got together, I started putting down drum tracks for the demos. Geddy and Alex said, "Well, it still sounds like you. It doesn't sound any different." And I was kind of disappointed. But when they went to play with it, it *was* completely different. The clock had just changed, altered that much. And that remains to this day. If we revive one of the older songs from prior to that time, I play it as I would play it now.

One song we revived, "Presto," we play so much better now, and Geddy said, "We have a different clock now." So they got it. There was something fundamental and seemingly intangible, because they couldn't hear it. It was more of the freedom now.

On the last two Rush albums, I haven't composed the drum parts—I've performed them. We worked with producer Nick Raskulinecz on the last two records, and I would play through the song a few times, see what would work, and then he'd come

in and we'd start recording. And he would conduct me, because our arrangements can be obtuse, and it used to take a long time for me to learn them.

I used to say it took me three days to learn one of our songs and put together a drum part. I don't like to count. I don't like to write notes. I want to play this thing like music. On this tour we're playing a lot of our older stuff from the 1970s with bizarre times. Why did we do this stuff? Because we were kids. We were learning how to do it. Because we could. I play that stuff completely differently now, with a much better lilt and feel and natural flow.

MD: In your last *MD* interview, in 2011, you said that studies with Gruber and Erskine helped you retain accuracy but feel good inside. Has anything changed? Is that even better now?

Neil: I'm still evolving in the ways that they have guided me. Sometimes I'll do an interview with non-musicians and they'll ask why I practice so much and take lessons. Well, I have the privilege of being a professional musician. It's my responsibility to devote myself to being all that I can be to the people that have given me that opportunity.

MD: Not everyone thinks that way.

Neil: I know, but they should. [laughs] I live by example. As a drummer, set a good example and don't work the audience. And when other drummers tell me I've inspired them to play drums, I tell them to apologize to their parents. [laughs] Like for this tour, I started preparation three months earlier. I'd play along with tracks all day and work on solo ideas, five days a week. So by the time we get to band rehearsals, I'm ready.

MD: How did the reverse chronological order of the set list come about?

Neil: Alex and I were excited to find the deep tracks, the songs we never play live. And we wanted to do a theatrical presentation where the show devolves back in time. So then we started thinking of how the songs should be chosen, and you've got two responsibilities—set one and set two, like two sides of an LP. So they'd have to start and end somewhere, and carry the audience dynamically.

Years ago we were talking about a certain order of songs, and Alex said we couldn't do that because they were all in the same key—something no one would think about. And I'm conscious of that tempo-wise. And for Geddy as a vocalist, he might not want to sing certain songs in a row.

A Tale of Two Kits

MD: Let's talk about your drumsets on this tour.

Neil: The kit in the first set evolved as an instrument of perfect comfort. I can play it with my eyes closed. The musicality through the cymbals and the toms. Everything is carefully chosen and put where it should be. I tell people: Don't look at those forty-seven drums. It's a four-drum setup. Look at the middle—everything spins off from there.

In the '70s, things evolved from the '60s. Ginger Baker [Cream, Blind Faith] had his ride off to the side with a crash on top of it, so he could have three or four toms across the front. That's around the era when I started playing, so I gravitated that way. When I first switched to the double pedal in the early '90s and DW really refined the first proper double-pedal setup, I went to it willingly right away—just ergonomically to free up the space. But I couldn't believe the



“El Darko” Kit

Drums: DW shells made from Romanian bog oak with black chrome finish

- A.** 6.5x14 VLT snare
- B.** 6" concert tom
- C.** 8" concert tom
- D.** 10" concert tom
- E.** 12" concert tom
- F.** 8x12 rack tom
- G.** 9x13 rack tom
- H.** 12x15 rack tom
- I.** 16x18 floor tom
- J.** 5x20 gong drum
- K.** 16x23 bass drums with Kelly Shu miking system
- L.** LP 13" brass timbale
- M.** LP 14" brass timbale

Cymbals: Sabian Paragon with brilliant finish

- 1.** 20" crash
- 2.** 17" crash
- 3.** 14" hi-hats
- 4.** 10" splash
- 5.** 16" crash
- 6.** 8" splash
- 7.** 18" crash
- 8.** 22" ride
- 9.** 20" Diamondback
- 10.** 20" China
- 11.** 19" China

Percussion

- aa.** Gon Bops Cowbell Tree
- bb.** Century Mallet orchestra chimes
- cc.** malletKAT Express



Hardware: DW 9000 series bass drum pedals and stands and 5000 series hi-hat; all stands with black nickel finish

Sticks, Heads, Extras: Peart plays Promark 747 NP "R40" signature model sticks. His heads are "an ever-changing variety of DW and Remos,"

while his accessories include UrbannBoard NP Signature Drum Shoes and Whirlwind braided cable. Neil's drum tech is Lorne "Gump" Wheaton.



sonic aspect. At the time, I half-noticed that the toms sounded cleaner and everything sounded more discrete.

This second kit was modeled after my 1978 black chrome Slingerland set. I had the notion that wouldn't it be great if, instead of having the rotating set I've had for years that kind of contrasts the acoustic and electronic drums, I went to a whole second drumset. I went to Drum Workshop and said I wanted that exact setup.

I always say this about old cars and motorcycles, and old drums: I love them, but new ones are better. There's no argument. And both sets are made from one tree in Romania that fell in the river, got buried in silt, and lay there for 1,500 years. In 2014, John Good from Drum Workshop bought that tree and made a few prototype shells that I tried. Of course the wood gets super-dense over that time, with pressure. And the resonance and timbre of the note were superior to even the best shells DW makes, which have evolved over my twenty

"R40" Kit

Drums: DW shells made from Romanian bog oak in Dyed Black Pear finish

- A. 6.5x14 NP Icon snare
- B. 13x15 floor tom
- C. 3x13 piccolo snare
- D. 7x8 rack tom
- E. 7x10 rack tom
- F. 8x12 rack tom
- G. 9x13 rack tom
- H. 12x15 floor tom
- I. 16x16 floor tom
- J. 18x18 suspended floor tom
- K. 16x23 bass drum with Kelly Shu miking system

Note: Each of the drums' logos, as well as the red oblong frames around them (which deliberately evoke Keith Moon's "Pictures of Lily" kit), are made of inlaid hardwoods.

Cymbals: Sabian Paragon with brilliant finish

- 1. 10" splash
- 2. 20" crash
- 3. 14" hi-hats
- 4. 17" crash
- 5. 10" splash
- 6. 16" crash
- 7. 22" ride
- 8. 8" splash
- 9. 14" Artisan hi-hats
- 10. 19" crash
- 11. 20" China
- 12. 20" Diamondback
- 13. 19" China



Electronics:

aa. Roland TD-30 trigger pads mounted in DW shells
bb. custom-built Daz trigger pad (the "target" head is a Who reference).

All trigger samples processed with Ableton Live.

Hardware: DW 9002 series double bass drum pedal and 5000 series hi-hat; all stands with gold-plated finish

NEIL PEART

years with them. And playing two bass drums and open concert toms again was fun.

MD: Was it tough at first to play that old setup again?

Neil: It was tough. The ergonomics of it all. I used to make everything so close and under me. But it was counterintuitive thinking. I used to think the closer it is, the more power I can get on it, but that's not true. You have to get it the *right* distance. Close or near doesn't matter. And the way the set list works out, I had to solo on that set. I'd much rather solo on my modern set in every sense, musically and physically.

But there are cool things as well. I used to have timbales on my left side, so I got those again and they're fun. That's part of the solo. But it grew organically and naturally by what excited me to play. And I never practiced this solo the way that I used to. I used to really compose the solo, and this one never went that way. And there are things in my solo that have been there since I was sixteen, that always thrilled me and still do.

MD: The snare stuff.

Neil: Yes, I can vamp on a snare drum all day long. And the four-on-the-floor. It feels exciting to me. And in the solo it's all

spontaneous. There are places I like to get to, like the waltz, because I love that. And I'll go up on the concert toms over the waltz, because I like how that works. And I want to get the cowbells in because they're funny. And there's a little Brazilian ostinato I love, though it's not in there every night.

MD: I'd figure you'd have the fearlessness to improvise a solo like that back in the day, but you're doing that now, later in the game.

Neil: I didn't have that fearlessness. And it was a responsibility thing. I wanted to make sure the performance was consistent. And I don't want to use tricks, but tools. There's a very important distinction. The quarter-note bass drum can be a terrible cliché. But if you use it at the right time in a complicated arrangement or something, there's nothing more powerful. I don't ever abuse it.

To me, my solo has become a soundtrack to an imaginary movie. When I want to build up the excitement, it has to be organic. When I build up that rudimental snare part and I bring the bass drum in, as soon as I start stomping on the hi-hat, it starts glancing, it's more exciting, and it's more exciting to play.

And for years I had 13" hi-hats, clamped down tight. Peter Erskine said he used to be

like me—he had his hi-hats super-tight and super-controlled. He said to just try to let them slosh for a while and see what happens. I did, and sure enough I learned that when they're moving like that, your velocity has to be exactly right and it helps your time sense. I got used to it, and it has this whole other benefit. Like in "Roll the Bones," the part with the sloshy hi-hat. I play that so much better now, and the feel in my bass drum foot is so much better for the quick hits. As is the time control, because I have to play to that moving hi-hat. Rhythmically, the velocity of my stick affects when it's coming back and the interval in between. And it's funkier. It's not just a sloshy hi-hat—it's part of the time.

MD: It's a shame you can't have all this fun on the kit you'd rather be playing.

Neil: Old things are nice, but new things are better. And I just know so much more through all the learning and evolution. The newer kit is just such a comfortable instrument, while the second one is ad-hoc. It came together bit by bit. Playing it now, I have to sit at it differently. My posture. And think about it and look where I'm going. The first time I tried to hit crash cymbals without looking, I was bleeding. And very many

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times I would finish something and go to where the ride cymbal should be and there's a tom there. So the map is different.

But I was able to compensate. It's not a compromise, it's a limitation, and one that I decided on for all good reasons. And I noticed quite a few of the songs had chimes. I have that as a sample on my malletKAT, but I thought, *You know what: Real chimes—it's suitable for the theater.* Century Mallet in Chicago made these beautiful-sounding black-nickel chimes.

The one factor that connects all this is the second bass drum. All the toms sound muddy on that side. And I'm told by the sound guys out front that a good thing is the main bass drum resonates in the other one, and it gives it a certain sonic quality out front that's all right. But it's the little subtle things like that that are a challenge.

Making Trades

MD: You've been celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the band on this tour. How do you choose what to play?

Neil: We don't have any songs that we hate, and there's none that we get sick of. They all have their charm to us, because they were all written from the heart, so there's none we feel reluctant to play. We came up with alternate sets, so it allowed us to not have to drop things but just play them every three or four shows. And that served us well on the last tour, and it was the first time we dared to try that. We usually hesitate to take on more work than we need. [laughs] And that's true even on the records. We've never written and recorded a song that we didn't put out. Why go through all that trouble?

Our benchmarks are really organic ones. I always think if I have a good idea, I'll remember it. If we play something that we like, we'll remember it. So there were songs that never got played, for one reason or another. We also wanted to fix on what we thought were high points along the way dynamically. But all the ones in the first set are killers to play, physically.

MD: They look demanding on you, right away.

Neil: On an album, you'll typically have a couple of slower, easier, gentler songs. But live, we don't. So it's an hour sprint for me. Full power from me.

MD: So if you never played "Limelight" again, that'd be okay?

Neil: Yeah, we've done it. We still like it. And there were lots of songs like that. We said, "Let's do *this* instead." We had to make those kinds of trade-offs.

MD: With your new feel and clock and maturity, do you ever think about how you might do something differently from these iconic parts and fills that you wrote long ago?

Neil: I do play those songs very differently. I've evolved into a different, more improvisational player. The clock on "Tom Sawyer" or "The Spirit of Radio" now...they're very different from what they were. I'm happy to play the composed parts the same every night. "Tom Sawyer" remains that way. If I

can play that right every night? Fine. I don't change very much, and I don't feel like I want to. "The Spirit of Radio" is another great example. Since 1979, I don't think I've changed anything except the feel.

For songs in those days, we were just starting to do a very formative technical thing, which was to put sequencers in the middle of a song. For that song, I'd have to play the intro and the first verse, which already have two different tempos, and then get to the chorus, with that sequence [sings

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the synth part], which was going to be the same every night. But I learned from that, to get set up and to get there and to flow through it and out of that. At the end, this piano sequence comes in, and typically toward the end of a song you might be speeding up—that's human nature. But I had to learn to train myself to know that thing is going to be coming in, and I want that to feel great. *That* should be the lift; that can't be the drag. So my time feel on those songs is that subtle difference that doesn't sound different but absolutely feels different to play, and better to play.

The Nature and Nurture of Change

MD: Back in the day you were part of a movement of idiosyncratic drummers who had a "sound." Stewart Copeland, Billy Cobham—if those names were on a record, it was going to sound a certain way. Guys who imposed brilliantly on the music, like Jack DeJohnette.

Neil: One of the masters. I've said of Jack that he's the one who best bridges classic drumming and modern drumming.

MD: Beautiful player, but he's not going to appear on a Katy Perry pop session.

Neil: [laughs] Let's hope not.

MD: And country records all sound quantized. Is it a healthy time for drummers? Where's the individuality? Where is the instrument going?

Neil: It's difficult. We were rehearsing in Toronto and I was driving back and forth and made it a point to listen to Top 40 radio. And it was fine. I love the R&B/hip-hop combo—it's very healthy for what it is. And I've always loved pop music if it's honest. Don't pretend you're a rocker in a leather jacket if you're a pop star. What is *pop* short for? Popular. It's not the same thing as being in a rock band, where I think a certain amount of integrity is inherent with the definition.

Over the two weeks, I didn't mind the music, but I did not hear one drummer or

one drum. But all of these acts have real drummers live, because the difference on stage—the theater of a live drummer—is enormous. The hope for the future is as performing drummers. It's hard to encourage young musicians now, because my rote advice is so useless, because I say, "What you have to do is play live." When I was a kid, we used to get gigs at the high school or the roller rink on the weekends, and during the week I could get paid \$20 to jam at the coffeehouse with other musicians. There were a lot of opportunities to play live if you were willing to ride in a van and pay your dues that way. There's no better way to learn.

For this band, when we got together in 1974, when we went out opening a tour, if the headliner took a day off we would go back to Akron, Ohio, and play the club. We would play anywhere and do anything. It was a slow build, and we worked so hard as an opening act. We were all supply and no demand. So later, when the demand grew, we eventually had to learn to say no. To not play ten shows in a row. Those were lessons along the way.

But we had the opportunity to play, and together. First, to build that unity, and then, over making subsequent albums, to learn how to write and arrange songs, and to learn to play and have a thing like "La Villa Strangiato (An Exercise in Self-Indulgence)." We knew what we were doing. Yeah, we were playing all this stuff because we could, but that's what we were supposed to do.

MD: Your music demanded the audience to invest in it.

Neil: We built our enduring reputation by live performance. Our albums would sell up and down, but people would still come to the show: "I didn't like that album so much, but I know that they'll play the rest of them, and the show will be good and they'll give it all they have." There was a trust factor there. So that's the hope for the generation of the



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future—the passion for the instrument. That people would want to play, whatever it takes.

And now people are finding avenues to communicate their music other than coming up through clubs. Not to publicize it or to brand it or sell it, but just to get people to hear it. If a band can get heard and seen on YouTube, then they can get gigs and start playing live. It's different, all right, but I still see people making it.

The Write Way

MD: You've said that sometimes you'll change lyrics so that Geddy can sing them more easily. Do you ever collaborate on the rhythmic delivery of the vocals?

Neil: Yeah, we often discuss phrasing. Plus it's kind of in-built. I have an advantage there, in that words are always rhythm to me. A line comes into my head and it has a rhythm, automatically, because I hear it as a drummer and pattern my phrasing that way. But sometimes I'll take liberties so that one should be longer and the next one should be back-phrased. And I might explain that to Geddy, or when he's doing his vocals I'll be around and if I hear him having trouble, I can rewrite something.

MD: And he's open to your suggestions?

Neil: Oh, mostly asking for help. [laughs] "I'm having trouble with this line" or "I need two more lines like this." Great—I can do that.

A lesson I learned is not to try to write one whole song and give it to the guys, like, "Here's my precious masterpiece." I just write a whole bunch of stuff and give it to them. They'll sit and jam and record it all, and Geddy will sift through it and make an arrangement out of it. And when he likes lines, I'm inspired. Just the fact that it's been accepted and found worthy to be a song. If anything gets rejected or left out, it's not a negative.

"Caravan" from *Clockwork Angels* is a good example. We had the "I can't stop thinking big" line. Geddy made it into the chorus and asked if he could have one more line to wrap it up. And somehow it came out to be "In a world where I feel so small, I can't stop thinking big." I don't know where that came from. It was just spontaneous.

It was a puzzle to solve. I'm really good at crosswords, and that helps a lot with that kind of thing. I have this many syllables. A song, even in our case, without much repetition, is only a couple hundred words. So you have to become super-economical with them and choose the word that conveys the meaning the best and that

sounds the best being sung, and that bears repeating. I didn't write "I can't stop thinking big" to be repeated. It was just a line. That's

one example where the problem solving can suddenly be inspiring. I don't know where that came from, but thank you. [laughs]

MD: What's more gratifying, seeing fans singing your lyrics or seeing them air drumming?

Neil: Singing. One of the keys to our longevity is that I know in many bands there's a great envy of the singer for getting all the attention. It causes a lot of ruptures and conflicts and all this pure ego. But all these people singing along with Geddy, they're singing my words. How can I feel bad about that? So that's very gratifying.

And the air drumming is the same thing. It's a level of engagement, just sheer exuberance. That's the energy you feel. It's truly spontaneous and it's a feedback loop. We energize them and they energize us. It's a palpable, sincere thing, and it's not just about [the musicians] putting on a show, but [the audience] being *in* the show. And I always say, I am the audience. I'm not a performer by nature. The choice of drums drove me into being a performer. I'm really a one-on-one talker. When I'm on stage, I watch people a lot. And the world too—on my motorcycle rides on my days off, it's the show coming at me. I'm the audience for it, and I try to absorb it as deeply as I can and hopefully share it with others later.

And that's the big appeal with prose writing, the urge to share. And this just occurred to me, but I bet the excitement I get in playing particular songs of ours [comes from the fact that] it communicates, "This is real." The energy that I'm giving this, the fact that this excited me when I recorded it and that became the drum part I wanted for that song—that meant something, and it still means something.

MD: Induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the cover of *Rolling Stone*...what's going on here?

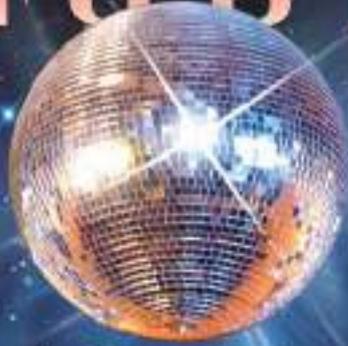
Neil: [laughs] Persistence! Just keep going. You can eventually earn people's respect. It's easy to be dismissed in the beginning. And I've done that myself as a reader. Just dismissed certain writers. And then they earn my respect over time. That's persistence.

MD: What's in the future? If Rush isn't touring, will you still record? Write prose? Be a dad?

Neil: You just answered it. There's no strict answer, but those possibilities are all there.



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orchestras. And thus the evolution of drum gear was initiated.

Not surprisingly, much of that evolution has been a response to changes in musical trends. As demands on drummers have increased, so too has the variety and sophistication of drum gear. Today, we have more choices than ever before.

As *Modern Drummer* celebrates its fortieth anniversary, we thought it would be fun to look back at some of the important milestones in the history of drum gear—especially those that came on the scene during the *MD* years. Enjoy!

by Rick Van Horn



Billy Cobham, who set standards of fusion-drumming greatness with Mahavishnu Orchestra, has always enjoyed using a mammoth setup, including this one that incorporated uniquely shaped North toms.

Terry Bozzio has been a driving force in gear experimentation for decades. With new wave band Missing Persons, he designed electronic kits and employed RotoToms to great effect.



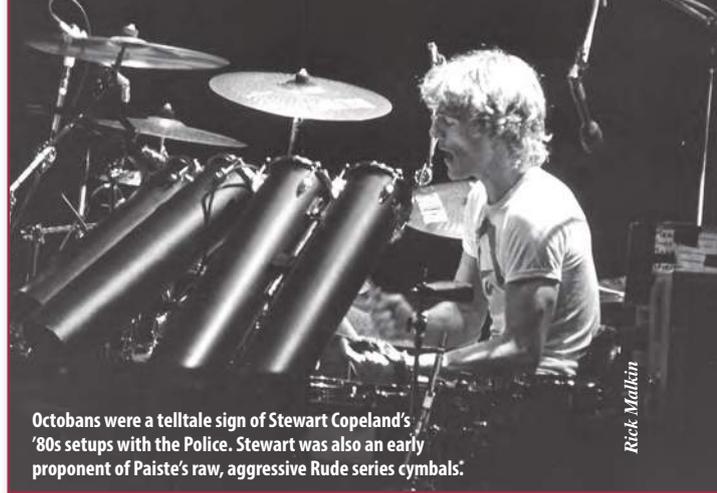
Drums

Fundamentally, most drums are simply cylinders with some sort of membrane stretched over their open ends. Of course there are exceptions, like single-headed North drums, with their distinctive horn shape, and Staccato drums, whose shape simply defies description. Both were first depicted in 1977 issues of *MD*.

But overall, the evolution of drums has mainly involved variations of material, size, and construction method. Shells have been made of wood, metal, acrylic, fiberglass, PVC, and even glass—and sometimes combinations thereof. “Traditional” diameters and depths of the 1950s and ‘60s gave way to “power” sizes in the ‘70s and ‘80s, only to return to shallower and smaller “fast” sizes in the ‘90s. We’ve even seen completely shell-less drumkits, like the PureCussion RIMS Headset, which was introduced in the April 1993 issue of *Modern Drummer*.

“Specialty” drums hit the market big time in the late ‘70s. These included Remo’s Rototoms, which saw their first *MD* mention in April of ‘77, as well as Tama’s Octobans and gong bass drums (both seen in the October ‘78 issue). These unique instruments became signature kit components for stars like Terry Bozzio, Billy Cobham, Stewart Copeland, Bill Bruford, and Simon Phillips.

Variations on all these themes are available in astounding abundance today, from major manufacturers and custom craftsmen alike. It’s now possible to obtain virtually any size, look, and sound of drum imaginable.



Octobans were a telltale sign of Stewart Copeland’s ‘80s setups with the Police. Stewart was also an early proponent of Paiste’s raw, aggressive Rude series cymbals:

Rick Malkin

The Dunnett Titanium snare drum. The company is at the forefront of independent drum manufacturers that have played an important role in drum design evolution.



Cymbals

When Buddy Rich appeared on the first *Modern Drummer* cover, in January 1977, his cymbal setup included one ride, one set of hi-hats, two crashes, a small splash, and a “swish” cymbal. Some rock drummers of the day used more crashes, but Buddy’s configuration was pretty typical.

The ensuing years have seen tremendous experimentation when it comes to rides, crashes, and hi-hats. Rides have ranged from pingy and clear to dark and washy, and with a big or small bell—and sometimes none at all. (Zildjian’s Flat Top ride appeared in *MD*’s inaugural issue. The company went to the other extreme two decades later with its Z series Mega-Bell ride.) Hi-hats have swung between small and large diameters, with mixed or matched top and bottom, and with crimped edges or holes in the bottom cymbal to prevent airlock (examples include Paiste’s Sound Edge hats and Zildjian’s Quick Beats, respectively, both introduced in August of ‘79). Crashes have ranged from

paper-thin to ultra-heavy. And sometimes—as in the case of Sabian’s eight-sided Rocktagon, launched in the September ‘85 issue—they’re not even round.

But again, these are all essentially variations on an established theme. It’s in the area of special effects that the most striking innovation in cymbals over the past forty years has taken place.

In the ‘70s and ‘80s, Stewart Copeland, Manu Katché, Phil Gould, and others brought splash cymbals into the rock pantheon, often mounting several different sizes and weights around their kits. Variations followed: Paiste Bell cymbals, which were essentially thick splashes, debuted in the May/June ‘79 *MD*.

China cymbals gained popularity in the mid-‘80s, largely due to their use by drummers like Neil Peart and Billy Cobham. Wuhan Lion cymbals and LP Rancan Chinas were heavily advertised beginning in the December ‘85 issue. China models were subsequently developed by all the major manufacturers.

In March of 1989, Zildjian introduced the EFX Piggyback. This 12" ultra-thin cymbal had a China-style profile and was expressly designed to be stacked on top of another cymbal. Sabian’s B8 Pro China splashes (September ‘91) were thin and quick when played on their own and featured inverted bells to make them stackable.

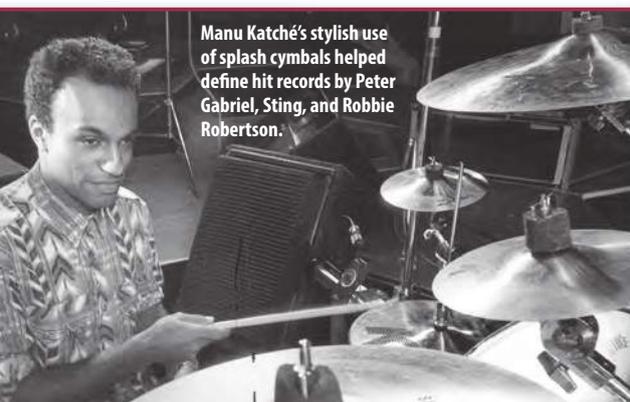
By August of ‘92, we saw



The changing shape of bronze: Sabian’s Rocktagon and Meinl’s Soundwave lines are examples of a rethinking of cymbal design that continues today.

entire special-purpose lines, like Sabian’s El Sabor series for Latin players. Hard-rockers got Z Oriental Trash Chinas (October ‘93) and Z Oriental Trash Hats (August ‘94) from Zildjian. These were joined by Sabian’s Rocktagon splashes in December of ‘94, Meinl’s wavy-edge Lightning crashes in April of ‘95, and Zildjian’s Zil-Bels in December of ‘95.

Special effects entered a new age in November 2001, when Meinl’s Generation X series introduced pairs of cymbals, including the Safari crash, designed to be stacked atop each other. And in April of 2002 Dave Weckl and Sabian combined to create the HHX Evolution series, which included the O-Zone crash—the first cymbal to have holes cut in it to produce a special sound. Since then we’ve seen China-profile cymbals riddled with small holes (Meinl’s Filter China, August ‘02), cymbals with slots as well as holes (Zildjian’s EFX models), and Paiste’s recently introduced Swiss series, which appear to feature more air space than metal. Who knows what’s next?



Manu Katché’s stylish use of splash cymbals helped define hit records by Peter Gabriel, Sting, and Robbie Robertson.

Drumheads

The single greatest innovation in the history of drumheads happened more than two decades before *MD*'s first issue appeared. That was the mid-'50s introduction of the synthetic head, which replaced the calfskin models that had been used for centuries. Marion "Chick" Evans is credited with the invention; Remo Belli is credited with taking it mainstream.

The earliest synthetic heads were single-ply, general-purpose models. But by the late '70s the demands of rock music had led to twin-ply heads designed for greater durability, as well as for the muffled sound that was prevalent at the time.

Remo and Evans (and later Ludwig, Aquarian, and Attack) heads were made of Mylar or a similar plastic film. But that

wasn't the only way to create synthetic heads. Cana-Sonic fiberglass heads debuted in the April '78 *MD* and lasted for quite a while. Duraline Superheads (August/September '79) were made of Kevlar (used for bulletproof vests) and were touted as being unbreakable. Hard on the hands and very limited in sonic range, Kevlar heads didn't prove popular on drumkits—but they totally took over the marching-drum market.

***MD*'s October '77 issue depicted Remo's first Pinstripe model, along with the Evans Hydraulic heads. Both are still in their respective company's catalogs, in addition to literally hundreds of other models dedicated to virtually every playing style and musical taste.**



Percussion

Because *Modern Drummer* was brand-new in January of 1977, that first issue understandably carried very few advertisements. But there was one incredibly significant ad. It depicted the single product that can be credited with launching today's gargantuan hand and drumset percussion market: the Latin Percussion fiberglass conga.

Afro-Cuban congas and bongos made of wood had been on the music scene for generations, but they were generally imported (which made them expensive) and handmade (which made them somewhat fragile). LP's fiberglass congas, on the other hand, were less expensive and much more durable than wood models. They were also louder and more penetrating, making them especially applicable in the context of amplified music. And because they were made of fiberglass, they could be offered in "sixteen beautiful finishes," which gave them eye-candy appeal. They were congas for the masses, and they revolutionized hand drumming, laying the foundation for the explosive popularity of ethnic drums of all kinds that we see today.

By the October/November '79 issue, *MD* was carrying plenty of ads, including one for LP's Everything rack. This was the first stand-mounted device available to multi-percussionists for putting all of their bells, blocks, chimes, triangles, and other "toys" in one convenient—and hands-free—playing position. Drumset players soon wanted in on the action, which led to a slew of devices from different manufacturers for mounting tambourines, bells, and blocks around a drummer's kit.

Percussion chugged along quietly for a generation, focusing primarily on traditional instruments like congas, bongos, and timbales, used mainly by professional musicians. But in the early '90s the drum-circle movement changed all that. These activities involved people who just wanted to bang on portable hand drums for the sheer fun and social



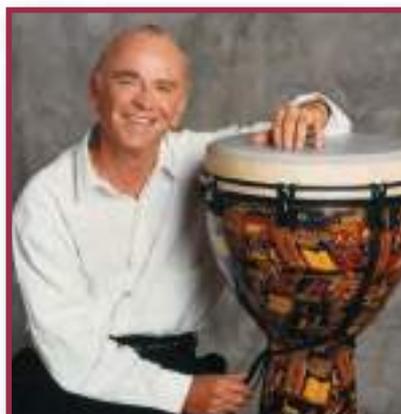
interaction of it. Ethnic drums like West African-style djembes were just the ticket. But like the original Cuban congas, imported djembes were expensive and hard to come by.

Enter the Remo company, which, as was stated in the July 1995 *MD*, "dove head-first into hand drumming." Using synthetic Acousticon shells and Fiberskyn heads, Remo created djembes, ashikos, and even some totally original instruments, all designed to provide good sound, light weight, and low cost.

The other major percussion companies quickly saw a market for djembes. Meinl wood models appeared in *MD*'s August '95 report on the Frankfurt Music Fair; a Toca fiberglass djembe was shown in the April '96 issue; and LP Bantu "African style" (djembe-like) drums debuted in May '96. For several more years, djembes dominated the hand-drumming scene.

By 1997, hand drumming—and what was now called world percussion—had exploded to the point where *Modern Drummer* ran a major supplement on the subject. It included a treatise on the health benefits of hand drumming, playing tips, and a showcase of ethnic instruments from large and small manufacturers around the world. In May of that same year, *MD*'s NAMM Show report listed more than two dozen manufacturers offering hundreds of percussion instruments.

Significant among those instruments was one of Peruvian origin, offered by Gon Bops. Its name in Spanish described it perfectly: a box. This was the cajon. Easy to play and super-portable (it acted as its own seat), the cajon quickly supplanted the djembe as *the* go-to percussion instrument for social gatherings and "unplugged" band performances. Its unique sound lent itself to all sorts of recording situations as well. Over the next decade the cajon was offered in literally hundreds of styles, materials, and specialty designs. Today it's a mainstay of most major percussion brands, including Meinl, Tycoon, Pearl, LP, and Toca.



Remo Belli's foray into world percussion helped grow not only his company, but the very role of hand drums in modern culture.

Sticks...and More

Aside from the nylon tip, which was introduced by Regal Tip in the late '50s, drumsticks have remained essentially unchanged from prehistoric times until today. Of course, variations on the basic theme have ensued over the years, including shafts that are square or feature bulges, various textured grips, and even lighted tips.

As rock drummers hit ever harder, stick breakage became a concern. Enter the synthetic model. Brands and materials came and went from the late '70s on. Riff-Rite graphite sticks, Duraline Kevlar sticks, and Veri-Sonic aluminum-and-nylon sticks were notable



among these, but they ultimately didn't last. The two that did are by Aquarian (May '81; made of special composites and graphite) and Ahead (April '92; aluminum shafts with replaceable nylon tips and sleeves).

Wire brushes were developed in the '20s for low-volume playing. Plastic variations evolved from there. But then came "unplugged" performances by rock groups in the '80s. Sticks were too loud; brushes weren't loud enough. The answer was something in between: bundled dowels wrapped with tape. The January '85 issue of *MD* carried a small ad for Branches—which withered under that name. But when Promark introduced the same item as Hot Rods in January of 1987, the implements instantly became indispensable for all kinds of medium-volume situations. Today multirods are offered—in many varieties and with many derivations—by every stick manufacturer.

Hardware

Nowhere has there been as much drumming-related innovation as in the area of hardware. Big and small items of every description have been created to improve the way drumkits are assembled, supported, and played. Given the sheer number of choices—and meaning no slight to those not included—here are the four that we deem the most important.

Memriloc. The Rogers Memriloc system (shown in the January '77 *MD*) featured special fittings that mated in order to secure the height and angle of stands, booms, and mounting arms. This enabled drumkits to be set up, broken down, and set up again quickly, with everything in the same place. The revolutionary concept was eventually adopted by every hardware manufacturer.

R.I.M.S. The Resonance Isolation Mounting System (October/November '79) allowed any brand's drums to be suspended from their holders without anything penetrating or connecting to the shells. Volume and projection were increased dramatically, and "isolation mounting" soon became another industry-wide feature.

Double bass drum pedal. The first device for playing one bass drum with two feet to appear in *MD* was the Sleishman Twin pedal, from Australia. It featured a footboard on either side of a centrally mounted beater yoke, thus also centering the drummer directly behind the bass drum. It debuted in the October/November '80 issue and is still sold today.

The Zalmer Twin (August/September '82) was the first to put two beaters on a "master" pedal and link it to an outrigger-style "slave" pedal—which in this case was connected by a heavy but flexible cable.

But it was the DW-5000 double pedal (February '83) that popularized the double-pedal concept. Initially this model featured a totally



Toto's Jeff Porcaro helped plant the seeds for an important trend in drum hardware with a prototype drum rack co-designed with tech Paul Jamieson.

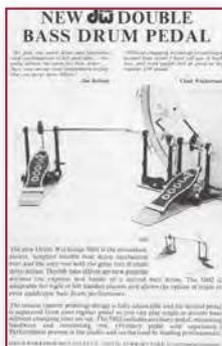
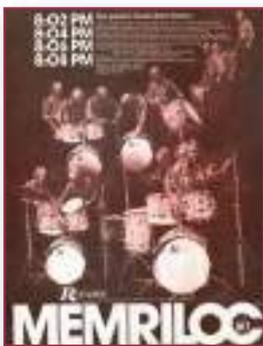
Rick Malkin

separate yoke fitted with a bent-shaft beater to strike the bass drum closer to the center. The slave pedal was connected to the yoke with a solid universal-hinge axle. Later DW models—and dozens of others—connected the axle directly to a second beater on the master pedal.

Drum rack. The first product designed to simplify the mounting of drums and cymbals was the Collarlock system. Starting with 1"-diameter tubular horizontal bars connected to existing cymbal stands, then later adding freestanding legs, the system debuted in Canada in 1978 and was first advertised in *MD* in the February '85 issue.

In late 1982 drummer Jeff Porcaro and drum tech Paul Jamieson collaborated on a totally freestanding rack that incorporated rectangular bars with special clamps to hold cymbal-boom and tom-holder arms. Pearl quickly picked up the design, and the DR-1 drum rack debuted in the August '93 issue.

Between these two systems—and all of their descendants—drummers gained a way to simplify complex setups, neaten up their stage look, and lighten their hardware bags.



Electronics

The April 1977 *MD* mentioned electronics as “the wave of the future”—but in that case was referring mainly to the modification of acoustic drum sounds with sonic effects like reverb, phase shifting, and even wah-wah pedals.

MD's third issue (July '77) featured the debut of the Synare Percussion Synthesizer. Looking like a black flying saucer with a foam-rubber top, it offered four user-modifiable sound sources. January '78 saw the Pollard Syndrum, with its Kevlar head and disco-friendly “swoop” sound.

October '79 introduced a new name—Simmons—with a drum synthesizer. The famous Simmons V Pro Kit, with its hexagonal, plastic-topped pads, debuted in April of '82, with the modest claim of being “the world’s first electronic drums.”

Throughout the '80s the seemingly inexorable development of electronics continued, with ever-improving pad kits from Simmons, Dynacord, Tama Techstar, Ultimate Percussion, E-Mu, and others (all shown in the October '84 issue). At the same time the LinnDrum entered the fray, followed by the debut of MIDI drum “brains” and interfaces. This led many to wonder whether live drumming would even continue.

But by the early '90s a sort of leveling out had begun. Companies offering electronic kits now focused on “drummer friendly” designs. Among these was the Swedish company ddrum, whose pad kits featured digital sound sources, drumhead-topped pads, and easy-to-understand operation. In March of '95 *MD*'s reviewer called the high-end ddrum 3 “arguably the most advanced electronic drum system ever invented,” adding that it was “more tailored to a performer’s needs than any other sampling system today.” The ddrum 3 cost a lot, however, and the later ddrum 4 didn’t bring the price down enough to keep the line successful, despite its advantages.

The electronics giant Roland entered the fray in the early '90s. In July of 1994 the pro-level TDE-7K pad kit had rubber pads and a pretty impressive array of sounds and functions—perhaps a little too impressive, given its cost and relative complexity. Roland quickly corrected that with the introduction of the TD5-K, which was simpler, more affordable, and in many ways actually more advanced than its larger sibling. The company also introduced the stand-alone SPD-11 Percussion Pad, which was the perfect add-on item for drumkit players who wanted access to electronic sounds.

In 1994 Yamaha was also getting busy, introducing the TMX drum trigger module, whose sounds could be accessed via electronic pads or triggers on acoustic drums. Yamaha touted it as being “drummer designed, with an emphasis on playing, not programming.”

August of 1994 saw the debut of the Korg Wavedrum, which

Today’s cutting-edge players often include a mix of acoustic and electronic sound sources. This shot of Katy Perry drummer Adam Marcello’s setup includes a Korg Wavedrum, as well as triggers, individual pads, and sampling units from Roland—and, of course, the ubiquitous MacBook laptop.



Few drummers did as much to make the world safe for electronic drums as Bill Bruford, whose setups with '80s-era King Crimson and his own Earthworks band pushed the technology of the time to its technical and musical limits.

could be considered the first electronic hand-percussion instrument. With its flying-saucer design, single pad, and dozens of digital percussion sounds of every description, it was a big hit with top-level pros—but was too expensive to appeal to the mass market.

There were lots of pad kits in the May '96 NAMM report. Most didn't last, but the Yamaha DTX system did, and it became a favorite with electronic drummers. As described in that *MD* issue, it featured “a 500-sound brain, four onboard mixer faders, a continuous hi-hat controller, choke-able cymbals, and a user-friendly sequencer.”

But it was in *MD*'s May 1997 NAMM report that Roland introduced a pad kit that changed everything: the professional V-Drums system. Its quiet, easy-to-play-on mesh heads were a quantum leap over rubber surfaces and set a new standard for electronic pad design.

In the ensuing years music has exploded stylistically, offering dozens of opportunities for acoustic *and* electronic drumming. Triggering sounds from acoustic drums is still popular, as is the use of the dozens of available sound-sample libraries as a resource for composition, recording, and live performance.





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Steve Smith

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Modern Drummer

The First Decade

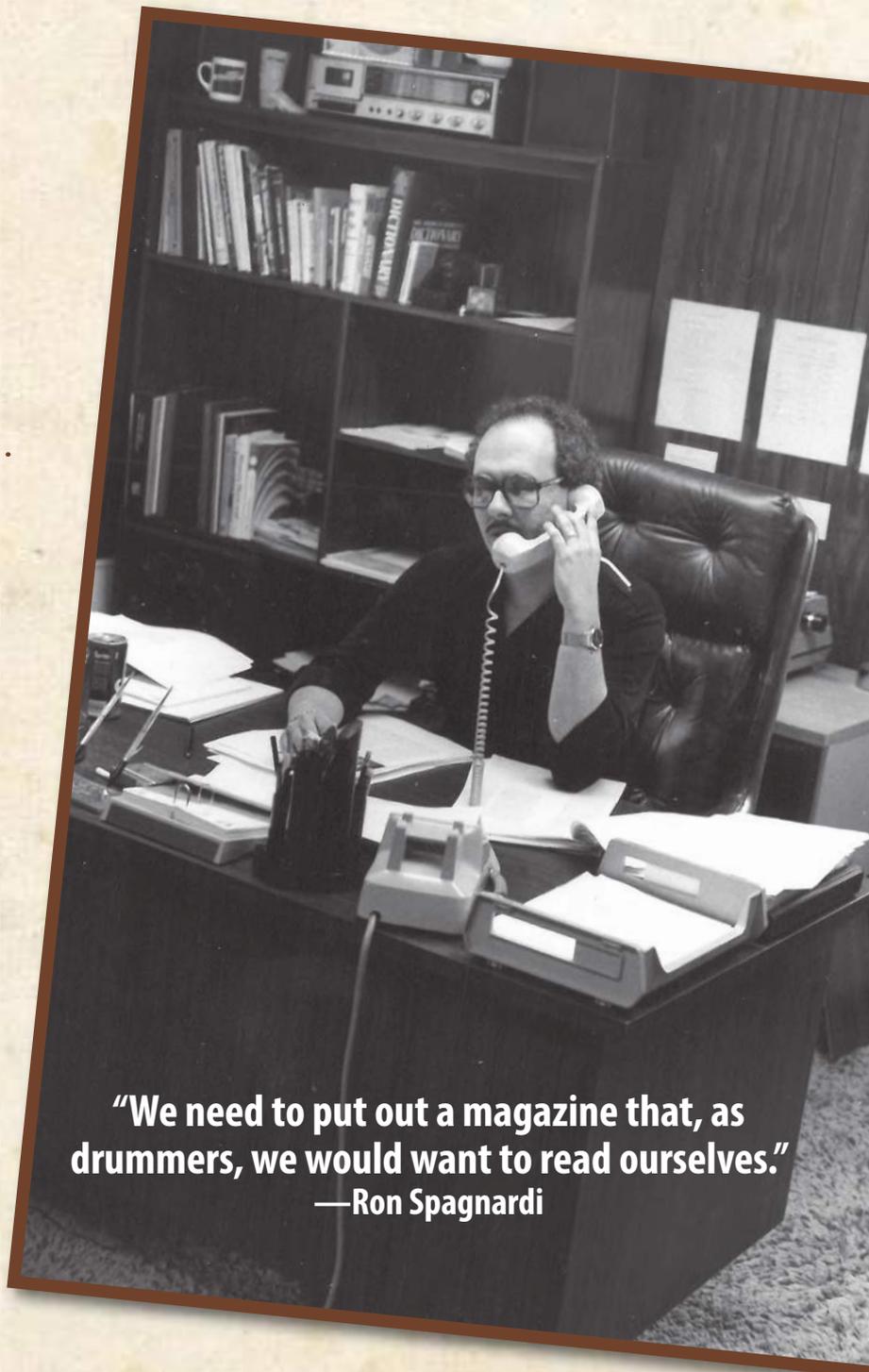
In the mid-'70s, a relatively unknown drummer named Ron Spagnardi had a big idea: to create the first independent magazine for and about drummers. He had no funds to speak of, and even less experience in publishing. He did, however, have the will. Now he just had to find the way.

by Rick Mattingly

The late-1976 ad in the musicians-union newspaper announcing the debut of a new magazine called *Modern Drummer* was small, but it jumped out at those of us who had dreamed of having our own publication. Guitarists and keyboard players had magazines, but there hadn't been much for drummers over the years. At one time, the Ludwig company published *The Ludwig Drummer* on a fairly regular basis, but by 1976 it was turning up only once every couple of years. Back when *DownBeat* was published every two weeks, an annual issue was devoted to drummers, but after the magazine went monthly, that was no longer the case. The Percussive Arts Society published *Percussive Notes*, but it covered the entire spectrum of percussion, so there wasn't much room for drumset.

Modern Drummer looked promising. Granted, it was going to be published just four times a year, but that was a lot more than had been available to drummers until then, and a one-year subscription was only four dollars, so it wasn't a very big gamble.

The first issue arrived in January of 1977. You're not supposed to judge a book by its cover, but, wow—they landed Buddy Rich for the first issue!



**"We need to put out a magazine that, as drummers, we would want to read ourselves."
—Ron Spagnardi**



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The people putting out this magazine obviously knew what they were doing. And the cover story wasn't the only impressive feature; Louie Bellson wrote an article on big band playing, Carmine Appice contributed a piece on rock, and marching expert Duane Thamm authored a column on rudimental drumming. There was a close-up on Billy Cobham's setup, a transcription of a Roy Haynes solo, a guide to disco drumming (about which any drummer who wanted to work in the '70s had to be knowledgeable), a page of warm-ups, reviews of new literature, product announcements, a question-and-answer column, and more.

A note from the editor, Ron Spagnardi, detailed the goals of this new magazine. "Drummers have long needed a voice in the form of an intelligent publication encompassing all phases of the art, and we hope to establish ourselves in this and future issues as a significant force in the field of drum education and as a platform for the exchange of ideas," Ron wrote. "We're basically for the drummer who's interested in growing as a musician and in search of a source from which he might draw some intelligent conclusions. We hope to be that source by staying abreast of the latest in styles, artists, and equipment; by keeping the pages of *Modern Drummer* as relevant to the needs of today's drummer as possible; and by keeping our fingers firmly placed on the pulse of our fast growing, ever changing industry."



That's what you call "opening with a bang" Buddy Rich, the world's greatest drummer, appeared on the cover of MD's debut issue.

It's Questionable) are still in use, while others simply expanded. (Printed Page, for instance, became Critique as *MD* began reviewing recordings, videos, and other media.) Spagnardi's original blueprint for *Modern Drummer* continues to serve as a viable framework as the magazine begins its fortieth year of publication.

The first page of the first issue also included a list of the magazine's staff. It turned out that except for Spagnardi, the names were all made up. *Modern Drummer* was, in reality, a one-man operation.

Spagnardi was a drummer who had attended the Berklee College of Music in Boston. After returning to his home in New Jersey, he played gigs and ran a music store



Among *Modern Drummer* publisher Ron Spagnardi's early supporters were legendary drummers Joe Morello (left), Louie Bellson, Roy Burns, and Ed Shaughnessy, and comedian Charlie Callas (right), who began his career in entertainment as a professional player.

By today's standards, that first issue was sparse: It was all of twenty-eight pages long, the photos were black-and-white, and the articles weren't very long. But what was there was solid, and looking back now, even though the magazine has evolved greatly, it's remarkable how many of the original column titles (e.g., Rock Perspectives, Jazz Drummer's Workshop, Strictly Technique,

in Bloomfield called the Music Scene. Like a lot of his colleagues, he wished that drummers had their own magazine, a lack that he was particularly aware of because he sold such titles as *Guitar Player* in his store. Finally, in 1974, he told his wife, Isabel, that he wanted to publish a drum magazine.

Ron had a lot to learn. He spent nearly three years studying other magazines,

Starr Time

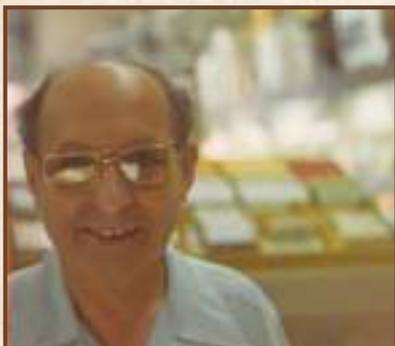
MD scored a major coup with its December '81/January '82 cover story on Ringo Starr. The former Beatle was about to release a new album, and *Musician* magazine had been promised the only interview he was going to give. In the meantime, *MD* contributor Robyn Flans had established a connection with Starr's good friend Jim Keltner, who was a fan of *MD* and encouraged Ringo to give an interview and pose for exclusive photos (all of this unknown by the publicist). Ringo's *MD* cover story came out just a couple of weeks before *Musician* hit the stands, with a standard promo shot of the drummer on the cover. People started paying a lot more attention.



especially ones dealing with music, to see how they were constructed. He subscribed to a magazine geared toward publishers and editors. He got advice on everything from layouts to postal regulations. *Modern Drummer's* address was listed as Nutley, New Jersey, which is where Ron lived. His basement became the *MD* office, and he laid out the first few issues himself on his Ping-Pong table.

But *MD* didn't remain a one-man operation for long. After the first issue appeared, Spagnardi received letters from a number of writers and professional drummers who wanted to contribute. And in the third issue, he ran a notice, "Correspondents Wanted," inviting drummer-writers to apply for freelance reporting assignments. Over the next few issues, the bylines of several writers who would contribute a lot during *MD's* early years (some of whom still write for the magazine) began to appear. Many of the columns were being written by prominent drummers and educators, including David Garibaldi, Mel Lewis, Charley Perry, and Roy Burns.

The magazine grew quickly, in terms of both subscribers and advertising. After the third issue came out, Spagnardi put his



A family business: One of Ron Spagnardi's earliest influences was his father, Leo, a drummer himself who worked in the *MD* offices for years. Ron's wife, Isabel, and daughter, Lori, remain involved with the magazine to this day.

music store up for sale so he could devote all of his time to *Modern Drummer*, which was also growing in size. The fifth issue jumped to thirty-six pages, the next issue was forty-four, and the one after that was fifty-two. But the extra pages were not just filled with ads; the articles were longer, and there were more of them.

Karen Larcombe was added to the staff as features editor starting with the seventh issue (July 1978), which also included the first *MD* article by this writer. That issue featured the magazine's first color cover photo, of Ed Shaughnessy. A couple of weeks after it came out, Buddy Rich appeared on *The Tonight Show*, and right before he did a duet with Shaughnessy, who was the house drummer on the show, Johnny Carson held up a copy of *MD* with Ed's cover story.

Another milestone was reached at the beginning of the third year: *Modern Drummer* went from quarterly to bimonthly. And two issues later, the masthead was listing a new address; *MD* had moved out of Spagnardi's basement and into an office building in Clifton, New Jersey. By the end of the fourth year *MD* was over a hundred pages, and by 1981 nine issues were being published per year.

That fifth year of publication saw some other significant changes. Scott K. Fish was hired as managing editor late in 1980, and in April '81 I was named features editor when Larcombe left. Ron now had an all-drummer editorial staff, and while he had created a detailed list of guidelines for the editors and writers to follow, his philosophy about what *MD* should be was perhaps best summed up when he told us, "We need to put out a magazine that, as drummers, we would want to read ourselves."

This was an exciting time to work for *MD*. The magazine had been accepted and embraced by the drum community, and whereas in the early days writers had to

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Modern Drummer: The First Decade

explain to drummers what the publication was in order to be granted interviews, by 1981 publicists and record companies were calling *MD* to request stories about their artists. And while drummers had always experienced a certain brotherhood that didn't always exist in other instrumental groups, *Modern Drummer* fostered even more of a family feeling.

Spagnardi insisted that *MD* maintain a good balance of drummers from every genre, and he especially wanted us to cover the legendary jazz players, many of whom were still working. The early '80s saw cover stories on (among others) Buddy Rich, Louie Bellson, Elvin Jones, Max Roach, Tony Williams, Philly Joe Jones, Shelly Manne, and Joe Morello, along with Steve Gadd, Phil Collins, Charlie Watts, Max Weinberg, Hal Blaine, and such up-and-coming drummers as Simon Phillips, Terry Bozzio, Kenny Aronoff, Stewart Copeland, Dave Weckl, and Vinnie Colaiuta.

MD went monthly in 1983, which also saw the launch of the *Modern Drummer* book division. As part of his emphasis on education, Ron wanted to publish method books, and we got off to a great start with Joe Morello's *Master Studies*, which was a result of the "family" that *MD* was creating. Danny Gottlieb, who was then with the Pat Metheny Group, had become a good friend of the magazine, and when we told him we were interested in publishing some educational material, he told us that his teacher, Morello, had a whole briefcase filled with exercises he had created. Gottlieb connected us with Morello, and *Master Studies* was the result. That book was soon followed by releases from Bob Moses, Gary

Chester, Carl Palmer, and Bill Bruford. *MD* also published a book by Spagnardi, *The Great Jazz Drummers*, which provided short profiles of sixty-two influential players.

Scott Fish left *MD* in the summer of 1983, to be replaced by Rick Van Horn, who had been contributing a column on club drumming. Shortly after, the editorial staff expanded again with the hiring of William F. Miller as an associate editor. The magazine was continuing to grow, and in the fall of 1984 *Modern Drummer* moved into its own building in Cedar Grove, New Jersey. Another major event that year was the launch of *Modern Percussionist*, a quarterly magazine that covered such topics as mallet-keyboard percussion, symphonic percussion, drum corps and marching percussion, and world percussion. Twelve issues were published over three years, and they have become highly sought-after collectors' items.

Besides being on the cutting edge of the drumming community, *Modern Drummer* was also at the forefront of the publishing industry. Art director Dave Creamer became very interested in the new technology of desktop publishing. He produced the last two issues of *Modern Percussionist* in-house on a Macintosh computer, and then began producing *Modern Drummer* the same way, making it one of the first national magazines to be desktop published. (Creamer was written up in *Folio* magazine, which is aimed at editors and publishers, for his pioneering efforts.)

MD celebrated its tenth year of publication with a special issue featuring interviews with four *MD* Hall of Fame drummers (Buddy Rich, Neil Peart, Steve Gadd, and Louie Bellson) and six recent Readers Poll winners.

It was the last major published interview with Rich, who died just over a year later. That issue also contained *Modern Drummer's* first "Sound Supplement"—a flexible record attached to the magazine's binding. It featured drummer Andy Newmark and studio expert Jimmy Bralower demonstrating how various drum sounds were achieved in the studio.

Roy Burns, who was on the cover of *MD's* second issue and went on to write a popular column for the magazine called Concepts, recalls the impact *MD* had on the drumming community. "For the first time, there was a magazine devoted just to drummers," Burns says. "For years we had put up with drummer jokes and put-downs, as though we weren't real musicians. So *Modern Drummer* made us feel legitimate and released us from that feeling of frustration. The psychological impact on drummers of having our own magazine was very great, especially during the first ten years. It gave us something to be proud of. Also, it wasn't just a place to show off drummers; it was a place where drummers could learn, get inspiration and ideas, and read the ideas of famous drummers who were interviewed. *Modern Drummer* gave an insight into the professional end of the business that had never existed before. Other magazines have copied the format, but nothing had the impact of those first issues of *Modern Drummer*, which made drummers proud of being drummers."

Rick Mattingly served as features editor of Modern Drummer from 1981 to 1985, senior editor from 1985 to 1989, and editor of Modern Percussionist.



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The Future State

Eleven of today's most forward-looking players ponder how drumming will evolve as we hurtle ever deeper into the twenty-first century.

In its hundred-year history, the drumset has been adorned by temple blocks, timpani, and bass drum heads with nature scenes painted on them. The introduction of the hi-hat, Rototoms, Octobans—and bass drums with no front heads at all—reflected and nudged forward the musical obsessions of the day, and eventually entire drumsets would spin in the air, be aided by powerful electronics, and explode in size with additional bass drums, toms, and snare drums and enough cymbals to equip a large marching band.

Drumming vocabulary has expanded to an even larger degree. From the New Orleans pulse of Paul Barbarin, Baby Dodds, and Zutty Singleton to the big band majesty of Jo Jones and Gene Krupa, drumming became faster and louder, swung harder, and grooved with greater might. The gods of technique arrived in the hands of Buddy Rich, Elvin Jones, and Tony Williams, equaled by magicians of subtlety such as Max Roach, Mel Lewis, Shelly Manne, Roy Haynes, and Jon Christensen. The big band drummers influenced classic-rock legends like

John Bonham and Mitch Mitchell, who in turn fired the manic imagination of metal firebrands like Dave Lombardo and Danny Carey, who subsequently pushed modern maestros like Travis Orbin and Matt Halpern yet further. Fusion kings Vinnie Colaiuta and Dennis Chambers inspired legions of hip-hop drummers, while the hip-hop programming of J Dilla influenced everyone.

So what of drumming's future? What will happen when computers become even further integrated into our daily lives and playing routines? How will such buzz phrases as "the Internet of Things" and "Industry 4.0" change the way drummers interact with their environment? A basic understanding of electronic instruments, which is already a required part of a working drummer's vocabulary, will surely become more ingrained in our skill sets. Or will some as yet unknown drummer or technology alter the game entirely?

We posed these questions and more to eleven drummers with their fingers firmly on the pulse of today's music. Here's what they had to say.

JOJO MAYER

"The pace at which technology is developing now is exponential," says Jojo Mayer, drummer/co-leader of the live electronica band Nerve, which has recently released its third studio album, *Ghosts of Tomorrow*. "We've never dealt with that before. The future will be less.

"The nature of Western drumming as a whole, it's a huge universe, but in terms of vocabulary we are limping thousands of years behind the Indians and what they already understand. Western drumming is really young. How people perceive Indian rhythms is more refined; it's a higher resolution.

"I also think drumming will return closer to its roots," Mayer goes on. "I don't think physical drumming will disappear completely, because it's fun. But as far as people who understand this refinement of drumming vocabulary, their gear will become simple again. We will create more vocabulary on less gear.

"When you look at the development of culture in inner cities, there's less physical space to drum without disturbing people. Kids begin playing drums now on electronic kits, but electronic drums don't communicate in the same way. We still rely on MIDI, an outdated protocol. There will have to be an open-source platform for electronic drums, which is not being supplied by the usual subjects for obvious reasons—because you cannot exploit that economically.

"We live in a time when people don't create, they *curate*. People curate sounds and styles—they like things, but they don't make things. We recycle and microwave the twentieth century to death. But for drummers, once we have open-source protocol for electronic drums, that will be a game-changer. When we have electronic drums that are intuitive and can be built to our personal specifications, they will become tools for creative artists. That will open the door to the future."



Robert DeLong



"Drumset has been a defining commonality of popular music since before I was born," says Robert DeLong, a drummer/frontman whose music incorporates elements of electro, alt-rock, and pop, and whose sophomore album, *In the Cards*, was released last September. "But a live drummer is now someone who plays to tracks, who has an SPD-SX where their rack tom would be, and whose drum sounds never appear on the recording. Yet the sound set of kick, snare, cymbals, and toms persists, stronger than ever, and so drumset lives on, evolved."

of the Art

Stella Mozgawa



"The creative process for drummers is opening up with the ease of technology," Stella Mozgawa of the alternative groove band Warpaint says. "A lot of popular music is sample based, and understanding that is part of the skill set for drummers. But technology is changing all the time. With Native Instruments' Mouth, for example, you can sing into a computer and it will translate it into MIDI, which can be changed into a drum-machine pattern or a melody or a synth pattern. With technology, drummers can just play the drumkit, or they can play the kit and transpose those ideas into different textures. It opens up different parts of the drummer's brain.

"The most exciting technology I've seen do this is Sunhouse's Sensory Percussion," Mozgawa adds. "Triggers have been around for decades, but Sunhouse is using triggers with seven or eight different possibilities, as opposed to the basics. That allows drummers to have the capacity to influence the music so much more than when they were only playing the kit or a sample pad. Sensory Percussion triggers samples and uses the actual drumkit. It will enable drummers to start marrying the two in a really successful and creative way. Then drummers will have control over a larger part of the music that's being produced.

"There are a lot of purists in the drumming world who have shied away from electronics, because there are certain feels you can't get unless you're actually playing the drums. This kind of technology, where the electronics are incorporated into the drumset and are so sensitive in the moment, might bridge the gap between the drumset purists and the people who program drums. It will be a catalyst for more technologies to incorporate human touch and human feel and ideas. If drummers can invite the positive elements of technology, there can be a healthy collaboration between technology and the mind of a drummer—together they can make something that can't be replicated."

Matt Garstka

"The future of drumming is going to be changed by technology," Matt Garstka of the contemporary metal band Animals of Leaders says. "The Internet has already had a huge impact on the drumming community and everyone's access to information.

"But it's a double-edged sword. For example, when the gospel-chops scene began, it helped drummers to better themselves and push the boundaries. But you lost some musicality in the mass population. There's always a dual effect.

"Generally, there will be more people who use technology. It's already happening—drummers are programming ideas that they can't play, or they'll audition an idea using technology before they learn it.

"As far as my style of drumming in the jazz-metal scene, it's more typical for people to use technology to program an idea than to play it. In the future, I hope people use technology more as a learning tool than as a writing tool—a vehicle to help you learn 11/16 or 15/16 or other difficult time signatures. You can program those over a quarter note.

"The drumming community overall is growing. As you do now, you'll see drummers playing to videos online who don't think of quality control. But the drummers who are willing to put in the extra time and research are going to find greater inspiration and information. Those people are going to be the future of drumming. Those people will excel."



Meytal Cohen



"I believe the greatest evolution in drumming will appear not in the art itself but in the way we consume it," suggests Meytal Cohen, whose career was built on her widely viewed drum-cover videos and who is currently promoting *Alchemy*, the debut album by her hard-rock band, Meytal. "New media has transformed the way in which we are now able to learn new techniques as well as showcase them for the entire world to see."

Mark Guiliana

When asked to name a specific player he thinks is pushing the art of drumming forward, Mark Guiliana, whose Jazz Quartet recently released its debut album, *Family First*, chuckles and says, "The first person who comes to mind is Tony Williams. Tony's so timeless. I keep returning to those records. And they're still just *impossible*. The second would be Aphex Twin, who technically is not a drummer. But his programming has influenced me in such a profound way—dare I say it, almost as profound as somebody like Tony. He's truly at the forefront of developing a new language that people are trying to emulate, but it's coming from a non-drummer perspective. And one of my biggest modern-day heroes is Jim Black. I first became aware of him when I was in college and I started going to all of his gigs. He kind of blew me away, and still does."



The Future State of the Art

Brendan Buckley

"The music industry as a business model has been changing rapidly over the past ten years," says longtime Shakira drummer Brendan Buckley, who has also recently performed with pop singer Daniel Powter, Brazilian singer Roberto Carlos, contemporary country singer-songwriter Shelby Lynne, Asian pop star Leehom Wang, R&B producer Dallas Austin, and Singaporean pop star JJ Lin, among others. "It kept ramping



Ronn Dinnert

up, but since 2000 the whole business has been shrinking. Studios go out of business, because not everyone is recording albums in big, fancy studios. Tours are shorter—people go out for three months instead of two years and hit the major cities. Instead of recording an album over two weeks they do it in two days. Instead of recording in a studio, you're in a glorified garage. Everywhere, from top to bottom, everything is switching and shrinking.

"I don't think it's a sinking ship, though," Buckley continues. "I think of it as evolving. So making money as a drummer is getting more difficult. You have to hustle. You have to negotiate. If you have your hourly rate, people are always asking you to give them the 'bro discount.'

"In my position I feel that I don't have to make myself more attractive. In L.A. I'm surrounded by fantastic drummers who have great time; they can all tour, they can all record. You're not trying to be better than your friend; you're trying to be good at what you do. If you're the right guy for a project, maybe your style or touch or signature is what they want. Perhaps you'll get the job. If you have a generous circle, everyone helps each other.

"An upcoming drummer will need to have his or her playing together, which sounds simple, but it's a lifetime of work. A good Facebook page is important, but can you play your drums well enough to be paid? Can you groove and understand arrangements? Can you give options? Are you on time? Can you memorize two hours' worth of music without messing up? Can an artist take you on the road for six months without you getting arrested? These are simple concepts, but this is what all drummers have to focus on if they want to work now or in the future."



Joey Verzilli

Tyler Ritter

"I've noticed this resurgence in '70s-style dance grooves," says Tyler Ritter of Moon Taxi, a popular Nashville-based band that recently released its third studio album, *Daybreaker*. "But I love how some groups are fusing those feels with more contemporary electronic sounds. I really like that approach; it's an interesting mix of the classic and contemporary. In the long run, it's all about making people dance."

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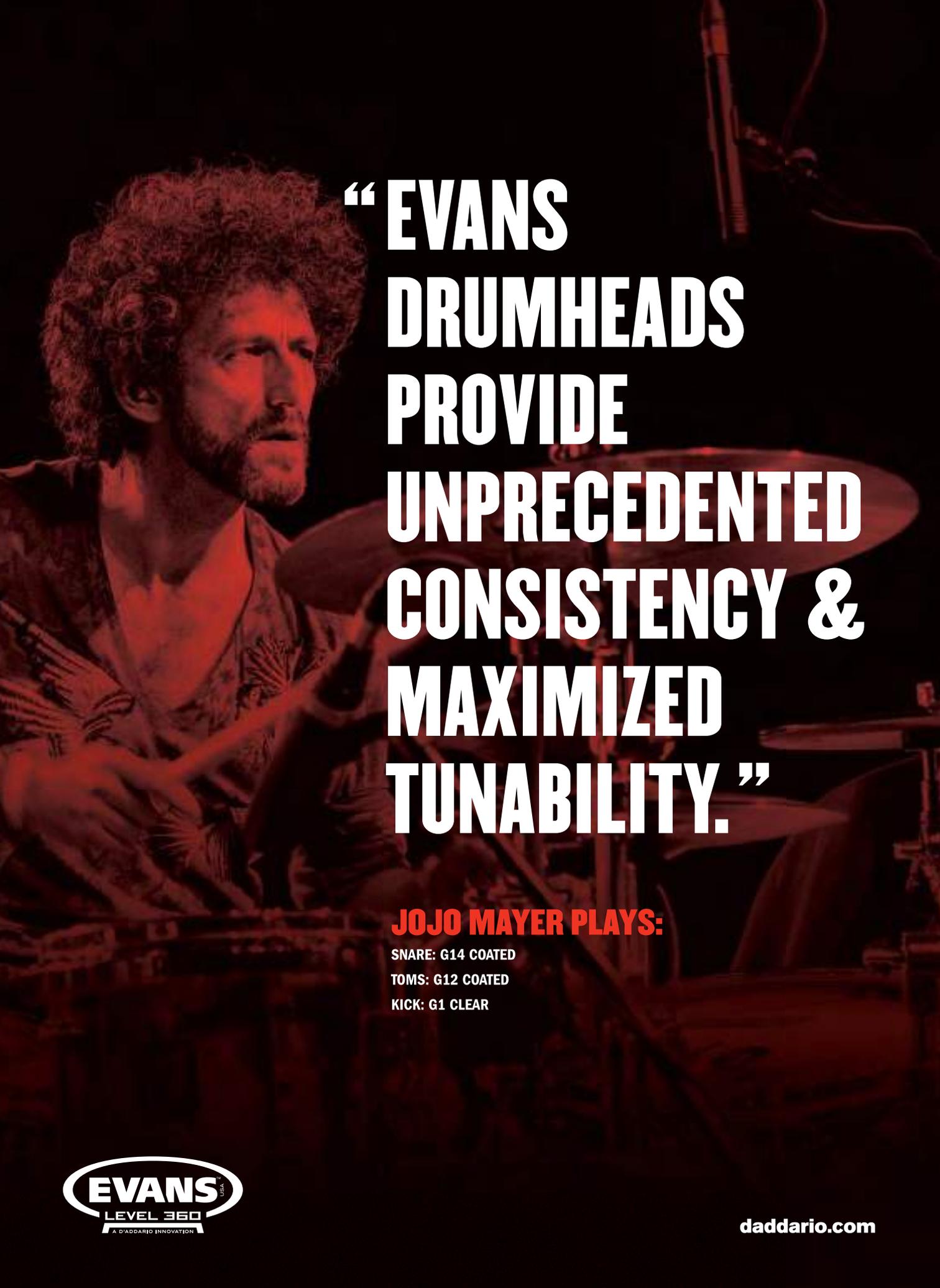


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The Future State of the Art



Evan Stone

Drummer/leader Evan Stone, whose poetic, political, and funk-laced Translucent Ham Sandwich Band released its debut album, *Music From the Future*, last year, tells *Modern Drummer* that, indeed, the future of drumming is a subject he thinks about a lot. "I believe that as the future unfolds," he says, "the art of drumming within music—both popular and otherwise—will begin to see a variety of more complex ideas coming from the drum chair, which may include elements of metric modulation, odd time signatures, and over-the-barline ideas that the general population will come to accept, comprehend, and feel in a more natural and organic way. A raising of the intelligentsia bar, so to speak!

"After studying the progress of drumming and drummers over the last ninety years," Stone goes on, "we can see that each new generation developed a better sense of 'metronomic pulse/time,' which doesn't necessarily reflect a more organic, 'feel' sense of time. The future will hopefully provide us with more 'feeling' drummers and fewer 'thinking' drummers.

"We as a drumming community must remember that every genre of music and its prospective 'feels' within those contexts is founded upon the principle of the *drumbeat* and the varying syncopations within those beats. This is what determines 'feel.'

"Drumming is the most primal of all instruments, and the organic experience of music and its beat must remain entrenched within it, as I believe that society as a whole would have a difficult time adjusting entirely to the removal of the human element in rhythm.

"Although I do not believe that artistic drummers/musicians are a dying breed, I do think there is a danger in having the future of recorded popular music dictated by machines, only to be mimicked and reenacted by a live musician."

Tim Kuhl

"With all the advances in technology and changing musical styles," says Tim Kuhl, who plays in Sean Lennon's psychedelic pop band Ghost of a Saber Tooth Tiger and who recently released the tablet-generated LP *1982*, "the role and the future of the drummer remain the same: Make those around you sound better."



Camille Gainer-Jones

"I think in the future drummers will need to be self-reliant," says Camille Gainer-Jones, who's performed and recorded with Roy Ayers, Roberta Flack, Heavy D, Christian McBride, Cyndi Lauper, and the Dream Logic, and who is out supporting her solo album, *A Girl From Queens*. "They should have their own bands and be able to write and produce, along with some marketing skills. Embrace all technology, from reading music to programming to playing other styles. Being flexible and open is how I see the future of drumming."



Rob Mazella

Interviews with Matt Garstka, Stella Mozgawa, Jojo Mayer, and Brendan Buckley conducted by Ken Micallef; interview with Mark Guilliana by Je' Potter.



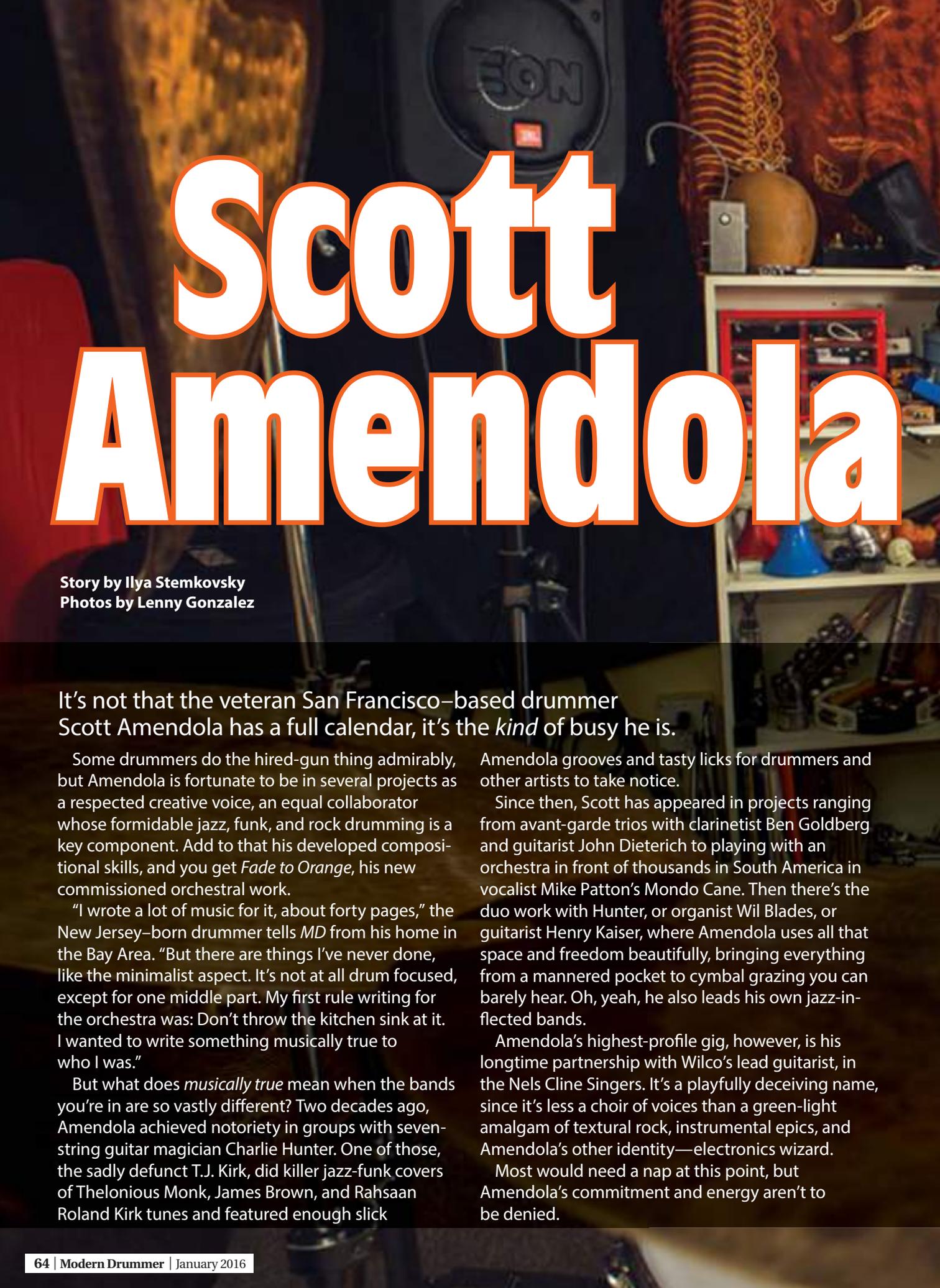
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Scott Amendola

Story by Ilya Stemkovsky
Photos by Lenny Gonzalez

It's not that the veteran San Francisco–based drummer Scott Amendola has a full calendar, it's the *kind* of busy he is.

Some drummers do the hired-gun thing admirably, but Amendola is fortunate to be in several projects as a respected creative voice, an equal collaborator whose formidable jazz, funk, and rock drumming is a key component. Add to that his developed compositional skills, and you get *Fade to Orange*, his new commissioned orchestral work.

"I wrote a lot of music for it, about forty pages," the New Jersey–born drummer tells *MD* from his home in the Bay Area. "But there are things I've never done, like the minimalist aspect. It's not at all drum focused, except for one middle part. My first rule writing for the orchestra was: Don't throw the kitchen sink at it. I wanted to write something musically true to who I was."

But what does *musically true* mean when the bands you're in are so vastly different? Two decades ago, Amendola achieved notoriety in groups with seven-string guitar magician Charlie Hunter. One of those, the sadly defunct T.J. Kirk, did killer jazz-funk covers of Thelonious Monk, James Brown, and Rahsaan Roland Kirk tunes and featured enough slick

Amendola grooves and tasty licks for drummers and other artists to take notice.

Since then, Scott has appeared in projects ranging from avant-garde trios with clarinetist Ben Goldberg and guitarist John Dieterich to playing with an orchestra in front of thousands in South America in vocalist Mike Patton's Mondo Cane. Then there's the duo work with Hunter, or organist Wil Blades, or guitarist Henry Kaiser, where Amendola uses all that space and freedom beautifully, bringing everything from a mannered pocket to cymbal grazing you can barely hear. Oh, yeah, he also leads his own jazz-in-flected bands.

Amendola's highest-profile gig, however, is his longtime partnership with Wilco's lead guitarist, in the Nels Cline Singers. It's a playfully deceiving name, since it's less a choir of voices than a green-light amalgam of textural rock, instrumental epics, and Amendola's other identity—electronics wizard.

Most would need a nap at this point, but Amendola's commitment and energy aren't to be denied.



MD: Between Nels Cline, Charlie Hunter, Wil Blades, sideman work, and of course your own groups, how do you juggle all these relationships?

Scott: At the end of every year I look back and think, *Well, that's how that year went.* I don't have just one name gig. My relationships with Charlie and Nels are over twenty years old, and [I've worked with] Wil Blades for ten years. Charlie and I have been doing a lot of duo stuff over the past few years, so that becomes a priority, because Nels is in this huge rock band, but when they're dormant, the Singers will start working. Charlie and I played together for so long and then didn't do anything for a while, but the relationship has been very important to us.

I don't want to be on the road for eight months anymore—and you just hope that you don't have to be. But I love touring and playing with these creative people. It would be nice if it was easier, but it's never going to be easy when you're not playing music that appeals to millions of people. [laughs] But then I'll play with Mike Patton's Mondo Cane to huge audiences in South America.

MD: Do you turn down lots of gigs?

Scott: I've turned down gigs if I didn't think I'd enjoy them night after night. And I've never regretted it, because maybe that wouldn't have lasted and I wouldn't have gotten a chance to do

these other things. All the people I play with really push me and inspire me.

MD: From a purely economic standpoint, duos must be nice, with fewer people to pay.

Scott: That's very true. It makes a lot of sense, especially today. But if it wasn't fulfilling musically, we wouldn't do it.

MD: You groove, swing, rock, and play free, but you have a uniformity of sound in your recordings. Are you using the same gear or switching stuff out?

Scott: That's interesting, because there was a time when I did a lot of gear switching. I needed to use certain things for certain bands, and I still do that, but it's becoming more refined. I used an 18" bass drum for so long, and I was on a bit of a mission with it, but lately I've been favoring a 20".

I also want to be able to translate a sound in different situations. There's a psychological element of tuning your drums higher because you're playing a "jazz" gig, or bringing a bigger kit because you're playing more R&B and soul and shuffles. But with the Nels Cline Singers, Nels is a force. He sets up right next to me super-tight and wants to be practically *in* the drums. I had been using bigger cymbals but decided one time to bring in the [smaller] cymbals I was using in other situations. And I played a certain way,

Scott Amendola

which affected the entire band in a positive way. It brought the upper dynamic down and gave more room for lower dynamics. I'd been using 15" hats, and one day I switched to these 14" hats and Nels really noticed. There was more definition. It was getting back to something I'd let go of a little—texture and sound. It made me think more about the kit and my voice.

I've also been using this Craviotto 5.5" copper/brass snare. I'd never used a metal drum as my main snare. With snares, it's a bit of a phase thing, but right now I'm just hearing this metal drum.

I've spent a lot of time trying to get my sound. And when I'm on the road and don't get to play my drums, I know what I have to do to get that.

MD: Regarding your duo recordings with Charlie Hunter, *Not Getting Behind Is the New Getting Ahead* is Charlie's music, *Pucker* is your music, and you've done EPs covering the music of the Cars, Cole Porter, Duke Ellington, and Hank Williams. Was there a different approach to handling each



session?

Scott: Yeah, we're coming from different places when we're writing. But when I was writing for *Pucker*, I was thinking about Charlie and what our thing is. I want him to be himself. We'd rehearse and arrange and play gigs and talk about things and see how

they felt. For my stuff I had specific ideas, but he was also totally open to my suggestions when we were working on his songs. That covers project was his thing. He had ideas for which tunes he wanted to do. But we would also drive around listening to rock music, so he wanted to do the Cars too.

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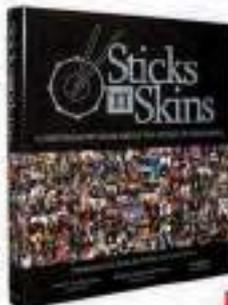
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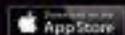
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Scott Amendola

We worked on it and it really translated.

MD: So you're not getting eye rolls for being a drummer who composes?

Scott: Charlie is collaborative and very supportive. When you're presenting something you've written, you're really exposing yourself. When you're in a supportive environment and everyone is really there and trying to make something happen, it's great. And hopefully they're not trying too hard. [laughs] I've had a couple of bad experiences with that with other people. If someone is not hearing anything and has a bad attitude, instead of trying to make something of it, in my opinion it's just someone I don't want to be working with.

You get asked, "You're a drummer...how do you write music? You just write beats?" And it's like, I play music—why can't I write music? Just because I don't play the guitar or piano in front of you, it doesn't mean I don't have a relationship with it. We have this idea about music schools and you need to know this or that. And man, you just have to figure out how to be yourself and what your relationship is to the art.

MD: Do you ever write anything for Charlie and forget that he has only two hands?

Scott: It's funny, there's a song "Rubbed Out" on *Pucker* that's

SCOTT'S SETUP



Drums: Craviotto with solid maple shells

A. 5.5x14 hybrid copper/brass snare

B. 8x12 tom

C. 14x15 floor tom

D. 12x20 bass drum

Heads: Attack 1-Ply Medium

Coated snare, tom, and bass drum batters and bass drum front head, and Thin Skin 1-Ply Clear snare and tom bottoms

Hardware: DW

Cymbals: Istanbul Agop

1. 14" Signature hi-hats

2. 20" Mel Lewis ride (with chain)

3. 21" Turk Jazz ride

4. Matt Nolan Heart gong (custom made)

Sticks: Vic Firth

Cases: Humes & Berg

Percussion: Pete Engelhart Snail



Electronics: ZVEX Fuzzolo, Maneco Man-Eko Deluxe, MythFx Infinium, Mid-Fi Pitch Pirate, Korg Mini Kaoss Pad 2S, Red Panda Particle, Behringer 302USB mixer, ZT Lunchbox amp, AKG C418 clip mic

tricky. It has this bass line and this guitar line, and it has this one three-bar phrase against a four-bar phrase, and I know he can do it—but is he going to want to? He learned it and told me it's his favorite song. He's a total phenom and he loves rhythm and harmony, and he's going to figure it out. I'm in awe every night. He's doing something technically brilliant and making incredible music out of it.

MD: For your trio project with Ben Goldberg and John Dieterich, how do you mentally approach playing without the traditional bottom end that a bass provides?

Scott: I've done a lot of gigs without bass. One of my favorite groups is the Paul Motian/Bill Frisell/Joe Lovano trio, and that's kind of all I need. And I love bass. I own a bass. I love *playing* bass.

When there's no bass, I'm trying to hear what my role can be. Am I holding it down rhythmically? Or playing free? Or does it go between the two? It's not like, "What's missing?" It's more like, "What's here?" I like the idea of space and a lack of low end. And what plays the role? My bass drum? My ride? It could be the clarinet or the low string of the guitar. Everybody has to commit to it.

MD: You're in so many groups that improvise. How do you deal when something's not happening musically?

Scott: You have to ask, "What can we change?" I'm all about trying stuff. Any idea that anybody has. If we're on stage improvising and it's not happening, you can't just stop. You have to ask, "What can I grab on to?" In rehearsal, sometimes it's about simply saying, "This is not working. This sucks." [laughs] It's like the elephant in the room. But sometimes it's perception. I'll walk off the stage and think something sucked, but someone else thought it was amazing. And nothing is really finished. Nels made a new arrangement of a song we'd been playing for years, and it was a great idea. It changed it. There were certain aspects I was going to miss, but this was a new direction for it. So just embrace it and make it happen.

MD: The Nels Cline Singers might be where your voice shines the strongest. Talk about your approach in that group, with your use of electronics and coming up with parts.

Scott: The leader, Nels, is a bottomless pit of creativity. He wanted the band to evolve and take time getting to certain places that he knew we would get to. There are aspects of my drumming, and this electronic thing I do, that he wanted in this band and that he was going to write for. He's described the

Singers as a cross between Paul Bley and Sonic Youth. Everything I love about music is in that band. Even things I didn't know I loved were pulled out of me. I love the way we can go from complete noise with my electronics into a groove or into a super-subtle ballad, or I can play colors or sonic textures. It's as exciting to me as anything.

It took a long time to figure out what I wanted to say with the electronics. Early on Nels was excited about it, so that sent me deep into exploring it. I wanted it to be a musical extension of the drums, to be a part

of me. There are so many technical aspects to what I'm doing, and figuring out how it affects the band musically, but also the onstage sound with things that are happening that maybe shouldn't be, like feedback, and people getting frustrated. [laughs] Or it's too loud.

[Tortoise guitarist] Jeff Parker played with me in a band called Crater. And he told me the electronics were cool but that I had them coming from all these monitors all over the stage. He said his amp is where his sound comes from, and my drums are

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Scott Amendola

where my sound should come from. It was about my sound coming from where I was, so it wouldn't take over the whole situation. He was right. So what I needed was a speaker next to me that I could control that everybody was hearing from there. And if someone wanted it in their monitor, like drums, then they could have that.

I'm essentially dealing with guitar pedals, and there's a certain amount of chance. Certain combinations of things yield surprises, and I like that. I don't set up loops beforehand. It's all about improvising. And I don't need to use the electronics. With Charlie Hunter, I don't hear it as part of our sound.

INFLUENCES

Fela Kuti anything with drummer Tony Allen // **Tony Allen** Black Voices, Secret Agent (Tony Allen) // **Aretha Franklin** Young, Gifted and Black (Ray Lucas, Bernard Purdie, Al Jackson Jr.), I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You (Gene Chrisman) // **Donny Hathaway** Live (Fred White) // **Duke Ellington and John Coltrane** Duke Ellington and John Coltrane (Elvin Jones, Sam Woodyard) // **Ahmad Jamal Trio** Cross Country Tour: 1958-1961 (Vernel Fournier) // **James Brown** Star Time box set (Clyde Stubblefield, John "Jabo" Starks, Melvin Parker, others) // **AC/DC** Highway to Hell (Phil Rudd) // **Jo Jones** The Essential (Jo Jones) // **Naná Vasconcelos** Saudades (Naná Vasconcelos) // **Thelonious Monk** Monk in Tokyo (Frankie Dunlop) // **Ornette Coleman** Beauty Is a Rare Thing (Billy Higgins, Ed Blackwell) // **Weather Report** all, especially recordings featuring Eric Gravatt // **Joe Zawinul** all (various) // **the Meters** all (Zigaboo Modeliste)

MD: What about your own bands? You've got trios and quintets and violins—you can really go anywhere with it.

Scott: This duo with Wil Blades is some-

thing I'm going to do more with. Not just a live record but maybe a studio album as well. But for my own bands, one obstacle I'm up against nowadays is being able to afford to record a quintet. I don't have a record deal, and I don't think I'd want one. But hopefully I can make a record and sell enough to be able to make another record, to fill up the recording fund.

MD: The *Fade to Orange* press release described it as the Singers meet the symphony. What were the challenges of writing for a large orchestra of non-jazzers?

Scott: When it was commissioned, there were certain things I wanted to do with the piece originally, like having the orchestra improvise, but the music was going in a different direction. It was to be about twenty minutes, and I've never had rules like that. Knowing I was working with Nels and [bassist] Trevor Dunn, I wanted us to be featured with an orchestra. But sometimes I'll agonize over notes, because I just want it to be right. The music itself isn't that hard. There's vibe and a lot of repetitive things in that piece, a lot of cyclical motion. But for the orchestra, you don't have to write chords, just voicings.

MD: What was the genesis of your project with Henry Kaiser?

Scott: Henry is a sweetheart and a great guitar player. He told me to offer [fans] that he and I would make an improv CD, and if enough people were interested in buying it, we would do it. I asked him what he needed, but he said not to worry about him. He was so generous. He came over with his computer and one microphone. It was an accidental record. It was just going to be an hour of improvising and handwritten CD-Rs to give out to people. But then Henry had some other ideas he wanted to add, and he asked me to put a few other things on afterwards, so that it could be an actual record. It was really fun. And then we did a house concert that was a blast.

MD: Do you get to practice? What are you working on?

Scott: Often when I practice, it'll be around

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Scott Amendola

a project I'm working on, and I'll relate my practicing to that. It's applied practicing, in a sense. But I do have students, and one of them brought over the Wilcoxon book [*Modern Rudimental Swing Solos*], which I've never gone through. And I try to work on the N.A.R.D. snare drum book [*America's N.A.R.D. Drum Solos*] or the Joe Morello book [*Master Studies*]. Sometimes some basic hand or foot exercises. But there's never a feeling of *I don't need to practice*. I really want to practice more. Plus I have to mess around with all these pedals and

electronics. I have to practice that too.

MD: What do you teach your students?

Scott: I really like teaching. Technique is really important. A lot of people that come

RECORDINGS

Scott Amendola Fade to Orange /// **Scott Amendola/Charlie Hunter Duo** Pucker /// **Scott Amendola Trio** Lift /// **Scott Amendola Band** Believe /// **the Nels Cline Singers** Macroscopic, The Giant Pin, Initiate, Draw Breath, Instrumentals /// **T.J. Kirk** If Four Was One, T.J. Kirk /// **Ben Goldberg, John Dieterich, Scott Amendola** Short-Sighted Dream Colossus /// **Charlie Hunter** Ready...Set...Shango!, Natty Dread /// **Scott Amendola, Ben Goldberg, Devin Hoff** Plays Monk /// **Bill Frisell** All Hat soundtrack /// **Kelly Joe Phelps** Slingshot Professionals /// **Stephen Yerkey** Confidence, Man; Meta Neo Nature Boy /// **Orenda Fink** Invisible Ones

to see me don't have a concept of technique, and one day I'd like to write a book or some kind of informational guide with my philosophy about playing and improvising. But there are so many ways to play drums, and sometimes drummers get caught up in the idea that there's only one way to do it, or that they can't create their way to do it. We can all benefit from books and rudiments, but it's also about physically looking at your hands and thinking about how your body feels at the drums and learning how your fingers and wrists work, how high you're sitting.... All those things are important and specific to each person. We all play differently.

MD: How has technology changed things in the landscape of gigging, performing, practicing, and distributing your work?

Scott: Yeah, that's a tough one. I came up at a time when I was able to establish myself. Record labels used to help us get our music and us out there. It was a symbiotic relationship. It's harder for younger musicians, and there are a lot more musicians today and a lot fewer gigs.

For me, the Internet's great, because you can reach people all over the world, record music inexpensively, own your music, and still tour. Young musicians need to know that you can still go out there and build an audience. If you have to have a job, you can still make music, and there's nothing wrong with that. Whatever it means to you, whether it's writing your own music or being in a wedding band, just try to follow that path and figure out how to make it work.

The value of music has changed so much. We're in this weird transition with the sale of music, and now with streaming music. But you can't replace the experience of hearing people live. I love performing and can't imagine not doing it. And I've turned down gigs that would take me away from my family for too long. But all I really want is to make a decent living. I don't need to be Charlie Watts. The people I play with are doing okay. Music has done only good things in my life. It's been a positive force, and I'm grateful that I can play music and write music.

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Mehmet Handmade Cymbals from Turkey

GEARING UP ON STAGE AND UP CLOSE

Interview and photos by Sayre Berman

The War on Drugs' Charlie Hall

Drums:

- A.** 6.5x14 Black Beauty snare with imperial lugs
- B.** 9x13 tom
- C.** 16x16 floor tom
- D.** 16x18 floor tom
- E.** 14x24 bass drum

Not shown: 5X14 Supraphonic transition-badge chrome-over-brass snare

Cymbals:

- 1.** 16" 30th Anniversary hi-hats
- 2.** 22" Om ride with three rivets
- 3.** 24" Traditional Medium ride

Not shown: 22" Mel Lewis ride

Sticks: Vic Firth Buddy Rich wood tip

Hardware:

Ludwig, including Atlas flat-base cymbal stands, 1950s WFL Speed King bass drum pedal with Danmar square felt beater, 1960s snare stand (for rack tom), and 1970s Atlas snare stand

Heads: Evans L360 HD Dry or Genera Dry snare batter and Remo Snare Side bottom, Ludwig Silver Dot tom batters and clear WeatherMaster bottoms

Electronics: JH Audio in-ear monitors and Roland SPD-SX multipad

The War on Drugs hit the ground running after *Lost in the Dream* was released in March 2014, and never slowed down in 2015. *MD* caught up with drummer Charlie Hall while the band was performing in Miami.

"On this tour I'm playing the modern-day, clear Ludwig Vistalites," Hall says. "I love how these drums project and also how versatile they are. You can tune them up tight and they have incredible clarity and evenness, or you can tune them down, which is what I do, and they sound really meaty without sounding floppy. The toms have great range and great control. My don't-leave-home-without-it snare is the 6.5" Black Beauty. It has a lower pitch, it's responsive, it cuts through, and it has a big, round tone. I can hit it ten different ways and get ten different sounds out of it. It can be warm, and it can be explosive. With the Evans Dry drumhead to diminish overtones, I get a classic 1970s Mick Fleetwood studio sound.

"Coming from a jazz background, I really appreciate cymbals that have wash and dark tonal qualities," Hall continues. "When playing louder music I need cymbals with definition and clarity. I'm always looking for cymbals with loads of character, with dark overtones and wash, that can still give the definition that I need when playing rock music. I

had the 22" Om ride customized by installing two rivets a few inches apart and then added an additional rivet about a third of the way around to act as a counterbalance. I use rivets of different widths and thicknesses, and each size gives a unique response. At the moment I'm using the heaviest combination.

"The cymbal itself is dark with great definition, so the rivets help to give it a colorful shimmer and sustain. The 24" Medium ride is a big, heavy cymbal but is light enough to provide wash and character. It sounds great at low volumes, yet it still cuts through. I'll occasionally use a 22" Mel Lewis ride in place of the Traditional. It's very similar but a bit lighter, and it has more of a washy crash. I use the 24" when I want to get a little more definition. The 16" 30th Anniversary hi-hats have tons of character and give me a good chick along with a nice wash."

Regarding his blend of drumhead brands, Hall explains, "I started using Evans on my snare drum several years ago, after

I did a session using an Acrolite snare with that head on it. It was tuned down without any gels, and it had a perfect dry, dead sound. I now live and die by that head. I played around with different heads for the Vistalites, but I've stuck with the Silver Dot. They have a little bit of attack, and the dots control some of the ring. They're a perfect match for these shells."

The War on Drugs recently changed to in-ear monitors from traditional floor wedges. Hall was a bit nervous about making that switch. "I had a notion that having our ears closed up would somehow separate us more," he says. "But in fact it's very much the opposite. Having in-ears allows us to hear each other so much more clearly, so the communication quality has increased tenfold. I can now hear the delay on the piano. Prior to the in-ears, that was a nuance I could never really discern. Now we're totally dialed in to what each of us is doing. The transition has been amazing."





D

C

E

A

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1

Red Bull

How to Practice

Get the Most Out of Whatever Time You Have

by Garey Williams

Enthusiasm is your fuel to improve your drumming. You probably spend time working on grooves and fills, playing along to recordings, searching YouTube for videos, attending concerts, practicing from method books, and jamming with other musicians. These are all key ingredients to becoming a good drummer. But the way in which you divide your time among them and how you structure your practice routine determines the rate of your development. Here you'll find some suggestions to help you get the most out of your practice time.

I recommend that you read through the article twice. Use the first time to understand how to plan a practice routine effectively. After the second read, you should fill out the practice chart. Make copies of the blank chart, so you can update it as you improve.

Listen, Practice, and Play

When developing your skills on the drumset, there are three main areas to focus on: listening, practicing, and playing.

It may not be convenient to practice on the drumset every day. On days when you can't get to your drums, spend extra time listening to recordings of your favorite artists and studying the work of the great drummers of yesterday and today. Listening is where you gain new ideas to add to your musical vocabulary. Watching videos falls into this category as well. You will remember more of what you hear if you can see it happening at the same time.

If you're rehearsing or performing a lot, you may not have as much time to practice. That's normal. Ideally you want to spend equal amounts of time listening, practicing, and playing, but they don't all have to happen equally each day.

The goal of practicing is to become a better drummer. Practice technique, reading, and coordination exercises often and in an orderly manner, but allow for some time at the end of each practice session to develop your ideas and expand your creativity. This falls into the playing category and is where new ideas and skills can be refined and polished.

Make a List

The first step in organizing better practice sessions is to make a list of new things you want to learn. Your list might include Swiss rudiments, four-limb coordination, double bass technique, linear fills, and Afro-Cuban grooves. Notate these things on the practice chart.

Next, make a list of the areas where you want to improve. It's helpful to distinguish between the things you can play that could be improved upon and the concepts that you have yet to learn.

Now name six bands or artists that you would like to play with. The point of doing this is to help you focus on certain styles or genres of music as well as prioritizing what you need to practice the most.

Establish Short- and Long-Term Goals

You can figure out short-term goals by completing the following statement: "By next week or month, I want to be

able to...." Long-term goals often take up the better part of a year or more and can be things like auditioning for an established rock band or becoming a studio drummer. Setting goals gives a sense of purpose and direction to your practicing and playing. Meeting goals is a very rewarding, confidence-building experience. Once you've determined what you want to learn and whom you strive to play with, you're now ready to organize everything into a workable practice routine.

How Much Time?

To begin with, you have to decide how much time you can dedicate to your practice sessions. Be sure this number is realistic and comfortable for you. There will likely be a difference in how much time you want to practice versus the amount of time you actually have available. The amount of time is less important than the quality. Practice for results.

Next, decide what time of day you can commit to practicing on a regular basis. Reserving a certain practice time each day will help ensure that it gets accomplished.

Balance Your Diet

In the process of selecting what to practice, I strongly suggest choosing things that develop technique, reading, and coordination. Becoming a great drummer in today's age requires a high level of technical facility (rudimental capabilities), reading skills (counting and chart interpretation), and coordination (four-way independence). The best way to prioritize what to practice is to focus on the things that relate to your current playing opportunities.

For example, developing jazz independence is necessary in order to play with a jazz ensemble. But if you're currently gigging with a rock band, it would be best to devote the first chunk of your practice time to things that need improvement in a rock style, like fill vocabulary, backbeat placement, and memorizing song forms; you can then focus on adding to your jazz skills later. If you're not playing with any groups, practice the concepts that will help you play with the artists you've listed.

Become an Artist

It's very important to schedule time in each practice session to be creative. This can be spent making up drumbeats, soloing, combining different styles of grooves, and so on. In the real world of professional performing, your success often depends on your interpretation of the music. If your practice time is spent only working through method books, where you're following written beats or exercises, your creativity and interpretive skills will be underdeveloped.

Block off a portion of your practice time to experiment with new ideas as well as test your recall of the things you've been shedding. When you're making up beats or soloing, try to imagine that you're playing with a group, and structure your ideas in four- or eight-bar phrases or follow a specific song form. This will help you transfer your newly developed vocabulary in ways that apply directly to playing situations with other musicians.

Outline the Routine

Now it's time to decide the order of things to focus on. Subjects that you feel are necessary to practice aren't always the most fun. So you may want to start with your least favorite and end with your favorite, i.e., save dessert for last.

You might organize a roughly hour-long daily practice routine as 10 to 15 minutes of technique, 10 to 15 minutes of reading, 10 to 15 minutes of coordination development, and 10 to 20 minutes of experimentation.

Practice Makes Permanent

More important than the total amount of time you practice is the consistency and efficiency of your sessions. The more consistent you are in your studies, the more rapid your development will be. Once you've written out a practice schedule, stick to it. I recommend calculating your progress on a weekly basis. You may struggle with something one day and then play it with ease the next. Some days are better than others, but as long as you continue to make the effort to be efficient, determined, and enthusiastic, you will see progress over time. Organization is the key to success!

Post It Publicly

When your schedule is finalized and written down, place it somewhere where you can see it easily. This will help you avoid wasting time trying to remember what to practice. Have fun!

Things to learn

1	6
2	7
3	8
4	9
5	10

Things to improve

1	6
2	7
3	8
4	9
5	10

Groups/artists I would like to play with

1	4
2	5
3	6

Short-term goals

Long-term goals

Practice Schedule

Practice amount: _____ Time of day: _____

Time	Description	Time	Description
1		6	
2		7	
3		8	
4		9	
5		10	

Flam It Up

Add Some Meat to Your Fills

by Rich Redmond

MUSIC KEY



Flams are fun! A flam is defined as a soft stroke, or grace note, and a louder main stroke played closely together to sound like one. Flams can be closed (less space between strokes) or open (more space between strokes). Classical flams are executed by playing the grace note softer than the main note. In rock music, flams are often played with the grace note and main note at the same volume. Experiment with both techniques.

Exercises 1–10 are basic patterns that serve as our building

blocks. I then put them together to create more complex phrases in Exercises 11–17.

Many of these exercises have a rock 'n' roll feel and sound. But you can use them in jazz, funk, or fusion settings by experimenting with dynamics, touch, subdivision, and the tuning of your drums. Try playing the phrases on high-pitched drums for use in a bebop setting.

I hope these exercises inspire you to spice up your drumming with flams. Flam it up!



16

17

14

15

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

For a video demo of these examples, visit moderndrummer.com.



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A man with a beard and short hair, wearing a black t-shirt, is playing a drum set. He is captured in a dynamic pose, leaning forward with his eyes closed, focused on his performance. He is using two wooden drumsticks to play a snare drum. The drum set includes a snare drum, a bass drum, and several cymbals. The snare drumheads are white with a clear center dot, characteristic of the Remo Powerstroke 77 series. The background is dark, highlighting the drummer and his instrument.

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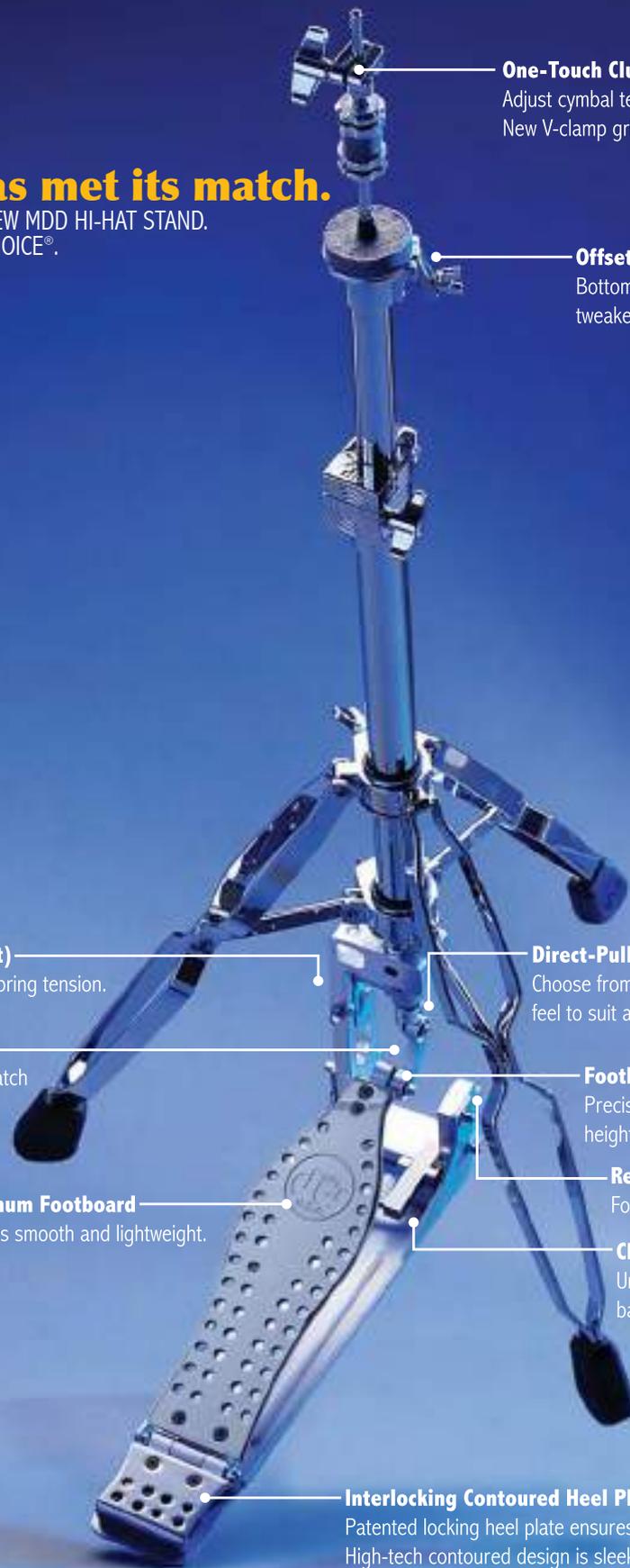


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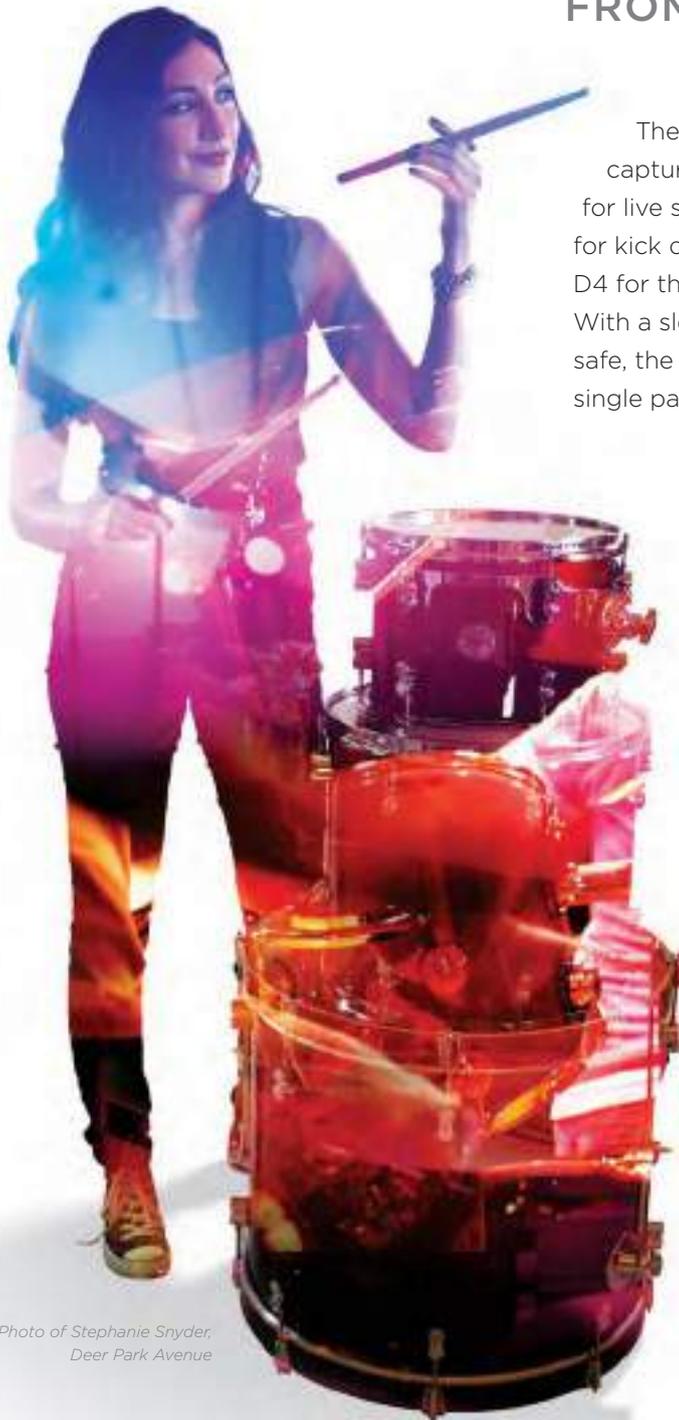
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Deer Park Avenue*

World Groove Independence Mash-Up

Improving Facility With Afro-Cuban Inspiration

by Mike Johnston

MUSIC KEY

R.C. — X
 S.D. — ●
 B.D. — ○
 H.H. — ◐
 w/foot

When I began writing my latest book, *Groove Freedom*, the goal was to gain flexibility both within my students' grooves and my own. As I practiced the book's systems, I realized they helped with independence as well as with groove. This allowed me to approach future systems differently. I started mixing things together that were previously off limits.

This lesson is an example of that approach. When I started working on world grooves in my teens, I learned quite a few traditional hand patterns and foot ostinatos from Cuba, Africa, Brazil, and the Caribbean. Until recently, it never occurred to me to treat them as drumset rhythms without a cultural association. Once I made that leap, I started to mix and match to improve my independence on the kit.

In these exercises, the right hand plays a 3-2 cascara rhythm (a traditional Cuban hand pattern) while the feet play a samba ostinato (a traditional Brazilian foot pattern). The goal is to

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

keep this three-limb ostinato going while cycling the left hand through multiple permutations on the snare drum.

Once you've completed Exercises 1–3, you should have enough left-hand independence to play the rest of the one-bar phrases. This system and others can be found in my *Groove Freedom* app, available in the iTunes App Store.



1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

For a video demo of these exercises, visit modern drummer.com.



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Triplet Fill Concepts

Part 2: More Three-Over-Four Fills

by John Xepoleas

MUSIC KEY

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



Welcome to the second lesson in our series on jazz-style triplet fills. This month we'll continue with the three-over-four triplet concept. For this version of the fill, you'll play the first three notes of the phrase on the snare and the fourth note on the bass drum.

1

R L R R L R R L R

Next, play one bar of a swing-time feel into one bar of the fill.

2

Accenting the Toms

In the next two examples we'll move the accented notes to the toms. The first example places the accent on the rack tom, while the second places the accent on the floor tom.

3

4

Practice both of the previous examples transitioning from one bar of a swing-time feel.

5

6

Now we'll create a two-bar fill by playing the accented note on the rack tom in the first bar and on the floor tom in the second bar.

7

We'll create another two-bar fill by alternating the accented notes between the rack and floor tom. Once you're comfortable playing this version, practice it going into two bars of a swing-time feel.

8

9



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Jazz Drummer's Workshop

Here you'll play flams on the accented notes. In the first example, the flam is played with the right hand on the rack tom and the left hand on the snare. Note the LR sticking after the flam.

10

r L L R r L L R r L L R

For this version, the right-hand grace note is played on the floor tom.

11

r L L R r L L R r L L R

Now we'll play both versions of the flam fill transitioning from one bar of swing time.

12

r L L R r L L R r L L R

Here's a nice-sounding two-bar version of the fill. After you've practiced it, develop some fills of your own.

13

r L L R r L L R r L L R

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.

For a video demo of these exercises, visit moderndrummer.com.



Paiste and Yamaha

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The Yamaha DTX502 Hybrid Pack consists of a five-piece Stage Custom Birch acoustic drumset with Yamaha 700 series hardware, a DTX502 module, two acoustic drum triggers, and two electronic drum pads: the TP70 7" single-zone pad and the XP80 8" three-zone pad, plus three clamps, two tom ball holders, and cables.

The Paiste PST X cymbals are a collection of effects cymbals. The core of the PST X set is made up of the Swiss models, cymbals that Paiste says achieve a noisy, dirty, and trashy sound quality by the use of specific layouts and varied sizes for the holes. PST X cymbals are made in Switzerland from 2002 bronze, brass, and aluminum.

Available: 14", 16", and 18" Swiss Thin Crashes, 18" Swiss Medium Crash, and 14" Swiss Flanger Crash; 9" and 10" Pure Bells; 10", 14", and 16" Swiss Hats; 10" Swiss Splash; and 14" Swiss Flanger Stack.

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Second Prize: Your choice of three Paiste PST X cymbals.

Consumer Disclosure: 1. To enter, visit www.moderndrummer.com between the dates below and look for the Paiste/Yamaha Contest button (some entry per email address). 2. ODDS OF WINNING DEPEND ON THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE ENTRIES RECEIVED. 3. CONTEST BEGINS DECEMBER 1, 2015, AND ENDS FEBRUARY 29, 2016. 4. Prize Drawing: Winners will be selected by random drawing on March 7, 2016. Winners will be notified by phone or email on or about March 9, 2016. 5. Employees, and their immediate families, of Modern Drummer, Paiste Cymbals, Yamaha Corporation, and their affiliates are ineligible. 6. Sponsor is not responsible for lost, misdirected, and/or delayed entries. 7. Open to residents of the U.S. and Canada, 18 years of age or older. Void in Quebec, Canada; Florida; New York; and where prohibited by law. 8. One prize awarded per household per contest. 9. Prizes: 1st Prize - One (1) winner will receive the prizes as described above. Approximate retail value of prize: \$4,159. 2nd Prize - One (1) winner will receive the prize as described above. Approximate retail value of second prize: \$888. Approximate retail value of contest: \$5,050. 10. Sponsored by Modern Drummer Publications, Inc., 271 Route 46 W, H-212, Fairfield, NJ 07004, 973-239-4140. 11. This game subject to the complete Official Rules. For a copy of the complete Official Rules or the winner's name, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Modern Drummer Publications/Paiste-Yamaha/Official Rules/Winners List, 271 Route 46 W, H-212, Fairfield, NJ 07004.



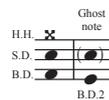
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Progressive Drumming Essentials

Part 6: Syncopated Double Bass...the Easy Way

by Aaron Edgar

MUSIC KEY



When I began working on double bass, I was inspired by drummers like Gene Hoglan, Raymond Herrera, and Thomas Lang, all of whom seemed to have a never-ending supply of creative parts. I'd spend every waking moment figuring out their ideas and working them into my playing. From this, I stumbled on a simple concept that can be applied to even the most basic 8th-note rock grooves to turn them into heavy, syncopated double bass patterns.

We're going to use a two-step process. First, we'll take a basic 8th-note rock groove (Exercise 1) and add "e" and "a" with the left foot (Exercise 2). The bass drum notes from the basic groove will fill the spaces between the hi-hat notes, and the result will be a syncopated double bass groove, as shown in Exercise 3.



The first step toward mastering this concept is focusing on the left-foot placement. We can do this by playing the right hand on the floor tom instead of the hi-hats. You'll end up with a 16th-note roll that goes back and forth between the floor tom and bass drum. To further solidify this, try turning the pattern into a groove by placing the snare on beats 2 and 4.

In Exercise 4, the right foot plays on beat 1 and the "&" of beats 2, 3, and 4. Try this concept with some of your own 8th-note rock grooves for extra practice before moving on.

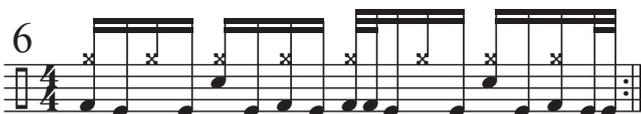


Doubles

In Exercise 5, there's a 32nd-note double figure with the bass drum. Be sure to phrase this strictly as 32nd notes. If you get lazy, it can start sounding like a triplet.



Exercise 6 demonstrates playing doubles with the left foot as well.

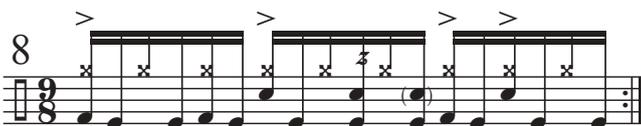


Odd-Time Examples

Here's where things get interesting. Let's see what happens when we apply this concept to a 7/8 time signature. Be careful not to flam the snare at the end of the pattern, as it lines up with the left foot.



Exercise 8 is in a 9/8 feel. Pay special attention to your left hand, as both buzzes and ghost notes line up with the left foot. Watch your dynamics!



Next we're going to move the right-hand pattern from Exercise 8 to every third 16th note. Make sure you've got the previous exercise completely internalized before trying this. Keep in mind that the left foot is still playing consistent offbeat 16th notes. Focusing on playing the left foot smoothly can help you even out the entire pattern.



When you play an odd time signature based on 16th notes, your leading foot will switch naturally every bar. This means you'll need to learn to play offbeat notes with the right foot as well. Let's take a stab at 15/16 using this concept. You might want to isolate the second bar before trying the whole example.





For Exercise 10, I like to switch my hands, as well as my feet, every bar. If that's too challenging, you can continue leading with whichever hand is easiest in both bars. Crashing loudly on beat 1 of each bar can help you feel how the pattern repeats to solidify the transition.

Since fifteen is divisible by three, we can again replace our 8th-note hi-hat pattern with every third 16th note—except this time it will fit evenly into each bar, which will make the transition sound less choppy.

11

Musical notation for Exercise 11, showing a 4/8 time signature and a hi-hat pattern with quintuplets.

While we're diving further down the rhythmic rabbit hole, let's channel the quintuplets we spent so much time on last month and modulate Exercises 10 and 11 into quintuplets.

The next exercise places quarter notes on the hi-hat while phrasing the previous kick-and-snare pattern as quintuplets. There are a lot of empty partials here. Be sure to count ("ta, ka, din, ah, gah"), and try to play accurately. It will be helpful to program quintuplets into your metronome.

12

Musical notation for Exercise 12, showing a 3/4 time signature and a hi-hat pattern with quintuplets.

Musical notation for Exercise 13, showing a 3/4 time signature and a hi-hat pattern with quintuplets.

Last but certainly not least, the right hand is going to play a five-over-three polyrhythm across the previous kick-and-snare pattern.

13

Musical notation for Exercise 13, showing a 3/4 time signature and a hi-hat pattern with quintuplets.

Make sure to practice Exercises 12 and 13 into and out of more ordinary 3/4 grooves, to ensure you're able to play them in context. It's easy to lose sight of how these patterns fit musically when they're isolated.

This lesson is a prime example of how I write grooves and parts. I never take something I enjoy playing at face value, and I find it inspiring to dig deeper into the rhythms that excite me. I always say, "Modify, modify, modify." You'll usually come up with something you like just as much, if not more.

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

For a video demo of these examples, visit modern drummer.com.

Endorsements

Part 2: Are You Really Ready?

by Russ Miller



Last month we started our discussion of product endorsements with the equipment manufacturers. I encourage you to read through that article again to familiarize yourself with some of the terms we're using this month. We've been joined by three of the top artist-relations directors in the drum industry: Joe Testa of Vic Firth, Joe Hibbs of Mapex, and Bob Terry of NFuzed.

If you're wondering whether you're in a position to have an endorsement, in all honesty you're probably not. Testa comments on this: "Focus on your playing and the music. I will find you. I will see

"The most splendid achievement of all is the constant striving to surpass yourself and to be worthy of your own approval."

—Denis Waitley,
author and motivational speaker

you play, and I will hear about you from other players." Of course there are exceptions, but when you're ready you will probably be asked by a company to join its roster.

Have you ever seen a Nike endorser that you hadn't already heard of? I doubt it, because Nike goes after the biggest names in the sporting world. The endorser has made a huge impact on his or her sport, and the company benefits greatly by the association. Terry, who was the drummer for Wang Chung in the '80s, says, "I speak from the company side now, having been a player before. An artist is wrong in thinking that we are going to make them famous."

As I wrote about last month, as an endorser you validate the product—the product does not validate you. Be patient. Wait for the right time, and it will all come to you. You will also likely be approached by the companies whose gear you're already using.

Don't settle for using a company's equipment just because it might be provided to you at a low cost or even for free.

You may be thinking to yourself now, *But I see a lot of guys with endorsements that I've never heard of.* And you're right! Let's address this.

Why Does *This Guy* Have a Deal?

Quite frankly, we have an epidemic in the drum world of unsubstantiated endorsements. There are a few reasons for this. First, there are a lot more instrument companies out there than in previous decades. All of these new brands are trying to get on the map and are doing whatever they can to get people to play their gear. This is understandable. A brand-new company will most likely not get big stars to play its equipment right away.

Secondly, many companies have gotten into a battle to sign artists before the competition does. This is one of the biggest mistakes a company can make. It lowers the bar in terms of who represents the company to the public. Also, it floods the market with "artists" rather than customers. Hibbs says, "In the past decade or so, the company's expectations about the artist's activities and influence seem to have lowered. This is due to the volume of players signed now."

The third reason for unsubstantiated endorsements is because the criteria for signing deals have lowered dramatically. When I was younger, only the top players in the world endorsed instruments. They kept the company's perception at the highest level, influenced sales, and pushed design ideas forward. "There are way more development artists than superstar artists now," Testa says. "In recent years, the industry has kept signing players in hopes that they'll make it. In years past, you would've already had to have 'made it' to get a deal. It's pressure caused by the companies trying to get someone before the other guy does. But in reality it takes up budgets, time, and resources and usually doesn't yield anything in the long run."

All of us want to play great equipment that inspires us. But don't let

PILLOW TALK

why size matters and other interesting bass drum facts.

For most drummers today, a 22" diameter by 18" deep bass drum is considered "standard". However, it wasn't always that way.

The bass drums used in "Double Drumming" (the earliest form of the drumset, circa 1880) were 24-32" diameter, 14" deep, concert and marching bass drums capable of enormous sound. As popular music evolved in the 20th century, the bass drum was down-sized to support its new role in musical styles where its purpose was to provide "Pitch & Punch"—as low a sound as possible with the potential for varying degrees of resonance and articulation "built-in".

By the middle of the 1900's, 20", 22" and 24" bass drums had become the preferred sizes for most playing situations. Today, bass drum depths of 14", 16" and 18" are also in general use. These drums are big enough to create a low pitch yet small enough to provide the controlled punch modern music requires.

Of course, another way to control the sound of bass drums is to muffle them. The first bass

drum mufflers were newspapers and feathers inserted into the drum. Later, at the turn of the 20th century, the external bass drum muffler was developed and remained popular through the 1950's. In the 1960's, drummers began to increase the articulation of their bass drums by using felt strips and by venting or removing the front heads. This was also the era when sand bags and pillows came into use for bass drum muffling.

In addition to the development of thicker, pre-muffled drumheads, the use of pillows to control and enhance the bass drum's sound has become the most common form of bass drum muffling in current era. There have been many refinements to the pillow's design over the years, leading up to the recent creation of the **KickPro** bass drum pillow which, along with the now standard 22"x18" bass drum size, is fast becoming the new standard for achieving a great bass drum sound.



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Concepts

the desire to get something for free overshadow your artistry. "I teach a class at Musicians Institute, Hollywood," Terry says. "I have students ask me for deals all the time. They're students! The industry has created the wrong perception of what an endorsement even means." It's important to know the various roles in an endorsement relationship. I wrote about them in last month's article, but here's a little more on the subject.

Qualifications for Endorsements

We're going to address each level of endorsement: marquee, international, national, and regional. If you're a marquee-level artist, then you won't have to ask. For international-level artists seeking an endorsement, they should first and foremost be playing the gear they're looking to endorse. How can you tell people at the company that you believe in the product, and are willing to let them use your name in reference to it, if you've never played it? Also, the intimacy that comes with already owning the equipment is very important in the knowledge you offer to the company. "AR guys are more interested if you own and are already playing the gear," Terry says. "It means the endorsement is based on honesty. It turns me off when guys come up

to me and say, 'This company offered me this and that, so you need to give me more and I will play your gear.' It starts things off dishonestly. You need to believe in what you're telling your fans you're playing."

Another qualification for an international artist deal is several—not just one—major-label recording credits that have been commercially successful or musically influential. You also need to hold a position as the drummer with a national or international-level artist whose work will be seen and heard by millions of people.

For a national-level endorsement, you should already be playing the gear that you're talking about endorsing. (This will be a consistent theme.) And you should hold a position as an influential drummer that has a gig with a national-level artist who's signed to a major label or has a very big country-wide following. Consistent visibility, via recordings, tours, TV appearances, and so on, is expected as well.

The first requirement on the regional level is—you guessed it—to already be playing the gear you're talking about endorsing. You should also be an influential drummer in a specific geographical area. If the AR rep sees that you're someone who really stands out and may eventually end up on a very visible gig, then he or she may make a move to sign

you earlier in your career. This is a great opportunity to build a long-term relationship with a company and is considered a developmental opportunity for the artist. Regional deals usually go to department heads of major music programs, authors of highly regarded drum books, and top local drummers. This doesn't mean a lot of views on YouTube—you need to be out working in the music business.

One of the crucial points in endorsements is that both sides are vital in the relationship. "Deals can be extremely effective if both parties do their part," Hibbs says. "If the company gets the right guy to move the needle and makes good use of it, it will have a huge effect. Likewise, artists need to commit their efforts as well—things like making sure products are listed in album credits and on social media, properly displaying logos on gear and websites, talking about their equipment in interviews, and making sure that their fan base knows what gear they're using. It can work really well for everybody."

For me, endorsements have never been about getting free gear. It's always been about support. When you're doing major tours and records, you can run into many unforeseen situations with your equipment, from broken parts to bizarre requests from producers and artists. Being able to service those, as well as having access to backline kits around the world, is what makes my relationship with the company crucial.

In regard to the artist's side of the relationship, you need to maintain a valid endorsement status. So don't switch companies all the time. This weakens your honest viewpoint of the product. Also, artist endorsements are serious business transactions. You need to keep up your side of the deal by being diligent with promotion, continually appearing at highly visible events, using all of your faculties to further the relationship, and always being a positive ambassador for the companies.

I hope these two articles help to clear up this particularly murky part of our industry. I've been a little blunt, but it's important to emphasize that an endorsement isn't going to make you a star. The quote that I chose this month emphasizes the points I've made about why you should want an endorsement in the first place. There are no shortcuts to success. It's hard work that leads to joy, humility, honor, blessings, and great music. Good luck!

Russ Miller has recorded and/or performed with Ray Charles, Cher, Nelly Furtado, and the Psychedelic Furs and has played on soundtracks for *The Boondock Saints*, *Rugrats Go Wild*, and *Resident Evil: Apocalypse*, among others. For more info, visit russmiller.com.



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The Calabria tamburello is manufactured with a Skyndeeep graphic drumhead and an Acousticon shell that's made from recycled wood fiber. It has a large notch cutout for extra playing comfort, and the two rows of standard and conical chrome jingles produce quick articulated beats. Two versions are available, one with a pre-tuned drumhead and one that's tunable and features a Mylar underlay ring to add bass tone. Both models are 2.5x12. The pre-tuned Calabria lists for \$122.95, and the tunable model is \$159.95.

remo.com

MXL PA-5K Drum Microphone Kit

MXL's PA-5K three-piece kit includes two A-5t tom microphones and an A-55 Kicker for the bass drum. The A-5t is a high-SPL cardioid that's said to have excellent rejection and a warm and punchy tone that complements the toms. It features a durable metal body and an adjustable, pivoting rim mount. The A-55 Kicker is designed to deliver the deep, low-end punch of bass drums, as well as bass cabinets, congas, and other low-frequency instruments. It includes a built-in mic clip. The list price for the PA-5K is \$199.95.

mxlmics.com



Outlaw Church Pew Drumset

Outlaw takes wood from old buildings and structures or any other timber that is no longer used and turns it into one-of-a-kind drums. This method of using recycled wood isn't just environmentally friendly; it also allows the grains of the timber to tighten up with age, making for a beautiful look and unique sound for each drum. Recently, when Gillionville Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia, was in need of drums for worship services, Outlaw took an old pew from a church in that state's Calhoun County and turned it into a drumset.

outlawdrums.com



COLLECTOR'S CORNER



Eddie Knight

A Living Legend of Leedy Lore

by Harry Cangany

When I walked into the South Bend, Indiana, drum studio of veteran drummer/teacher/collector Eddie Knight, I picked up more sensory input than I could process. On the walls were autographed pictures of past guests and former students. While I looked them over, Eddie talked about having dinner with Gene Krupa, and then he pulled out a pristine 1929 Leedy Broadway Dual snare in white marine pearl, and an equally impressive early-'30s Broadway Standard in rainbow pearl.

Let me digress about these drums a moment. The Leedy Broadway Dual would have been among the last drums overseen by Ulysses G. Leedy, just before he sold the company to Conn. This was the beginning of the box lug, which was the first separate-tension lug with full swivel capabilities. The drum had a solid walnut shell, satin brass-plated lugs, and refurbished brass hoops. The Dual strainer was original, and the drum had wire snares on top and gut on the bottom. The Broadway Standard was a knockout from across the room. While the hoops and strainer had been refurbished, the solid shell was untouched and the colors were vibrant.

To the right side of the room was Knight's teaching kit, a Camco Oaklawn in gold moire finish with two 18" bass drums. Eddie was pictured as an endorser in George Way and Camco catalogs, and I can't tell you how many Eddie Knight stickers I've seen on vintage drumsets and snares.

I went to visit Knight after a friend from England wrote to me about him. Eddie is a famous drum teacher in Indiana and is as active as ever, teaching six days a week in addition to gigging in the evening—and this has gone on for over fifty years. When I got there, he told me about Mr. Leedy's personal catalogs, which he owned.

Knight has boxes of pristine catalogs. Some I had never seen, like one from around 1904. He also has catalogs with leather-bound covers and Ulysses G. Leedy's name stamped in gold. These would have been used at trade shows and at music stores.

As a young man, Knight was given a nickname by George Way: Be-Bop. Way and Knight were good friends for years, and the affection still shows, even more than forty years after Way's passing. Many personal items were given to Knight by Way's widow, Elsie. These include Smithsonian-quality catalogs, pictures, and pieces I saw reproduced in Leedy catalogs. The original images are framed on the walls of Eddie's studio.

Knight has four Camco, Illinois, drumsets in boxes, along with a white marine pearl Rogers Dynasonic. On the wall is a framed Zildjian cymbal that survived a terrible fire during a performance by Ringling Brothers in 1944, which caused more than 150 fatalities. Near the cymbal is a framed picture of the Duke Ellington Orchestra, signed by Ellington and drummer Sonny Greer. I walked into Eddie's studio in awe, and I walked out knowing I had just met a living legend of American drum lore.



Eddie Knight with his '30s Broadway Standard in rainbow pearl finish



1929 Leedy Dual snare in white marine pearl finish

Knight's teaching kit, a Camco Oaklawn in gold moire finish



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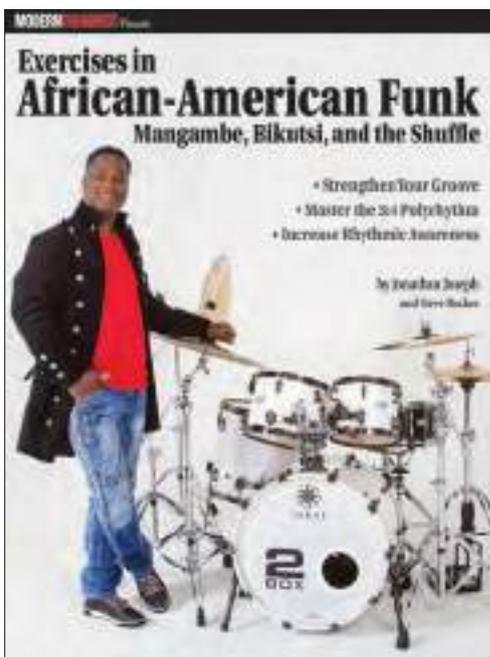
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Written by renowned drummer Jonathan Joseph (Jeff Beck, Joss Stone, Richard Bona) and University of Miami director of drumset studies Steve Rucker, *Exercises in African-American Funk* is designed to introduce musicians who've studied jazz, R&B, rock, soul, and blues to a concept that applies West African rhythms to various genres.

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MULTIMEDIA

Frank Zappa *Roxy: The Movie*

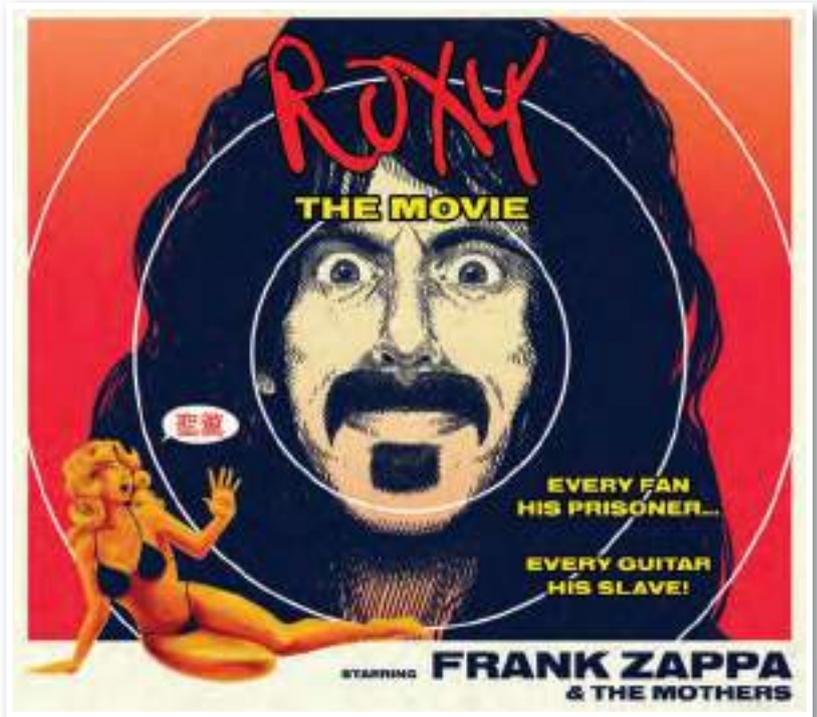
Fans of Zappa and the Mothers' seminal double-drum-powered live album *Roxy & Elsewhere*, rejoice!

Recorded over three nights in December 1973, *Roxy: The Movie* is the visual companion to the classic live Frank Zappa album *Roxy and Elsewhere*, bringing the record to life with herculean performances and the guitarist/composer's mad sense of humor.

Featuring drummers **Chester Thompson** and **Ralph Humphrey** and percussionist **Ruth Underwood** performing incredibly challenging material like "Echidna's Arf (of You)" and the opening theme of "Be-Bop Tango (of the Old Jazzmen's Church)," the ninety-minute video, available on Blu-ray and DVD, presents Zappa's genius and his band's amazing technique and inspired interpretive skills in high relief. And there's not a chart in sight.

Over and above the original audio release, *Roxy: The Movie* provides increased insight into Zappa's brilliant players and their relative ease in performing music packed with circuitous melodic sequences, myriad metric modulation and polyrhythmic patterns, and dense arrangements that seemingly never end. It also includes material from the *Roxy* shows that didn't appear on the LP: a bluesy, slow-swinging "Inca Roads," a particularly funky "I'm the Slime," and the instrumentals "RDNZL," "T'Mersh Duween," "Dog/Meat," and "Big Swifty," all of which turn this already percussion-heavy material into a drummer's dream.

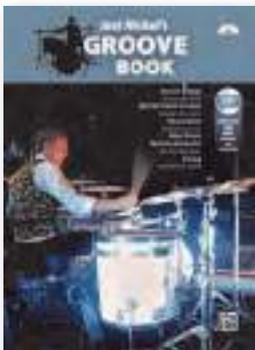
It's fascinating to watch Humphrey and Thompson bring their legendary performances to life, confirming their unique contributions: Humphrey plays most of the demanding odd-meter and polyrhythmic parts along with cowbells and additional percussion. Thompson supplies the low-end funk and flow while also navigating through-composed sections. The pair play in unison



for the bulk of the movie, but their approach is more about being complementary than syncing up exactly.

Ruth Underwood is also a revelation. Performing on marimba, vibraphone, timpani, snare drum, bongos, and other percussion, she is poetry in motion. Whether flying across her marimba or drawing sounds from concert bass drum, timpani, or snare, Underwood provides the rhythmic counterpart to Zappa's poly-metric brain.

Zappa conducts and cues every moment of this dizzying performance—timeless music from an American master. (Eagle Rock Entertainment) **Ken Micallef**



Groove Book by Jost Nickel Exploring the meaning of groove, both in terms of what's played and how it's played.

Each chapter in Jost Nickel's *Groove Book* presents a new concept, such as linear playing or ghost notes, and with it a set of rules for constructing patterns. Plenty of examples accompany each concept, so a student should feel prepared to come up with his or her own phrases after finishing a chapter. The majority of the book

deals with straight-8th- and 16th-note figures, but the ideas can be applied to triplet-based patterns or shuffles. Long text passages are avoided, allowing more room for exercises, but the explanations, when needed, are clear. The book includes an MP3 CD with more than 200 of the book's patterns.

For the most part the chapters are independent of each other, so students can dive into whichever idea they want to explore. An orchestration section introduces two concepts—splitting and shifting—that are used to create variations. Two sections devoted to building grooves include rules for constructing phrases (e.g., "The right hand begins on the first beat"). Linear grooves, ghost notes, beat displacement, and go-go rhythms are covered, each with a separate set of guidelines for creating patterns while using the discussed concept.

Some chapters feel misplaced. Nickel's philosophies on groove and timing are found at the end of the book, for instance, while a student would benefit from reading these ideas before practicing the preceding material. Likewise, bass drum technique is covered in the middle of the book, rather than up front where a student could internalize the motions before moving on. Fortunately, this doesn't detract from how thoroughly each concept is covered. Drummers looking for a fresh perspective on the concept of groove will certainly find it here. (\$21.99, Alfred) **Willie Rose**

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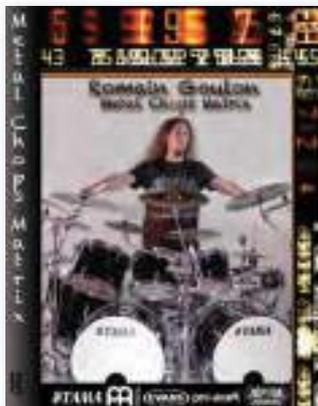
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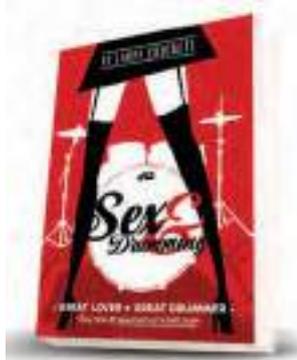


Metal Chops Matrix by Romain Goulon

A course on extreme metal drumming, with the expected spotlight on double bass and blast beats.

In this instructional video, available on DVD and in downloadable formats, French drummer Romain Goulon (Necrophagist) gets into a concept he calls Leg Ankle Limit, that 150-to-170-bpm sweet spot where there's a transition from

your leg to your ankle being more engaged. Goulon focuses on his fluid heel/toe double-stroke work for bass drums, and he explains his wicked hand technique, focusing on his wrist. Of note is Goulon's well-developed fusion skills and how he applies gospel-chops-style improvisation to his overall approach. Some attention is paid to odd times as well, so metal drummers looking to expand their horizons will have plenty to work on. The production value is no-frills but effective, and Goulon engages in enough on-camera speaking to give your mind an occasional break from the relentless barrage of killer patterns coming at you. (DVD: €20, digital download: \$19.99, romain-goulon.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Sex & Drumming by Larry Crockett

Yup, the author's serious with the title—but not too. Either way, open minds will find that there's a thing or two to be learned here.

Author and drummer Larry Crockett (Eric Bibb and J.J. Milteau, Martha Reeves) resides in Paris, so perhaps it's those famously unstuffy French attitudes toward sex that inform this fun but

practical collection of stories and insight about drumming and lovemaking. Take the chapter on "quickies," where Crockett explains the connection between getting to the point without wasting time under the sheets and short sixteen-bar solo spots behind the kit, where you have to please an audience right away. Chapters with titles like "Keep the Fire Lit" (helping a gig/relationship stay fresh) and "Bigger Better?" (kit size/"stick" size) give you a sense of what's inside, but the material is not pornographic. Instead, the anecdotes about not faking it sexually or musically, and about experimenting with different tempos on stage or in bed, are surprisingly useful in the real world. And though much of this is from a male-dominated point of view, female drummers can take something from here as well. (€19.99, larrycrockett.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

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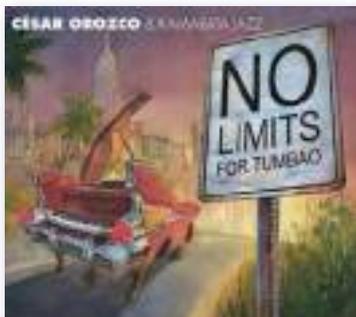
Steely Dan, Steve Gadd Band,
Paul Simon, James Taylor

RECORDINGS

César Orozco & Kamarata Jazz *No Limits for Tumbao*

This sprawling yet conceptually focused recording makes for a fun ride through ethnic and jazz idioms.

Citing the title, keyboardist César Orozco explains that, in Latin music, tumbao is akin to what "swing" means in jazz, as in, "it don't mean a thing if it ain't got that..." Rest assured, Orozco and company have got plenty of it in their inspired mix of Venezuelan and Cuban styles (both folkloric and modern) and jazz. Despite complex rhythms and sudden left turns, the music remains surprisingly lyrical, buoyed by multi-percussion with a danceable heart. The grooving rhythm section includes bassist Rodner Padilla, percussionist **Francisco Vielma**, and **Euro Zambrano**, an L.A. drummer originally from Venezuela who lends scintillating drive to overlapping Afro-Latin grooves and loping funk. Notable guests include the pioneering saxophonists Paquito D'Rivera and Yosvany Terry, and **Pedrito Martinez**, **Luisito Quintero**, **Pablo Bencid**, and **Vladimir Quintero** make outstanding percussion/drumming cameos as well. (ALFI) **Jeff Potter**



TAKING THE REINS

Phil Haynes *Sanctuary*

A veteran jazzier releases his first solo album, capturing a career's worth of sonic impressions.

Though free jazz can be a tough nut to crack—free-jazz solo drumming even more so—what you get out of it is often what you bring to it. On Bucknell University professor Phil Haynes' solo debut, *Sanctuary*, free-ish rhythms wash over the listener like a wave submerging a surfer. A sensitive drummer, Haynes treats silence almost philosophically; his assorted drum cracks, brush filigrees, and cymbal zings are like the sounds of forest creatures at dawn. Comprising twenty-seven short pieces organized as five movements, the music is performed on drums and cymbals, water bottles, discarded "plastic strips," a broken toy, and hand percussion. *Sanctuary* is an atmospheric world of percussion shape-shifted into living things. (Corner Store Jazz) **Ken Micallef**



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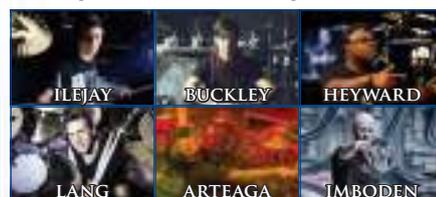
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KoSA 2015

The innovative drum camp and festival celebrates its twentieth anniversary with a genre-bending lineup featuring heavyweights Dennis Chambers, John Blackwell, and many more.

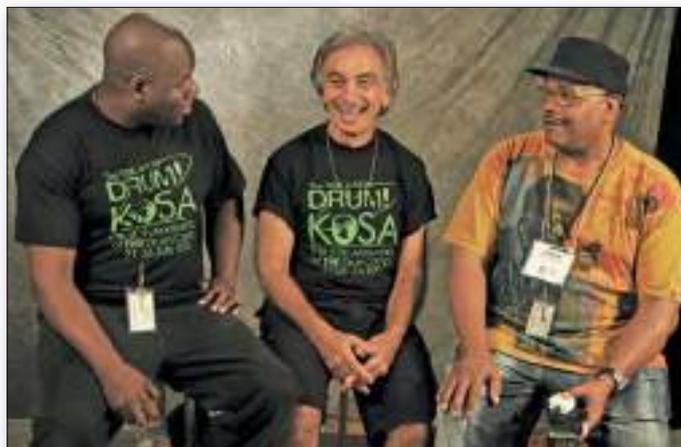


KoSA's annual International Percussion Workshop, Drum Camp, and Festival took place in its quaint home at Castleton University in the Lakes Region of central Vermont this past July, just as it has for twenty years. The participation of fusion powerhouse Dennis Chambers added an extra bit of sizzle to an already outstanding faculty.

Students of all stripes were able to interact with, learn from, and perform among featured artists over the event's six days. According to cofounder and artistic director Aldo Mazza, KoSA is unique among drum events in that it's a very intense, intimate, hands-on experience. "You have nineteen artists on site," Mazza explains, "and we purposefully designed the classes so that they're very small. People who come here to see Jason Bittner of Shadows Fall, for example, will also be in a class with frame drum master Glen Velez."

Along with anchor artists like Chambers, Blackwell, *Saturday Night Live* percussionist Valerie Naranjo, and classical percussion master Frank Epstein, KoSA's 2015 lineup featured a diverse array of world percussion standouts, including steel pan composer and educator Tracy Thornton and samba master Marcus Santos. "I loved all of the experience," Naranjo says. "[It's] packed with seasoned artists who are culturally and socially aware. I was also impressed with the number and quality of seminars dedicated to the music business."

"I think that for the participants it's a great chance to see and experience some of their favorite players up close, and to have a chance to ask questions," first-time KoSA artist Chambers says. "They get a chance to see us, and we get a chance to see them." Chambers seemed to be having as much fun as the campers, according to Mazza, who says, "I'll never forget how much Dennis lit up once he began playing with rhythm section lab players Bob Quaranta [piano] and Francesco Beccaro [bass], who were so tight and solid. He wore a smile from cheek to cheek, and he played so funky and kept pushing



John Blackwell, Aldo Mazza, and Dennis Chambers



Valerie Naranjo conducts a master class on West African keyboard.

Peter Bruce Wilder

the musicians to the edge. It was totally electric. Dennis became like a kid at a playground.”

Though camps where featured performers and attendees mingle freely are commonplace now, KoSA was among the first to introduce this concept, developing a reputation for fostering an open, welcoming environment in which students can discover, learn, and grow. “The intimacy, the vibe, the focus, the chosen faculty, the positive energy, and the location combine to make KoSA a truly amazing experience that I, as well as everyone involved, will not soon forget,” Thornton says. “You take the experience with you, and it *stays* a part of you.”

During its twenty-year existence, KoSA has grown to include regular events in Cuba, China, and Europe, along with a host of smaller-scale events in New York, Miami, and other major markets. KoSA also conducts percussion-oriented team-building experiences and operates a school of music in Montreal. Still, Mazza describes it as a labor of love. “It’s really meant to be intimate and inspiring,” he says, “where all the artists who come can give back. You’re treated like family here. We’re not selling anything, only the idea that you can do it. If you believe, it is. All you have to do is the work.”

Ben Meyer



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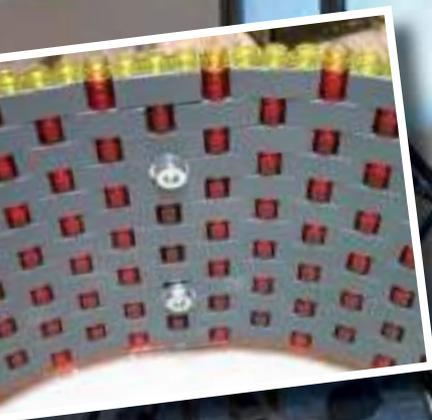


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Brick by Brick



Emitte R. Searles

“I am always experimenting with objects of all kinds to create new sounds, colors, and textures,” Brian Melick of Ravena, New York, says. “With my son at a Lego BrickFair in Virginia, I watched two children and their parents build a very flexible creation with a limitless offering of Lego bricks, and it occurred to me that it was possible to create a fully functioning instrument that incorporates all the elements of a well-designed drum. I was totally inspired and up for the challenge. I had successfully created a few rattles and shakers, so why not a snare drum?”

“After I assembled the Lego drum shell—following a strict credo to honor the original Lego brick and not alter it in any way, therefore no cutting, drilling, or gluing—I completed it with conventional elements so that I could tune the instrument and also really play it. I was taken aback by its musical personality. It has

a tight, dry texture, very woody sounding. The drum has found a permanent spot in all of my diverse setups.

“Then it only made sense to me to create a bass drum. I wanted to work with smaller, compact sizes and ended up with 16x16. When I tuned it up, mounted a pedal on the platform I created, and hit the drum, my mouth fell open. The kick has a powerful, warm, fat sound. I built a 10x10 rack tom and 12x12 floor tom, and I find that they sing in most every genre of music and react very well to all implements. I am now in the process of building a 14x14 floor tom to add a little low end. So I get to make another drum—and what bad could ever come out of that!”

Care to guess how many Lego bricks were used to make Melick’s four-piece kit? Here’s your answer: 8,016.

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



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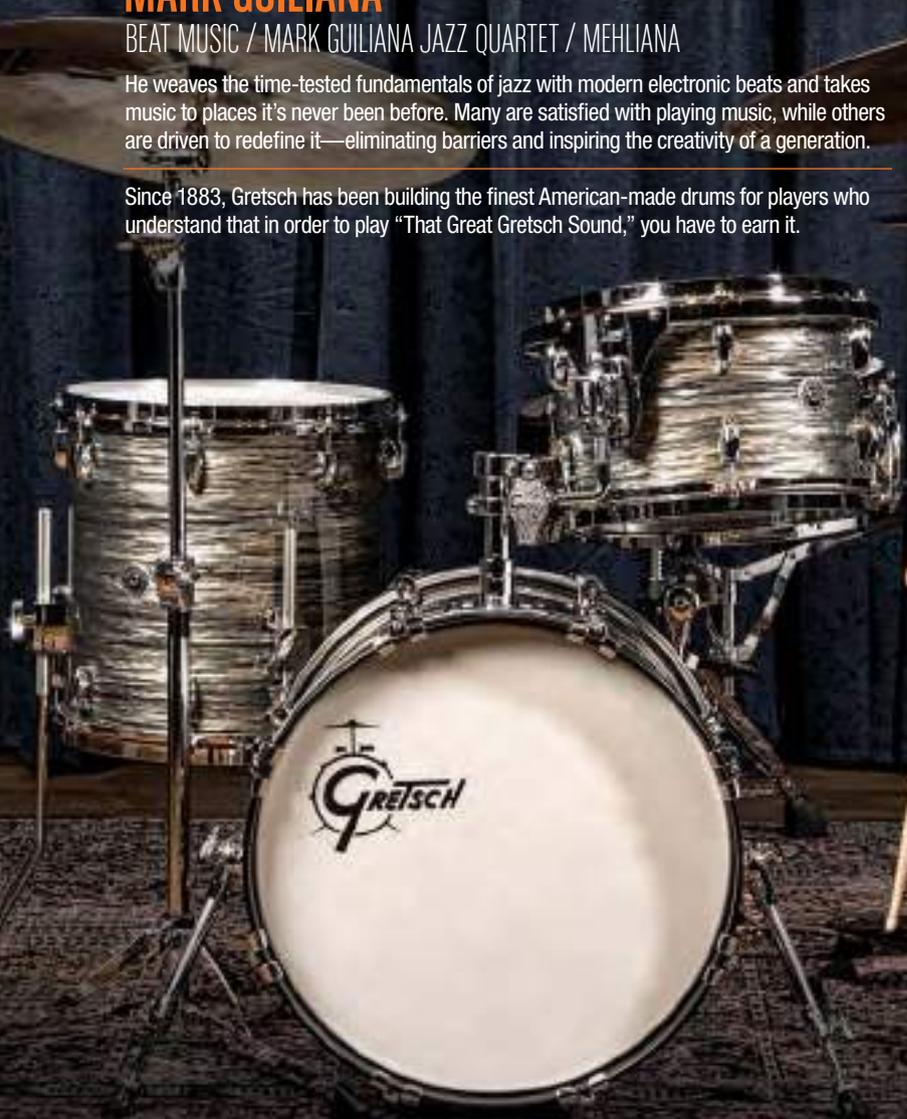


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