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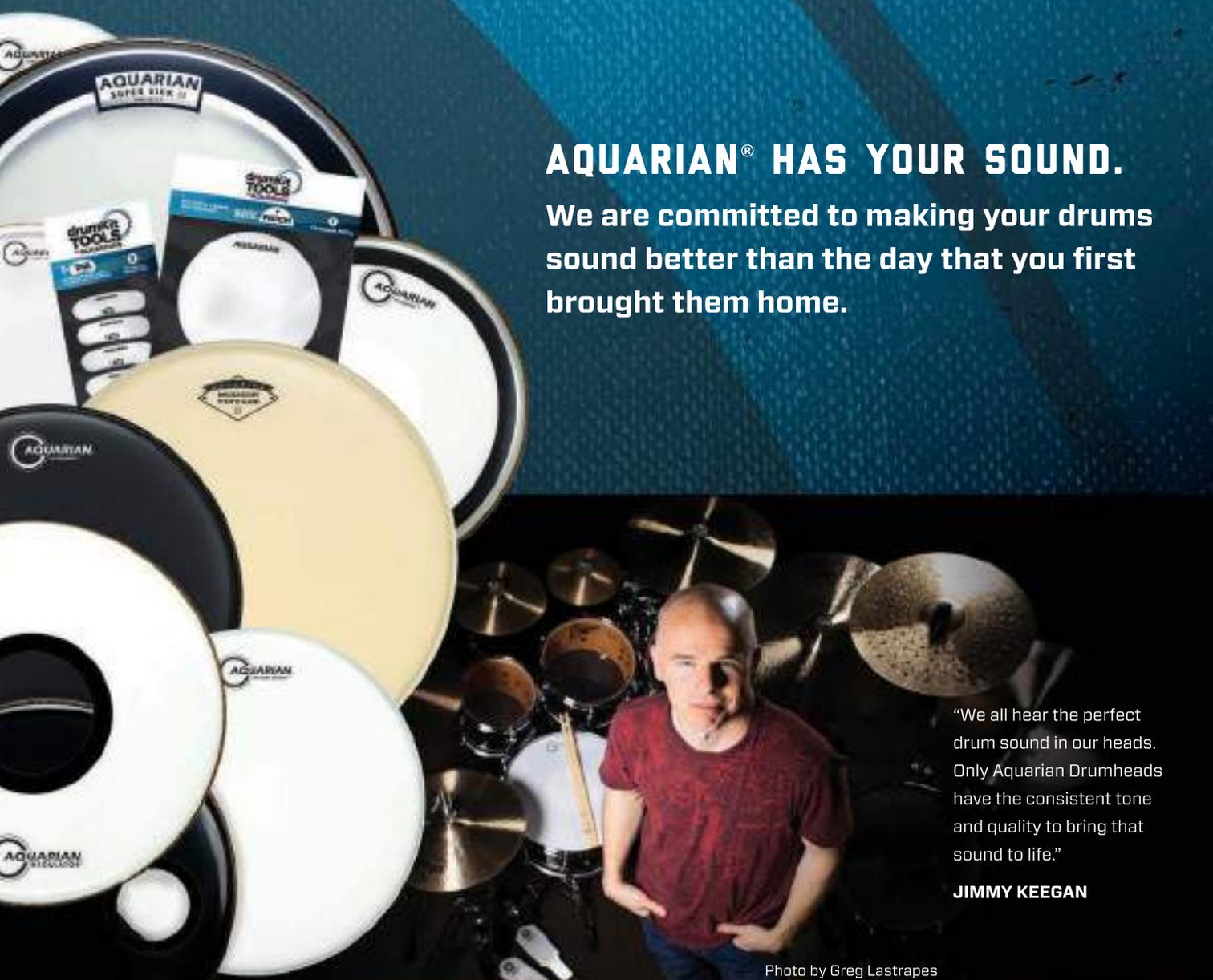


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# Happy New Year!

Hello, everyone. It's that time again, when we reflect on the past year and think about the new one ahead. What did we do with our time? Did we accomplish what we set out to in 2015? What do we want to accomplish in 2016?

Did you know that although more than 80 percent of us start the new year with resolutions, half of us bail on them before January's over? But I don't think that fact should discourage us from believing in our dreams and setting new goals. Why not be among those who *do* succeed in finishing what we started?

This year I'm proud to say that we at *Modern Drummer* magazine are celebrating our fortieth anniversary. *MD* founder Ron Spagnardi was certainly among the percentage of people who successfully follow through on their goals. Ron's dream was to change the drumming world forever. He accomplished that, though I think that sometimes even *he* was amazed at how the little print product he started in his basement became recognized the world over as the authority on drumming, in print and online.

I clearly remember Ron feeling proud and grateful when drummers expressed to him how honored they were to grace the cover of *MD*—and such gratitude continues to this day, long after Ron's passing. In fact, this month's cover artist, Barry Kerch of Shinedown, makes mention in his feature that appearing in *Modern Drummer* was one of *his* goals in life.

A fellow pioneer in the drum business, and a longtime supporter of Ron Spagnardi and *Modern Drummer*, Vic Firth, who passed away last year, also knew a thing or two about setting and attaining goals. To learn all about Vic's fascinating career as a performer and manufacturer, check out our exclusive tribute to him, starting on page 60 of this issue.

I've set a few goals for myself this year, including writing and recording new music with my band Mantus, which will also be celebrating its fortieth anniversary this year. Another milestone I've been thinking about is the twentieth anniversary of David Fishof's Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp. I've seen firsthand how David, like Ron, has helped make the dreams of many musicians come true, and it always makes me happy when I see campers' faces light up just being in the same room as one of their musical idols. The prospect of sharing a stage with their heroes motivates them to work hard on their own skills.

Even if you don't have a similar carrot at the end of your stick, why not pledge to yourself this year to dig into some new rhythm or instrument, take a few lessons, or simply practice or play more? Regardless of your age or how long you've been playing, there are always ways to improve and be the best you can be.

As always, thank you for your support of *Modern Drummer*, whether it's been for forty years or just a couple months. Please continue to encourage one another, because we could all use it now and then. Enjoy the next forty years—and play, play, play!



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## READERS' PLATFORM



### December Issue

What a pleasure to finally see Dom Famularo on the cover of *Modern Drummer*! In the 1980s, I was fortunate to host several Tama drum clinics with Dom in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He was always a favorite of mine as well as my customers. Dom is a total pro and a

real inspirational person in front of and behind the drumset. Thanks for giving Dom his due!

**Donn Deniston**

### Harold Jones

Thank you for covering Harold Jones in your December 2015 issue. I had the good fortune of seeing Harold in Hawaii with Tony Bennett, and I was blown away by his feel, timing, and sense of swing. I was able to meet him after the show and quickly realized that in addition to being a monster player, he is also very kind and modest. Thanks again for giving this gifted artist the credit he's due.

**David Alexander**

### Dropped Beat

The photos of Adam Deitch in his February 2015 cover story were taken by Rahav Segev.



### More Cowbell

Last month's cowbell-infused groove tutorial by *MD* columnist Rich Redmond inspired us to ask our Facebook followers to name their favorite performances that feature the staple accessory. "We're an American Band," "(Don't Fear) the Reaper," and "Honky Tonk Women" were all popular choices, however Corky Laing's performance on Mountain's "Mississippi Queen" eclipsed the rest with the biggest response. Here are a few picks from our followers:

Only one song has the perfect cowbell groove: "Mississippi Queen" by Mountain! Corky Laing par excellence.

**Bubi Blacksmith**

Of course "Mississippi Queen" by Corky Laing, but how about trying "Looking for Love" by the Babys. Tony [Brock] does it one-handed—check it out. You can find it on the first Babys record.

**Eric Fischer**

Dave Matthews Band with Carter Beauford on "American Baby Intro" from *The Complete Weekend on the Rocks* [search "American Baby Intro Live at Red Rocks 2005"]. You'll never hear cowbell work like that anywhere. Trust me.

**JC Weis**

**Want your voice heard? Follow us on Facebook and look out for next month's question.**

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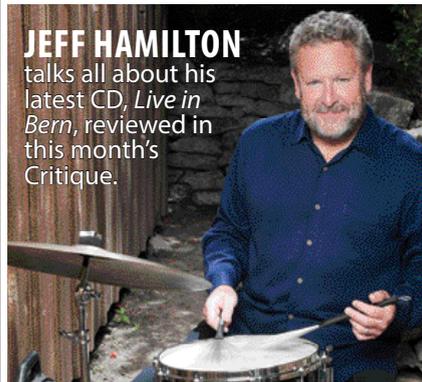
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### JEFF HAMILTON

talks all about his  
latest CD, *Live in  
Bern*, reviewed in  
this month's  
Critique.



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"I was thinking about early-'90s rave-era  
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snare in constantly changing patterns, all  
very high-pitched and *nasty*."

### THE TAP NINE

Rich Redmond on practical ways to apply a  
popular marching rudiment to the drumset.

### HIDDEN RHYTHMS

Mike Johnston finds hidden groupings in  
measures of 16th notes.

### BRIT TURNER

Blackberry Smoke's drummer on the  
group's latest album, and on England's  
love affair with country rock.

### ONE-SIDED HAIRTAS, GRANDMAS, AND GRANDPAS

Bill Bachman expands our vocabulary once  
again in this month's Strictly Technique.

Plus the greatest drum-related prizes  
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# NEWS

## Out Now

### Savages

#### Adore Life

With all of the praise heaped on Savages and their new album—and there's been a *ton* of it—one of the less frequently made observations is the variety of beats drummer **Fay Milton** works into the band's intense post-punk sound. "I don't like repeating the same groove," Milton tells *MD*. "That's probably why I started drumming in a band—I was bored of listening to the same rhythms repeated over and over." Ironically, and to her credit, Milton says it's not the search for complexity that informs her aesthetic—in fact, it's quite the opposite. "I'm usually trying to find the simplest way of doing something interesting," she explains. "I suppose I'm a bit of a minimalist, and that makes sense, seeing as while growing up probably my favorite piece to play was 'Clapping Music' by [pioneering minimalist drummer/composer] Steve Reich. So simple, but so good." (Matador) **Adam Budofsky**



Savages, from left: Gemma Thompson (guitar), Ayşe Hassan (bass), Fay Milton (drums), and Jehnnu Beth (vocals)

### Daughter

#### Not to Disappear

Drummer **Remi Aguilera**'s distinctive, stripped-down, and tasty phrases pepper the dark, moody dream pop of Daughter's sophomore effort. "When we started, the music was a lot more acoustic, and the two other musicians in the band were both playing guitars," Aguilera says. "It didn't feel right to add more high-end frequencies to the mix, and instead I decided to approach the drums more like timpani. I mainly played with mallets and brushes, and I decided I wouldn't add a hi-hat to my setup, in order to think about the parts differently." Aguilera builds and breaks down grooves throughout the record to match the broad dynamic range. "I feel like we take drum parts for granted a lot of the time," he says, "and that we want to hear a combination of cymbals, snare, and kick at all times. But by bringing one of those three elements in halfway through a verse, I think you're able to lift that section, or at least bring it somewhere else." (Glassnote) **Willie Rose**



For more with Fay Milton and Remi Aguilera, go to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

### More New Releases

**David Bowie** Blackstar (Mark Guiliana, James Murphy) /// **The Cult** Hidden City (John Tempesta) /// **Peter Dinklage** Is Dr. Um and the Lost Pages (Peter Dinklage) /// **Eleanor Friedberger** New View (Noah Hecht) /// **Night Beats** Who Sold My Generation (James Traeger) /// **The Besnard Lakes** A Coliseum Complex Museum (Kevin Laing) /// **Venomous Concept** Kick Me Silly: VCIII (Danny Herrera) /// **Failure Anthem** First World Problems (Zane Frye) /// **Bloodiest** Bloodiest (Cayce Key) /// **Ty Segall** Emotional Muggler (Ty Segall, Evan Burrows, Dale Crover, Charles Moothart) /// **Ignite** A War Against You (Craig Anderson) /// **Basement** Promise Everything (James Fisher)



Paul Undersinger

Turner

**On  
Tour**



Claudia Hansen

Lockett

**Blackberry Smoke is riding the wave** of its hit album  *Holding All the Roses*, overseas...and on the seas. The group, which includes drummer **Brit Turner**, headlines the Outlaw Country Cruise in early February and continues expanding its fan base with high-profile gigs like the Download Festival in Leicestershire, England, and Shepherd's Bush in London. "We're playing great venues and meeting great people, and we got a day off in Amsterdam and lived through it," Turner chuckles before a soundcheck at O2 Academy in Birmingham, England. "I always feel like people over here, whether it be in the U.K. or Europe, are fascinated by Southern music, and they're very passionate about it. They read the liner notes, and they know everything about the Allman Brothers, Skynyrd—hell, more than we know—and it's just been fantastic. After making  *Holding All the Roses*, our plan was to tour and play it

for our fans, and hope to get more. And it's worked." Turner is traveling with his custom-made Palmetto drums.

**Robin Tolleson**

**Pete Lockett is touring India** and the Middle East this winter. The internationally renowned world percussionist spent most of 2015 traveling the globe for numerous recording projects, video productions, live performances, lectures, master classes—and the publication of his first sci-fi novel. "It's been a busy time," Lockett says. "I feel blessed to experience these diverse opportunities. The novel was an interesting and odd addition. But apart from that, I've had many varied collaborations and performances, including forty tribal drummers deep in the Indian jungle and great duets with drummers Russ Miller, Gabor Dornyei, and Indian masters Pandit Jasraj, Anindo

Chatterjee, and Hariprasad Chaurasia." Upcoming events for Lockett include a Drum Channel recording, the China Drum Summit, the Shanghai Drum Festival, and solo performances in Dubai, followed by a U.K. solo clinic tour. **Mike Haid**

**Also on the Road**

**Shannon Forrest** with Toto /// **Chris Adler** with Lamb of God /// **Charlie Benante** with Anthrax /// **Matt Burr** with Grace Potter /// **Paul Ferguson** with Killing Joke /// **Tom Hunting** with Exodus /// **Michael "Moose" Thomas** with Bullet for My Valentine /// **Riley Geare** with Unknown Mortal Orchestra /// **Eric Slick** with Dr. Dog /// **Michel "Away" Langevin** with Voivod /// **Chargeee** with Marty Friedman /// **Michael Miley** with Rival Sons /// **Adrian Erlandsson** with At the Gates /// **Nicko McBrain** with Iron Maiden /// **Jason Slota** with Thao and the Get Down Stay Down

Go to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com) for more with **Britt Turner** and **Pete Lockett**.

**Who's Playing What**



Percussive Arts Society president **Julie Hill** has joined the Yamaha artist roster.

**Industry Happenings**

**Cymbal maker Sabian has bolstered its U.S. efforts following the transition to a direct-to-retail sales model in 2015.** Roger Jewell is now the new Northeast regional sales manager, Tim Morris is Midwest rep, Paul Holdgate is West Coast rep, and Mary Sandschafer is inside sales rep.

**The Masters of Maple company has created one-of-a-kind drumkits for Capitol Studios in Los Angeles.** The first kit was recently installed in Studio B, known throughout the industry as one of the best-sounding drum rooms in the country. Masters of Maple and Capitol Studios engineers collaborated on the design of the kits, which represent the first drums custom built for the studio since it opened in 1956.

The drums feature the signature Neo-Classical series blend combining gum and mahogany, as well as a 14x28 bass drum, a size that's increasingly been requested by Masters of Maple's studio clientele. The gear will join some historic equipment at the studio, including Frank Sinatra's original microphone and chair and Nat King Cole's New York Steinway "B" piano. "Becoming a part of the studio's history is surreal," Masters of Maple founder Sahir Hanif says. "Working with a team of this caliber is a privilege, and I can only imagine the music that these drums will make for decades to come."



## Meinl's 10th Anniversary Drum Festival



Peterson



Lang



From left: Garstka, Searight, Greb, and Holland

Last June, in Gutenstetten, Germany, the Meinl Drum Festival celebrated its tenth anniversary with an all-star lineup of international percussion greats. Featured were interdependence powerhouse Thomas Lang, metalcore monster Luke Holland, Hungarian jazz-metalmer Adam Markó, ambient jazz drummer Richard Spaven, Austrian extreme-metal demon Kerim "Krimh" Lechner, free-flowing American bebop great Ralph Peterson, German pop and fusion up-and-comer Anika Nilles, metal-fusion innovator Matt Garstka of Animals as Leaders, and Snarky Puppy's highly regarded Robert "Sput" Searight. The climactic finale featured the clever, dynamic, and slinky drumming of Benny Greb with his band Moving Parts.

"It was a pleasure to be on the same bill with these amazing drummers," said Garstka. "It's events like these in the drumming community, when players aren't afraid to go big, that really help to push forward awareness, inspiration, craft, and the business of drumming."

**Story by Mike Haid**  
**Photos by Marco Hammer**



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**- DAVE LOMBARDO**  
*Dead Cross*

“What I really love about this new version is that it's basically been taken to the next level. The swiveling action of the Swivel Spring Tight makes it feel so natural. It's even faster, it's smoother and it's more solid. It's so streamlined, I'm able to play with more power with less effort.”

**- RODNEY HOLMES**  
*Rodney Holmes Trio / Jim Weider*

“Due to the new Speed Cobra upgrades there's a lot more durability, a lot more speed and there's a lot more smoothness. Another upgrade that I like is they adjusted the bass drum mounting plate on the master side of the pedal. In addition they widened the base plate, which means the whole pedal is a bit more stable.”

**- NICK PIERCE**  
*Unearth*

# Rod Morgenstein

**“The concept of jam band totally applies,” the famed drummer with fusion greats Dixie Dregs says of his latest album with Jazz Is Dead, “meaning go for it, challenge yourself, and don’t be afraid to take chances.”**



Preparedness has long been a key to survival for working musicians. It’s certainly been a constant in Rod Morgenstein’s long career, ever since his red-hot collegiate passion for the legendary fusion band Mahavishnu Orchestra made him a perfect fit for Steve Morse’s similarly molded Dixie Dregs. Decades later, like all survivors, Morgenstein still embraces the unknown, creating something new using the elements he’s presented with. Jazz Is Dead’s recently released fourth album, *Grateful Jazz*, is yet another example of this open approach, finding Morgenstein, alongside guitarist Jeff Pevar, bassist David Livolsi, and late Dregs keyboardist T Lavitz, flawlessly blending genres while reinterpreting a vast range of Grateful Dead classics as instrumentals.

“I’ve done fifty or sixty albums in my career,” Morgenstein says,

“and sometimes as a player you think, *This could be the one*. Maybe it’s because of the history of this recording—the basic tracks were cut in 2004 with original members T Lavitz and Alphonso Johnson—but I think this one *is* special.”

To be sure, if ever there were a showcase for Morgenstein’s versatility, *Grateful Jazz* is it. Rod’s all over the Dead staples “Sugar Magnolia,” “Truckin’,” “Attics of My Life,” and “Mr. Charlie.” “One More Saturday Night,” alternately playing with sensitivity and ferocity, maximizing his capabilities rhythmically and melodically, and always walking the delicate line of respecting tradition and exploring boldly. On this last point, Morgenstein says, “You have to make sure you’re stating the main themes of whatever song you’re doing so that the audience can recognize it. But the whole beauty



Since first appearing on *MD*'s cover in July of 1985, Rod Morgenstein has enjoyed a sterling yet unpredictable career, racking up Grammy nominations with the legendary fusion band Dixie Dregs and touring and recording with the pop-metal act Winger, jazzy shredders the Jelly Jam, and the prog-leaning Rudess/Morgenstein Project. He's also penned the well-regarded method books *Drum Set Warm-Ups* and *The Drumset Musician* (the latter was counted in *MD*'s 25 Timeless Drum Books survey), contributed to this magazine as a writer and Pro Panel member, and served as professor of percussion at Berklee College of Music, where his Rock Drums online course is now in its fifth year. A fan favorite, Morgenstein topped the Progressive Rock category in *MD*'s annual Readers Poll each year between 1987 and 1990, and in 1999 he was voted best All-Around Drummer.

and charm of this band is, as soon as the verses and choruses have been clearly laid out, it's almost like a free-for-all."

In 2016, Morgenstein's go-for-it credo seems as top of mind as ever. "I have a couple of surprises," Rod shares. "First, Winger is due for an album and a tour. Second, the Jelly Jam [Morgenstein's rock trio with guitarist Ty Tabor of King's X and bassist John Myung of Dream Theater] is in the midst of signing a record deal and will be recording and hopefully touring for the first time. And third, I might be coming home again. By that I mean that we're in preliminary discussions about reforming the Dixie Dregs. Nothing is sealed yet; we've just started talking."

If all goes according to plan, we, and many others, will definitely be listening.

**Bob Girouard**

# The Aquarium Rescue Unit's Jeff Sipe

Home is where the art is  
for this drummer's drummer.



Vikas Nambiar

**W**hen Jeff Sipe met underground art-rock icon Col. Bruce Hampton in the clubs of Atlanta in 1984, his life—and drumming—changed forever. "From the very first time I played with Bruce," Sipe tells *MD*, "I felt that I'd found my calling as a player."

When Sipe joined up with Hampton, he put everything else on hold, including subbing for the likes of Sonny Emory (Earth, Wind & Fire, Steely Dan), and devoted his time to gigs and marathon practice sessions with the singer/guitarist. "It wasn't for the money," Sipe says, "but for the creative outlet. I found my voice on the drumset playing with Bruce and ARU. Everyone in the band was a serious, schooled player in most styles, and we brought that experience into ARU and took it into uncharted territories. Bruce would say something on stage that would launch us into any number of styles, from rock to funk, country, disco, jazz, reggae.... Anything and everything was possible and impossible, appropriate and inappropriate."

Though the band's activity trailed off in the '90s following the departure of various members and the increased freelance fortunes of others, the Aquarium Rescue Unit did occasionally reconvene for one-off

gigs. Last year, however, fans were treated to a full-blown reunion after Souvik Dutta, owner of the jazz-fusion label Abstract Logix, wrangled together the bulk of the 1989 version of the group for a tour that featured mostly sold-out shows. Now the ARU is planning on releasing a live recording from that tour, and the members are talking about more dates and a possible studio recording for 2016.

As in the original Rescue Unit, Hampton, guitarist Jimmy Herring, bassist Oteil Burbridge, and Sipe make up the nucleus of the group, which also includes various guest artists. "The adventurous spirit is still there," says Sipe, who last year also toured with Warren Haynes in support of the former Allman Brothers Band guitarist's *Ashes & Dust* release. "Everyone is older, more mature, and more professional in caring about the end result. ARU started as a group of guys getting together to escape the musical trappings of the average working situations. The current ARU is more focused and more concise, but with the same reckless spirit. It's been inspiring to see and hear everyone's musical evolution after all our years working with so many great artists, and now bringing it back to explore again in true ARU fashion." **Mike Haid**



## IT'S QUESTIONABLE

# Snare Drum Rescue

A friend rescued this old drum from a local high school that was being demolished. It has a white "4" stenciled on the side, and two of the tension rod holders are cracked. The interior tag dates the drum back to between 1948 and 1952. It's an eight-lug 8x15 WFL with a mahogany shell. Can you tell me a bit more about its history and value?

**Dan**

According to drum historian and Collector's Corner columnist Harry Cangany, "That is a Contest Model concert drum, which was also called the School Symphony Concert Drum to differentiate it from the other Contest models that were 6.5x14 and 6.5x15. It was made by WFL during the time just before the repurchase of the Ludwig name and when they used glitter wraps around 1960. The company changed to sparkle wraps around 1960. This glitter finish is called Red Flash. The drum has nickel-plated hardware, and the P83 strainer with the WFL logo stamp was used for years after the company bought back the Ludwig name.

"My 1964 Ludwig Supraphonic has a WFL logo on the strainer, and so did the footboards on my first Speed King bass drum pedal and hi-hat. WFL are the initials of William F. Ludwig Sr., the cofounder of Ludwig & Ludwig. William sold the company to Conn in 1929 and started WFL in 1936 in Chicago. In 1955, he bought back the Ludwig name, assets, patents, tools, and dies from Conn. That's when the brand became known as the Ludwig Drum Company.

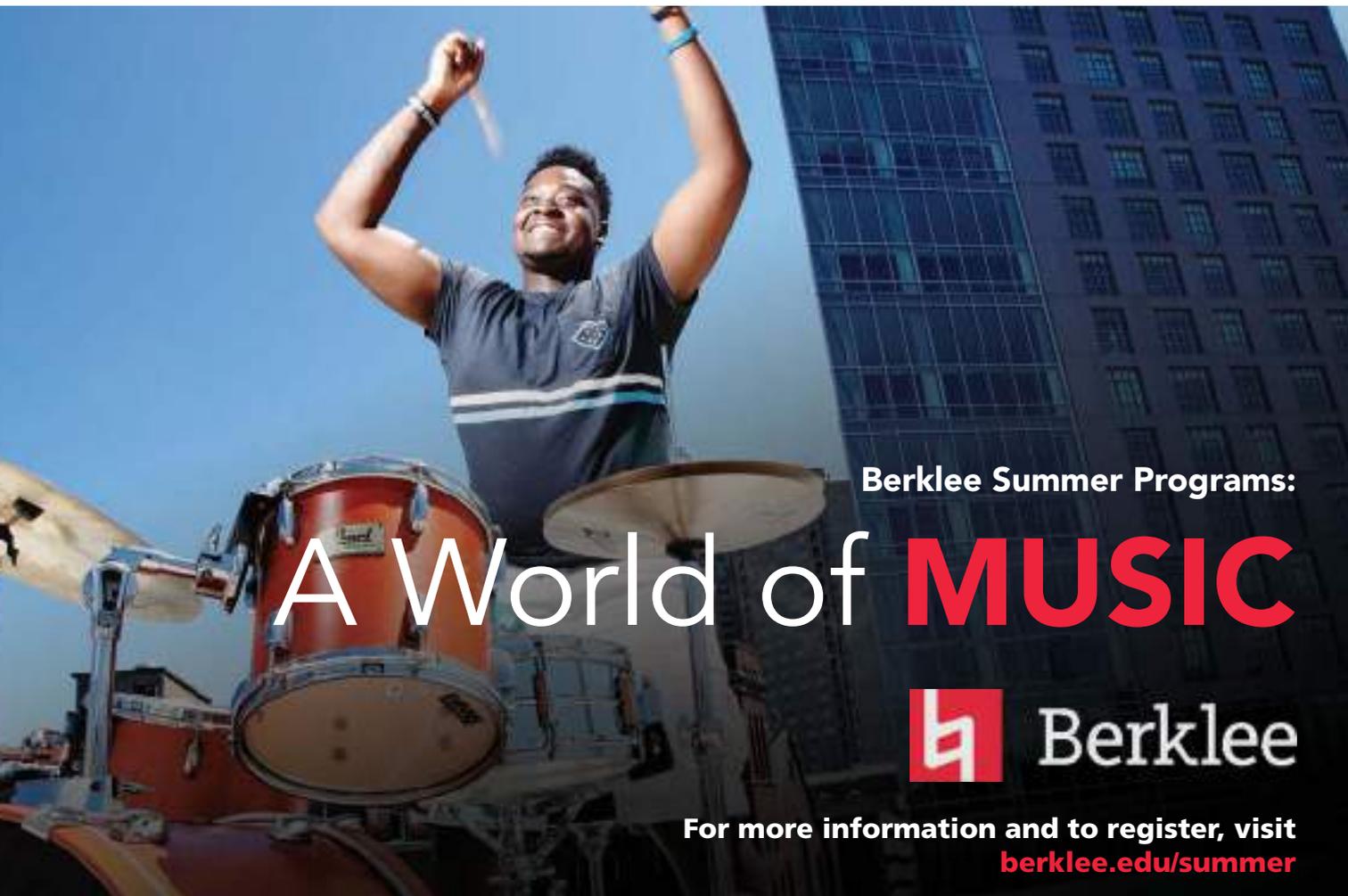
"From the badge, I can tell that this is an early-1950s drum. It has an African mahogany shell with 30-degree bearing edges, so it will



produce a loud, low-pitch, and woody sound. The lugs and strainer are still made today, but not with nickel plating. There are a lot of original parts out there, so check eBay and other used markets. The metal work is in need of a good polishing. I would also chemically remove the number and clean and polish the plastic wrap because the glitter will really sparkle under stage lights.

"What's it worth? If it were clean, with no broken lugs, new heads, and functional snare wires, it could get \$300 to \$350."

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# Natal Arcadia Series

A competitive entry-level kit with a full set of hardware.

**The last time we checked out Natal**, we talked about their vision to offer a range of high-level drumsets. Each kit comes with the same high-quality components, but it was the species of wood that differentiated each model. The company recently expanded on that concept and is now offering entry-level kits, called the Arcadia series. The purpose of this lineup is to provide worthy contenders in the \$600 to \$800 price range, in both rock- and jazz-size configurations, the latter of which we were sent for review. Let's take a look.

## Our Review Kit

We received an Arcadia kit in traditional jazz sizes (\$599), which included an 8x12 tom, a 14x14 floor tom, a 14x18 bass drum, and a 5x14 snare drum. The kit features 6-ply poplar shells with a great-looking gray strata wrap. Two additional finishes are available for the poplar-shell option: black sparkle and red sparkle. The Arcadia series also comes with birch/poplar shells, and kits in those are available in two lacquers. All kits in the Arcadia series include a medium-duty hardware pack. The hardware we received comprised a boom stand, a straight stand, a snare stand, a bass drum pedal, a hi-hat stand, and a tom mount. The Arcadia series is also available in four- and five-piece rock configurations with a 22" or 24" bass drum for no more than \$699 for the poplar option and \$799 for birch/poplar shells.

## Same Price, More Hardware

With the Arcadia series, you get a nice savings in hardware alone. Most other manufacturers offer a shell pack in similar sizes and at the same price points, but they usually only come with a tom holder. To get an additional hardware pack that includes all the same pieces that come standard with the Arcadia kits, you're going to spend on average an additional \$220.

## The Shells

The 6-ply poplar shells that came on the Arcadia review kit sounded great but had subtle limitations. The bass drum was our favorite of the bunch. The 14" depth combined with the 18" diameter gave it a nice, controlled sound. We were able to tune it low for a deep, punchy attack with short low-end resonance and then tune it higher for more of a traditional bebop sound. The resonance in the low and high range of the drum was fun to control via foot pressure. We could change the pitch of the drum by subtly applying force into the drumhead, or we could capitalize on the full, open tone by striking and immediately releasing the beater.

### TECH SPECS

**Shells:** 6-ply poplar

**Sizes:** 8x12, 14x14, 14x18, and 5x14

**Finish:** gray strata wrap

**Hardware:** medium-weight straight and boom cymbal stands, snare stand, pedal, hi-hat, and tom mount

**Price:** \$599

The toms sounded best at medium to low tuning, which provided a smooth, warm tone with some extra low end. As we explored the higher tuning range, the toms began to choke and sound a little thin.

The snare was the toughest to tune out of the box, but with a little love it sounded good at a medium tuning, where it offered a woody crack with a long, resonant tone. As we tuned the snare very high or very low, it emitted a few harsh overtones that needed to be controlled with muffling.

## Who's It For?

The Arcadia series is an excellent option for someone who wants to maximize every dollar spent toward his or her first kit. Although the shells aren't extremely versatile, the included medium-duty hardware will continue to serve you faithfully, even if you decide to upgrade to a more professional-grade kit down the road.

**Miguel Monroy**





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

Sabian

# HH Remastered Cymbals

A few thousand extra hammer strokes later, and the line that launched the brand is better than ever.

For the past couple years, Canadian cymbal company Sabian has been revamping its manufacturing to put greater focus on the old-world hand-hammered stage of its process. We saw the initial results of those efforts with the introduction of the gnarly, funky Big & Ugly series early last year. For 2016, Sabian decided to give a similar treatment to the line that the company made its initial launch with in 1982, the Hand-Hammered (HH) series. Each

## TECH SPECS

**Alloy:** B20 bronze

**Sizes:** 7"-24"

**Style:** vintage

**Sound:** dark and smooth

HH model is now hammered—by a human being—at least 3,000 times in an effort to bring out more complexity and tone. These new “remastered” HH cymbals feature thinner and more musical crashes, broader and richer rides, and warmer, faster hi-hats.

The sampling of HH Remastered cymbals we received for review consisted of a 22" Medium ride (\$439); 21" Raw Bell Dry and Vintage rides (\$405); 16" (\$269), 18" (\$319), and 22" (\$439) Thin crashes; 16" (\$269) and 18" (\$319) O-Zone crashes; and 14" X-Celerator hi-hats (\$449).

## Rides

The Remastered HH 22" Medium ride is a solid all-purpose cymbal that has an excellent balance of clear stick articulation and warm, smooth wash. The sustain has a touch of complexity to it, but it's still clean and even. The bell sounds strong and rich, but it's not overly piercing. The crash is big and washy. I imagine this cymbal will become a workhorse for many drummers who have to jump genres from gig to gig or from session to session. It's dark and expressive enough to handle big band and modern jazz, but it also has the power to withstand more aggressive styles.

The 21" Vintage ride is for players who want a thinner, quieter, and more Turkish-style ride sound without losing Sabian's trademark clean and even tone. The stick

ping is less pronounced than on the Medium, while the wash is more prominent. The Vintage bell has a more integrated sound that blends with the sustain rather than jutting above it. You can also crash the 21" Vintage ride very easily, making it an ideal option for players looking to get a wide variety of timbres from a single cymbal.

On the other side of the spectrum sits the 21" Raw Bell Dry ride, which has the most articulate stick tone of the three, as well as the loudest and clearest bell sound. The sustain is controlled and clean. Crashes are a bit gongy, but you can still get this cymbal to open up a bit for louder applications by striking the edge with the shoulder of the stick. I'd pull up this ride if I needed to cut through dense mixes or high stage volumes.

## Crashes

The Remastered HH crashes are my personal favorites of the group we sampled. They each have a smooth, warm tone with a touch of complexity, which makes them sound older than they are—like they've already been broken in from a few hundred hours of play. The 16" and 18" crashes hit fast and quick with a flashy, dark, and explosive attack, and then they get out of the way with a short but balanced decay.

The 22" Thin crash falls in line with the warm, broken-in vibe of the 16" and 18", but it has broader sustain and slower attack. It also doubles nicely as a thin jazz ride, with decent articulation, breathy wash, and a very integrated, vintage-sounding bell. Like the 22" Medium ride, the Remastered HH crashes are tailor-made for jack-of-all-trades drummers who need great-sounding crashes that will work in any genre.

## O-Zones

The 16" and 18" HH Remastered O-Zone crashes feature 2" holes cut at the center of the bow (six on the 16" and eight on the 18"), which make the cymbals sound trashier, with a shorter sustain and less discernable pitch. They are both very fast and explosive, yet they still sound rich and musical. They're nowhere as noisy as a

China, but they offer a bit more bite than you'll get in the more refined and rich flavors of the Thin crashes. The 18" was my favorite because of its slightly deeper tone and wider wash.

## X-Celerator Hats

The 14" HH Remastered X-Celerator hi-hats feature a heavy, rippled Air Wave bottom cymbal that's designed to eliminate airlock and to offer a strong, crisp foot “chick.” The top cymbal is medium-weight. Together the pair provides great clarity and cutting power while remaining expressive and musical at all volumes. Faster double strokes speak easily, and open barks are quick and easy to control. Shoulder strikes sound broad and chunky, and the open sound has a big and throaty tone. They'll certainly hold up in the loudest of situations, and they're designed more for that application, but you can get a variety of light, expressive sounds as well.

**Michael Dawson**

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





Van Kleef

## 6x14 Titanium, 7x13 Stainless Steel, and 8x14 Aluminum Snare Drums

Spawning from one of the metallurgy capitals of the world, these precision-built drums are built to blast.

**Van Kleef Custom Drums** is owned and operated by Alan van Kleef, a UK-based musician-turned-builder who started his career in the '90s as a live drum & bass performer and studio owner. His workshop is in Sheffield, which is the industrial city in South Yorkshire, England, where in 1912 metallurgist Harry Brearly invented stainless steel. Not surprisingly, Van Kleef

### TECH SPECS

**Location:** Sheffield, England

**Shells:** rolled 1.5mm titanium, 1.5mm stainless steel, and 2mm aluminum

**Hoops:** straight stainless steel

**Wires:** Puresound Custom Pro

**Heads:** Remo Coated Ambassador batters and Ambassador Hazy bottoms

uses stainless steel as the primary material for his hoops, lugs, and throw-offs. He also makes shells out of stainless steel, as well as copper, maple, birch, aluminum, titanium, and other materials. We got our hands on three VK metal snares to review: a 6x14 1.5mm grade 1 titanium (\$1,050), a 7x13 1.5mm stainless steel (\$980), and an 8x14 2mm aluminum "Dre Energy" signature model (\$1,050).

All VK snares come with Sheffield-made stainless steel VK straight hoops, solid stainless steel lugs with brushed sides and mirrored faces, a stainless steel throw-off with an integrated drum key, a stainless steel butt plate, Remo drumheads, and Puresound Custom Pro twenty-strand wires. Badges are either separate pieces (as on the steel drum), or they are laser cut directly into the shell, like on the aluminum and titanium models shown here. You can also special-order drums with custom laser-cut logos.

### 6x14 Titanium

This is a ten-lug drum with a straight 1.5mm titanium shell (no edge flanges). The VK stainless steel throw-off, which appears on each of the review drums, hinges out to the side and rests perpendicular to the shell. It operates firmly but smoothly. The snare

tension knob locks into place every quarter turn, which prevents it from loosening during play.

The integrated drum key, which hides on the backside of the throw-off arm, is a really nice touch. It reminds you that these are drums made by a drummer who understands how stressful it can be when you need to make a tuning or hardware adjustment on the fly but can't find a key.

The VK straight hoops are super-strong and sturdy, which made tuning the drums super-easy, and the hoops held tension very well. The hoops also provide loud and cutting rimshots and rimclicks while not hindering the resonance of the shell.

The 6x14 titanium VK is a powerful drum with a dense, bright tone and super-clean resonance. It really shines at tighter tunings, where it can bark and chop its way through dense mixes without assaulting your ears with too much high-end "ping." Medium and lower tunings elicit a great chest-thumping "smack," and snare sensitivity is excellent across the board. I never felt the need to

muffle this drum, even when close-miking it in the recording studio. Of the three VK snares we reviewed, this would be my choice when looking for the most versatile and powerful sound.

### 7x13 Stainless Steel

This hefty 7x13 eight-lug 1.5mm steel drum also features a straight shell without flanged edges. It's as sensitive and powerful as the titanium model, but it has a more explosive voice with longer and more pronounced overtones. It still sounded great when played wide open with no muffling, especially at very high tunings, where rimshots had an incredible metallic bite that recalled the infamous industrial-sounding snare tone of modern-rock master John Stanier on Helmet's classic album *Meantime*.

This 7x13 stainless steel drum also does lower tunings very well, producing a punchy attack and very musical overtones with a touch of pitch dip. While the titanium VK wins for versatility, the stainless steel is my pick for having the most personality.



6x14 titanium



7x13 stainless steel

### 8x14 "Dre Energy" Aluminum

The final VK snare in our review is a mammoth 8x14 ten-lug 2mm aluminum model built for Cirque du Soleil drummer Andre "Dre Energy" Boyd. This drum showcases VK's ability to offer customized laser-cut logos, as Boyd's signature is prominently featured alongside the company's logo at the center of the shell.

While not as bright sounding as the

stainless steel and not as clean and dense as the titanium, the aluminum model had a broader voice with more spraying overtones. That gave it a more vintage sound and feel, especially at medium and low tunings. As with the other two VK drums, no muffling was needed, even when the batter head was detuned nearly all the way. I was blown away with the sensitivity of this deep drum, and it really shines

at medium and medium-low tunings. In that range the shell opens up very nicely and provides a huge bed of plush, rich overtones. If you like big, fat snare tones, this is the one. It's a gentle giant.

**Michael Dawson**

**Check out video demos of these drums at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).**



8x14 "Dre Energy" aluminum

# Zildjian A391 and Paiste PST7 Cymbal Packs

Could a prepack be for you? Here are two excellent options.

**So you've never considered a cymbal pack** before and generally like to purchase cymbals one at a time based on what your needs are at the moment? That's totally understandable. But could there be some great advantages to buying a handful of cymbals at one time? Like anything that can be purchased in bulk, you'll often get a better deal.

A major emphasis in my gear shopping this year has been on increasing variety,

while being mindful of finances. When it came to cymbals, exploration was key in finding what sounds worked best for me. Would I lean more toward bright or dark tone...brilliant or rugged finishes...thin or heavy weights...? The answer was all of the above, and the best part was that I didn't spend a ton of money in the process.

After acquiring two cymbal packs, Zildjian's A391 and Paiste's PST7, I started with eight cymbals, and then narrowed

down my final selection to four cymbals, which comprised two models from each pack. The other four were sold online. Let's take a look at each pre-pack.

## TECH SPECS

**Alloy:** B20 (Zildjian) and B8 (Paiste)

**Sizes:** 14"-21"

**Sound:** bright, clean, all-purpose

**Price:** \$699.95 (Zildjian) and \$425 (Paiste)

### Zildjian A391

The Zildjian A391 series cymbal pack is a wonderful investment and one of the better options out there. You'll be taking home 14" New Beat hi-hats, a 16" Medium-Thin crash, a 21" Sweet ride, and an 18" Medium-Thin crash. These timeless cast-bronze cymbals are a staple in the drumming world and have been used by the likes of Soundgarden/Pearl Jam's Matt Cameron, Smashing Pumpkins' Jimmy Chamberlin, Foo Fighters' Taylor Hawkins, Queen's Roger Taylor, and many others.

The 14" New Beats hi-hats come in a traditional finish and have a medium-weight top paired with a heavy bottom. Whether you are a heavy hitter or have a light hand, they respond equally well and are a joy to play because of their broad range of sound.

The 16" Medium-Thin crash cymbal has a perfect natural timbre with warm, rich tones. It also features a newer hammering technique that's closer to that used on A series cymbals back in the '40s and '50s.

Many of the same attributes of the 16" crash can be said of the 18" Medium-Thin crash. It has a noticeably lower pitch and carries an overall bigger sound. When paired with the 16", you've got a strong one-two punch with some awesome contrast.

The 21" Sweet ride is a versatile cymbal with an array of tones. Something that has always been important to me is being able to get a strong crash sound from my ride. With the Sweet ride, I could crash it, ride on it, and use the bell, all within four bars of music, with clear separation between the three tones.

At \$699.95, the Zildjian A391 is a professional-grade and well-valued pack for beginners, intermediates, and professionals.

### Paiste PST7

Among the things Paiste is known for is producing budget-friendly cymbals without compromising integrity. The PST7 series cymbal pack is a perfectly executed example of this. Though priced lower than the Alpha and 2002 series, the PST7s are made from the same B8 bronze as the popular professional-grade 2002s.

The PST7 pack comes with a 20" ride, a 16" crash, and 14" hi-hats, in a choice of three weights: Session (light), Universal (medium), and Rock (heavy). There's also an effects cymbal pack that includes a 10" splash and an 18" China.

One of the first things you'll notice after playing these cymbals is how clean they sound, especially the crashes and hi-hats. The 20" ride has nice overtones that blend well with the crashes. The lighter Session cymbal pack was my favorite of the three, and offers the closest alternative to the 2002 series for a fraction of the price.

Each of the three PST7 ride cymbals had a well-defined stick ping and full-sounding bells. The Session ride can be easily crashed. The Rock ride is most metallic, with considerably more ping. The Universal ride has a nice blend of sustain and a clear-cutting bell.

All of the PST7 crash cymbals sound fantastic. The Session crash is the fastest, and the warmer-sounding Universal was the most versatile. The Rock crash had the most volume and sustain.

I've always thought that Paiste produced amazing-sounding hi-hats, and the hi-hats in the PST7 packs are the most noteworthy of the family. When played closed, all three pairs sound crisp and full. Loosen them up, and you get a rich wash. You can find any of the three Paiste PST7 cymbal packs online for around \$425. This is a steal, folks. **Nate Bauman**



Check out a video demo of the Zildjian A391 and Paiste PST7 cymbal packs at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).





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**A SOUND CHOICE**





# Barry Kerch

**“So heavy” and “So pro” are two typical compliments paid to Shinedown’s founding drummer. But as the group’s latest album, *Threat to Survival*, makes clear, “So smart” and even “So subtle” are part of his essence as well. *MD* contributor Ben Meyer sees firsthand what it’s like powering one of modern rock’s strongest juggernauts.**

Photos by Rick Malkin





# We've all been there.

Gazing at the posters of our favorite musicians taped to our bedroom wall, dreaming of the day when it'll be our face that some future teenager will be staring at. Imagining it's us on that drum riser, playing in sold-out arenas—and if we're lucky, still delivering kick-ass shows twenty years down the line.

Barry Kerch was that kid. And now he's unquestionably that veteran player, a survivor who seems almost ageless in his ability to kick it as hard today as he did when he first started out—maybe even harder, for in his travels he's learned about profound concepts like efficiency, pacing, and picking your spots.

Kerch has also figured out how things can work in the real world, regardless of what skills you're born with, and he's learned to not always believe the hype machine. He knows that making it to the top demands much more than being in the right place at the right time or possessing a desire to take it as far as it'll go. It also means having the chops, personality, and endurance to keep the gig. "A professional drummer just plays the drums," Kerch says. "He plays for the song and can be a chameleon. He plays for the group. That's being a pro. It's a job. I'm in the music business. I'm not a rock star."

We'll leave judgment on that last point to you, the reader. Not up for interpretation, however, is whether Kerch looks poster-worthy. Initially inspired by an early hero, Mike Bordin of Faith No More, the now thirty-nine-year-old drummer still sports the telltale waist-length dreadlocks he's had since the world was introduced to him via Shinedown's 2003 debut album, *Leave a Whisper*. The look is more than just a fashion statement, though. Kerch embodies Bordin's tough, earnest integrity, and has produced a catalog of thunderous performances that fans of FNM's famed lefty could easily get with.

Tracking drums and cymbals separately on most of *Threat to Survival*, Kerch teaches a class on playing for the song, drawing great tones from his instrument and setting up impacts so hard they make your teeth hurt. The road to success has been a long and winding one for the Florida native, and his even demeanor, kind heart, and dedication to swinging, stadium-crushing bombast are the keys that unlocked that door.

*MD* jumped at the invitation to spend some time at Ocean Industries Studios in Charleston, South Carolina, during the tracking of the lead single from *Threat to Survival*, "Cut the Cord." Kerch and bassist/coproducer Eric Bass locked seamlessly. They were also in a constant state of looking to take Shinedown's music in new directions. The band's sound is muscular and generally dark, but some kind of twist is always added to take the compositions well beyond standard Top 40 radio fare.

By also being privy to the creative workings of an as-yet-unnamed side project that the Shinedown rhythm-section mates have been working on for a year and a half, we witnessed the indulgence of certain musical elements that were creeping into the writing and production of *Threat to Survival* in vibrant, unexpected ways. The application of those concepts helped make the album Shinedown's most unusual and exciting to date.



**MD:** What's the writing process in Shinedown?

**Barry:** For this album it was similar to how it was on our last album, *Amaryllis*. I've never been invited to the writing sessions, because [singer] Brent Smith can't stand drums in the writing room. It's distracting to him. He likes to write with an acoustic guitar and build from there.

**MD:** Is that process different when you're just working with Eric Bass, like on your current side project?

**Barry:** Yeah. When it's Eric and me, we write together, which is why we did this side project. On Shinedown's material, there's [writer/producer] Dave Bassett there, and they want to include Zach [Myers, guitar] as well. Dave is like our fifth Beatle. He's been writing with us since *The Sound of Madness*, and he produced a lot of the songs on this record. Brent likes to write with new people, just to have new ideas. A lot of people out there shit on that, like it's selling out. They think just because you're in a band together, you write together. It doesn't work that way.

**MD:** So how much of *Threat to Survival* was written with all of you playing together at the same time?

**Barry:** None of it. On the first couple of records we tried doing that over and over again, but it was like beating a dead horse. It just doesn't work for Brent. For him to get the lyrics out that he does, he's got to have his method. But it's fun for me, because then I get to come in with a better idea of what the song structure is going to be. I think that's why my drumming in Shinedown serves the song well. There've not been many "Look at me" moments, because it doesn't work for this band.

**MD:** The drum patterns on *Threat to Survival* are relatively simple and bashy, but it still swings.

**Barry:** That's my fault! I like to swing.

**MD:** There's hardly enough rhythmic material happening for it to swing, and yet it does.

**Barry:** That's a big compliment. I appreciate that. This side project of Eric and mine, that's more of my roots playing. I love R&B and James Brown's drummers. They're some of my biggest early influences. I love drumming that makes you move. Everything was intentionally done because of the space in the songs on this record. On a song like "Devour," which has to be precise 16th notes straight through, there's no room to swing. On something like the chorus of "Outcast," it's pretty straight, but I try to swing the kick drum every once in a while. Especially with a little bit more programming on this record, that's what's going to create polyrhythms between the programmed and acoustic drums and make it swing.

**MD:** How do you feel the decision not to use one single producer or recording environment for the album affected the final product?

**Barry:** I think it was nice for us; it was fun. We spent the last two records with [famed producer and chairman of Warner Bros. Records] Rob Cavallo, which was a great thing. He's a great producer. He's able to kind of make the record his and ours. With this one, it didn't have that vibe, because the songs are so dark and different and disjointed, in a good way. They're all over the place. We were trying to get them together, but the vision of having one producer do all that just didn't work.

**MD:** Aside from "Misfits," there aren't really any ballads.

## Kerch's *Threat to Survival* Tour Kit

**Drums:** Pearl USA Custom Reference in pewter abalone wrap with Reference Pure lugs

**A.** 3x13 steel-shell snare with Pearl Tru Trac head

**B.** 14x20 gong drum

**C.** 6.5x14 Hybrid Exotic Cast Aluminum snare

**D.** 9x13 tom

**E.** 16x18 floor tom

**F.** 16x16 floor tom

**G.** 18x22 bass drum

**H.** 16x26 auxiliary bass drum

"We were using a brass snare, and I liked it," Kerch says, "but our front-of-house and monitor engineers liked the cut of the aluminum better. I've been using a larger secondary kick with a slave pedal on the right side since *The Sound of Madness*, for intros to certain songs and on some of the ballads, where you just need that bigger tone. And the 3x13 snare with the Tru Trac head triggers samples for snare and kick reinforcement and gate control."

**Cymbals:** Meinl

**1.** 16" hi-hats (Byzance Dark crash bottom/ Byzance Medium crash top)

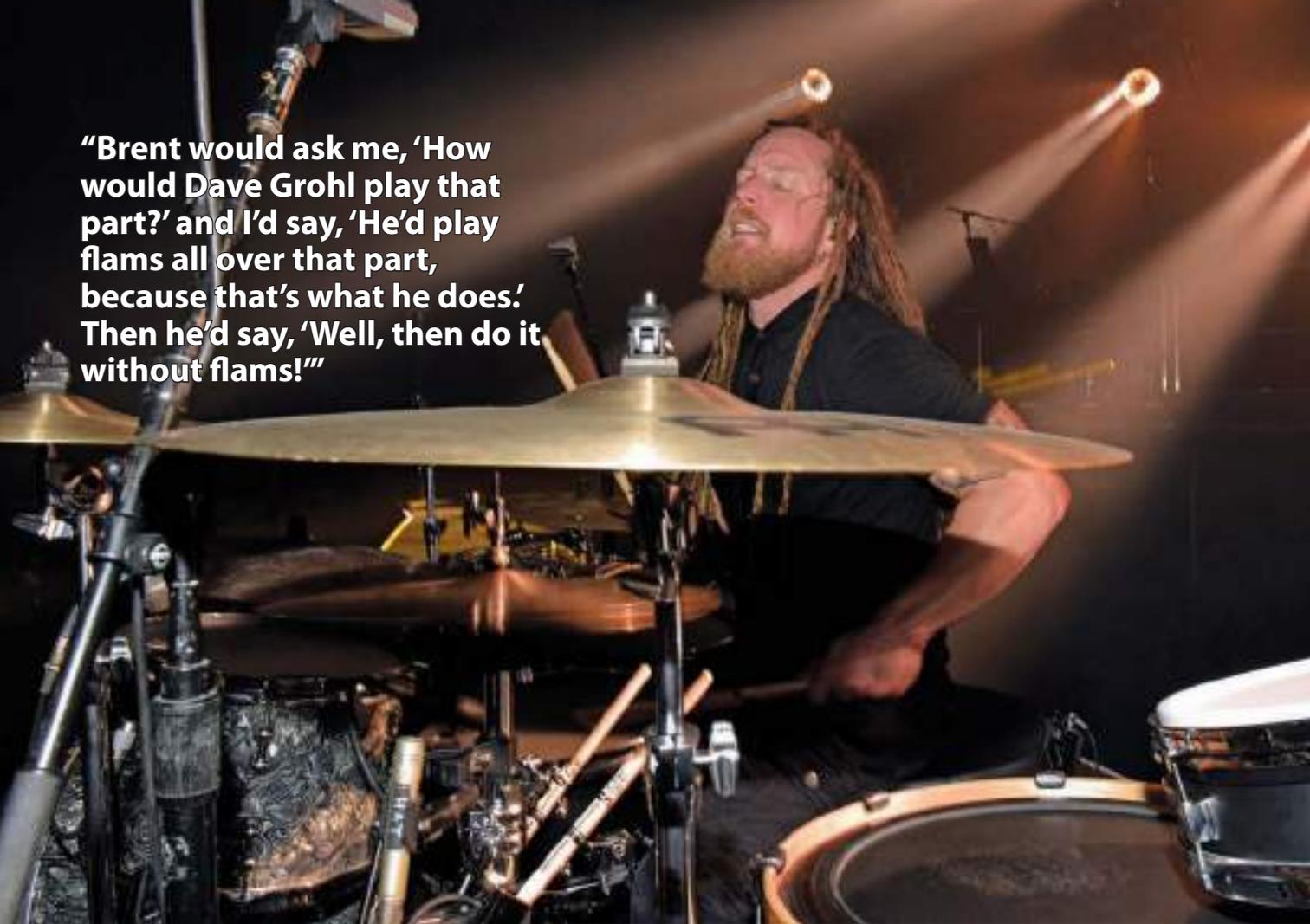
**2.** 20" Byzance Medium crash

**3.** 22" Byzance Vintage Pure ride

**4.** 16" Byzance Trash crash and 14" Byzance China stack

**Sticks:** Promark Hickory 747 Rock model with wood tip





**“Brent would ask me, ‘How would Dave Grohl play that part?’ and I’d say, ‘He’d play flams all over that part, because that’s what he does.’ Then he’d say, ‘Well, then do it without flams!’”**

**Hardware:** Pearl P3002C Demon chain-drive double pedal and slave bass drum pedal, Eliminator H2000 chain-drive hi-hat stand, C1030 straight cymbal stands, and C2030 boom stands

**Heads:** Evans, including Hybrid Coated snare batters and 300 Clear snare-sides, Level 360 Onyx tom batters and Level 360 G1 Clear tom resonants, EMAD Onyx gong drum batter, EMAD Heavyweight bass drum batter, and Inked by Evans custom front head with artwork by Rob Prior

**Electronics:** Playback Control “Vig Rig” designed by Vicky Vignola, including two redundant MacBook Pros. Backing tracks hosted live in Digital Performer. Boss FS5U momentary footswitch for track start/stop. Tru Trac head on 3x13 snare used to trigger samples from Yamaha DTX900M Drum Trigger Module and ddrum brain. Porter and Davies BC2 saddle throne. Westone ES50 in-ear monitors.

#### **Clean and Connected**

“Working for a powerhouse like Barry requires innovation, consistency, and attention to detail,” drum tech Mark “MBZ” Bennett says. “One of the things we’ve done is remove all of the tripods from the cymbal stands and connect them to the riser with a custom ‘cymbal cup.’ The throne, snare stand, and floor toms are also strapped to the riser to ensure consistent playing zones throughout the show, and I use a Tune-bot for maintaining pitch. In addition, the pH of Barry’s sweat causes the cymbals and the chrome to oxidize overnight, and the heavy amount of pyro dust after the show means that everything needs to be cleaned inside and out daily as well. For this task, I’ve been using Meinl’s cymbal cleaner and protectant spray and LADS Tour Tech drum polish to make everything look brand-new for every show.”

**Barry:** No. It’s a driving and more mid-tempo, groove-oriented record. I think it’s a very drum-oriented record compared to the last few. And since we weren’t in one room, it was fun for me, because drums are always the first in, with one producer and all the guys in the control room looking at you, going, “Why aren’t you done yet? This is costing money.” I was able to spread out and relax and maybe even explore a little more, because it wasn’t everybody staring at each other, waiting for their turn. I enjoyed it.

**MD:** How much did you map out your parts ahead of tracking? Did you spend time working with demos, or was any of it put together while you were tracking?

**Barry:** None of it was put together during tracking. All of the demos were pretty well in place. I played with them a lot here at home to learn the programmed drums precisely, then I would work on fills if there weren’t any in the demo. Then, when we got to the studio, if the producer wanted to change something, we would. There were a couple songs where audibles were called and we would change something or add an intro or shorten a section. We’d do those on the fly. If they didn’t like what I had for fills, we’d work on them. For me, a lot of times it’s not that I play too much, it’s that I don’t play enough. I’ll learn the demo and keep it super-simple, and they’ll say, “Hey, at the end of the song, would you do a little bit more?”

Then, going into this record, I really practiced not playing many flams. The last record didn’t have any, because Brent decided that he hated flams. He called them “flubs.” [laughs] He would ask me, “How would Dave Grohl play that part?” I’d say, “Well, he’d play flams all over that part, because that’s what he does.” Then he’d say, “Well, do it without flams!” [laughs]

If you listen to *Amaryllis*, there might be one or two. On this record, “Cut the Cord” was the first song we wrote, and we did the drums at Eric’s studio without Brent there. There’s those big, open flat flams before the last chorus, and Eric left them in and sent it to Brent to see what he thought, and he loved it. So the door was open and I got away with a few flams on this record.



## Off the Record: *Threat to Survival*

### "Asking for It"

Kerch smashes away in the second chorus of the churning opener and includes a tasty fill between his hands and right foot toward the end of the phrase. The tempo is 144 bpm. (1:56)

### "Outcast"

This dynamic but simple fill leads into the song's huge first chorus. No overdubbing tricks were used to cover the tight transition from the snare and floor tom figure before the chorus kicks in. The tempo is 74 bpm. (0:57)

### "Dangerous"

Kerch builds the section before the song's driving second chorus to a fever pitch with this propulsive snare drum fill. The tempo is 115 bpm. (1:37)

### "Thick as Thieves"

This '80s-inspired gated tom fill leads into the song's huge final chorus and was performed on a combination of DW piccolo toms and Remo Rototoms. The tempo is 89 bpm. (2:59)

### "Black Cadillac"

This triplet-based groove supports the rollicking first chorus and ends with a simple, powerful fill that leads into the second verse. Check out the huge, dark hats and massive kick and snare sound. The tempo is 72 bpm. (0:52)

**MD:** I think I was there the day you did that.

**Barry:** You were. You saw that.

**MD:** I remember thinking there was no way in hell those flams were going to make it on Top 40 radio.

**Barry:** You did say that! I forgot about that. It's our biggest single ever. Apparently Brent doesn't hate flams anymore. [laughs] I think what was happening, though, in Brent's defense, is that I was playing them too open and they were distracting him.

**MD:** Are most of the final tracks on the album comped, or are they full takes?

**Barry:** Dave's stuff is pretty much full takes, with maybe a fill here or there comped. [Producer] Scott Stevens' stuff is very comped. He loves to comp. He heard things that I don't think any of us were hearing. That's just the way his ears work. And then Eric, you've seen Eric in the studio and how he works. Making "Cut the Cord" with him, which was the first one, was a blast. He and I have such a good rapport. We have the same brain in the studio, so it's just natural.

**MD:** That's one of the songs with the most impact, especially where you leave space before the last chorus—it hits so much harder when there's space right before it.

**Barry:** That was a fun one to make. Eric and I were stealing a lot of the stuff we'd been doing on the side project on that one, and it ended up transferring to this whole record. I think 90 percent of the record was tracked with drums minus cymbals, with the cymbals overdubbed later.

**MD:** You'd never know it, listening to the feel you achieved. Are there any secrets to making that kind of tracking work?

**Barry:** I had bruised legs for months! [laughs] It looked like I got hit in the thighs with a baseball bat. It was horrible. But it's so much nicer for the mixing engineer to be able to have more control over the cymbals. When you're overdubbing cymbals, your snare is your left leg, and vice versa when you're playing the kick and snare—you're riding on your right leg. That's how you still get that groove. I think if you just stood there and played cymbals, you'd never have cohesiveness.

**MD:** How did multitracking most of the parts on *Threat to Survival*, as opposed to playing them live, affect the writing of your parts?

**Barry:** I've gotten very comfortable with playing separated parts, especially doing the side-project stuff with Eric. It's a good challenge, but the hardest part is making it sound cohesive when you put it all back together. But I really prefer tracking that way, just for sonic control. I hate the sound of cymbals, I really do.

**MD:** There's not even a lot of cymbals in the

mix. On the verses of several of the songs I wondered if you were riding the floor tom or playing with both hands on the snare, or if there were just no cymbal parts.

**Barry:** They're there, just very subdued. They work, but can become abrasive so quickly. That's also up to the mixing and mastering engineers.

**MD:** There's at least one instance I noticed where there's independent hi-hat and floor tom parts happening at the same time.

**Barry:** That would be "Outcast."

**MD:** How are you approaching sections like

that live?

**Barry:** I've had to work on my left-hand independence a little bit more. That's why I'm using the gong drum. I'll move my left hand from the gong drum to the snare. And it's no secret that there's programmed drums on the album. Those tracks will be going when we play live.

**MD:** How prominent is that in the live mix?

**Barry:** On that song, it's a good doubling of everything. There's a trashy electronic snare and trashy toms on top of the natural toms, and they really blend well together.

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## Barry Kerch

**MD:** And those aren't being triggered—they're in the backing track?

**Barry:** It's in-track. We always run a percussion track with tambourine, shakers, and that kind of stuff.

**MD:** How do you think more inclusion of samples, like the stuff that Eric pulled from old LPs, influenced the material on this record? You guys hadn't really done that before.

**Barry:** No, we hadn't. Maybe small things in an intro or something. That's the place where things bled in from this fun side project.

**MD:** It makes *Threat to Survival* sound quite different from the last few records.

**Barry:** Some people are crucifying us for it and using the old "sellout" line, but we've been told we've been selling out since the first record! [laughs] But look at bands like U2. *Achtung Baby* and *Zooropa* were different records for them, and that's okay. It was fun, and they were actually very successful. This record is doing really well for us so far; it's just different. Some of the diehards are pissed off. They say, "Why doesn't it sound like *Leave a Whisper*?" Well, that was thirteen years ago, and we don't want it to sound like *Leave a Whisper*.

## Blue-Collar Caretaker

Shinedown bassist, coproducer, and chart-topping songwriter  
Eric Bass on what Barry Kerch brings to the table.



**MD:** How do you compare tracking Barry to other drummers you've worked with over the years?

**Eric:** Barry is a human metronome. His timing is impeccable, and, whether he's on a click or not, his meter is very even. He was the first drummer I ever recorded who had a sound. I remember miking up the kit the same way I mike up everybody else. All of a sudden the drums not only sounded better than usual, they sounded like the drums I'd heard on the first two Shinedown records.

**MD:** What role does Barry play off stage?

**Eric:** First of all, he's the tour mother—he's always worried about everybody being okay. Barry's one of the kindest and most caring people I know; he always has a smile, and he always has time. The other thing about Barry is that he's blue collar. He hangs out with the crew on every day off, so he kind of binds the crew to the band in a way. He's mother hen meets burly blue-collar guy.

**MD:** From a producer's perspective, how well does Barry serve your vision for a drum track?

**Eric:** Barry typifies everything I love about great drummers. Something that a lot of people will never know about him is that he can do anything. If you want him to play Dream Theater, he can play Dream Theater. If you want him to play Motown, he can play Motown—and not sound like he's trying to do any of those things. It'll sound like that's what he does.

One thing that struck Dave Schiffman [L.A. audio engineer and longtime collaborator of producer Rick Rubin] when we were working on *Threat to Survival* was the fact that we could track with drums and cymbals separately and when you listen back to the track, it doesn't sound separated. It sounds like it was all done at the same time. You can't tell on this record which songs he played that way and which songs he played live.

**MD:** Do you think Shinedown could survive with any other drummer?

**Eric:** If for some reason we had to, but I can't see any reason why we would ever go on without Barry. It would never be the same. You're talking about a guy who's vitally important to the health of this band off stage and beyond vitally important on stage. With everything he has to do and the way he plays, I don't know where we'd be, and I don't even want to think about it.



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**MD:** And on a whole, this record is actually heavier than *Amaryllis*.

**Barry:** There's only darkness on this one, because Brent was in a dark place and he was telling dark stories. Every album is very autobiographical of the band. This one is no exception. Lyrically, it's heavy. Musically, I think it's heavy. A lot of people are asking where the fast songs are. Where's the "Devour"? Well, fast doesn't necessarily mean heavy.

**MD:** There really aren't any burners on *Threat to Survival*.

**Barry:** No, and I'm fine with that, because those things are exhausting! [laughs]

**MD:** Every time I hear "Devour" on the radio, I think it must be really tiring to play.

**Barry:** It's miserable. And it's typically at the end of the set. It's one of the last three songs. Thanks, guys. [laughs]

**MD:** You appear to be playing extremely hard on stage. Is part of that for show?

**Barry:** I'm a heavy hitter, but a proper hitter. I'm not trying to break stuff. I'm hitting the cymbals properly. And the big arm movements and hair everywhere definitely make it look heavier than what it is, but I am a hard hitter. And I definitely hit harder on stage than I do in the studio. You want to be more precise in the studio, and you don't want to choke the drum.

**MD:** The band's performance in the "Cut the Cord" video is so energetic and aggressive.



*Barry Kerch of Shinedown  
and drum tech Mark Bennett*



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## Barry Kerch

**Barry:** That's us in a live setting. We wanted to show people us being natural. If you put the four of us in a room with an aggressive song, that's us. That's who we are. We wanted to come back to those rock roots, because we'd been gone for a year and nine months. It was time to come back with a vengeance.



**MD:** What advice would you offer to young players who are interested in following your path, with the current environment being so much about YouTube and drum covers?

**Barry:** It's a different path from what I had. YouTube is a great tool. But getting a good teacher who can watch you play and tell you what you're doing well and what you're doing wrong is *crucial*. I still take lessons when I can.

Beyond that, learn how to play the songs. And learn how to get along with people—that's the hardest thing. I spend more time with the guys in my band than I do with my own family. You'd better enjoy each other's company, and you'd better be able to deal with them on their bad days.

**MD:** Have you developed any physical problems from drumming?

**Barry:** Not really. I used to have some wrist and elbow problems, which I thought were carpal tunnel syndrome at one point. That goes back to learning over the years to change my grip, to loosen up and work on the Moeller technique. I'm still working on that. I don't have it down, but I'm better at it.

**MD:** Do you freely switch between matched and traditional grip? I saw you move between them a bit during the acoustic set on the *Somewhere in the Stratosphere* DVD.

**Barry:** For the live rock show, no. I'm strictly

matched for that, because I don't have the ability to get the same power out of my left hand with traditional grip, though I do feel my ghost notes are stronger that way. You just play differently with that grip. In the studio, I'll switch back and forth depending on the song. On a song like "Black Cadillac" I probably played traditional on the verses and matched on the choruses. That song was done on two different kits. The verses were on a small jazz kit, and the choruses were on a big rock kit. I do warm up with both grips, though.

**MD:** In the Promark video where you're talking about using stick wrap, you say, "I kind of changed up my technique," explaining why you no longer use wrap. What do you mean by that?

**Barry:** My hands are a little less choked and a little less grippy.

**MD:** When did that happen?

**Barry:** I think between *The Sound of Madness* and *Amaryllis*. During *The Sound of Madness*, I was having wrist issues from overuse. We toured for three years, so you're going to have that. I'm a rock drummer in a rock band; I'm hitting way too hard and I'm slamming wood into plastic and metal five days a week. It's going to take its toll on your body. I'm sore after shows and I have "rock neck," but I was really starting to get some wrist issues.

I went through physical therapy and started researching ways to get some help. I took a few lessons from Dom Famularo via Skype. What a neat dude. I want to do it again. I only took three or four lessons with him, but that was enough to set me on the path. He taught me what he calls the free stroke, which is similar to the Moeller technique. It was painful to really slow it



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## Barry Kerch

down and go back to basics and work on that stroke through *Stick Control*.



**MD:** Who are your favorite drummers in your genre these days?

**Barry:** Everybody is really good these days. Morgan Rose of Sevendust is great. Nothing More's drummer, Paul O'Brien, who just left the band, is phenomenal. He reminded me of Matt Cameron [Soundgarden, Pearl Jam]. John Fred Young from Black Stone Cherry has a really cool style. Sam Loeffler from Chevelle and Tom Hane from In This Moment are great drummers. Tony Palermo from Papa Roach—I love his playing.

But I don't know everyone in my genre, because I don't pay attention unless we play shows together. I've completely gotten away from rock in what I'm listening to lately, because I've been bored with it. I've been listening more to programmed, girl-fronted pop stuff. MS MR and Banks—I'm in love with Banks' stuff. It's been a departure for me. I play a rock show and there are rock bands playing around me all day, opening for us or at festivals. When I get on a plane or on the bus I want to chill and listen to something that's the polar opposite of what I do every day.

**MD:** When you think back to when you were thirteen, compared to when you were in your twenties—or now, in your thirties—what were your drumming motivations?

**Barry:** Whoa... Drumming at thirteen, I wanted to be a really good marching drummer, I wanted the girls, and I wanted to be a rock star. I wanted to get on that

**"YouTube is a great tool. But getting a good teacher who can watch you play and tell you what you're doing well and what you're doing wrong is crucial!"**



poster on my wall. I wanted to be doing what I'm doing right now, which is to be in *Modern Drummer*. In my twenties, I still had the same dreams and aspirations, but I was being more realistic. I was in college, becoming a little more artsy and learning about live playing in clubs and bars. I was still trying to get the girl. [laughs] Then I finally got her at twenty-four, and then, by the time I was twenty-five, I was in Shinedown. In my thirties, my goal has been to maintain where I am and become a better drummer. I've also wanted to give back,

because I'm pretty damn lucky.

**MD:** Who were the most important people in your life in terms of becoming the drummer that you are today?

**Barry:** My grandmother started me on the path—my dad's mom, Grandma Hook. Her brother was a jazz drummer in Chicago, nobody famous. I never met him, but he was a guy that worked back in the day. Like a typical kid, I would take the Christmas boxes and beat on them and make a drumset instead of playing with the toys. She said to me early on, probably when I was five or six,

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My parents were also huge—and not just supporting me, but paying for lessons and dealing with me playing in the house. They helped me into my first drumsets and everything else. They were very supportive, as long as I did it scholastically.

**MD:** Who is someone non-musical in your life who is important to your drumming and your life as a musician?

**Barry:** My wife, who continues to support me. We're a team. As far as who I am, my father is my hero and always will be. I'm a mama's boy all day long, but my father... he's just a good, humble person. I idolize him for it.

**MD:** What's your definition of drumming greatness?

**Barry:** That's a loaded question! [laughs] To me, drumming greatness is playing for the song and making people feel something. I like notes, I just don't want to play them unless they're called for.

**MD:** To you, what's the distinction between a professional and an amateur drummer?

**Barry:** An amateur drummer is, "Hey, look at me—I'm here playing the drums!" A professional drummer just plays. He plays for that song, and he can be a chameleon. Whether it's somebody like Steve Ferrone or Josh Freese, a pro plays for the group. If you see Josh Freese with the Vandals or you see him with Nine Inch Nails or you see him with Devo, he's playing for that situation. *That's* being a pro.





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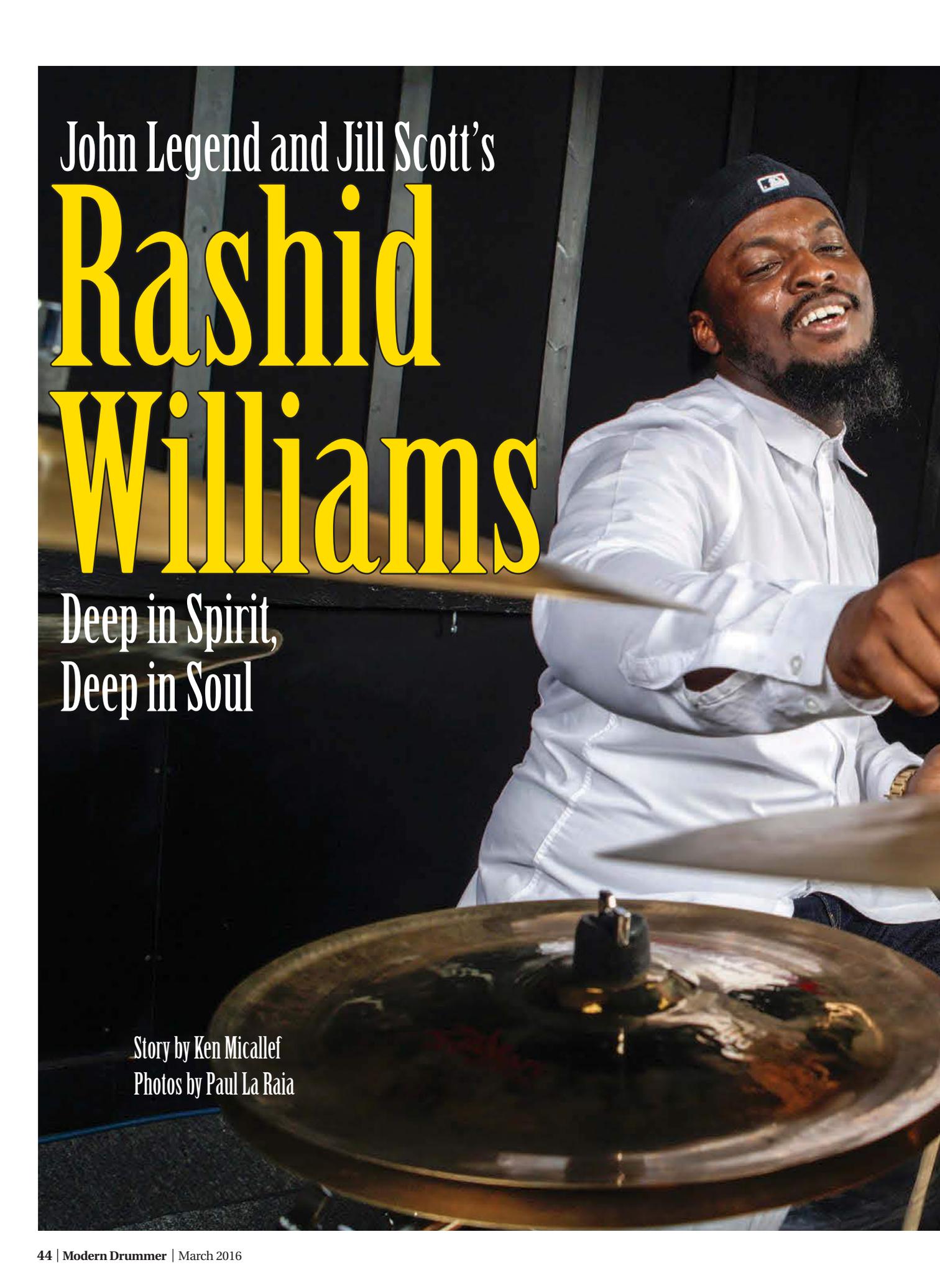


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John Legend and Jill Scott's

# Rashid Williams

Deep in Spirit,  
Deep in Soul

Story by Ken Micallef  
Photos by Paul La Raia

**R**ashid Williams has always been attracted to powerful people. When he was seven years old and attending church in Jersey City, New Jersey, the drummer with the best groove nabbed the drum chair, whether it was Rashid or the other drummers in his family—who happened to be his mother and father. Now twenty-nine, Williams is still lodged between powerful male and female figures, the R&B giants John Legend and Jill Scott, who've employed him for eight and five years, respectively.

Like many musicians in the sample-addicted worlds of hip-hop and R&B, Williams has recorded relatively few albums. But his serious presence has been felt on the bandstands of Alicia Keys, N.E.R.D, Diddy's Dirty Money, Eric Roberson, Goapele, and J. Cole, and perhaps most notably with Scott, with whom he's employed as both drummer and musical director, and Legend, where his surging pocket proclivities turn the singer's sample-filled hit songs into rousing gospel-worthy anthems. And once you see any of the widely viewed videos he's done for Vic Firth, Toca, or Zildjian, it's easy to understand why. Williams' full-set fluidity, powerful beats, and startling dynamics are conveyed with an effortlessness that is

inherent in many natural players—this man was obviously born to groove. But he also shows technique to spare, roaring around the kit, ripping off complex figures and over-the-barline extensions with incredible grace.

Williams is largely self-taught, with no formal training—but the persistent and curious drummer hardly views these facts as barriers. The title of his recent PASIC clinic, "No Theory, No Problem: Developing Musicality Without a Theory Background," certainly makes that clear. "That describes my life!" Williams says, then reemphasizes, more seriously, "You *can* have a career without heavy formal training."

An avid soundtrack collector whose trick bag extends to rock and jazz in a pinch, Williams recently completed the recording of his debut album as a leader, *Another Side of Me*, which at press time was in the can and awaiting mixing and mastering. Featuring tracks that at times recall the music of one of his heroes, Phil Collins, but also ambient late-night journeys and serious instrumental soul, *Another Side of Me* reveals a major talent that deserves to be heard far beyond the drumming community.



“Even artists who you’ve been with for a long time want it to sound new. John Legend has to feel like I’m continually showing him new things.”

**MD:** You’ve been with John Legend for eight years. What keeps that gig challenging, assuming it is?

**Rashid:** Oh, it’s definitely challenging. It stays challenging because John plays piano with us, so he needs to be fed on more levels than simply “John Legend, the artist.” He’s also a part of this band. So he knows his album loops, he knows all the drum parts. The challenge for me has always been to cater to him as an artist, give him all [the drumming that’s on] his records, and make sure he hears the patterns and loops, but also cater to him as a musician and give him that onstage energy. He still wants to feel like part of the band, so we have to connect as piano player and drummer in the rhythm section.

**MD:** Can you stretch and improvise on the gig?

**Rashid:** Yes, there are a few tunes where we watch for his cues as to when to stretch. With John we definitely have a lot of freedom. He’s a musician; he wants to feel the stage. “I Can Change” is a big one in our live show for stretching. “Green Light” was and still is the song where John really allows me to express myself and fill in the gaps. That was also one of my audition songs.

**MD:** What was the audition process?

**Rashid:** I’d just come off the road with N.E.R.D. John called and set up an audition for a week later at SIR in New York. He sent me five songs. In the audition it was John playing piano, his MD on keys, and his bass player. I walked in; John called out “Show Me.” Then he asked to play through a couple more songs. Then he said, “I want to hear you solo over ‘Green Light.’ Show me what you can do.” We finished and he said, “I’ll be in touch.” The “Green Light” solo became the way we ended the show on my first tour. I added some stuff during the audition—I’m big on setting up changes. I wanted to make sure John knew that I knew every change in his music. I still keep the foundational patterns, but I always add a little bit. Two days after the audition John called and said I had the gig.

**MD:** How has your drumming changed over the years with John?

**Rashid:** I like to think I’m a little more polished. Your creativity grows the more you play a gig, because it has to. Even artists who you’ve

been with for a long time want it to sound new. John has to feel like I’m continually showing him new things.

**MD:** Do you play with a click or sequenced tracks live?

**Rashid:** Jill Scott’s gig is completely without a click. Alicia Keys’ gig is entirely to a click. With my being Jill’s musical director, doing away with the click track and Pro Tools came from her desire for a free stage where everyone could be themselves. She hired us to play. We play from the heart all the time. John’s show is integrated—some tracks still run with click tracks, some songs are just the band. With John, on some songs album sounds are included in the live mix, often the tracks with heavy samples. It’s often down to time limits. You want to stick to a specific set length, and that’s hard to gauge without a click track.

**MD:** The drum tracks on most R&B records today are loops and samples. Why is that?

**Rashid:** Jill Scott’s new album has a lot of live drums, played by Chris Dave, Lil John Roberts, and others. You have drummers like Chris who thrive on session work. Most of the major R&B records with live drumming, it’s Chris. He had a lot to do with Maxwell and Adele’s records and the early Mint Condition albums. Producers call the drummers they know best. That’s how I got on the Ledisi record *The Truth*. A friend called me to play on some tracks, which they then submitted to Ledisi. But hip-hop drumming is a lot of sampling. Kendrick Lamar mixed it up on *To Pimp a Butterfly*; he had Robert “Sput” Searight on drums on some tracks.

**MD:** What does it take for a drummer such as you to break into recording more albums?

**Rashid:** The live world and the studio world are very separate. The live event is a translation of the studio event. The producers have the guys they call, just like the musical directors do. I spend ten months of the year on tour, which leaves me little time to create relationships with record producers. I’m not that frustrated about it...yet. I always remind people that they can trust me in the studio as well as live. I always speak to the producers at shows. I did a session where the song began as a John Legend track and ended up

with Jennifer Hudson. But that particular song didn't make the cut for either of their records! When it's time for you to collect, you hope they remember your name.

**MD:** Has all of this made you more business savvy?

**Rashid:** For sure. These transactions that come from working within R&B...you learn so much. It never stops. When Jill was recording, she'd let us hear the tracks and I'd wonder, *Who is this drummer? Is it a sample? Or did someone play, then they sampled that?* So I get exposed to both sides of the business, live and studio. You have to know both in order to survive.

**MD:** How is your groove different when you're playing with Jill Scott as opposed to John Legend?

**Rashid:** They want what we call "the live translation"—for example, when we play Jill Scott's "Hate on Me." The recorded version of the song is mid-tempo, energetic, but very radio friendly. On stage, Jill wants to feel more aggression. She wants the drums to heighten the experience of the lyrics. It's the same with John when we do "Green Light," which was one of his biggest hits and was recorded with sequenced drums. John wants the energy, the feel that people need to dance, but he wants the drums to accent more places in the arrangement and get busier in certain spots, because that brings extra excitement to the music. John lets me play, and even he starts dancing.

**MD:** Does one artist want you to sit more behind or ahead of the beat than the other?

**Rashid:** Jill definitely likes me to sit in it a little more than John does. She wants me to make it feel really good. If that means lay back, I do that, or if she wants more aggression, I give her that—whatever it takes to make her feel good about the groove. John's thing is to play the tempos on the record. And he likes me to push the beat a little bit more, a smidgen ahead of the beat. That keeps his excitement going. But they both give me a lot of freedom to do what I do.

**MD:** In one online video, "Rashid Williams in the Toca Studio," you're playing very clean, over-the-barline note groups, with great feel and fluidity. What did you practice to achieve that level of clarity?

**Rashid:** My practice regimen as a kid was to play for hours and hours, as long as my family could stand it. I've never had formal training, so part of it was being hard on myself and being a perfectionist. I focused on being clean. I don't like anything sloppy, from my closets to my drumming! I want everything to be felt and heard, from the ghost notes to the snare drum crack. I want it to be spic 'n' span.

I practiced a lot of repetition. I videotaped myself practicing as well as playing at Brown Memorial Church in Jersey City, New Jersey, and in my dad's church, Share the Love Ministries. I grew up in a church environment, and both of my parents played drums in church. My dad would push me off the drums in church so he could play! But I developed a habit of listening to the band more than to myself. I like music, not just drums.

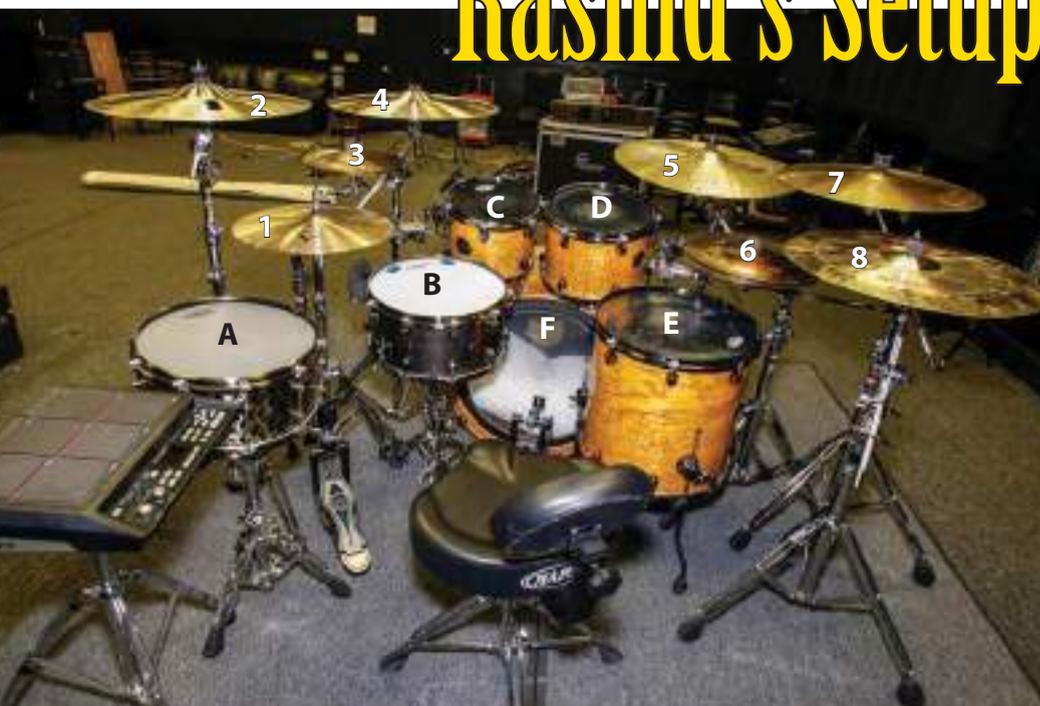
**MD:** What did playing drums in church give you?

**Rashid:** Ears. Church developed my ear more than I could ever have imagined. A lot of drummers who play by ear now grew up playing in church, where many of the band directors don't necessarily have formal music training. The leader, who usually plays an instrument, might direct you with a body motion to give you a signal. Now, certain chord changes will direct me in regards to a turnaround in the music. I know what that sounds and feels like because of playing in church. The old hymns and gospel songs are standard, and they lead you; once you learn to hear that, playing R&B music is a breeze. It all comes from the same source.

**MD:** Did you study from any instructional manuals?

**Rashid:** I didn't know about that until I was much older. I remember sitting with some guys from Mapex in Frankfurt, Germany, when Dom Famularo—who I love; he makes you want to do great things—started talking about calluses. "If you have calluses," he said, "you're doing something wrong. Maybe you're gripping the sticks wrong." Those acted as lessons for me. My technique changed after that. I started warming up more with the rudiments. And I paid attention to my grip. I was using a smaller stick then. Now I hold the stick more loosely and I play a heavier and longer stick. The Vic Firth

## Rashid's Setup



### Drums: Mapex Saturn V

- A. 6.5x14 Black Panther Sledgehammer snare
- B. 7x14 Black Panther Phat Bob snare
- C. 8x10 tom
- D. 9x12 tom
- E. 16x16 floor tom
- F. 20x22 bass drum

### Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1. 15" A New Beat hi-hats
- 2. 18" K EFX crash
- 3. 10" A Custom EFX splash/10" Oriental China Trash stack
- 4. 19" K Dark Thin crash
- 5. 22" Medium K Dark ride
- 6. 14" A Custom EFX crash/14" Oriental China Trash stack
- 7. 19" Kerope crash
- 8. 20" Oriental Crash of Doom

**Electronics:** Roland BT-1 Bar Trigger Pad (mounted on Phat Bob snare) and SPD-SX sampling pad

**Sticks:** Vic Firth American Classic eStick

**Heads:** Evans G14 batter and 300 resonant on Phat Bob snare, Hybrid batter and 300 resonant on Sledgehammer snare, Black Chrome tom batters and Black resonants, and EMAD bass drum batter



## Influences

**Kim Burrell** Everlasting Life (Doobie Powell), Try Me Again (Chris Dave, Teddy Campbell, Jeremy Gaddie, Jimmy Neuble) /// **Phil Collins** Face Value (Phil Collins) /// **Sting** Ten Summoner's Tales (Vinnie Colaiuta) /// **George Duke** Face the Music (Lil John Roberts) /// **Jill Scott** Experience: Jill Scott 826+ (Erik Tribbett, Luke Parkhouse) /// **Chris Dave** And the Drumhedz (Chris Dave) /// **Mint Condition** Definition of a Band (Stokley Williams, Chris Dave) /// **Sly and the Family Stone** Greatest Hits (Greg Errico, Andy Newmark) /// **Muse** The Resistance (Dominic Howard) /// **The Roots** all (Questlove) /// **John Mayer** (any with Steve Jordan) /// **Fela Kuti** (any with Tony Allen)

## Recordings

**South Jersey Mass Choir** Christmas With South Jersey Mass Choir /// **Jeff Bradshaw** Home: One Special Night at the Kimmel Center /// **Ledisi** The Truth

[American Classic] eStick I use is meant for electronic drums. It's like a thicker, longer HD4. That stick, along with Dom's remarks, created a big change. I had to reevaluate my drumming and make sure I don't get carpal tunnel from playing with the wrong technique.

**MD:** So you learned all the rudiments.

**Rashid:** Yes, the Vic Firth rudiments poster was very helpful. I was a grown adult looking at that chart. I also learned the difference between French and German grip. And I began warming up, and I learned traditional grip. These were all things I practiced. Sometimes I use traditional grip, depending on the groove. Sometimes I'll hold the stick near the butt end so I can accentuate ghost notes and make the most of the weight. The weight of the stick helps the backbeat too.

**MD:** How did you become adept at playing odd-note stickings, as you do in the Toca video? Does that style begin for you with Dennis Chambers?

**Rashid:** Dennis Chambers, Tony Williams, Vinnie Colaiuta. The guys I looked up to looked up to them, such as Erik Tribbett, Lil John Roberts, and Brian Frasier-Moore. John Roberts' solo on Janet Jackson's *Velvet Rope Tour* video—I watched that so many times, until I understood what he was doing.

As a kid I would practice doubles and triples on my bass drum for three or four hours. I play a single-pedal setup. I played everything equally between hands and feet. I would trade off hands: double on my left hand, double on my foot; double on my right hand, double on my foot. Then I would do the same thing with triples. Then quadruplets between limbs. I pushed my body to the limit. That's how you get better.

**MD:** Did you practice slowly? And to a metronome?

**Rashid:** Yes, though I didn't own a metronome until I was in my twenties. But I practiced as long as my parents would let me or until

I got it. If I felt my foot was deficient, I would focus on that. I would start slow, work up to a high speed, and hold it there for a while or until I achieved my goal.

**MD:** In your Vic Firth Performance Spotlight video you play double-time 16th-note triplets over a funk groove, which Dennis Chambers popularized. How did you become proficient at executing that level of complexity over a groove?

**Rashid:** I listened to a lot of fusion growing up. I saw Dennis Chambers with Santana; he has so much finesse and control. I took note of that, and when I practiced I tried to replicate those ideas. Dennis made it look easy, but he accomplished so much. That made me realize I had to figure out how to play with more finesse. I had to learn how to be effective even when playing softly. So I practiced, practiced, practiced. The Vic Firth video is pretty much me practicing in front of the camera. I'll push myself; I'll see how long I can play a bass drum figure, or how long I can play polyrhythms between two hands. Constantly push yourself until you hurt or until you get it.

**MD:** What's your ideal practice routine when you're off the road?

**Rashid:** When I'm off the road, often I won't touch my drums. I need a break. But I have sticks in every room. I'm playing rudiments on everything. The drums are always deep in my spirit; they're always deep in my soul.

**MD:** You've had such a great career. Do you have any unmet goals?

**Rashid:** I've been working on my solo record, *Another Side of Me*, for a long time. The goal is not to sell a bunch of records but for people to hear what goes on with me outside playing the drums. There's not one drum solo on my record. That's how Phil Collins stands out to me. On "In the Air Tonight," the drums are so heavy, but you almost forget that he's a drummer. You just enjoy the vibe. But as a drummer I want to keep outdoing myself—and I want an alternative-rock gig!





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**Spock's Beard's**  
**Jimmy**  
**Keegan**  
**Fueling the Flame**



**W**hen frontman and main songwriter Neal Morse left Spock's Beard in 2002, drummer Nick D'Virgilio assumed the lead role, pulling triple duty as singer, drummer, and guitarist for studio efforts and stage performances. Not wanting to sing from behind the kit during the progressive rock band's live gigs, D'Virgilio called upon Jimmy Keegan, someone with a similar drumming style who could also handle backing vocals and Spock's stew of odd meters.

Inviting another multi-instrumentalist into the ranks added considerable depth and dimension to the band's shows, and for years Spock's functioned well with Keegan acting solely as touring drummer. That is until 2011, when D'Virgilio was offered a full-time position with Cirque du Soleil's production of Totem, a theatrical and acrobatic interpretation of human evolution.

**Story by Will Romano**  
**Photos by Alex Solca**

Some observers predicated the death of Spock's Beard without D'Virgilio, recalling the uncertainty following Morse's exit nearly a decade earlier. The group has demonstrated a remarkable resiliency, however, proving the naysayers wrong. The capable Ted Leonard, lead vocalist for the progressive metal band Enchant, got the nod, and Keegan was promoted to full-fledged member, assisting Spock's in its infinite pursuit of fresh musical landscapes.

Tapping Keegan was a savvy choice. The guy had, quite simply, been around. A child actor who received his first drumkit at age ten, Keegan appeared with the brilliant but doomed thespian River Phoenix on *Real Kids*, a spinoff of the early reality TV series *Real People*. As a teenager in the mid-1980s, Keegan formed the band Polo and regularly performed at Disneyland alongside none other than a young Josh Freese. "Josh has said in interviews that he'd played at Disneyland with another drummer," Keegan says. "I've been the 'other drummer' for thirty years. He was on a set of Simmons pads, which he was known for at the time, and I

was on an acoustic kit."

Since his Disney days Keegan has appeared on soundtracks and completed various sessions with artists such as Kenny Loggins, John Waite, and most notably Carlos Santana, on the track "Primavera" from the 1999 megahit album *Supernatural*.

For the last decade-plus with Spock's, Keegan has cut a slew of live albums and a pair of studio releases (beginning with 2013's *Brief Nocturnes and Dreamless Sleep*), and he's in the process of finishing his as-yet-untitled solo record. On the Beard's twelfth studio effort, 2015's *The Oblivion Particle*, Keegan recalls shades of both Morse and D'Virgilio, as he steps up to the mic to sing lead on the psychedelic-pop-ish and wormhole-wonderful "Bennett Built a Time Machine," offering more startling proof of D'Virgilio's discerning eye for talent.

"I've always loved the Beatles and bands that have multiple singers," Keegan says. "When Ted joined I was trying to make a point that he's not the only singer. I'm not interested in stepping on anyone's toes, but when the right song comes along, I

would not mind taking a stab at it. I asked if I could do a pass at it, and it turned out that everyone liked it."

It appears that the forty-six-year-old grandfather is as virile as ever. Yet, for all of Keegan's exuberance, one gets the sense that the drummer's default position is that of happy warrior, entertaining the folks regardless of what's happening behind the scenes. There are moments, however, when the talkative veteran lets his guard down to reveal details of the struggles musicians encounter while operating from deep inside the trenches. *This* Keegan keeps it real, making brutally honest commentary mixed with self-deprecating humor.

"I would play drums in my garage for myself—and that's why I play drums," Jimmy says. "But why am I in the music business? I have to pay my bills. At the same time I want to do what I want to do. I've chosen this type of music, the good and the bad of it, which is why I still do cover bands and weddings. I need to eat, you know? It's really that simple."





## Jimmy's Setup

**Drums:** Yamaha Absolute Hybrid Maple in classic walnut finish

6x14 snare /// 7x8, 7x10, and 8x12 rack toms /// 11x14 and 13x16 floor toms /// 16x22 bass drum

"I played a 20" kick drum for almost twenty years," Keegan says. "So the idea of jumping up to a larger drum was kind of...let's not get *too* big. I can't play a 24" unless I do only one rack tom, because it just gets the toms too high for me. And I like the way the shallow toms sound, but the primary reason I use them is that I have short arms, and if the toms are too deep they become difficult for me to play—and you can't see me!" [laughs]

**Cymbals:** Paiste

14" 602 Modern Essentials hi-hats /// 14" PSTX Swiss Flanger Stack /// 20" Giant Beat ride /// 10" Signature splash /// 8" 2002 splash /// 16" Signature Precision crash /// 20" 602 Modern Essentials ride /// 18" Signature Dark Energy crash /// 18" 602 Modern Essentials China

"The Signature Precision crashes are the new heroes of Paiste," Keegan says. "They're competitively priced and sound great—more of a classic crash cymbal, with a bright shimmer. I used a Traditionals Medium ride for years, but Paiste stopped making them. I still have mine, but the 602 Modern Essentials has a little bit more shimmer, making it more versatile for Spock's. For other gigs I'll bring out the Traditionals."

**Heads:** Aquarian. Texture Coated snare batter with dot underneath and Classic Clear snare-side /// Response 2 tom batters and Classic Clear bottoms /// Force 1 bass drum batter with Super-Thin kick pad and logo front head

**Hardware:** Yamaha 9500 series. Double pedal (switches between chain and direct drive) /// 950 snare stand /// 1200 two-leg hi-hat stand /// boom stands all around with a few combo stands /// Tama Ergo Rider throne

**Sticks:** Vater Josh Freese H-220 model and Poly brush

**Microphones:** Audio-Technica ATM650 on snare /// ATM25 on bass drum /// AT41 on hi-hats /// ATM450 overheads /// ATM350 on rack toms /// ATM250s on floor toms /// custom Electro-Voice vocal microphone N/D468JK (N/D468 casing with N/D767 capsule, engineered with tighter pattern; can be special ordered)

**Electronics:** Yamaha DTX-MULTI 12

"Spock's doesn't use tracks," Keegan explains, "but there are percussion sounds and a handful of unique sounds that I've sampled straight off the record. There's a percussion loop in the song 'Submerged' [from *Brief Nocturnes and Dreamless Sleep*], for instance, which has doumbek, analog kick drum, a few shaker things, reverse guitar sounds.... Whatever we can't physically play in that section I trigger on the fly. We're not against having extra tracks, but it has to be pretty important and impossible to play for us to do it."

Setup interview by John Martinez



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### Jimmy Keegan

**MD:** Years ago Nick D'Virgilio told me why he chose you to be Spock's Beard's touring drummer: "I needed to find somebody who played in a similar style to me and who also sang. The only person I knew who I trusted to do that was my friend Jimmy." Can you comment on that?

**Jimmy:** Nick and I knew each other, but we weren't close buddies. I had read about him in *Modern Drummer*. I hadn't actually sought out any of Spock's music, but people said it was cool. Finally I found out that Nick was going to be singing for the band, and I'm pretty sure I read that announcement in *Modern Drummer*. I called him and made a joke: "Are you going to be a big sissy and go out front with a guitar and sing? Or are you going to front the band from behind the kit and be a real man?" [laughs] A month later he called me and said, "Hey, man. Wanna be in Spock's Beard?" I said, "Yes, I want to be in Spock's Beard—but you're still a big sissy!"

I was, and still am, a single dad. My daughter was five or six then. She was finally at the age that I felt comfortable taking off for extended periods of time. I was good to go. Then I started listening to Spock's Beard's music and went, *Oh, crap*. [laughs] Playing a groove in an odd meter is one thing, but Neal [Morse] liked to compose in such a way that you'd have four measures of six followed by one measure of five and then another four measures of six. When that section in five was reprised later in the song, it would appear in a different place, not preceded or followed by four measures of six, if you see what I mean.

**MD:** Neal's exit from Spock's was shocking to some. Can you describe the atmosphere in the band when Nick left for Cirque du Soleil?

**Jimmy:** Well, Nick and I share similar families; we have kids, and we both know the struggles of being a working musician. We communicated a lot in terms of how you handle different circumstances—and not just the dynamics of the business, but also the dynamics of the family. Nick called me and said, "What would you do in this condition, if you had the option...?" My advice to him was, "If you can get a job that you enjoy doing, that pays well, gives your kids a fantastic education, and you get insurance and all the other things that we ignore...if you don't want it, let me know. I'll be there so fast." We had a laugh about that.

**MD:** What happened next?

**Jimmy:** The band was finishing up the *X* album at the time. Nick, in theory, would stay involved. The band would schedule around his breaks, but that got impossible, really fast. We had an offer for



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## Jimmy Keegan

a couple of festivals. Spock's rarely gets a chance to do festivals, and those are the best things for us. We decided we should do them [without D'Virgilio]. Ted [Leonard, vocalist] was an old friend of the band, and Dave [Meros, bassist] and Ted have a cover band [Rolling Heads], so they work together all the time. It's a natural progression. We didn't want Nick to leave, but what an amazing opportunity [for him]. I would have done the exact same thing.

**MD:** There's a YouTube video of you covering the Police's "Synchronicity II." You're singing and playing drums at the same time. How

did you develop this skill?

**Jimmy:** I started singing first, which is funny, because I never really considered myself a singer until years later. As I've gotten older, singing and drumming became my way of making sure I always got hired. The only thing difficult about singing and drumming is breathing. Sometimes the breathing you need to do to sing doesn't match the breathing you need to do to play the drums.

**MD:** How do you overcome that?

**Jimmy:** Knowing when to breathe and always keeping proper support. But therein lies the rub: Ask a singer what

proper support is and then ask a singing drummer what proper support is, and they're not necessarily the same thing. I'm very particular about the drum throne I use, to the point where I've asked tech guys to go back to the shop and get me a different seat, because the seat is too hard.

**MD:** How did you approach new Spock's Beard material without having Nick around to provide a blueprint?

**Jimmy:** Well, knowing the guys already, there was an advantage that they didn't have to learn my personality and I didn't have to learn theirs. Sure enough, we got into the studio and Al [Morse, guitarist, Neal's brother] was really big on, "Play more. This is prog." I understand that, but sometimes the song begs for a groove. It wasn't until Al started tracking his parts that he called and said, "Dude... there's all this space and I can do things that I wouldn't normally be able to do."

**MD:** You won them over.

**Jimmy:** That comes from being a session musician for thirty years. You play to the vocals or the solo and, if at all possible, stay out of the way and give the song a groove. It's the Steve Gadd approach. When it's time for a fill, then you add the flourishes. Having said all of this, I'm busier on *Oblivion* than I was on *Brief Nocturnes*. Finally, Al is happy.

**MD:** Groove and prog are not necessarily mutually exclusive terms. You prove that with a song like "Get Out While You Can."

**Jimmy:** If the song isn't groovin', either I will change it or I'm going to ask you to change it. If you can't, maybe I'm not the drummer for you. Then again, just because the song is in seven, it doesn't mean it can't dance. Gavin Harrison [Porcupine Tree, King Crimson] talks about similar things. He's a lot busier than I am, which is strange because I think I'm a really busy player. Gavin plays a lot, but it still grooves like crazy.

**MD:** Any odd times that don't dance?

**Jimmy:** I don't like playing in 6/4. Anything 6/4 or 7/4, it's going to sound like something got clipped off the end.

**MD:** The quarter-note time in an odd tempo can make the rhythm feel stilted.

**Jimmy:** Yeah. Do you know Karim Ziad? He does this fusion Algerian/Mediterranean music played with traditional and contemporary instruments. A lot of music from that region is in five or eleven, and he adapts traditional rhythms that you'd never know are in an odd meter. I played some of that for the guys before we did the *Brief Nocturnes* record, to offer a different perspective on playing in odd meters.

**MD:** Spock's seems to have a history of fostering multi-instrumentalists. Neal Morse

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## Jimmy Keegan continued



An advertisement for Ahead Armor Cases. The background is a dark, textured red. At the top, the text "THE NEXT LEVEL IN PROTECTION" is written in large, white, distressed, block letters. Below this, the name "Jost Nickel" is written in a white, cursive script, with "JOST NICKEL" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font underneath. In the center, a man (Jost Nickel) is shown from the waist up, wearing a dark grey jacket over a blue and white plaid shirt. He is holding a large, black, circular drum head cover with the Ahead logo on it. At the bottom of the advertisement, there is a large Ahead logo with the text "DISTRIBUTED BY BIG BANG DISTRIBUTION" and "878.727.1127 AHEADARMORCASES.COM" to the left. The Ahead logo itself has "AHEAD" in white and "ARMOR CASES" in red below it.

is a singer, keyboard player, and guitarist, and he wrote most of the material for the band. It only seems natural that you came along, a singing drummer.

**Jimmy:** I also noodle on piano. Ted can play drums too, by the way.

**MD:** On the limited-edition deluxe version of *The X Tour Live* CD/DVD, you perform a funky drum duet with Nick. At one point you stomp your feet, play the drum riser, a monitor, and the actual stage with your sticks.

**Jimmy:** Yeah. [Speaks in a Groucho Marx-like voice] "When I play the theater, I really play the theater." When we were putting that drum duel together, I kept playing in my head the episode of *The Muppet Show* with Buddy Rich. Buddy plays the walls and a candelabra and eventually on the head of one of the Muppets. He looks at the camera and says, "When I play the theater, I play the theater!" That's the worst Vaudevillian joke ever, but *The Muppet Show* was patterned upon a Vaudeville show, and Buddy was a child star of Vaudeville.

**MD:** Did you rehearse the drum duel?

**Jimmy:** No. Nick said, "I saw you do this drum solo once. You did this sort of half-time, Jeff Porcaro-pattern thing." It sprung out of that. I don't remember whose idea it was to get up and off the drumkit, but we tried executing a stick-tossing routine, throwing sticks to each other from behind our kits. In the end, we'd have sticks all over the floor. [laughs] I miss that little moment of camaraderie. I love Ted, but I don't have my cohort anymore.

**MD:** Would you ever do a double drum thing with Ted?

**Jimmy:** If it happens it'd be out of humor. I wouldn't put it past Ted to be funny, but I don't think it would ever be something that we would do.

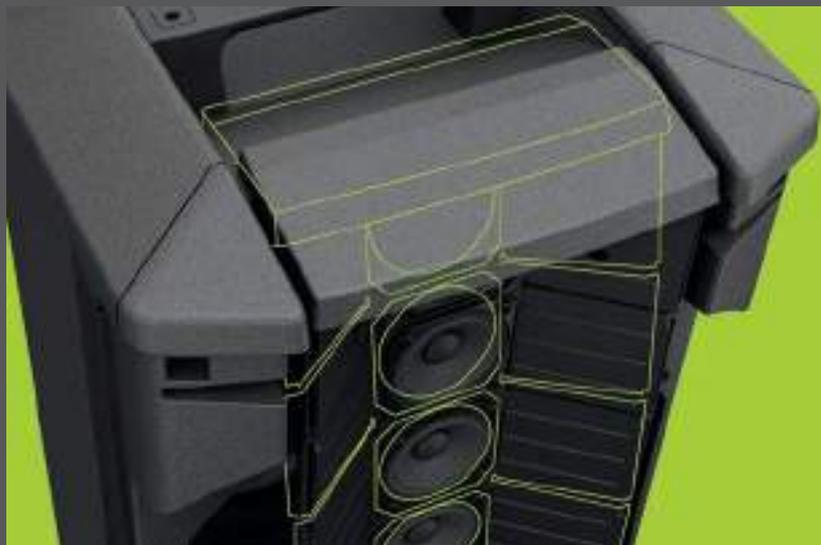
**MD:** You're working on a solo record. How far along are you with it?

**Jimmy:** I have about half the songs ready, and I've laid the groundwork for a handful of others. I had the idea of doing a solo thing for a long time, but because I have a family I have to do what I need to. But things have changed. The time is now and I might as well do it, because I have friends, amazingly talented friends, who can help. I've worked with a number of names, some you've heard, some you haven't. Lately it's been, "Hey, remember the sessions we did? You really didn't have the budget you thought you'd have and you ended up buying me lunch? Yeah, well, come on over. I'm going to buy you lunch."



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Remembering

# Vic Firth

by Rick Mattingly

His neighbors in Maine probably got used to it, but people passing through were likely bewildered by the sight of a man jogging down the road with snakes in his hands. "Those snakes are harmless," Vic Firth told me when I saw a couple of them on the stone path that led to the summer cottage on his property. "But my daughters don't like them, so in the morning when I go jogging, I gather a couple up in each hand and I throw them in the creek about a mile from here." He paused and then added with a chuckle, "I get some funny looks from people driving by."

However much those passersby may have assumed that he was some local eccentric, the music community had the highest regard for Firth, who spent several decades as timpanist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, taught at the New England Conservatory of Music, ran a hugely successful drumstick manufacturing company, wrote method books and percussion ensemble pieces, and collected art.

Firth died on July 26, 2015, at age eighty-five. Within hours of the news, his company's website, [vicfirth.com](http://vicfirth.com), was flooded with tributes from throughout the music world.

"Vic was a very charismatic figure," Peter Erskine says. "Everybody wanted to talk with Vic and be with him. He was as gracious to the beginner as to the seasoned pro, the famous rock drummer, the jazz guy, that old friend of his, the weekend warrior, or the guy who owned the music store."

Everett Joseph "Vic" Firth was born on June 2, 1930, in Winchester, Massachusetts, and raised in Maine. His parents were musicians, and Vic began learning trumpet at age four. He also studied trombone, clarinet, piano, percussion, and arranging. By the time he entered high school, he had decided to focus on percussion, and he studied first with Robert Ramsdell and then with Boston Symphony Orchestra percussionist Larry White.



"I actually started off playing jazz," Vic told *MD* in 1982. "I was about thirteen or fourteen when I first joined a group, and of course they were all older men. When I was about fifteen I formed my own eighteen- to twenty-piece big band with a singer, and I also booked a small band with six or eight players. We did a lot of work."

After graduating from high school, Firth attended the New England Conservatory of Music, where he studied with Charlie Smith and continued to study with White. "My mallets and percussion were in pretty good shape, but I had never seriously taken a timpani lesson at that point," Vic recalled.

The summer after his freshman year, Firth was set to go on the road with a jazz group, but a music club in Maine offered him a full scholarship to attend Tanglewood, the summer home of the Boston Symphony. "I got all caught up in the classical music scene," Vic said. "I suddenly saw all this great, beautiful music. I don't think I realized that I would get so wrapped up in it all, but I subsequently did."

When Vic returned to the New England Conservatory in the fall, he began to study with Boston Symphony timpanist Roman Szulc. He also studied with George Lawrence Stone (author of *Stick Control*) and made regular trips to the Juilliard School in New York to train under New York Philharmonic timpanist Saul Goodman.

In 1952, when he was twenty-one and a senior at the New England Conservatory, Firth was invited to audition for the Boston Symphony Orchestra as a percussionist. He beat out nine other candidates, becoming the youngest member of the BSO and the Boston Pops. In 1956, Firth was named the orchestra's principal timpanist, a position he held until he retired in 2002. Longtime Boston Symphony conductor Seiji Ozawa called Vic "the single greatest percussionist anywhere in the world."

Bassist Buell Neidlinger, whose career has included work with Cecil Taylor, Tony Bennett, Frank Zappa, and Roy Orbison, along with four years in the Boston Symphony, once told Peter Erskine that Firth was the reason why the Boston Symphony sounded so good. "Buell said it was not only because of Vic's rhythmic drive, precision, and feeling, but primarily because of his pitch," Erskine says. "Buell felt that the whole orchestra was able to build its sound on top of Vic's pitch because it was so good and so consistent."

During his years with the BSO, Firth played many pieces numerous times. Given the fact that classical music is completely notated, did he ever get bored with the repertoire? "No," he said in 1982, at which point he had been in the orchestra for over thirty years. "It's as exciting now as it was the first day I went in. It's still overwhelming to play great music with great musicians. We do have a printed part, and it very specifically instructs you what to play. However, once you have become more experienced, you can see all kinds of subtleties in how you color what's there and how you can shade it. I take all kinds of liberties on what's written and what I play. I don't change rhythms; it's a more sophisticated and, I might add, restricted area. There is where you separate the pros—those who can find the subtleties."

Firth's musicianship was always his first priority. Erskine remembers Firth telling him, "No one should ever mistake that because I'm so active in the drumstick business that I am anything less than 100 percent serious about my playing."

After joining the Boston Symphony, Firth finished his bachelor's degree at the New England Conservatory. Before graduating, he began teaching in the conservatory's preparatory department, and afterward he became head of the percussion department. He also taught at the Berkshire Music Center in Massachusetts.

Nancy Zeltsman, who teaches at the Berklee College of Music and is head of the percussion department at Boston College, studied with Firth at the New England Conservatory. "I left every lesson with Vic with a level of inspiration and motivation that was like a rocket," she



**"He's the single greatest percussionist in the world"  
—BSO conductor Seiji Ozawa**

says. "We all started out calling him Mr. Firth, but gradually he told us that Vic was fine. I recall that one thing he drilled and drilled—mostly through hours of *Stick Control* assignments—was learning to play truly accurate subdivisions."

Zeltsman benefited greatly from Firth's flexibility and open-mindedness when, in her senior year, she decided to specialize in marimba. "Vic allowed me to bring any repertoire I wanted into my lessons," she recalls. "I sensed he felt a little out of his comfort zone



**Peter Erskine recalls Firth saying, "No one should ever mistake that because I'm so active in the drumstick business that I am anything less than 100 percent serious about my playing."**

## Remembering Vic Firth

offering entirely off-the-cuff remarks about repertoire he hadn't heard before. Nevertheless, I remember all that year's lessons were phenomenal and profound as he dove into talking about phrasing, colors, and musical imagination."

In the early 1960s, Firth became frustrated with the commercially available timpani mallets. He made a prototype of a mallet in his garage and then took it to a professional wood turner. Vic made the felt head himself, wrapping the material over the top of the mallet's core so that there was no seam down the side of the head. He created several different models to produce the variety of tonal colors he desired. He had no plans to start a business; he was only making sticks for his own use.

"The next thing I knew," Firth recalled in 1982, "my students started saying, 'I'd like to have a pair of those sticks.' So the next time I called the wood turner who was making them, I told him to send down ten pair instead of the usual two pair. Then I started getting letters from people wanting them, so I started ordering fifty pair. Then Maurie Lishon from Frank's Drum Shop called, and I started ordering a hundred pair. We've gone from that to where now we keep an inventory of about a hundred thousand pair of sticks at all times." Today, the company sells more than twelve million pairs of sticks and mallets a year.

Firth set up Vic Firth Inc. in 1963. He began with five models of timpani sticks and five models of "orchestral" snare sticks, made of maple. He gradually branched out into drumset sticks, marching percussion sticks, keyboard percussion mallets, world percussion products, practice pads, stick bags, and other implements and accessories.

Firth was the first manufacturer to guarantee drumsticks to be free of warp. "Those sticks get rolled from the time they come out of the burlap bag as a dowel," he said. "We reject thousands of sticks every year. We pull out all the warped ones, and they end up in my fireplace."

Vic also wanted each pair of sticks to be matched as perfectly as possible, and assumed that the way to do that was by weight. "We bought a very expensive digital-readout scale," he explained. "We got exact weights on every stick, calibrated to hundreds of thousandths of ounces, and they weren't a pair! The pitch was so far apart that when you'd hit a drum, you'd hear two different sounds. So we went to pitch-pairing, and that's about 99 percent true."

Other companies had put prominent drummers' names on sticks



before Firth, but only to reflect which standard model a particular player preferred. Vic was the first to invite leading drummers to participate in the design of their own signature models. His endorsers came from every field of music, including jazz, rock, symphonic, and world percussion. And far from being the "classical snob" one might expect by virtue of his symphonic playing, Firth had no problem relating to people from throughout the musical spectrum—to the point that he was once reprimanded by the Boston Symphony's personnel manager when word got out that he'd sat in with the Grateful Dead at a concert.

"Soon after I became a Vic Firth endorser," Rod Morgenstein recalls, "Vic came to see me play with the Dixie Dregs. I thought that was very sweet of him. He had time in his busy life to come see me play? And over the years he came out on other occasions. I always felt special knowing he was out there watching me."

Firth didn't just associate with drummers for "professional" reasons, either. He genuinely enjoyed their company. "Once, after I gave a clinic in Boston," Morgenstein says, "Vic invited me and two guys who worked for Premier to come back with him to his home in Maine. The next morning Vic took us out in his boat for a day of fishing. I could see the utter joy he felt being out on the open ocean. And then shortly after my wife died, Vic picked me up after I had spent the day teaching at Berklee and took me out to dinner. He always struck me as a guy who really cared about you."

Firth sold the company to Zildjian in 2010, but he continued to be involved until just before his death, and his longtime team continues to run the day-to-day operations. "From what I can tell," longtime Firth endorser Erskine says, "the sale to Zildjian was a smart move, and the company is in very good shape."

Firth was active in the Percussive Arts Society, sitting on the board of directors for several years and also serving on the society's executive committee as treasurer. In 1997 he was elected to the PAS Hall of Fame.

"Just as a timpanist, Vic joined that pantheon of the immortals," Erskine says. "Being the timpanist for the world's most demanding music directors and walking the sacred, hallowed ground that this music is being played on and that the performances are built upon—that's heavy-duty stuff, and that's in addition to running one of the most successful music-industry companies in the world. And yet he remained completely unruffled. The only time I saw him become indignant was when he sensed that someone presumed that he would accept less than the 100 percent best quality."



**At twenty-one years of age, Vic beat out nine other candidates, becoming the youngest member of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Boston Pops.**



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If you're like most drummers, you prefer to hear, play, and inspect a drum before buying it. But for the best comparison shopping and to get gear that's in choice condition, the Internet is usually the place to go. Yes, there's a degree of risk in purchasing pre-owned goods online, but there are ways to reduce that risk. As founder, owner, and restoration tech for Vintage Drum Center, I've purchased thousands of drums. Almost all were bought "absent style," by phone, email, or the Internet, and then shipped to us from hundreds of miles away. To avoid potential problems in buying this way, I've always followed certain guidelines, which I'll share with you here.

### 1. Do the Research and Get Knowledgeable

The time to learn about vintage drums is long before you buy them. Here are some ways to plan ahead to save time and money, and to avoid mistakes.

**Read books about vintage drums and browse reputable e-commerce websites.** Get familiar with gear and pricing.

**Study manufacturer catalogs.** They're the best source for information. I highly recommend [drumarchive.com](http://drumarchive.com). This website offers free online PDF scans of hundreds of vintage drum catalogs from all the major

and some not-so-major manufacturers. You'll learn to identify brands and models, pinpoint production dates, and get familiar with sizes, finishes, and features.

#### Visit vintage drum reference websites.

Here are a few of the most popular.

- [vintagedrumguide.com](http://vintagedrumguide.com): Vintage drum identification, history, restoration tips, links.
- [vintagedrum.com](http://vintagedrum.com): This is my website, featuring an extensive photo gallery, technical and historical articles, and restoration tips.
- [coopersvintagedrums.com](http://coopersvintagedrums.com): Historical information, photos, and catalog images.
- [polarityrecords.com](http://polarityrecords.com): Drummer Samm Bennett's entertaining and historic images of vintage drumkits from the 1920s and '30s.

**Visit vintage drum forums.** Two excellent ones are [vintagedrumforum.com](http://vintagedrumforum.com) and [drumforum.org](http://drumforum.org). Industry professionals, collectors, experts, and novices frequent these. Facebook groups are another source.

Whatever forum you're visiting, keep in mind that no single person knows it all. Always try to distinguish opinions from facts. Be aware of the experience and knowledge level of the person whose post you're reading.

### 2. Use Keyword Search Strategy

When you're on a search engine, type in a

variety of keyword phrases. This can be the difference between finding and not finding the gear you want. Suppose you're looking for a Ludwig white marine pearl snare drum and you do three separate searches using the following keyword phrases: Ludwig white marine pearl vintage snare drum; buy 1960s vintage white marine pearl Ludwig snare; and 1960s vintage WMP Ludwig snare. Not all of those phrases might result in a find. Doing multiple searches using various keyword phrases improves your chance of success.

If irrelevant listings crowd your results pages, Google's Verbatim tool can help. Enter the keyword phrase in the text bar as usual, then click "enter" to get the search results page. You'll then see a Search Tools button on the right side, below the main search bar. Click it and go to the drop-down menu titled All Results, and select Verbatim. You'll find listings for only the specific terms you entered. They won't be 100 percent "clean," but a number of unwanted listings will get weeded out.

### 3. Find Out What It's Worth

There's no single source out there that will instantly dial in vintage drum prices. The way to gauge the market is by regularly

browsing a broad range of website types, including e-commerce sites, blogs, auctions, and marketplace-style sites. As you do this, you'll discover that prices for an item (in the same condition) can vary greatly from one website to another.

So how do you know which price is correct? A solid rule of thumb is that when an item consistently sells in the same price range for at least three to six months, that range is a reliable indicator of worth. Some vintage drums seldom get listed due to their rarity, so you might not find them online. In that case, seek out opinions from as many experts and collectors as you can. Be sure to ask what criteria their opinion is based on and why.

Before we leave vintage drum pricing, let's talk about false price indicators. Over the years I've talked with thousands of buyers. I've found that some use erroneous pricing methods that result in their overpaying or not buying a drum because the price looks too high. (Some sellers also use false price indicators, resulting in overpricing and underpricing their gear.) Here are four things to avoid.

**Using eBay "asking prices."** Some buyers think an asking price on eBay is what the seller will get when an item is sold. But the final selling price could be higher or lower than the original asking price. A far better way to use eBay as a pricing tool is via the Sold Listings filter. This strictly shows items that have actually sold, and at what prices. But don't rely on it as your sole price gauge, since eBay prices can be much lower or higher than prices on other e-commerce venues. Read on and you'll see why.

**Using low and high eBay prices.** Some eBay sellers don't know the value of their vintage gear, and they auction it off with "no reserve," which results in low selling prices. If the most interested buyers aren't browsing eBay within the time window of that auction, the item could sell for far below its worth due to bad timing and little or no bidding competition. An item could also sell for an excessively high amount because two buyers get into a bidding war and one or both of them would rather pay more than lose. The competitive eBay atmosphere tends to drive prices higher than they would otherwise be in a less competitive venue.

**Believing too much in "it's worth whatever someone will pay for it."** This economic concept sounds simple, but its logic falls apart depending on the time, place, and circumstances of the sale. Consider this example: A zealous snare drum collector has to have a drum that's snugly at home in someone else's collection.

To entice its owner to sell it to him, he makes an excessively high offer, an amount no one else would pay; his offer is accepted and the drum is sold. But does the price he paid become the benchmark for everyone else? It does not. That's because exceptions, with their peaks and valleys, do not set standards; what does, as mentioned before, is consistent selling prices over a span of time.

And just as one person can perceive a drum's value as high, another can perceive it as low. Say Collector A tells Collector B that he purchased a 1920s Ludwig snare drum for \$1,500. Collector B says, "You paid too much! I would have paid \$750." Does this mean the drum is worth only half of what Collector A paid for it? Again, the answer is found by tracking the selling price over a period of time.

**Checking price tags but not condition.** The same model in the same finish can sell for very different amounts due to its condition and degree of originality. So when you're monitoring online values, never rely on photos alone, no matter how good they look. Always read the descriptive text. Are there modifications such as recut bearing edges, extra holes, or repainted shell interiors? Anomalies like these are not always depicted in photos and often explain why two drums or drumsets that appear to be in equal condition are priced so differently.

#### **4. Consider Whether You'll Have to Do Restoration Work**

If you're thinking about buying vintage gear that's in need of restoration, first ask yourself these three questions:

- What is the cost of the restoration?
- Am I willing and able to pay that cost?
- If I decide to sell the item, could I recoup the cost?

#### **5. Try to Buy From a Dealer Rather Than a Private Party**

If you're new to vintage drums, it's good to start your buying from a reputable dealer. A private seller may have honest intentions to give you an accurate assessment of the gear, but could fall short of the mark due to a lack of knowledge and experience. Misinformation that might have been unintentionally or intentionally passed on to the seller by a previous owner could be passed on to you. Also, if you're dealing with someone that has no verifiable reputation, you could be taking a risk.

But whether you're buying from a dealer or a private seller, check the seller's reputation and feedback rating. Make sure

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## Buying Vintage Drums Online

the gear can be returned for a refund if you're not satisfied with it. Always get the seller's email address, street address, phone number, delivery date commitment, and tracking number.

### 6. Consider Modified Gear

If you want to save money, and "vintage sound" is more important than vintage originality, buying modified drums might be your answer. If you take this route, keep in mind that while some alterations don't affect the sound of a drum, others can, such as recut bearing edges that are unsuitable for a shell type, or a poor rewrap job.

### 7. Ask the Seller to Do an Inspection

This is where I've seen even experienced collectors get into trouble. Here's a scenario: You see a vintage snare online, and you know it won't be there long because of the great price and condition. So you ask the seller a few quick questions, the answers sound good, and you buy the drum. After it arrives, you install new heads, try to tune it up, and wince when you hear the bad overtones. And that's not all—the tension

knob slips when you torque up the wires.

Problems like these are invisible in a photograph, and they're not flushed out in a quick inspection. So play it safe when you buy online. Ask the seller to do an in-depth inspection using the free online guide "How to Inspect Vintage Drums" at [vintagedrum.com](http://vintagedrum.com). This is a compilation of inspection processes and techniques I've developed that buyers and sellers use worldwide.

Even if a drum or set looks brand-new, ask the seller to print and use our inspection guide. Why? Any drum, vintage or otherwise, must do more than look good. I've seen my share of vintage drums in unused, new condition but with serious factory-original structural, functional, and acoustical problems. Have the seller use the inspection guide to reveal hidden defects before you buy the item. When it arrives, re-inspect it yourself.

### 8. Communicate

When possible, talk with the seller by phone before you buy. This gives you the chance to learn who you're dealing with. Does the seller sound sincere and knowledgeable?

Do you get direct, straightforward answers to your questions, or are responses evasive and vague? Trust your instincts. Ask for additional photos if necessary.

### 9. Pay Safely

No matter what online venue you use to make your purchase, the most secure way of paying is with a credit card. In case of non-delivery or the seller's refusal to resolve a disagreement, you can dispute the charges with your bank. In a large majority of cases, credit card banks will reverse the charge and refund the account. Using an online service like PayPal is an excellent payment alternative and gives you a layer of protection.

### 10. Watch Out for Scammers on eBay and Craigslist

Fraudsters are always on the prowl for unsuspecting eBay and Craigslist buyers. Check out [newlifeauctions.com](http://newlifeauctions.com) and [fraudguides.com](http://fraudguides.com) for excellent tips on how to protect yourself.

Art by EJ DeCoske.



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# GEARING UP ON STAGE AND UP CLOSE

Interview by Dave Previ  
Photos by Jamie Cabreza

## Jazz Great Jeff "Tain" Watts

### Drums: Sonor Phonic ('80s)

- A. 5x14 snare
- B. 8x12 tom
- C. 8x13 tom
- D. 16x14 floor tom
- E. 16x16 floor tom
- F. 16x22 kick  
(16x18 for combo work)

### Cymbals: Sabian

- 1. 14" Artisan hi-hats
- 2. 20" HHX Legacy Ozone ride
- 3. 22" Zildjian K ride (vintage)
- 4. 20" Rocktagon Prototype
- 5. 16" Tan Man Fan (made by Fedirico Percussion)

**"After living in Brooklyn for thirty years,** I now live in Pennsylvania in an old Lutheran church built in 1875," says modern jazz great Jeff "Tain" Watts. "My latest CD, *Blue*, was recorded here. There are four buildings. The chapel is the recording/rehearsal space. My family lives in the pastor's house, which is connected to another building that's my living room. And the old Sunday school is a guesthouse. It's really nice to be able to play drums or listen to music without disturbing my family or neighbors. Recording-wise, this space isn't too wet like some other churches I've played in. It's also a really peaceful and quiet atmosphere, so you can truly practice."

"The previous owner was using this for his audio/visual production company, so it came wired for sound and video. And there's a stage with lights, so I didn't need to do anything to it. The walls are thick, so there's a lot of isolation from the outside. There's a piano, pipe organ, bell tower, bass, a ton of drums and cymbals, a marimba, vibraphone, and a lot of amps and percussion."

Referring to his trademark Sonor drumset, Tain says, "I've had those drums since '83, when I became a Sonor endorser, and I've used them in many configurations. After going through various kits, I just recently came back to them. They are really tough drums. You could kick them down a flight of stairs and nothing will happen."

"Sonor drums have a note that's pure. Gretsch have twang to them, and that makes me play in a classic-jazz sense, which is great. That sound makes me play a little more like Philly Joe or Tony Williams. But I really enjoy the Sonor tone. It's a really sweet,



pure note, and it doesn't have an influence on my vocabulary. "I tune them until they open up. I can go for a combo of thirds and fourths, but as Billy Higgins told me once, 'The drums belong with one another, so make them sound like a family.' I want them to be as open as they can be so that I have the option to make it less open."

In regard to his current use of a larger 22" bass drum, Watts says, "I've gone back to working with a bigger kick drum sound. In the past, when it came to playing jazz, the tendency was to go with the smaller ringy tone even though I preferred a concert bass drum sound. I went through a phase of using a smaller kick drum, but I'm back to the larger kick."

"The late, great Vic Firth came up with the Vic Grip, which is slightly tacky and keeps the stick from slipping. Sometimes I use it in both hands, and sometimes I'll just use it in one hand. Maybe I'll play a smaller stick without it for the ride cymbal, but I need a little more weight in the left hand, and the Vic Grip gives me that."

"For crashes, I go between the 18" Rocktagon and an 18" Legacy. The Legacy has a nice explosion that gets out of the way, but at the same time you can play it softly on ballads. The Tan Man Fan has almost specific pitches. You can use it as percussion, which I do on ballads. For the hats, I have a lot of Artisans, which give a nice chunky sound. But many times I end up mixing them [with other cymbals], depending on what's appropriate. If it's a traditional setting, I'll use a Sabian bottom with an old K on top, or I'll use two old Ks to get that softer touch with the foot. Or I'll use two bottoms for something that's a little chunkier."

"I tune them until they open up. I can go for a combo of thirds and fourths, but as Billy Higgins told me once, 'The drums belong with one another, so make them sound like a family.' I want them to be as open as they can be so that I have the option to make it less open."

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5

4

E

3

D

C

F

A

B

2

1



# The Tap Nine

## Embellishing Backbeats With a Modified 9-Stroke Roll

by Rich Redmond



The traditional nine-stroke roll consists of four alternating double strokes followed by a single stroke. It can be played open (clearly articulated) or closed (buzzed). This is a popular rudiment in marching and concert percussion idioms, and I've found a practical way to apply it to the drumset.

The world dances, sings, and claps along to music largely because of the drummer's backbeat. By beginning *and* ending the nine-stroke roll with a single stroke, you can embellish your backbeats. I call this variation a "tap nine."

Play the tap nine after backbeats to add length to the groove or glue phrases together. You can also apply it to the hi-hat to create feels that work well in funk, fusion, techno, dance, or rock. Adding the tap nine to accent patterns on the snare with common bass drum patterns creates grooves that straddle the line between traditional marches and New Orleans funk. Crafty drummers can apply these in singer-songwriter or commercial studio situations. I use this figure often to set up a Motown phrase on beat 3 or a classic-rock fill on beat 4.

Practice the exercises below to help incorporate the tap nine into your playing in a musical way.

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

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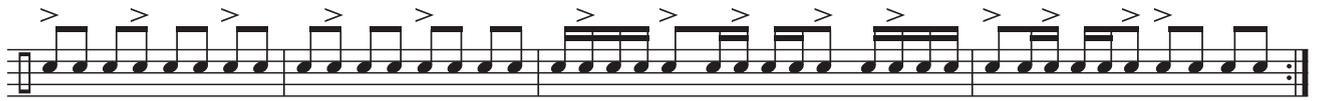
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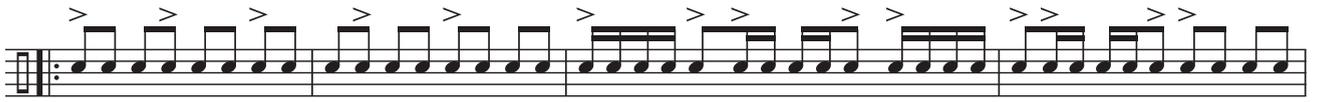








R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R R L R R R L R L R R L R L R R  
 L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L L L R L R L L R L R L L R L R L L L



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



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

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



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# Hidden Rhythms

## Part 2: Odd Groupings

by Mike Johnston

Last month we explored the endless rhythmic and textural ideas hiding inside a measure of 16th notes, including clave and cascara patterns, partido alto phrases, and more.

This time we're looking for hidden groupings within our measure of 16th notes. Most often a bar of 16th notes in 4/4 is felt as four groupings of four notes. However, it doesn't have to be felt that way. The subdivision can remain intact while you accent other groupings. We have sixteen total notes to group however we'd like. For example, you can play two groups of three notes and two groups of five notes in any order, and they will always take up the space of sixteen 16th notes. The same is true for any combination of four groups of three and one group of four. Let's try it out.

Start with a 3-3-3-3-4 grouping. First, accent the first note of each grouping while playing alternating strokes on the snare.

1

(1 2 3) (1 2 3) (1 2 3) (1 2 3) (1 2 3 4)

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

Now move your right hand to the ride cymbal, and keep your left hand on the snare. The last four 16th notes are played with an alternating sticking to accommodate faster tempos.

2

(1 2 3) (1 2 3) (1 2 3) (1 2 3) (1 2 3 4)

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

Now move your right hand to the hi-hat, keep the left hand on the snare, and replace the last note of each grouping with a bass drum stroke to create a linear pattern.

3

(1 2 3) (1 2 3) (1 2 3) (1 2 3) (1 2 3 4)

R L L R L L R L R L

The next three examples utilize a 3-3-5-5 grouping. The same rules apply. Learn the pattern with an alternating sticking, try it with the right hand on the ride and the left hand on the snare, and then try it as a linear idea.

4

(1 2 3) (1 2 3) (1 2 3 4 5) (1 2 3 4 5)

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



5

(1 2 3) (1 2 3) (1 2 3 4 5) (1 2 3 4 5)

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

6

(1 2 3) (1 2 3) (1 2 3 4 5) (1 2 3 4 5)

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

Finally, practice the three variations with a 3-5-3-5 grouping.

7

(1 2 3) (1 2 3 4 5) (1 2 3) (1 2 3 4 5)

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

8

(1 2 3) (1 2 3 4 5) (1 2 3) (1 2 3 4 5)

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

9

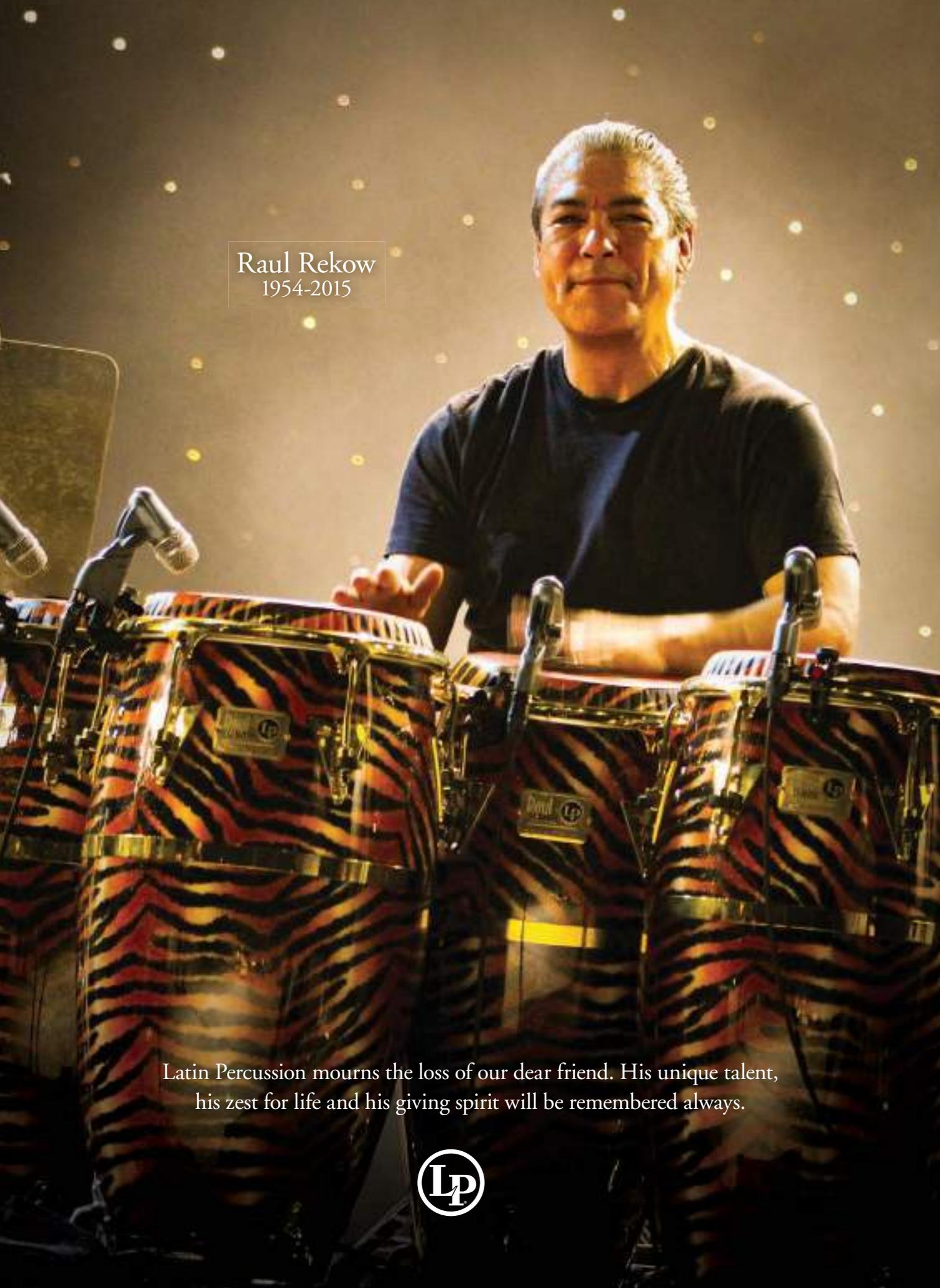
(1 2 3) (1 2 3 4 5) (1 2 3) (1 2 3 4 5)

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

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

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





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# Timetable Warm-Up

## Modulating Swing Patterns

by Steve Fidyk



As drummers, we're often taught the importance of warm-up exercises. These drills are typically designed to help loosen the muscle groups of your wrists, forearms, and fingers. A good warm-up routine develops your reflexes and helps you produce an articulate drum and cymbal sound.

This month's lesson features a challenging exercise for the ride cymbal that helps develop consistency, timing, concentration, and tone. It's important to practice this exercise with a metronome to ensure that the tempo remains consistent

as you transition from one subdivision to another. A good starting tempo is 40 bpm. This exercise is also fun to work on with a bass player.

As you gain confidence with the different subdivisions, try repeating each for longer periods of time. Once you're comfortable with them, add the remaining limbs and improvise comping patterns or play the rhythms of the melodies of standard tunes within each subdivision. Have fun, and stay patient as you work through each rhythm and transition.

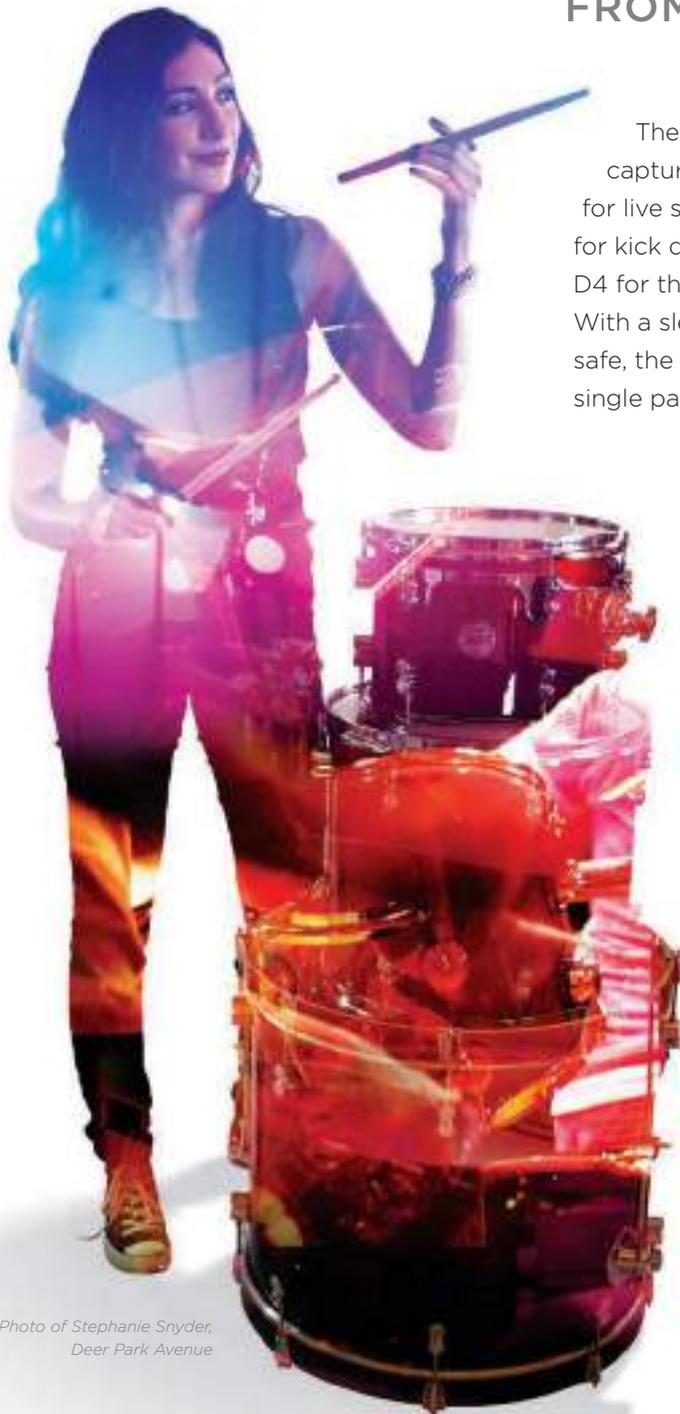
♩ = 40

Steve Fidyk has performed with Terell Stafford, Tim Warfield, Dick Oatts, Doc Severinsen, Wayne Bergeron, Phil Wilson, and Maureen McGovern, and he's a member of the jazz studies faculty at Temple University in Philadelphia. For more info, including how to sign up for lessons via Skype, visit [stevefidyk.com](http://stevefidyk.com).



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# Progressive Drumming Essentials

## Part 8: Advanced Beat Displacement

by Aaron Edgar

To take our beat displacement prowess to a higher level, we'll learn how to shift the pulse by smaller increments. Let's focus on displacing grooves by a 16th note. A great example of this idea can be heard on the track "I'm Tweaked/Attack of the 20lb Pizza," off Vinnie Colaiuta's self-titled solo album.

Before you can start shifting the downbeat at will, you need to first learn how it feels to displace a groove to each 16th-note position against a quarter-note pulse. The most important thing to remember in these first examples is to stay rooted in the pulse. You don't want to misperceive your displacement and end up feeling beat 1 in the wrong place. Counting out loud will force you to feel the pulse correctly. Playing quarter notes with your hi-hat foot or bobbing your head to the beat also helps to feel these rhythms properly.

1

Optional H.H.

2

3

4

After you've mastered each displacement on its own, try playing Examples 2, 3, and 4 into and out of Example 1. Also, practice them in order. Don't forget to release the rhythmic tension you're creating with the displacements by coming back to the original pattern.

The optional quarter-note hi-hat foot notated throughout is great for learning how to feel the displacements properly and can help you when trying these ideas with other musicians. But don't become reliant on the hi-hat foot. For a more effective displacement, you might not want to highlight the pulse.

Example 5 is a warm-up exercise that can be played without a drumset by tapping your hands on your lap and your foot on the ground. Count out loud, and use your metronome. The goal is to feel the offbeat 16th notes with ease. Drill this until you can practically do it in your sleep.

5

The first four examples include all of the 16th notes. If you displace grooves that have 8th notes as well, you end up with some really interesting and challenging rhythms.

When learning to displace a groove with 8th notes on the ride cymbal, first displace only the kick and snare. This makes the displacement easier to internalize. It's important to spend enough time on this half-displaced groove until it feels solid and in the pocket. The deeper you can feel it, the easier it's going to be to displace your ride cymbal by a 16th note. Anchoring your left foot to quarters or 8th notes can help.

6

7

8

Let's try some more displacements of Example 6. In Examples 9 and 11, we'll push the pattern to start on the "e" and "a" of beat 2, respectively.

9

10

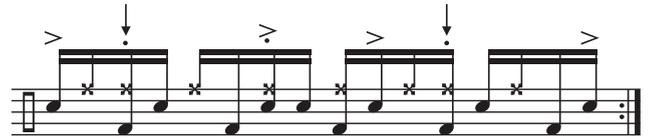
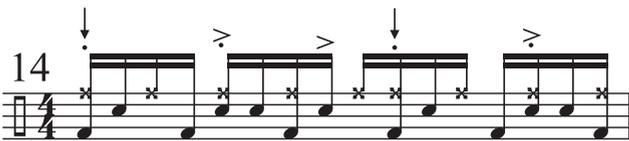
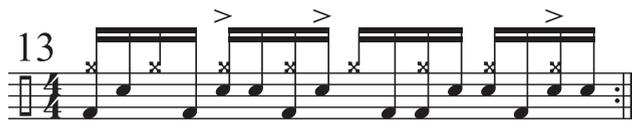
11

12



When you can comfortably play the preceding exercises, try practicing the three displacements again while only looking at Example 6. In time, you'll reach a point where you can play displacements of grooves without having to write them out.

You don't always need or want to start and finish displacements on beat 1, so it's important to practice beginning and ending displacements at different points in time. Let's take a new groove and see what happens if we displace it more than once in a phrase. In Example 14, we're going to restart the beat on every ninth 16th note across two bars of 4/4. The bass drum now falls on every third 16th note across the two-bar phrase.



Another fun way to practice displacements is by playing a 16th-note double bass pattern while displacing your hands. I use this idea with my band Third Ion, at 2:13 in the song "Zero Mass." I keep 16th notes going on double bass and push the groove played with the hands forward each bar by a 16th note.

For extra examples, visit [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com) to download the written notation of every 16th-note displacement of Examples 6 and 13. Try playing each displacement for two bars and then moving straight into the next one. Have fun!

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

**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 [aaron edgardrum.com](http://aaron edgardrum.com).



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# The Business of Gigging

## 6 Rules for Creating the Best Show Possible

by Russ Miller

**This month's topic, so eloquently summarized by Henry Ford,** has been on my mind for a few months. I went to see the Rush R40 tour this past July. I've seen Rush many times over the years, but I knew this one would be special. Neil Peart and the guys announced that this might be the last big tour for the band, so I thought, *I better go and see this.*

I was very impressed with the show. Of course, the playing was amazing, but what struck me the most was how much the trio gave back to the fans. I grew up in an era of amazing bands like Genesis, Yes, Styx, Rush, and Journey putting on incredible productions. But

**"The man who will use his skill and constructive imagination to see how much he can give for a dollar, instead of how little he can get for a dollar, is bound to succeed."**

—Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company

the Rush concert was over and above. They had an incredible video element to the show, epic lighting, great sound, and cool staging. They even changed gear to mimic what they used when the music was first released. It was all jaw dropping.

But Rush didn't *need* to do any of that. They could have just shown up to the gig, and everyone would've been happy. Yet they chose to deliver an amazing experience for their fans. This is one of the key components to their success and it's one of the reasons that they have legions of fans around the world. They are very serious about the business of gigging, so people always leave saying, "I'll be back for the next show."

On the flipside, there have been times when I've gone to see live shows by young pop artists that I recorded with and they fell completely short. I remember going to one show where the audience was nearly silent at the end of the set. And I've been to shows with seasoned artists who didn't put out enough effort to give the audience the experience they wanted.

Reflecting on both the good and bad experiences, I've come up with six basic rules to gigging. Let's go over them.

**Rule #1: It takes a lot of effort to get any gig, so give it all you've got.** Make sure that everyone in the audience walks away as a true fan of your work. Not every person at every gig comes in as a die-hard fan. They may like a few songs from your album, or they came as a guest of a friend. Draw them in, communicate with them, and make them come back! This applies to sideman gigs, as well. There might be musicians in the band you've never played with before, so make sure they leave ready to recommend you to other gigs. This is how your network builds over time.

**Rule #2: Reinvest finances into the experience of the show.** I know many bands that consume everything they make on a job. Make sure you're reinvesting a percentage of your keep into making the next gig better than the last. This could involve buying better gear, getting more stage lights, increasing rehearsal time to

tighten up the set, hiring a publicist, and so on. Rush's R40 show is a great example. The band uses its money to front the production costs for rehearsals, equipment, and expenses. This allows them to put together an amazing show for the fans.

**Rule #3: Make sure you and your band are adequately prepared before the performance.** We discussed being prepared as a drummer in a previous article, but the same thing applies to your band. If you're headlining a show, you shouldn't be reading charts. Having a music stand on stage shows a lack of commitment to the job. Obviously there are exceptions, like when you're subbing or coming to the gig with little time for preparation. There have been times I've hired guys for my gigs and had to deal with this lack of commitment. I sent them the records and charts months ahead of time, and they still had their heads buried in the book during the show. I feel that is disrespectful to the artist and to the audience.

**Rule #4: Never underestimate the experience of doing a lot of gigs.** I was playing on the *Tonight Show* with a young artist a few years back, and she was scared to death of the performance. A label rep came up to me backstage and asked, "Is she okay?" I remember saying, "There's nothing like throwing her to the wolves, man. There are ten million people watching, and it's only her second gig!" It takes playing hundreds of gigs to learn how to pull off a performance effectively. You have to learn how to hold the crowd's attention and take them from point A to point B. Also, the confidence that comes with knowing your show inside and out is crucial. You need to know what's coming up and how the arc of the performance is designed.

Record your rehearsals, listen back, and take notes. You should also record videos of dress rehearsals in front of friends and family. Observe how the crowd reacts to specific moments in the show. But most importantly, get out and gig as much as possible. You'll learn something from every show, even if it's what *not* to do next time.

**Rule #5: Push the boundaries of what's possible.** With my band Arrival, I'm constantly pushing the boundaries of what's possible for the show at a given venue. Without trying to erect props like Spinal Tap, I'm usually driving the other guys in the band and crew crazy with video projection, audio recordings, samples, and so on. If you've seen our *Arrival Live* concert DVD, you know what I'm talking about. For that shoot, we stuffed a 1,500-seat theatre production into a 300-seat venue.

But pushing the limits of production is not all about lights and video screens. It also has to do with pushing the players to their highest potential. Make sure that there are moments in the set that are challenging for you and the band. If you stay safe and play beneath your abilities every night, your performance will become stale and uninspired. I like to approach gigs with the mentality of a professional athlete. I want to smoke the other bands on the bill, and I want everybody to know why we are the headliners. The crowd deserves to see you really give your all for them.

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**Rule #6: Engage your audience after the gig.** This is done in a few ways. First, make sure people can take the experience home via merchandise, whether it's CDs, download cards, shirts, show programs, and so on. Also make sure to have your website, social media pages, and fan club info available. And be sure to let the audience know about your upcoming shows. Getting return fans, as well as adding new ones, is the key to building a following.

The bottom line is that getting people to spend their hard-earned money to watch you play is a huge blessing. Don't take it for granted. Not every gig will leave you floating home on a cloud. However, every gig contains something to be learned. Take that lesson, and use it for your benefit. Be conscious of what you're asking the audience to listen to, and don't go off into your own little world on stage. Keep the audience engaged in your performance. Make the best music possible, and then present it in a way that adds another dimension to the show.

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



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## LP Raw Series

This industrial-looking line includes Street Canz, Potz, the Trash Snare, and the Jangle Bell. Street Canz are said to deliver thunderous punch and explosive power courtesy of a 1 mm beaded steel shell. They are available in 14x14, 16x16, and 18x18 sizes.

The Trash Snare is a hybrid instrument that can transform from side snare to timbale, ocean drum, metallic street percussion instrument, and more. Made in the USA from repurposed, galvanized stainless steel trashcan lids, the tunable Trash Snare comes with a Snare Wire Sound Enhancer.

Potz deliver the tonality and musicality of bells in a distinctive cylindrical shape. The Jangle Bell is a hybrid bell that combines LP's Classic Ridge Rider with three internal nickel-plated steel jingles.

New accessory items include the Sound Enhancer Jingle, Shaker, and Mini Snare Wire. The Jingle Enhancer features three nickel-plated steel jingles on a plastic clip designed to magnetically attach to any flanged counter hoop. The Sound Enhancer Shaker has three floating modules filled with shaker material to produce a subtle rain-like sound. The Sound Enhancer Snare incorporates sixteen steel snare strands.

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



## TAMA Abe Cunningham Signature Snare

Deftones drummer Abe Cunningham's new signature snare features a 6x14 3mm brass shell, die-cast hoops, and brass tube lugs, plus four 2"-diameter vent holes to ensure maximum cut and projection.

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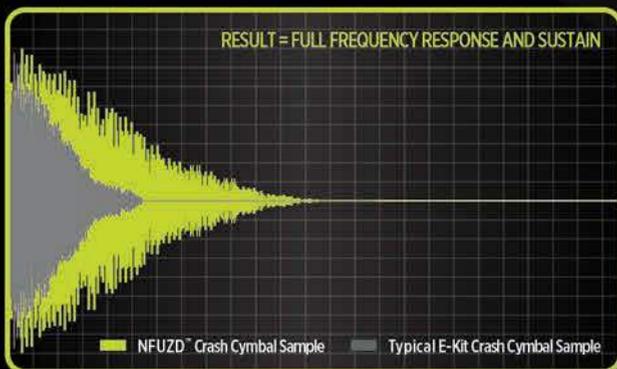
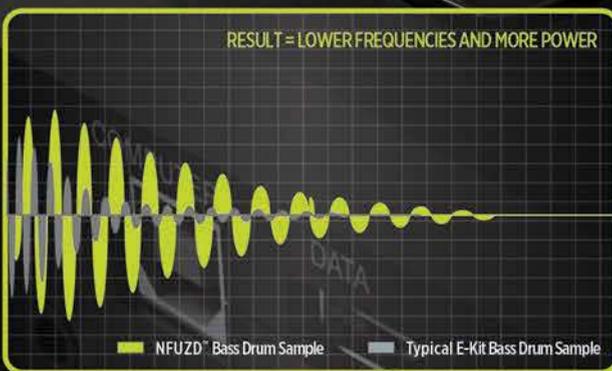


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# Craviotto 10th Anniversary Drums

## Commemorating 10 Years With Two Very Special Snares

by Bob Campbell

**Johnny A. Craviotto, a San Francisco native,** is one of the most well known names in the drum business. He has been mastering his craft for several decades, from humbly repairing used drums to creating the Solid/Select Drum Company, partnering with DW, and ultimately, in 2004, founding the Craviotto Drum Company. Johnny's recent creations, the Anniversary Ambrosia Maple and Diamond Series Black-Nickel Masters Brass snare drums, are fitting tributes to celebrate the company's tenth year of existence in 2014.

### Ambrosia Maple

When brainstorming ideas to commemorate ten years in business, Craviotto wanted to produce something truly over the top. He ultimately decided to build some limited wood- and metal-shell snares. For the wood model, Johnny chose Ambrosia maple, which the Craviotto team found in an East Coast mill near the Erie Canal in New York. Johnny says the wood was "white and wormy" and "looked like it has eels swimming in it."

The unique look of the timber is the effect of the maple tree having been infested with the Columbia Timber (Ambrosia) beetle. These beetles bore through the wood, leaving small tunnels that turn blue, brown, or gray from fungus. The result is a finely figured wood with interesting sonic characteristics. According to Johnny, "[Ambrosia maple] has a nice midrange to it and isn't quite as sharp-sounding as eastern hard-rock maple."

After playing the Ambrosia Maple 10th Anniversary Craviotto snare, drum expert Steve Maxwell said, "I really like the natural warmth that comes from the Ambrosia maple since it's softer. The sound is very rich. The shell is also visually stunning, and the bores act as a natural venting system." These drums come with Craviotto diamond-base tube lugs, a Trick throw-off, and triple-flange hoops, and they carried an original street price of \$2,750. Only forty drums were made—twenty 5.5x14 and twenty 6.5x14.

### Diamond Series Black-Nickel Masters Brass

From his days as a collector, Johnny developed a profound admiration for vintage Ludwig brass shells, especially those used to make the Black Beauty. He always wanted to release a Craviotto metal-shell drum, but none that he made lived up to his standards—until after he was introduced to those created by Italian drum builder Adrian Kirchler (A.K.). Craviotto recalls, "I picked up Adrian's version of a Black Beauty and looked at everything pretty close, and he nailed it. I think I bought the very first drum he ever sold. In 2006, I called him up and asked him to co-brand an A.K./Craviotto drum."

The A.K./Craviotto collaboration spawned the Diamond Series Nickel-Over-Brass (2007), the Diamond Series Copper (2009), the Masters Metal brass/copper two-piece hybrids (2012), and the Masters Brass (2013). In 2014, the pair got together to design the



10th Anniversary Diamond Series Black-Nickel Masters Brass snare drum. Says Kirchler, "I made the first sketch for the nickel-over-brass Diamond series around 2007. I wanted to come up with something that would match the typical Craviotto diamond-shaped badge and lugs. The engraving on the 2014 Black Diamond is a more elaborate version of the original Diamond pattern. The hoop had to have something diamond-shaped too, but I wanted to use some wavy lines, as a pure diamond pattern would have been too hard on the eyes."

The result is a one-piece, 0.7mm black-nickel-plated brass shell with twenty-four-carat gold-plated hardware (4mm rolled-brass hoops, three-point strainer, and tube lugs). The shell is hand-engraved by A.K. and features the signature Craviotto diamond pattern and the words "Craviotto U.S.A., 2004–2014."

Only twenty-five 5.5x14 drums were produced, and each had an original street price of \$7,500. Maxwell says, "For the Craviotto 10th Anniversary Black Diamond snare, the intent of Adrian and Johnny was to pay tribute to the incredible Ludwig Black Beauty snares of the 1920s with a black-nickel-plated brass shell and elaborate engraving. The end result is a stunning drum that's also sonically superb. It has sensitivity, projection, warmth, and incredible articulation at any volume level."





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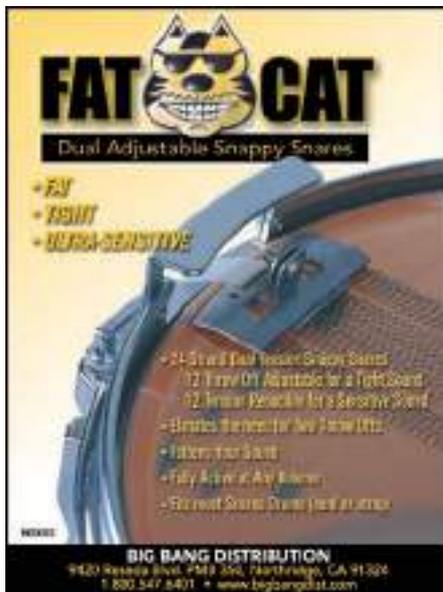
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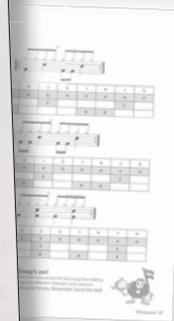
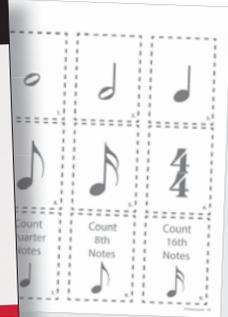
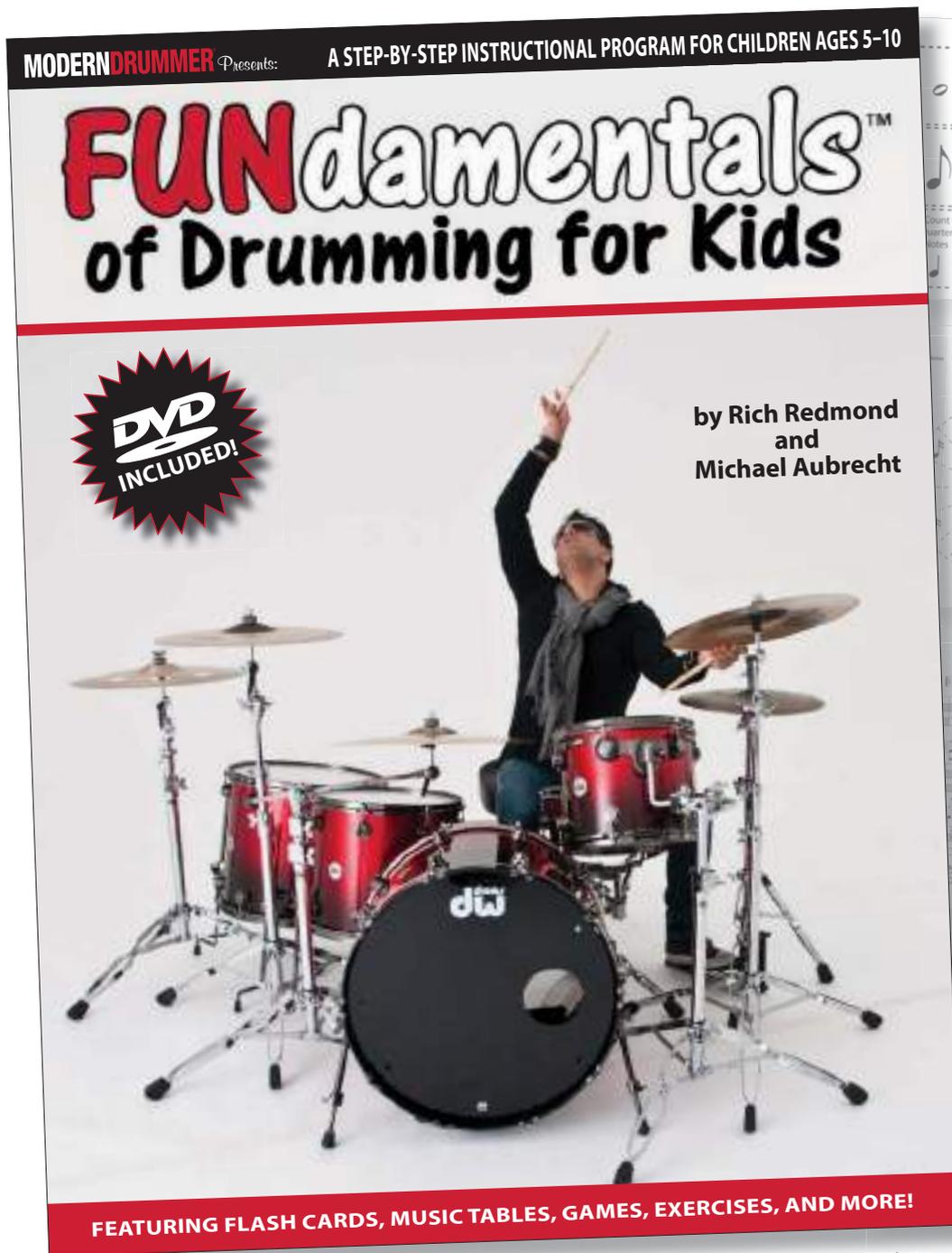
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## RECORDINGS

### Taking the Reins

**Deantoni Parks** *Technoself*

**Flash into the future with this innovator's newest burst of killer beats.**

Purely as a piece of audio, the new record by Deantoni Parks (the Mars Volta, Sade, Flying Lotus) is an adventurous amalgam of crooked beats, bizarre samples, and underground club rhythms informed by the hip-hop and dance worlds. It's only when you learn that Parks is doing it all in real time, splitting his body in two, with the left hand on hi-hat and snare while the right hand plays a sampling keyboard, that you realize you're, in fact, listening to something astounding. On "Bombay," one of three live tracks, the unrelenting machine-gun rimclicking is wicked fun, while the keyboard execution takes the same command and discipline as any rudimental sticking. The appropriately named *Technoself* points toward a future where the line between man and machine is blurred, but before that happens, the new breed of drummers like Parks can conjure an organic sound with a little bit of that human touch. (Stones Throw/Leaving) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

Shawn Cruz



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## Scott Hamilton & Jeff Hamilton Trio

*Live in Bern*

**The tenor saxophonist and drummer might not be kin, but they're certainly blood brothers in joyous mainstream swing.**

On *Live in Bern*, two masters of smooth, full-bodied tone, swinging phrasing, and melodicism prove an ideal team, aided by drummer Jeff Hamilton's superlative working trio featuring pianist Tamir Hendelman and bassist Christoph Luty. Hamilton swings hard but sensitively throughout and also unleashes some dazzling soloing on "Woody 'n' You."

And swingers like "September in the Rain" reconfirm his lofty throne as high priest of brushwork. Nowhere is the two Hamiltons' rapport more evident than on "There'll Be Some Changes Made," which opens with a brushes/tenor duet. It's clear the duo could have laid down a whole tune—if not an entire disc—this way. Despite the



title, the set is not a live performance before an audience but rather a flat-out no-overdubs session. But the desired goal of in-the-room spontaneity is strong. You can practically see the quartet grinning ear to ear. (Capri Records) **Jeff Potter**

### Other Drummer-Leds to Check Out

**Zakir Hussain** Distant Kin /// **José Gurria's Gurrisonic Orchestra** Three

Kids Music /// **Charles Rumback** In the New Year /// **Billie Davies** Hand in Hand in the Hand of the Moon /// **Roger O'Dell's Beatifik** Intrigue /// **Alex Jenkins Trio** Jumping Ship /// **Jaе Sinnett** Zero to 60 /// **Brian Andres and the Afro-Cuban Jazz Cartel** This Could Be That

## Peréz/Patitucci/Blade

*Children of the Light*

**Wayne Shorter sidemen step out front to say their own thing.**



As the longtime rhythm section in Wayne Shorter's adventurous quartet, Danilo Pérez, John Patitucci, and Brian Blade have reached a point where they can finish each other's sentences. Their dialogue is deep, with mutual references and a mature but still delightful sense of wonder. The music here doesn't swing in the traditional sense—check out the title track's knotty rhythms and jagged accents. And Blade is sensitive enough to hold back huge sparks, like with the chill brush backbeat on the gorgeous "Within Everything." As usual with Blade, the cymbal sound is divine, and the stream of melodic ideas seemingly never ends, so the drumming imposes on the music, but just enough. No self-aggrandizing maneuvering here, just three friends swimming in the adult end of the post-bop pool and having a great time doing it. (Mack Avenue) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

## MULTIMEDIA

### **Ringo Starr and the Beatles Beat, Parts One and Two**

by Alex Cain and Terry McCusker

**In the vast pantheon of Beatles literature, these volumes might not offer any revelations. But they do serve as a smartly compiled Ringo one-stop with an emphasis on the drummer's influential artistry.**

Authors Cain and McCusker characterize their expansive two-part e-book as "a listener's guide to the percussive element of the Beatles' music... not intended as a scholarly work." This is a virtue, as there's plenty of informative and entertaining Ringophile reading for drummers and non-drummers alike.

Part one covers tracks from 1962 to 1966, while the second installment continues with 1967 to 1970. The bulk of the volumes is a song-by-song analysis of Ringo's performances throughout the entire Beatles studio catalog, with a focus on how his unique drum parts/execution and sound choices are crucial to the success of each song. Avoiding overkill, the authors tend to notate only key grooves. But more complex parts, such as "Rain" and "Strawberry Fields Forever," are afforded more detailed and extensive transcriptions. When available, information on mic choices/placement and other recording facts are also included.

All percussion parts and overdubs are cited, right down to Starr's thigh slaps on "I'll Follow the Sun" and the altered EQ used to enhance that sound. And in our digital-spoiled era, it's edifying to read about anecdotal moments such as re-dubbing a lost hi-hat part due to an accidentally creased tape. Brief historical and biographical essays are included, as well as an analysis of style, feel, and technique. Gearheads, take note: A section highlighting Ringo's rigs features detailed specs spanning his "first real kit"—a cheap Ajax Edgware set—through his iconic Ludwigs.

These volumes are clearly a labor of love; both authors are drummers and superfans. But McCusker holds special bragging rights: He has followed the Beatles since his Liverpool youth, when he watched the pre-fame band play lunchtime sets at the legendary Cavern Club. Such firsthand recollections are especially colorful, as when he remembers descending the venue's cellar stairs into "a most unhygienic place...the aroma stuck to your clothes." (\$7.99 per volume, ringostarrandthebeatlesbeat.com) **Jeff Potter**



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# Jellyfish

## *Spilt Milk*

This group of power-pop purveyors is long gone, but its songs—and monster stand-up drummer/singer—are far from forgotten.

It's a crime Jellyfish never found a bigger audience during its brief run in the early '90s. But echoing Supertramp, pre-disco Bee Gees, the Beach Boys, and Harry Nilsson while dressing like they'd raided the wardrobe closet at a Sid and Marty Krofft production was a tough sell in the era of grunge. Jellyfish just wasn't made for its time.

The collateral damage relative to this crime is that Andy Sturmer, the band's singing drummer, isn't more widely acclaimed. More than just a great drummer who happened to sing lead, Sturmer was the chief architect behind the Jellyfish sound, writing or cowriting (with Roger Manning Jr.) all of the band's material, in addition to orchestrating many of the bells, whistles, and vocal harmonies.

Sturmer's work on the kit reveals a student of classic pop-rock drumming. On Jellyfish's two studio albums, 1990's *Bellybutton* and 1993's *Spilt Milk* (both reissued as deluxe editions last year on Omnivore), Sturmer plays with a swinging feel and joyful flair reminiscent

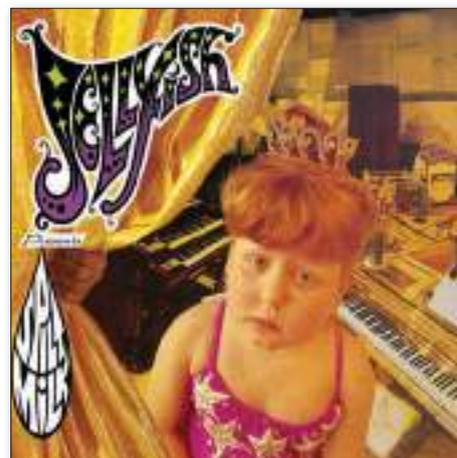
of Hal Blaine, Ringo Starr, and Bun E. Carlos, delivering fills as melodic and memorable as the songs themselves. (And live he was a master multitasker, standing center stage and playing a kit that was mostly rack mounted—toms and cymbals to his right—while singing like a raging angel.)

Of the two albums, *Spilt Milk* is the better showcase for Sturmer's timekeeping talents. Not that anything is lacking on *Bellybutton*. (The fills in the bridge of "The King Is Half Undressed" are totally bananas.) But on that album the emphasis is on hook-heavy songs that hit you immediately—there isn't much cause for the drums to be featured. There's all *kinds* of room for ambitious drumming, however, on *Spilt Milk*, an everything-but-the-kitchen-sink production with songs that are alternately bombastic, intimate, and playful.

The sequencing of *Spilt Milk* allows Sturmer's drums to make a grand entrance. Mere seconds after the album-opening lullaby "Hush" concludes—all blissful harmonies, twinkly strings, and one dynamic timpani crescendo—Sturmer is smashing his cymbals to accent the power chords that introduce "Joining a Fan Club." He plays the meaty rocker with a perfect balance of brawn and finesse, strategically tumbling through the 7/4 sections of the bridge, while elegantly playing through the multiple stops with an impressive variety of punctuations.

After that heady one-two punch of an opening comes an abrupt change in tone with "Sebrina, Paste and Plato," an unabashedly nostalgic confection that sounds like it was conceived by Lennon and McCartney in Brian Wilson's sandbox during the spring of 1967. Sturmer shows an ear for symphonic touches as overdubbed timpani—played against a marching snare pattern in one spot—add a murky percussive rumble to the sunny song.

On tracks that call for more subdued drumming, Sturmer's subtlety and ease still stand out. As his pleading vocal in the drum-less opening verses of "Glutton



### *Spilt Milk* (1993)

Hush • Joining a Fan Club • Sebrina, Paste and Plato • New Mistake • Glutton of Sympathy • The Ghost at Number One • Bye Bye Bye • All Is Forgiven • Russian Hill • He's My Best Friend • Too Much, Too Little, Too Late • Brighter Day

**Andy Sturmer:** vocals, drums, guitar, keyboards

**Roger Joseph Manning Jr.:** keyboards, vocals

**Tim Smith:** bass, vocals  
with Lyle Workman (guitar), Jon Brion (guitar), and T-Bone Wolk (bass)

Produced by Albhy Galuten, Jack Joseph Puig, Andy Sturmer, and Roger Joseph Manning Jr.

of Sympathy" ends, his three-note snare and hi-hat combination (snare on 3, open hi-hat on the "&" of 3, snare on the "&" of 4) is the perfect setup to the sublime chorus. Even when the fills get busier, they never gum up the transitions or step on the melody. And if a Lava Lamp had a sound, it'd be the groovy swing Sturmer puts to "He's My Best Friend," a cheeky ode to handling something other than drumsticks.

The feel is so free and easy that even when Sturmer is dancing across the toms and snare in a syncopated pattern to drive "All Is Forgiven," he's not pushing the 6/4 song. He's merely guiding the roaring chaos—a roar that stops cold with the beginning of the dreamy "Russian Hill," on which he enters halfway through to lend beautiful brushwork behind strings and woodwinds that sound like something out of a vintage Disney soundtrack.

In less capable hands than Sturmer's, a record like *Spilt Milk* could've collapsed under the weight of its own ambition. But those hands were not only responsible for incredible drumming, they helped to craft the songs and the sound that could measure up to such ambition. In doing so, Sturmer created an album for the ages.

**Patrick Berkery**



### Hot Stuff

**SWEET FILLS.** Sturmer plays a mean "falling down the stairs" fill, none meaner than the one at the 3:06 mark in "Joining a Fan Club," as the band is transitioning from the double-time instrumental section back into the chorus.

**MORE...CASTANET?** *Spilt Milk* features lovely percussion throughout, but the castanet rattles in the choruses of "New Mistake" are particularly tasty, taking nothing away from the chimes and bongos that appear in various spots throughout the tune.

**GREAT SOUND.** Sonically, *Spilt Milk* is a dense affair. But the drums cut through in a crisp and punchy manner that's in your face without being overwhelming. Credit coproducer/engineer Jack Joseph Puig for milking such a great tone from Sturmer's tubs, a sound Puig would utilize on a handful of other productions during the '90s.

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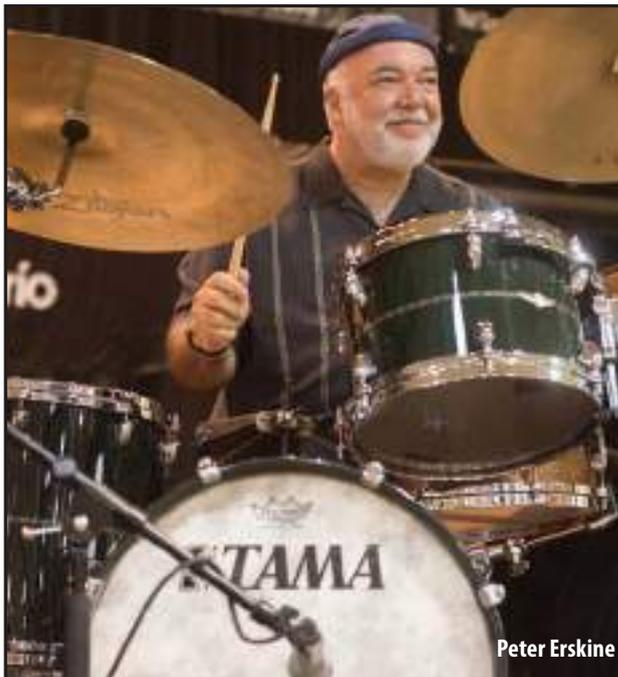
This past October 10, the 2015 Hollywood Custom & Vintage Drum Show took over the Glendale Civic Auditorium in Glendale, California, marking the event's fifteenth year. Forty-five international exhibitors filled the floor with drums, cymbals, and accessories, and vintage collectors showcased drums dating as far back as the early 1900s, including a near-mint '60s Slingerland set.

Musicians Institute instructor Sammy J. Watson opened the day's clinics, performing with backing tracks and a live guitarist, and was followed by a trio performance with jazz luminary Peter Erskine that drew a standing ovation. Buddy Rich Band drummer Gregg Potter's dynamic solos impressed attendees as he played along with big

band arrangements of classic Rich tunes. A drum duet featuring Hungarian session monster Gergo Borlai and March 2015 *Modern Drummer* cover artist Matt Garstka closed the show.

Boutique companies such as Dunnett Classic, George H. Way, D'Amico, DTS, Doc Sweeney, BoneYard, Superdrum, and San Francisco Drum Company featured custom products alongside major manufacturers' wares. Retailers Guitar Center and Sam Ash offered special event pricing to customers, and between performances event organizer Kerry Crutchfield doled out raffle prizes that included snares, cymbals, and pedals.

**Photos by Alex Solca**



Peter Erskine



Gregg Potter



Matt Garstka



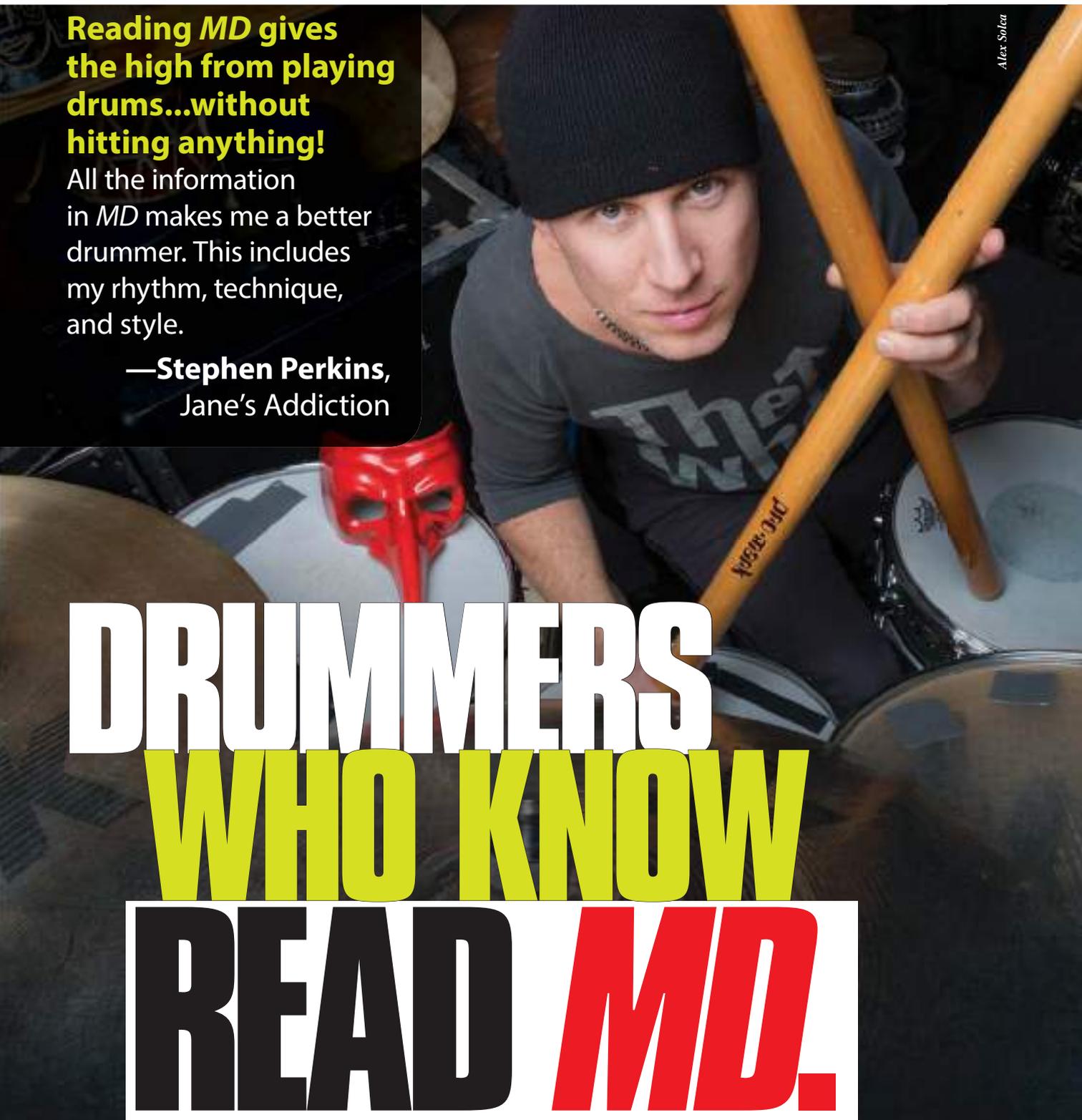
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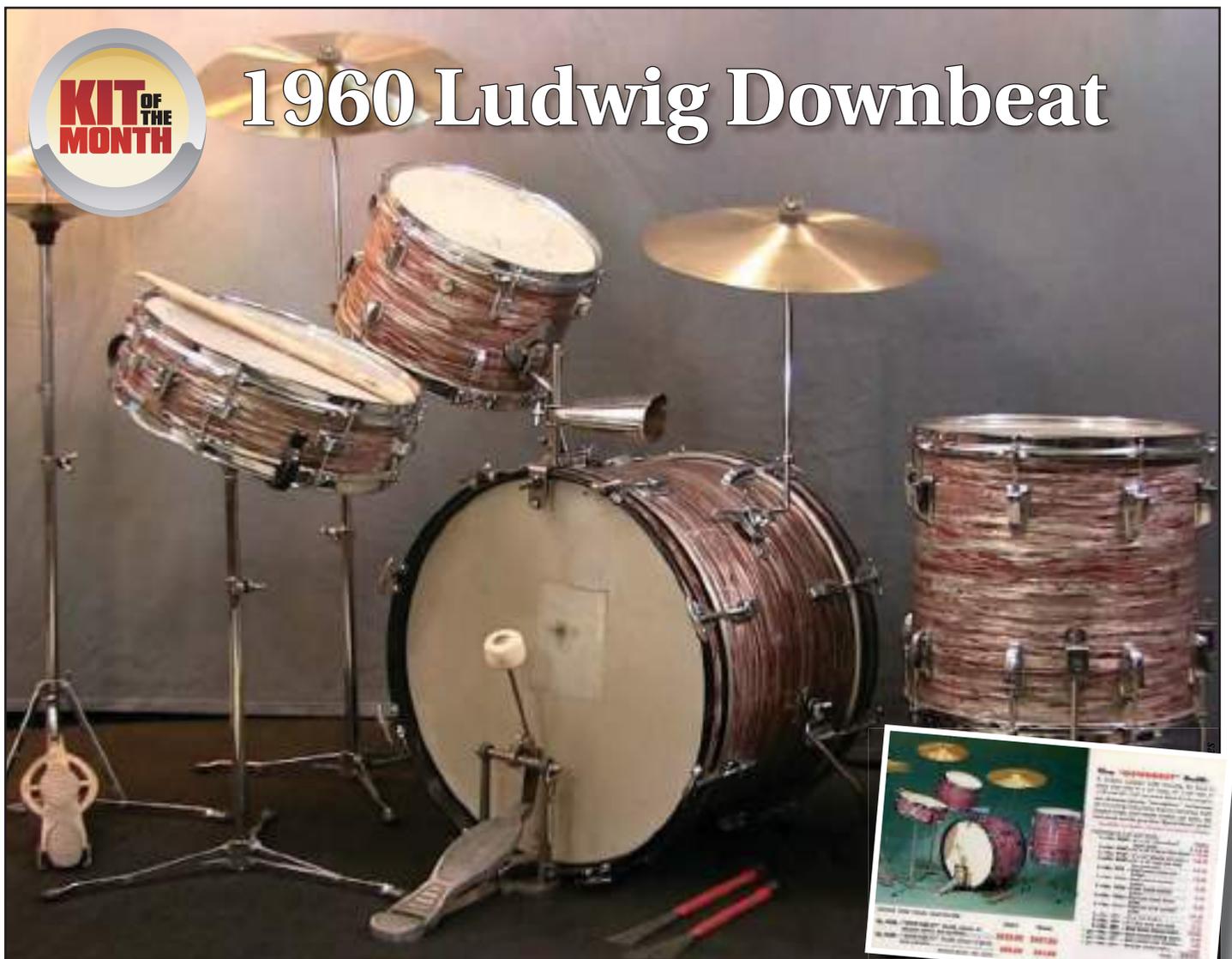


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"The first owner of the set was a local jazz drummer who played it just a handful of times before selling it to the second owner, a hobbyist who never once took the drums out for a gig.

"All of the drums are nearly mint and stamped on the interior within a day of each other. We've read that the original manufacturing run from 1960 to '61 may have been as low as 200 drums with this wrap, so seeing such a complete kit in such a beautiful condition floored us!

"The only thing missing on the drums themselves was the inlay on the batter-side bass drum hoop. We had it digitally recreated and then installed it at the shop. The drums look like they just rolled out of the factory.

"Sometimes when buying a vintage kit like this, there will be a stand or two thrown in as an afterthought. Everything from the original catalog outfit listing was present, down to the cowbell and brushes. So Mitch Cady, who works at the store, and Dylan Wissing, our friend from Triple Colossal Studios, recreated the photo from the original 1960 catalog. We set up a side-by-side photo of both the catalog shot and our recreation, along with a video about the set that we put up on thedrumden.com.

"The kit sold very quickly and the buyer is a well-respected drummer and collector," Martinez concludes. "We here at the Drum Den are excited to see it go to such a good home."

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




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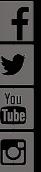


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