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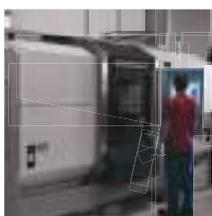
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Snarky Puppy's Robert "Sput" Searight, Larnell Lewis, and Jason "JT" Thomas

"The music was different this time. The band has evolved. We're trying to combine different elements together. That's why this record is groove based."

As senior Snarky drummer Robert Searight suggests, the band's first studio album in eight years, *Culcha Vulcha*, is all about the bigger picture—a grand tapestry of sound resulting from multiple drummers and percussionists carefully picking their parts and contributing to grooves of great depth.

by Willie Rose

Cover photos by Andy LaViolette and Christian Thomas Hynes

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by Adam Budofsky

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56 VICTOR DELORENZO. He established a sound and personality with alt-rock icons the Violent Femmes that remains long after his departure. But he's not standing still, drumming-wise or otherwise.
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60 UP & COMING: CHRIS WOOLLISON. If it's not about chops, can it really be called prog? Poly-Math's texture-obsessed drummer unequivocally says yes—and backs it up brilliantly at the kit.
by Ilya Stemkovsky

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Competition

I was recently asked to do a recording session that I couldn't make due to scheduling conflicts. While going through contacts to find a sub, I was reminded of an unprompted comment that Robert "Sput" Searight made during our conversation for this month's feature on Snarky Puppy's drummers.

"The thing about Snarky Puppy," Searight said, "is that everybody always asks or gets some notion that this is a *bad thing*—like there's supposed to be tension between three guys playing for one band. I've done interviews where that's been the underlying tone—*How do you feel about someone else playing your gig?* From promoters to fans to YouTube comments—I'd have to tell JT to stop getting on there to defend our rights, because he's such a passionate guy. You can really get caught up in that. But we're all really brothers and friends."

Searight made the comment toward the end of my conversations with the three drummers, and at that point any idea that there was tension between them couldn't have been more remote in my mind. Each of them possesses a tremendous admiration for the others' playing, and on the newest Snarky Puppy album, *Culcha Vulcha*, they've crafted tasteful and powerful music *together*. After all, these three drummers were called to play on the same album because they've all subbed for each other in the past. If the relationship was tense, would those calls have been made?

Competition often emerges within the music and drumming community, and in some cases, it can have positive effects. A student striving to fill the captain role in a drum line might spend an extra hour or so each day practicing—as opposed to something more distracting—while improving and learning how to invest his or her time toward an end goal.

But when accompanied by a certain attitude, competition can derail opportunities. Going back through my list of recommendations for the session I couldn't make, I ended up calling a friend I first met while attending a performing arts high school more than ten years ago. Admittedly, back then I harbored a somewhat negative competitive nature. If someone else got the gig I wanted, or their band was given a better spot on a bill, or I simply lacked another drummer's talent, I sometimes became naively envious and resentful, and some friendships, including one with the drummer I was now recommending, became strained—no doubt due to my own faults. It felt like I was at war with other drummers, and we certainly weren't sharing gigs.

After recently speaking with my friend about subbing, the conversation turned to competition among drummers, and we realized we both shared the same attitude years ago. Over time, perspectives shifted, and we started relying on each other for certain gigs and work. But how many opportunities to play with new musicians in different styles did I miss out on in the past because of the wrong attitude?

Searight didn't have to go out of his way to clarify the relationship he has with Snarky Puppy's drummers—it's evident in their attitudes toward each other and the music they've created. Yet there's a valuable lesson there, and this drummer could've used it years ago.



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Peter Erskine

In 1977 I took my wife, Maryann, to a Maynard Ferguson concert at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia. While waiting for the show to start, we ran into a very nice gentleman who was slightly older than me—I was twenty-five at the time. We started talking about Ferguson and his famous number “Give It One.”

The man said that if I wanted, he could give me backstage passes to speak with Maynard after the show. I, of course, said yes. We had great seats to start with, and when the curtains parted, I was shocked to see that the gentleman who offered me those passes was Ferguson’s drummer.

Playing drums myself, but being young at the time, I’d never heard of Peter Erskine; however, I’ve followed his career ever since. From that night forward I always remember what a great player he is, and what a nice guy he was to my wife and me.

Stephen Taylor

Blister Treatment

Whether it’s because we’re grasping on to sweat-drenched drumsticks at an outdoor gig, slamming through the last song of a heavy metal set, or bearing down for an all-day practice marathon, many of us put ourselves in the position of having to deal with blisters on our hands. This month we asked our Facebook and Instagram followers how they treat, manage, and prevent tearing up their hands.

The best way to avoid blisters is to play with correct technique. There shouldn’t be any rubbing of your hands and fingers. They might get a little callused, but that’s to be expected if you’re someone who works with your hands. Don’t just put a Band-Aid on the problem (pun intended). Fix it!

Becci McGarry

Know your surroundings. Heavy hitting doesn’t always mean you’re putting out the best sound. Get to know your sound guy, your bandmates’ stage levels, and what the house sounds like. You shouldn’t have to play too loud just to compete with your frontline’s wall of amps, especially if your kit is miked. If that fails, just grab a needle and hydrogen peroxide to disinfect.

Rob Wu

Play around with different stick gauges. I used to love my Vic Firth Questlove signatures, but they were so slender that I was over-gripping them when I had to play with power. I also recommend trying different brands, because finishes can vary immensely. Sticks are the cheapest drum accessory—try out some new pairs. Different sticks have different tapers, so be mindful of what a stick is made for; if you’re using a light stick or one with a longer taper, you’re going to be working a lot harder to get a fat rock tone, which can compromise form and grip.

Jacob Rogers

The number-one problem is gripping the sticks too tightly. Proper technique will prevent any crazy blistering. I’m guilty of it too. It’s hard when you play outdoor shows, sweat like crazy, and get tired—your technique fails. But I’ve been keeping a rosin pouch in my stick bag—like what baseball pitchers use to keep their hands dry—and it’s worked like a charm!

Joe Pinchotti

It’s brutal, but years of experience have taught me to cut blisters off with fingernail clippers as soon as they appear. I put some Neosporin and a Band-Aid on it for twenty-four hours. The skin underneath won’t re-blister or feel rough. I also cut off excess skin with fingernail clippers to keep calluses smooth.

Brian Steele Medina



You can try different stick sizes, alter the tightness of your grip on the sticks, or study different grip techniques. A lot of self-taught drummers simply picked up a pair of sticks one day and started beating on things around the house without knowing that there’s a right and wrong way to hold them. My advice is to learn a technique that’s comfortable and fluid for you and your playing style. If you’ve found a good grip technique and still get the occasional blister, it never hurts to bring some Band-Aids with you.

Michael Johnson

The best advice I’ve ever heard is to hold the sticks like you’re holding a bird—tight enough that it doesn’t get away but loose enough that you don’t hurt it. Zero blisters here!

Steve Staulcup

I keep a bottle of liquid bandage and a roll of athletic tape in my Pelican [case] at all times. The liquid bandage and tape wrap allow me to maintain dexterity and get me through a run. I then air out any blisters to let them dry between gigs. Once aired out, the skin underneath is tough. There’s also always the emergency FootJoy golf glove.

Jimmy Elcock

Want your voice heard? Follow us on Facebook and Instagram, and look out for next month’s question.

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REMO BELLI

The drum industry icon passed away recently, but not long before that he invited *Modern Drummer* to his namesake company's factory for a visit. We created an exclusive mini documentary, a fitting if bittersweet tribute to the man and his legacy.



ALEX SHELNUTT

A Day to Remember's drummer on the popular hardcore band's brand-new sixth album, *Bad Vibrations*.

CREATE TENSION AND RELEASE

In this month's Rock Perspectives column, regular *MD* contributor Aaron Edgar employs the mechanism of groove contraction to make tempos feel as if they've changed.

PRODUCT CLOSE-UP



Video demos of Zildjian's S Family cymbals and Tama's Superstar Classic kit.

ON TOUR

The Birmingham, England, progressive metalcore band Oceans Ate Alaska headlined a British tour earlier this summer and is now in the midst of the Vans Warped Tour in the States. Drummer Chris Turner takes us along for the ride.

GROOVE CONSTRUCTION, PART 5

Just Nickel helps us expand our dynamic range by focusing on ghost notes within ostinatos.

ON THE BEAT

Matt Byrne of Hatebreed, Mike Calabrese of Lake Street Dive, and others check in.

Plus the greatest drum-related prizes on the Net, news from around the world of drumming, exclusive *MD* podcasts, and much, much more.



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NEWS

Out Now

A Day to Remember *Bad Vibrations*

With its sixth studio album—set to release mid-August—A Day to Remember expands its meld of metal and pop-punk while continuing to deliver powerful hooks and crushing breakdowns. According to drummer **Alex Shelnutt**, the band didn't adhere to one compositional approach. "Most of the time Jeremy [McKinnon, vocals] will have a melody or chorus idea," Shelnutt says, "and then he'll bring it to us and we'll write a song around it. At other times we'll start jamming and finish a song within an hour. And when we're touring heavily and don't have time at home to write or jam together, we'll end up writing in the back lounge of the bus with MIDI drums and a guitar interface. Writing is cool because I get to see how much I've grown as a drummer from record to record. Hearing the finished product is always very special."

Shelnutt says that certain parts were influenced by music he listened to while practicing. "When I was learning double bass," he explains, "I tried to play along with my favorite heavy bands at that time—Bury Your Dead, Evergreen Terrace, and Darkest Hour. After I felt confident and could play along to it, I would study the different time signatures or the way the kick changes in certain parts of the measure. Mark Castillo from Bury Your Dead was my main influence for double bass; I owe a lot to jamming along to their album *Cover Your Tracks* until I knew every bass drum hit. Mark's playing largely inspired the breakdown at the end of the title track on *Bad Vibrations*. It's heavy!" **Willie Rose**

For more with Alex Shelnutt, go to modern drummer.com.

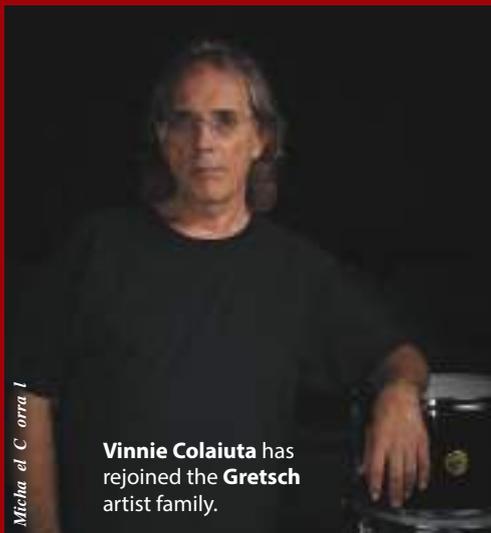


James H. Arley

More New Releases

Good Charlotte Youth Authority (Dean Butterworth) /// **Fates Warning** Theories of Flight (Bobby Jarzombek) /// **Chris Robinson Brotherhood** Anyway You Love, We Know How You Feel (Tony Leone) /// **Jeff Beck** Loud Hailer (Davide Sollazzi) /// **Chevelle** The North Corridor (Sam Loeffler) /// **Revocation** Great Is Our Sin (Ash Pearson)

Who's Playing What



Michael Corrao

Vinnie Colaiuta has rejoined the **Gretsch** artist family.



Dan Aran (Michael Arenella and His Dreamland Orchestra) and **Victor Alexander** (Outkast) are using **Innovative Percussion** gear.



Ja som Ma g ed u

Chris Turner with Oceans Ate Alaska

Oceans Ate Alaska's summer tour finds Chris Turner managing jagged time-signature changes with breakneck chops during the band's technical metalcore sets. In preparation, Turner developed a practice routine to tackle the intense music. "I've created a bunch of my own hand and foot patterns," the drummer explains, "and I drill them pretty intensely and systematically on practice pads. I used to practice an insane amount to keep the speed up, because I did notice a significant difference with just a week off [from practicing] before. But now that I'm touring almost full time with the band, the speed seems to maintain itself fairly easily.

"As far as exercises go," Turner adds, "I like to isolate my kick drum and train almost to the point of it not even being musical anymore—it's purely a workout. [laughs] But when I do drop back into my playing and use my training, of course it's musical again, just without restrictions.

When he's not playing drums, Turner spends much of his time

rock climbing. "I don't do this because I feel I have to keep fit to tour, though," he says. "I do it purely because I love it. I've been climbing my whole life, and it continues to give me endless mental and physical challenges while keeping me strong. Don't get me wrong, though—I'm still normally *completely* ruined after each show, especially if it's a longer headline set."

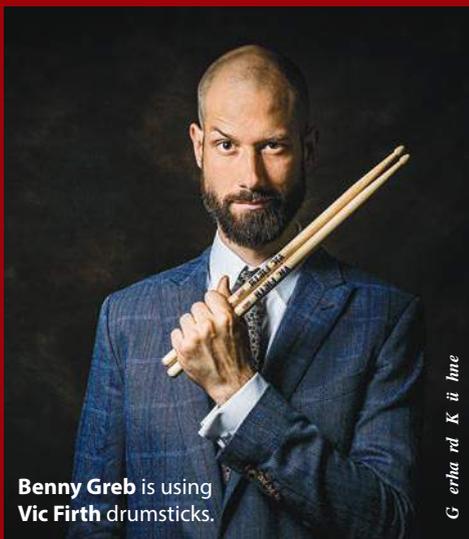
One way Turner *has* found to conserve his strength during the band's demanding sets has nothing to do with improving his physical stamina. "My setup is arranged to save me energy," Chris explains. "As I said earlier, it destroys me enough playing our set, not even taking into account the hot lights and the sweaty crowd. I'd rather not be lifting my arms way up high to hit my crashes before having to quickly come back down for a fill. So I arrange everything nice and local. It makes my life a touch easier."

Willie Rose

Also on the Road

Jimmy Brown with UB40 /// **Will Champion** with Coldplay /// **Robin Goodridge** with Bush /// **Shannon Forrest** and **Lenny Castro** with Toto /// **Joe Vitale** with Joe Walsh /// **Michel Langevin** with Voivod

For more with **Chris Turner**, go to moderndrummer.com.



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Benny Greb is using **Vic Firth** drumsticks.



A Liya h H a k im G roov esm ith L id .

Omar Hakim has joined the **Earthworks** roster.

Industry Happenings

Rich Redmond's L.A. Drummer's Weekend

This past April 8 through 10, Jason Aldean drummer Rich Redmond hosted a weekend-long education- and performance-based workshop at Musicians Institute in Los Angeles. Among the highlights was hands-on training with MI instructors **Stewart Jean**, **Fred Dinkins**, **Jeff Bowders**, **Albe Bonacci**, and **Tim McIntyre**. Featured artists, including **Nate Morton** (*The Voice*), **Kenny Aronoff** (John Mellencamp, John Fogerty), and author/educator **Frank Briggs**, conducted multi-hour clinics, performances, and career-oriented discussions.

Morton performed a medley incorporating styles he plays on *The Voice*, and discussed charting songs and career development. Aronoff covered career longevity and played the drum parts from several of the hits he's recorded. And Briggs demonstrated a vast array of feels and time signatures within a fusion style.

The event also included a Q&A session with **Tony Braunagel** (Robert Cray), **Jimmy Paxon** (Stevie Nicks, Ben Harper), and **Blair Sinta** (Melissa Etheridge). To close out the weekend, attendees performed rock classics with a house band at the Lucky Strike bowling alley in Hollywood. All proceeds from the event benefited the Paramount Academy of Music.

Photos by Alex Solca



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Morton

Fred Gretsch Receives Honorary Degree From Elmhurst College

Fred W. Gretsch, president of the Gretsch Company music manufacturer, was awarded an honorary Doctor of Music degree from Elmhurst College at the school's spring commencement this past May 28.

Elmhurst confers honorary degrees on individuals whose commitments and achievements embody the college's mission, vision, and core values. Gretsch, an Elmhurst alumnus, was recognized for his ongoing contributions to the music industry and to his family's mission to enrich people's lives through music.

Fred, his wife and business partner, Dinah, his company, and the Gretsch Foundation have been supporters of Elmhurst and its department of music, funding a variety of scholarships and the Sylvia and William Gretsch Recording Studio. Fred has also been a major supporter of the annual Elmhurst College High School Invitational Jazz Festival.

"Fred Gretsch's support has helped us develop one of the top music business programs in the country," says Tim Hays, director of Elmhurst's music business program, "from the Gretsch Music Business Student Scholarship fund to his multiple gifts that have allowed us to build and continually upgrade our state-of-the-art



From left: Elmhurst College interim president Larry Braskamp, Fred Gretsch, and music department chair Peter Griffin

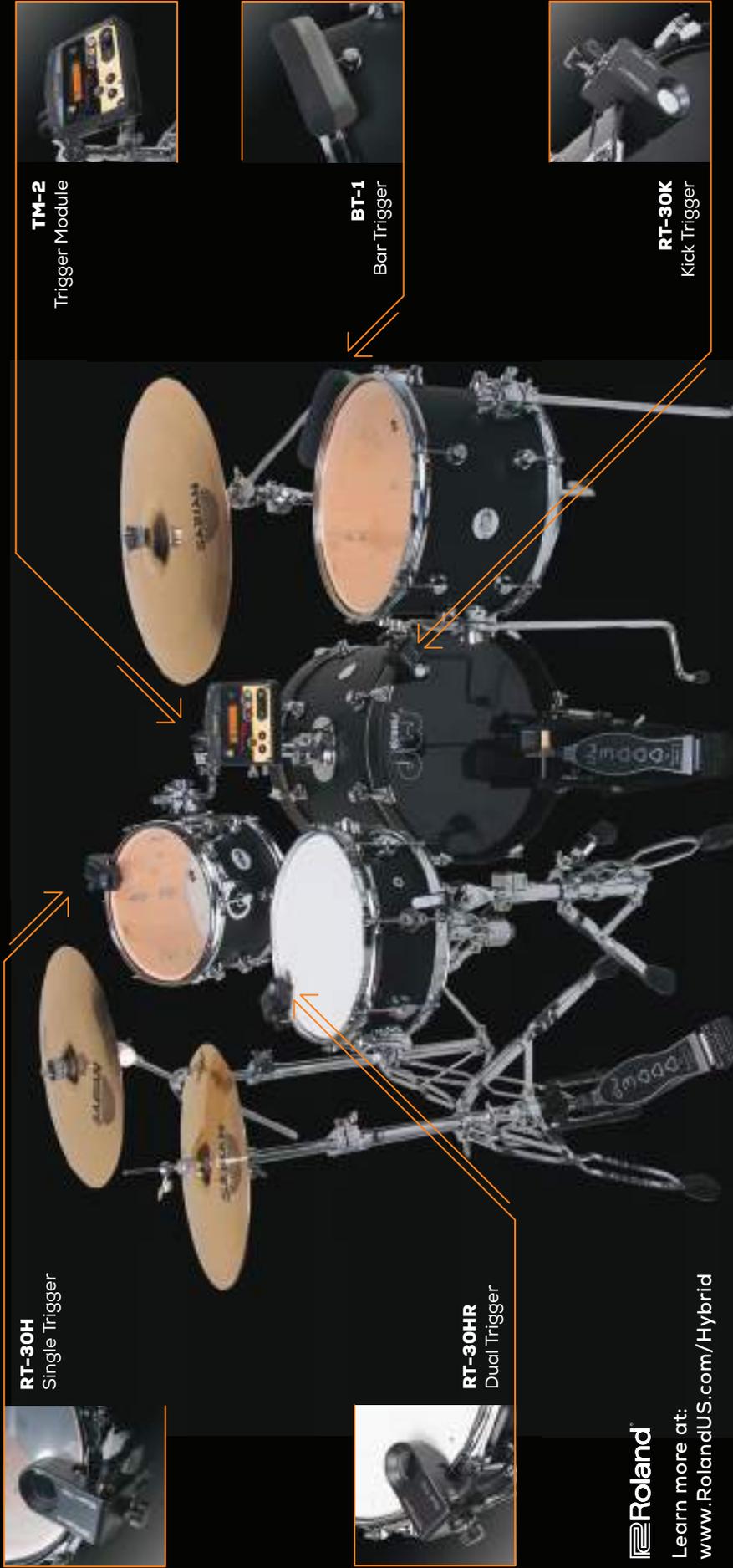
Gretsch Recording Studio. The college, the music department, and generations of students have benefited from his vision and generosity."

"I'm grateful and I'm honored," Fred says. "When it comes to enriching people's lives through music around the country and around the world, I recognize that Elmhurst is a great place to start. I look forward to working with the college to create more music makers in the generations ahead."



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Humidity and Drums

I'm in the process of creating a drumming area in my basement. I want to make sure the high humidity level doesn't adversely impact my drums. Should I aim for a specific humidity level?

Stan

"That is a great question," says *Modern Drummer's* Miguel Monroy, who has some insight into the issue, having been the owner of a hardwood flooring company. "There are a lot of similarities in the way wood responds to moisture, whether it's used for flooring or for instruments. We reached out to product managers at Dixon and Tama to get additional input as well, and we all agree on the following.

"First and foremost, wood will be more susceptible to the effects of moisture if it's a solid piece of timber. So solid guitar bodies, solid- and stave-shell drums, and solid floors are more likely to experience expansion and contraction due to changes in humidity. However, most drums are constructed in a multiply fashion, thus making them less impacted by air-moisture levels. The way ply drum shells are made is similar to the process flooring companies use to create what's known as engineered hardwood, which is designed for use in places with a higher moisture level.

"With all of that said, the general consensus is that a humidity level between 35% and 55% should keep your drums safe and sound."



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TAMA[®]

Jason Bittner

As *Shadows Fall* goes into hibernation, the drummer reconnects—and makes his mark with—an early influence.



In 2007, at the Sounds of the Underground festival in Phoenix, Arizona, where *Shadows Fall* was on the bill, Jason Bittner heard that Kelly Smith, drummer for the thrash veterans *Flotsam and Jetsam*, was in attendance. Bittner first met Smith back in 1988, shortly before leaving home to study at Berklee. “[Our soundman] came onto the bus and mentioned that he saw Kelly, so I ran down to talk to him,” Bittner recalls. “Ironically, Kelly’s son was a fan of *Shadows Fall* and my drumming, so he was excited to meet me, but I was telling him how much his father had influenced me.” The two drummers reminisced and then kept in touch.

Fast-forward seven years. Bittner had finished up some touring fill-in work for Anthrax’s Charlie Benante, and *Shadows Fall* had gone on an extended hiatus, when a call came from Smith, who had to leave *Flotsam and Jetsam* for personal reasons. Bittner was his first choice to be his replacement. The timing couldn’t have been better. “I was really on the fence about what I was going to do with my life at the time,” Jason says.

Stepping into an established band and

Jason Bittner first hit *Modern Drummer’s* radar in 1995, due to his playing with the New York–based hardcore band *Stigmata*. In 2001 he joined the Massachusetts outfit *Shadows Fall*, and his work with the group helped win him several *MD* Readers Poll awards and earn him a spot in the 2005 *Modern Drummer* Festival lineup. An experienced clinician, session player, and educator, Bittner authored the method book *Drumming Out of the Shadows* and released the instructional DVD *What Drives the Beat*. Jason appeared on the cover of the May 2007 issue of *MD*.



replacing one of its original members posed some creative challenges for Bittner. Although he proudly wears his influences on his sleeve, he's worked hard to establish his own style. "At first I approached how I played with Flotsam through Kelly's eyes," Bittner explains, "but the guys told me they wanted me to do my own thing. There are rules and limitations when you join a band with a history, so it was a conscious effort on my part to keep that spirit alive, while not being afraid to do the things that I'm known for."

From a compositional standpoint, recording the band's recent self-titled album was also a new experience for Bittner. He tracked seventeen potential songs, unsure of which tracks would ultimately make the record. "I was kind of flying blind," Bittner says, "but Eric [Knutson, singer] told me not to worry, because he'd just write around what I played. That was the first time I heard a singer say anything like that! The band is sounding more like it's of this era, rather than what they sounded like thirty years ago."

Bittner's stamp is all over the album. "Monkey Wrench" features his fiery X-hat, bell, and splash combos; "Iron Maiden" boasts some telltale two-handed ride assaults; and the 210 bpm "Taser" is tattooed by intense double bass and the first blast beat on a Flotsam and Jetsam record. "I really love 'Life Is a Mess,'" Bittner says. "It was the second song I was sent as a demo, and I connected with its energy immediately. My drumming on that song showcases all my old-school influences: Lars Ulrich, Charlie Benante, and Dave Lombardo."

Bittner will be on tour with Flotsam and Jetsam for the remainder of 2016 and into 2017, doing some clinics, lessons, and sessions along the way. And if you're interested in hearing Jason's funkier side, check out Coconut Donut's debut album, *Musically Delicious*, which he also produced.

David Ciauro

Good Tiger's Alex Rüdinger

"There might be a misperception online that this is a one-off side project for us," the tech-metal marvel says of his new all-star project, "but it's very much our full-time gig."

Since kicking down the door to the metal world with his jaw-dropping YouTube play-along videos more than six years ago, twenty-four-year-old journeyman Alex Rüdinger has filled in on tours with Monuments and Revocation and recorded and toured with his still-breathing side project Conquering Dystopia. He also did a stint as a member of the L.A. death metal act the Faceless. After leaving that band in 2014, Rüdinger joined some highly experienced playmates in Good Tiger, which became the first act signed to Metal Blade Records' Blacklight Media imprint earlier this year.

Including former members of some of tech metal's most popular acts—Safety Fire guitarists Derya Nagle and Joaquin Ardiles, Tesseract vocalist Elliot Coleman, and Architects guitarist Morgan Sinclair on bass—Good Tiger has allowed Rüdinger a refreshing shot at being a founding member of a band and playing on its debut release, a privilege that had eluded him in his other recent projects, apart from Conquering Dystopia. "My main focus is just on this band at the moment," the drummer says.

On his decision to jump into the van and make a go of it with Good Tiger, a move that some may see as lateral, if not backward, given his distinguished résumé, Rüdinger says, "Good Tiger is a very healthy situation. I decided to do this over other offers that some people might think would've made more sense for me stylistically, given what I'd done before. But part of the reason I did this

is because it is a very different direction—and, most of all, a direction I wanted to go in musically."

Rüdinger tracked drums for Good Tiger's debut album, *A Head Full of Moonlight*, with the aid of acclaimed producer and bassist Adam "Nolly" Getgood of Periphery. "Nolly coproduced the album, engineered the drum session, and mixed the whole album," Alex explains. "I'd worked with him before on some things just as friends, but it was really exciting working with him on this album. Just the time that went into the engineering of it was insane. We were trying to go for a very consistent sound. It was pretty next-level, and I feel like it paid off. I feel like it holds up next to a lot of modern albums with really high-end production, except that the drums are one hundred percent real. There are no samples in it anywhere."

With their debut single, "Where Are the Birds," meeting critical acclaim, and with their first North American tour, with August Burns Red and Between the Buried and Me, in the books, Rüdinger and his Good Tiger bandmates are already happily at work writing the follow-up to *A Head Full of Moonlight*. "This is something I wanted to play every day on tour," Rüdinger says. "I wanted to do something more musical, and to be in a band where I'm writing. Above everything, the guys in this band are the greatest dudes. That's become very important to me."

Ben Meyer



Tama

Superstar Classic Drumset

Competitively priced with a nod to the past and tones for the contemporary.

Tama's all-maple Superstar Classic kits are now available with a striking Jet Blue Burst lacquer finish, which complements the drums' spirited sonic presence. Maple drums produce classic drum tones, boasting punchy, enthusiastic brightness with residual warmth. Tama's Superstar Classic series feature well-crafted, versatile drums that make for a great all-around kit at an affordable price point.

We were sent a seven-piece Superstar Classic shell pack to review (list price: \$1,499.98) that included an 18x22 bass drum; 7x8, 8x10, and 9x12 rack toms; 12x14 and 14x16 floor toms; and a 6.5x14 matching snare. All of the shells have 45-degree bearing edges. The snare and toms are 6-ply (5 mm), while the bass drum is 8-ply (7 mm). The bass drum is furnished with maple hoops, the snare and toms come with triple-flange hoops, and the rack toms feature Tama's Star-Mount suspension system, which is said to enhance sustain. All of the drums are outfitted with low-mass single lugs and the original T-style badge used on Superstar drums in the late '70s. The stock heads include Tama's Power Craft II clear single-ply (10 mil) on the toms, a coated single-ply snare batter, a clear single-ply bass drum batter with an internal muffling ring, and a stylish cream-colored non-ported bass drum resonant head.

Although single-ply heads may not be everyone's preference, they are an honest indicator of a drum shell's innate tonal character. Playing on a larger Tama kit like this one brought to mind some of my drumming heroes, such as Simon Phillips, Brann Dailor, Stewart Copeland, and Charlie Benante (all coincidentally Tama artists), so I took the drums through the high-to-low tuning spectrums with those players in mind.

I kept the batter and resonant heads at the same tension at all tunings, with the exception of the snare drum. The resonant snare head was tuned to a G (approximately four full turns above wrinkling), and it remained at that setting through all the tuning ranges. No muffling was used on the snare and toms, and a little muffling was used inside the bass drum.

I began at the top end of the tuning spectrum to test the 8" tom's choking threshold. It was able to go up to the note A, which was approximately two turns above wrinkling. I tuned the 14" floor tom an octave lower. The remaining toms were tuned to melodic equivalents, which turned out to be G octaves between the 10" and 16". The 12" fit nicely at D. The kick drum was tuned an octave lower than the 14" floor tom, and the snare batter was cranked up to an A.

My drum room is quite lively, so leaving the bass drum wide open resulted in it sounding a bit too explosive. To remedy that, I rolled up a towel and secured it with gaffer's tape to the batter head, which is a muffling technique used by Simon Phillips. The towel tamed the overtones perfectly without compromising the bass drum's sound. The drum's low-end punch was impressive and held a nice high-end attack without being boingy. The snare and toms sang and cut at this tuning, offering a tight, crisp attack and a bright tone that coaxed me into playing a plethora of melodic tom phrases. The kit was very touch-sensitive, allowing for excellent dynamic control.

For medium tension, the snare was tuned to G, the kick an E, and the toms at E (8"), D (10"), A (12"), F (14"), and D (16"). The kit breathed the most at this setting, as each individual drum felt like it was tuned to its sweet spot while also sounding fierce. The toms had a nice, even decay that stayed focused enough to prevent fast coast-to-coast fills from becoming muddled. They lost some sensitivity but still had plenty of presence and tone.

For the lower tuning range, the intervals between the



drums were narrowed. The tone became more prevalent, and the drums sported ample attack. The snare was tuned to an E, the kick to G, and the toms at C# (8"), A# (10"), G (12"), D (14"), and C (16"). This tuning served well for more note-heavy drumming styles, such as metal, thrash, or gospel.

These Superstar Classic drums had a wonderful tonal familiarity without sounding old-fashioned. They remained full of life across

the tuning spectrum and inspired me to play more melodically. One design feature to point out is the swiveling thumbscrew on the rack tom mounts, which makes positioning the drums a breeze regardless of the configuration. This is a very well designed drumset with a fresh, modern aesthetic, sonic versatility, and an impressive price point.

David Ciauro

For a video demo
of this kit, visit
moderndrummer.com.



Zildjian

S Family Cymbals

A new B12-bronze lineup with broader musical scope.

After two years of research and development, Zildjian has released a new series of B12 (12% tin and 88% copper) cymbals, the S Family, to replace its mid-level ZHT line. While retaining the bright, explosive tonal qualities and competitive price point that its predecessor was known for, the S Family is designed to offer a more balanced frequency response and expressivity for use in a variety of musical situations.

We were sent a sampling of Zildjian's top sellers in this new S series, which included a 10" splash, 14" regular and Mastersound hi-hats, 16", 18", and 20" Thin crashes, 18" and 20" Medium-Thin crashes, an 18" Rock crash, 18" and 20" Trash crashes, an 18" China, 20" Medium and Rock rides, and 22" and 24" Medium rides. All of the cymbals are fully lathed top and bottom, heavily hammered, and polished to a brilliant finish.

10" Splash

This little effects cymbal is paper-thin and possesses a glassy, high-pitched tone with a fast, bright attack and short sustain. It sounds best when smacked at medium or higher dynamics, as softer strikes didn't get all of the overtones to speak evenly. Even though it's quite thin, this S Family splash has a fairly firm feel—one that gives the sense that it will be quite durable for harder-hitting gigs. List price is \$79.95.

14" Hi-Hats

Josh Dun of the alt-rock/pop duo Twenty One Pilots is currently using several S Family cymbals on the road, including the 14" hi-hats. When interviewed about them for a video on Zildjian's YouTube channel, Dun stated that the S series is easier for their sound engineer to control, and they don't obliterate his bandmate Tyler Joseph's ears. The first things that I noticed about the 14" S hi-hats was their slightly muted sustain (which makes them less harsh when played at high volumes), firm feel, and bright, clear tone. The top cymbal is medium weight and the bottom is heavy. Like the splash, the 14" S Family hi-hats sound best when played at medium to loud dynamics. The closed sound allows for great articulation, the open sound is bright yet controlled, and the foot chick is clean and crisp.

The 14" Mastersound S Family hi-hats feature a hammered-edge bottom, which is designed to prevent airlock and to provide a faster chick sound and more balanced presence. I noticed that they had a deeper tone than the regular hi-hats, and they had a more shimmery open voice. Closed stick hits sounded a bit broader while remaining crisp and quick. Both sets of S Family hi-hats would be good for modern rock, electronica, metal, contemporary R&B, and other heavily amplified playing situations. List price is \$199.95.

Thin, Medium-Thin, and Rock Crashes

The 16", 18", and 20" S Family Thin crashes had a quick attack, bright and high-pitched sustain, and moderately short decay. They pack a lot of punch, which makes them great for situations where you need clear definition. Matt Greiner of August Burns Red states in a Zildjian promo video that he prefers the S Family Thin crashes because with them he's able to articulate different dynamics easily, even when striking the same cymbal multiple times in a row. The 16" S crash has the brightest attack and the most shimmer (\$119.95), the 18" is more focused and full-bodied (\$139.95), and the 20" has the broadest and most balanced wash (\$169.95).

The Medium-Thin versions—we had 18" and 20" crashes—sounded similar to the Thins but with less shimmer, more focus and power, and longer sustain. The 18" Medium-Thin had the most all-purpose sound of all the crashes, while the 20" Medium-Thin was more explosive and had a deeper and more billowing sustain.

The 18" Rock crash is designed to cut through the



mix, and it does so with a strong and punchy attack, a bright and high-pitched sustain, and a long decay. You really need to smack this crash to get it to speak fully, but when you do you get rewarded with a full, powerful, and well-balanced sound.

18" and 20" Trash Crashes and 18" China

Trash crashes are thin cymbals with rows of different-sized holes cut into them to add distortion to the tone. The S Family Trash crashes have a high pitch, but the sustain is shorter and less glassy than that of the regular S crashes. The 18" Trash crash had a papery attack and a nice amount of trashiness that dirtied up the tone without going so far as to turn it into a special-effects cymbal. To my ears, the 18" Trash crash had a nice, complex character that was reminiscent of what you get from a heavily hammered B20 crash. List price is \$149.95.

The 20" Trash crash had a grittier, nastier sound with very little sustain. This cymbal bridged the gap between the all-impact smack of the 18" China and the overdriven tone of the 18" Trash crash. List price is \$179.95.

The 18" S Family China, which is a favorite of metal great Jason Bittner, is a thin cymbal with a medium-bright tone, short sustain, and sharp, explosive attack. The cup is flattened on top to allow for easy upside-down positioning. It delivers everything you need from a China, meaning it hits fast and hard, has a gnarly tone, and gets out of the way quickly. You'll no doubt see this cymbal in use by many of the metal drummers on Zildjian's roster. List price is \$139.95.

20", 22", and 24" Medium and 20" Rock Rides

The S Family Medium rides have a bright and even sustain, clean attack, and moderate crash potential. The 20" version (\$169.95) was the most all-purpose of the three. It provided clear articulation and has a bright bell and moderate wash. The 22" (\$189.95), which was my favorite of the three, has a mellower wash, a richer ping, and a deeper-sounding bell. The 24" Medium ride (\$209.95) has the most defined ping, the lowest pitch, and the strongest bell. The 20" Rock ride (\$189.95) is medium-heavy and has long sustain, super-clean articulation, and a very powerful bell.

While they may lack some of the nuance necessary to be fully satisfying in low-volume, acoustic situations, the S Family cymbals excel in contemporary, full-volume applications where punch, power, and precision are the name of the game.

Michael Dawson

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





Maple Gum Drumset

Classic Jasper-style 6-ply shells with a contemporary twist.

I sat down behind a C&C kit for the first time about three years ago. It was a beautiful luan mahogany Player Date setup, and it was one of the warmest and best-sounding drumkits I've ever played. If I were blindfolded, I would have sworn that the floor tom was a 16" rather than a 14". After going to the company's website, I was equally impressed by its artist roster, which included drummers from the bands Death From Above 1979, Mumford & Sons, Grizzly Bear, Of Montreal, Cold War Kids, Valient Thorr, the National, Flaming Lips, Coheed and Cambria, Interpol, Local Natives, Arcade Fire, and many others.

This past spring C&C released its Maple Gum kit, which previously had only been available as a custom order for select artists and retailers. Company founder and master builder Bill Cardwell, who described the Maple Gum kit's sound to *MD* as "maple-poplar-maple on steroids," said that the inspiration for its shell design was the highly coveted 6-ply shells made in the 1960s by Jasper. There is a major difference between C&C's shell and Jasper's, however: on the C&C Maple Gum, the interior ply runs horizontally, while the older Jasper shell's inner ply runs vertically. According to C&C, the horizontal ply makes the shell stronger and adds brightness. The result is a consistently warm yet bright tone from each drum of the kit.

The bearing edges used on the Maple Gum shells contribute to the kit's warm yet articulate tones. The toms come standard with proprietary Full Contact edges top and bottom, which are said to provide warm, round tones with lots of body, control, and a subdued attack. The snare has a Full Contact edge on the batter side and a Bread and Butter edge on the resonant side, which uses a back cut on the outer two plies and an inside cut starting on the fifth ply, and the bass drum has Bread and Butter edges on both sides.

Maple Gum kick drums come in 18", 20", 22", and 24" diameters and 12" and 14" depths. They feature C&C's single-ended deco lugs, deco claws, and either vintage-style or modern spurs. The snares come in a 14" diameter and 5.5", 6.5", and 8" depths and feature single-ended deco lugs, stick-saver hoops, and a Deluxe Classic throw-off. Rack tom sizes are 8x12, 9x13, and 10x14, and floor toms are available in 14x14, 16x16, and 16x18 sizes.

With inspiration from a classic shell, C&C has created something timeless with the new Maple Gum kit. It's simple, consistent, durable, and downright tasty. And the finishes, which include Bright Tangerine, Sole Yellow, Sky Blue, Menta Green, Dark Olive, Eggshell White, and Dark Chocolate, are inspired by the colors used on Fiat coupes in the 1950s, which contribute to the Maple Gum being a true gentleman's kit. And although it sounds and looks like a million bucks, it's reasonably priced between \$2,700 and \$2,900 for a three-piece setup (minus snare).

Nate Bauman





Promark

ActiveGrip Forward 5A Drumsticks

Coated for a touch of tackiness as the intensity level increases.



Promark experimented with its ActiveGrip coating on Wilco drummer Glenn Kotche's signature Active Wave 570 stick, which was released in the summer of 2015. This year the company is expanding the ActiveGrip coating—to be offered in black—to some of its most popular models, including signature sticks for endorsing artists Rich Redmond and Mike Portnoy. We were sent a pair of Forward 5As with the ActiveGrip to review.

The ActiveGrip coating, which covers the entire stick except the tip, is formulated to provide an increased amount of tackiness as it heats up. The stick gets easier to hold as you play and sweat. Unlike some other coated sticks, the ActiveGrip is barely noticeable, and it's applied thinly enough to not increase the diameter or affect rebound. The coating also doesn't mark up drumheads and cymbals like the paint on some other colored sticks does.

I used these sticks for about six hours of studio sessions, and the ActiveGrip coating held up very well. The shoulder, where the stick

hits the edge of the hi-hats and crashes, eventually began to chip away to reveal the raw hickory underneath, but the coating on the rimshot area, which was heavily dented from dozens of backbeats, remained intact. The grip got a bit tackier as my hands heated up but never to the point of being distracting. My hands tend to sweat a lot, so the ActiveGrip helped me keep hold of the sticks without having to squeeze harder.

The other difference with the ActiveGrip 5A sticks is the tip shape, which is a traditional acorn rather than Promark's classic oval. This tip elicits a broader cymbal sound with more overtones when held at a flatter angle to the bow, while a steeper angle allows for a slightly softer attack and a more focused, pure sound. Rimclicks and rimshots sound essentially identical between the ActiveGrip 5A and a regular 5A. Check them out!

Michael Dawson



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SNARKY PUPPY'S HOLY TRINITY

For *Culcha Vulcha*, Snarky Puppy's eleventh album and first studio effort in close to a decade, bandleader, bassist, and primary composer Michael League recruited the three drummers—plus a trio of percussionists—who've been collectively backing the genre-defying jazz-fusion group over the past ten years.

Story by Willie Rose

Photos by Stella K.



**ROBERT "SPUT"
SEARIGHT**



**LARNELL
LEWIS**

**JASON "JT"
THOMAS**

Culcha Vulcha listeners could be justified in expecting the drumming world's newest testament of chops, considering each player's reputation and credentials. Robert "Sput" Searight shattered 7/8 time with a blazing solo in "Flood," from Snarky Puppy's 2010 release, *Tell Your Friends*, and he's held down the throne for such artists as Snoop Dogg, Timbaland, and Kendrick Lamar. Larnell Lewis, whose explosive performance on 2014's *We Like It Here* arguably helped propel the Pups to fame, played double-bass-rate 16ths on a single bass drum pedal—while nonchalantly toweling off—during his 2015 PASIC clinic. And when he's not out with

2012 *American Idol* winner and songwriter Phillip Phillips, Jason "JT" Thomas handily blasts through both drummers' recorded parts live with the group.

All things considered, *Culcha Vulcha's* drumming, provided by different pairings of Searight, Lewis, and Thomas, swerves from the anticipated. Massive yet unobtrusive grooves seethe underneath a world-influenced funk gumbo, without a drum solo in sight. Powerful in their modesty, mature in their restraint, and crushing in their tones, these three gospel-raised drummers (and friends) stretch way beyond chops on Snarky Puppy's newest collaborative statement.

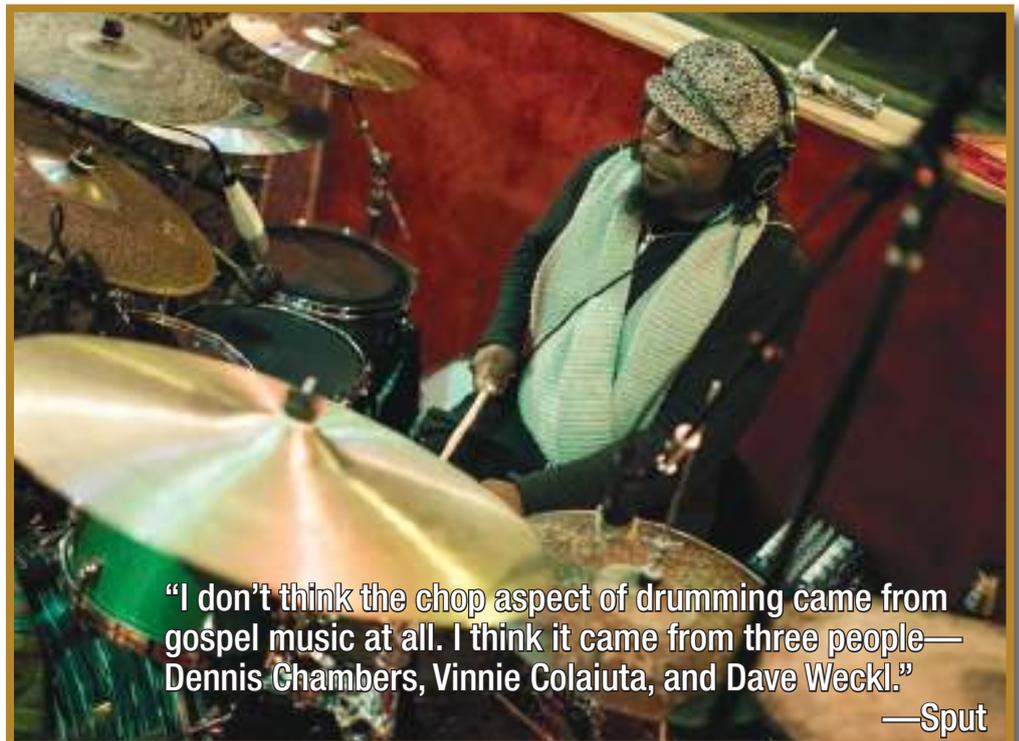
Culcha Vulcha

MD: Every track on the new record features two drummers. How were the parts conceived?

Larnell: Mike would decide which two drummers would play each song, and it was absolutely heavy on the composition side. For songs that weren't necessarily straightforward, we homed in on what was necessary. Sput or JT would play a section, and we'd be searching for a part or groove that fit best. Depending on whoever got that, we figured out what the other drummer's part would be to color the main groove, or we'd double up and play the same thing. In some cases, somebody might handle brushes while the other uses sticks. Having two people brainstorming really helped to get to the point faster.

For me, compositionally it's always been about trying to understand what makes and creates Snarky's sound within the drum and percussion section. It's this ability to create and compose parts where everybody knows where they need to be and all of these gaps are filled without walking over each other. A lot of that has matured from live shows. And it's awesome taking it into the studio, because on some songs you wouldn't know there's two drummers, or you'd think there was an overdub. But everything played on the drums was completely live.

JT: On some songs we're both drilling the



"I don't think the chop aspect of drumming came from gospel music at all. I think it came from three people—Dennis Chambers, Vinnie Colaiuta, and Dave Weckl."

—Sput

same groove. On "Tarova" I'm playing the deep snare part and hi-hat and Sput's playing a tight snare and bigger bass drum. I'm playing a 20" kick and he's playing a 24" or 26". In the first half of that song I'm playing the deep snare, and any tight snare stuff that you hear is Sput. Later it gets into the groove, and we're both playing cranked main snares. His snare was a 13" and I was using a tight 14". So even though they're both cranked, you can still hear the different pitches if you listen to it with headphones.

Sput: It's funny—it was JT, Larnell, and me in a room. But most of the drum parts were

being thrown at us by people who didn't play drums. And there was a point where we just laughed. I thought, *I'm sitting in between two of the baddest drummers in the world, and a sax player is telling us what to play.* [laughs] Everybody was throwing something into the pot. After going through that whole motion, we'd say, "Okay, let us come up with something." Out of respect to the guys writing the songs, you definitely want to make them happy. But in the end we went forward with our stuff.

And the music was different this time. It's centered around grooving underneath

the melodies. The band has evolved and become lovers of Afrobeat, and we've always been lovers of funk. We're trying to combine different elements together—Brazilian rhythms and melodies, Cuban melodies, or a Latin approach, all applied to funk. It's like a gumbo of genres. That's why this record is groove based.

I think Larnell and I just worked together. And it took a while, because I think we have two different styles of playing. Larnell has his sound. And we were able to implement both of our sounds in a lot of the songs and grooves. He would be playing these hi-hat sweeps on top of my groove, and he has this thing that he does with the ride bell. Every time he did that on top of my groove, the band would go nuts. We also took the James Brown drummer approach. He would play the bridge, I would play the verses, and then we might both play the choruses. It was like literally playing drum parts.

JT came there three or four days after we started recording, and in my opinion the session started when he got there. He brought the vibe, and everybody knew it and felt it. But on all of the songs that I played with JT, I basically copied what he was playing. We're both from Dallas, so we kind of have the same approach. We played the same stuff—the same fills. It was really scary to play with him like that, because we really hadn't gotten a chance to play together a lot. We'd play the same fill, look at each other, and bust out laughing. It was weird but really fun at the same time.

Larnell and JT's playing was the same way, but in their songs the writing was a little more complicated than 2-and-4, like the stuff that I played with JT. They got into some serious rhythms and patterns, so that was pretty unique to watch unfold. Larnell is the youngest of us, and he's a sponge. He still considers himself a student. But it was also a learning experience for me. He's such a fast learner with material, rhythms...everything. It's really cool to watch. I don't learn in that manner. I have to sit down and repeat certain things a couple of times before it really registers. And it's just a different process. But he's a quick study.

MD: How do you think the parts might change from the record to a live show?

JT: That's the same question we



“Playing in orchestras, or even just the symphonic bands in high school, I learned that a lot of drum sounds can really make or break a piece.”

—Larnell

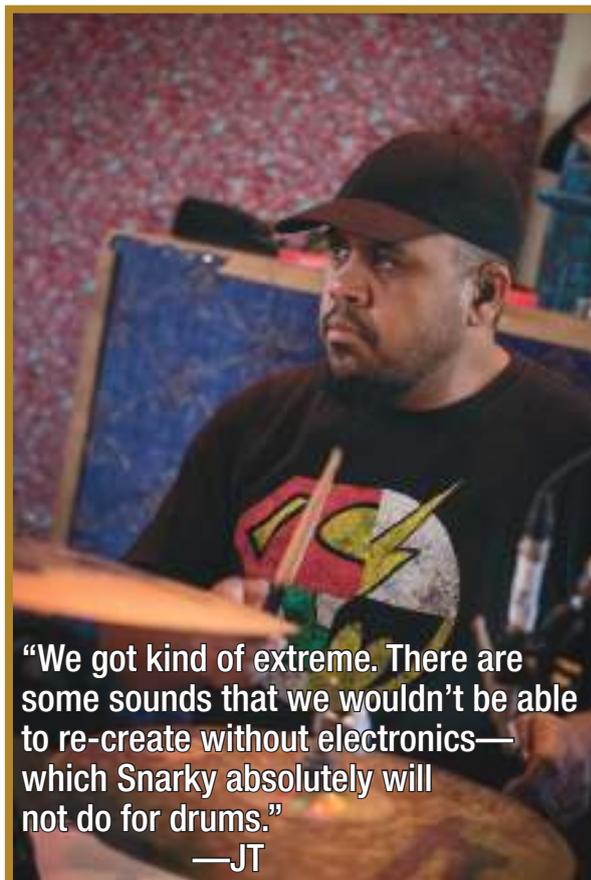
were asking ourselves. We have to figure out how to play this stuff live with only eight members, when fifteen or more people recorded. It was fun, but we definitely set ourselves up. I'm thinking, *Why did we do this to each other?* You realize that we have

to figure this stuff out live. When you have access to that many tracks and you're in the studio, it's like, *Do we want to do another part?* Sure. [laughs]

We got kind of extreme, especially Sput. The studio, Sonic Ranch in Texas, had a lot of gear, and a lot of old vintage gear, specifically drums. They had some old Slingerland and Rogers stuff and 24", 26", and 28" bass drums. And Sput used *every one* of them. [laughs] There are some sounds that we wouldn't be able to re-create without electronics—which Snarky absolutely will not do for drums. **MD:** What's your approach to coloring another drum part?

Larnell: I've definitely been a lover and fan of sounds and textures from the drumset and what they do to music. Playing in orchestras, or even just the symphonic bands in high school, I learned that a lot of those sounds can really make or break a piece. And I guess going about that really has to do with understanding where we're trying to go in the music. And I think another part of it comes from playing in church—you're playing a song for a long period of time, it seems to plateau, and you have to figure out how to take it higher. So you look at where you were and where you want to go, and then make adjustments for where you need to go.

Without being too abstract, I would say to experiment. If Sput's playing a heavy kick, snare, and hi-hat groove with a deep snare, that leaves me options on



“We got kind of extreme. There are some sounds that we wouldn't be able to re-create without electronics—which Snarky absolutely will not do for drums.”

—JT

my main snare, which is a lot higher than his deep snare. I probably might not play a kick drum, because he's using a 20", or sometimes a 28", and I'm using a 22". I brought a few hi-hats and a bunch of cymbals with me so that I could add whatever kind of contrasting color made sense. I would switch between a bunch of sticks and decide on what worked. And then if I was stuck, we'd figure out what to come up with on top of what was happening, based on whatever advice I had from Sput or the other band members.

Gospel's Drum Evolution

MD: In the drum world, there seems to be an association between gospel drumming and chops. What are your thoughts? Was there a point in time where you saw a change?

Sput: I'm always pinned as the bad guy, because I don't think the chop aspect of drumming came from gospel music at all. I think it came from three people—Dennis Chambers, Vinnie Colaiuta, and Dave Weckl. They were playing that stuff in the early '80s. Gospel chops didn't kick off until maybe the early 2000s. We were late bloomers. It's different in church, because the church musicians were raw. They didn't



have technical training and didn't read. They played by ear. But they could pull off and repeat certain things just by hearing them. We used our ears to regurgitate whatever we heard. So there's no technical drive behind it—it was something that you could do naturally because of the culture. We'd have to

learn songs by ear without sheet music.

I was doing gospel records during that period, from '97 to now. Maybe I used some of the influences of Dennis Chambers and all that in stuff I was playing as well. But by that time I was studying music in school, and I'd graduated high school and had gone to

Coloring Culcha Vulcha

Snarky Puppy's three percussionists—Nate Werth, Marcelo Woloski, and Keita Ogawa—on the newest album.

MD: Can you describe your compositional process?

Nate: The three of us worked as a team and utilized all of our strengths. We put the music first, and I feel that the result is truly a work of art. We work really well together, and humility is a very large reason for that.

MD: How do you stay out of the way or complement two drummers playing at the same time?

Nate: The most important tool that I use to avoid an overbearing sound is to listen. I don't want to play long or open sounds when the drummer is playing cymbals with long decays—it muddies up everything. We often think in combinations of two to four short sounds and then go from there. Sometimes on the bridge or chorus of a song I'll go to the longer sounds, and the drummer will stay on the hi-hat to keep the groove driving and crispy. We think of us as one drummer with one sound.

Marcelo: The key is to find parts that complement each other, lay out in some spots, double different timbres, and try not to overplay. We doubled up percussion parts, like the caixas [Brazilian snares], on "Semente" or the fills on "Big Ugly" [2:23]. And we double the drummers, like on "Tarova," where the repinique

and caxixis accentuate the snares. Also, sometimes there might only be one or two of us playing on part of a track. It's a concept that Nate and Sput have been developing.

Keita: It's great working with multiple percussionists at the same time. Before we got to the studio we all had demos of the songs, although I had no idea what sounds we'd use until we played. When we started rehearsing the songs, we'd discuss what instrument or sound we needed, create some phrases, and try them a couple of times. On some songs we used ideas from Brazil, Africa, and other areas, and then developed them our own way. Nate, Marcelo, and I are really close, so there's no problem making music together.

MD: Does playing with a different drummer live change anything within your parts?

Nate: Absolutely. It's such an honor to get to play with all of the Snarky Puppy drummers. I think each of them is among the greatest drummers living today. It's like a free lesson every night. We rarely play parts. We are constantly listening to each other and letting the rhythm and groove flow like water down a stream. Sometimes you don't know what's coming, but you know where you're going.



Werth



Woloski



Ogawa

The Pups' Gear

Jason "JT" Thomas

Drums:

- Yamaha Live Custom
- 7x14 and 5.5x14 snares
- 7.5x10 tom
- 8x12 tom
- 15x16 floor tom
- 16x20 kick drum

Cymbals:

- Meinl
- 16" Byzance Traditional Medium Thin hi-hats
- 16" Byzance Extra Dry Medium Thin hi-hats
- 19" Byzance Extra Dry Thin crash
- 12" Classics Custom Trash splash/12" Generation X Jingle Filter China stack
- 22" Byzance Vintage Sand ride
- 12" Classic Custom Trash splash/20" Byzance Vintage Trash crash stack
- 18" Byzance Jazz Thin crash

Hardware:

Yamaha

Heads: Remo, including Coated Ambassador X on main snare and Powerstroke 77 on deep snare with Hazy Ambassador resonants; Coated Emperor tom batters with Clear Ambassador resonants; and Coated Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter with Ebony Powerstroke 3 resonant

Sticks: Vic Firth, including AJ1, 5A, and 55A models

Accessories: Big Fat Snare Drum head and Meinl Ching Ring

Larnell Lewis

Drums:

- Yamaha PHX in textured natural ash finish
- 6x14 Hybrid Maple Absolute main snare
- 6.5x14 John "JR" Robinson Signature Nail Custom snare
- 7x10 tom
- 8x12 tom
- 15x16 floor tom
- 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals:

- Zildjian
- 14" K Custom Session hi-hats
- 14" A Custom EFX
- 8" A Zildjian Fast splash/8" ZXT Zildjian Trashformer stack
- 18" or 20" A Custom EFX/11" Oriental Trash splash stack
- 22" K Custom Dark Complex ride
- 18" A Custom EFX
- 16" K Zildjian EFX/14" Oriental China Trash/12" Gen16 splash stack
- 12" Z3 splash (used on snare with hi-hat clutch)

Hardware: Yamaha, including FP9500C bass drum pedal

Electronics: Yamaha, including DTX-MULTI 12 sampling pad and XP80 trigger pad

Heads: Evans, including G1 Coated batter on main snare and Hydraulic Blue Coated on deep snare with Hazy 300 resonants; G1 Coated tom batters and G2 Coated floor tom batter with Genera Clear resonants; and EMAD Clear bass drum batter with EQ3 Resort Smooth White resonant

Sticks: Promark, including Select Balance RBH550TW sticks, TB5 brushes, MT3 mallets, PMBRM1 Broomsticks, and Hot Rods

Robert "Sput" Searight

Drums:

- Tama Star Walnut
- 5x14 main snare
- 9x14 deep snare
- 5x10 Metalworks snare
- 7x12 tom
- 15x16 floor tom
- 15x20 bass drum

Cymbals:

- Meinl
- 12" and 14" Generation X X-Treme stack hi-hat
- 12" Soundcaster Custom splash/20" Byzance Trash crash stack
- 8"/10" Generation X Electro stack
- 10" Byzance Extra Dry splash
- 18" Generation X Safari ride
- 16" Byzance Extra Dry Medium Thin hi-hats
- 20" Byzance Vintage crash
- 10" Byzance Extra Dry splash
- 21" Byzance Transition ride
- 18" Byzance Vintage Pure crash
- 20" Byzance Extra Dry Thin crash
- 10" Byzance Extra Dry splash/18" Generation X Kinetik crash stack
- 22" Byzance crash/ride

Hardware: Tama Star stands, Iron Cobra Rolling Glide bass drum pedal, and Iron Cobra hi-hat.

Electronics: Yamaha

Heads: Evans, including Power Center Reverse Dot batter on main snare, Hybrid Coated on deep snare, and G1 Clear on piccolo snare; G2 Coated tom batters; and EMAD bass drum batter

Sticks: Vic Firth, including AJ1 and AJ2 models

college for a few years and had music education inside of me for at least eight years by then. So my approach was obviously different from somebody who hadn't had the fundamentals of studies.

During that time period it surfaced and blew up, and someone called it "gospel chops." But I think it was coined because musicians in the church community gravitated toward that style of playing, and it actually wasn't the standard way to play gospel music. It's the *opposite* way you're supposed to play gospel music. A lot of times, the only setting where you play that way would be in a shed, or in a practice setting, when you're playing with your other friends on two different drumkits. If you played like that in church you'd be kicked off the drums. You'd get kicked out. But now it's evolved and is becoming "the way."

The authentic gospel way of playing drums goes back to Joel Smith and Bill Maxwell. There are a few other names you could throw into the hat, but one guy in particular that innovated the way gospel music is played today is Calvin Rodgers. He's actually younger than me, and we've talked about this a lot. I've seen him grow up. I met him when he was twelve years old, and he's innovated and transcended the art of playing gospel music since that age. He was always



Snarky Puppy

evolving the style. So kudos to him for that, because it's the standard way gospel music is supposed to be played now. And his biggest influence is also Joel Smith. We've talked about it, and we both saw Joel play for the first time together, years ago now, and we both cried like babies when we saw this guy we grew up with playing. [laughs]

So that's my take on the gospel chops. I mean, I love it, but it's not really an approach I like to take in sharing music or playing music from my perspective. But a lot of it is obviously in me. I'm a big fan of Vinnie, I'm a big fan of Dave, and I'm *definitely* a big fan of Dennis. But I try to use it in a way where I can incorporate the rest of my influences, especially a lot of the jazz cats, like Billy Higgins, Billy Hart, Philly Joe, Jeff "Tain" Watts, Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, Roy McCurdy, and of course all of the guys from back in the day—Buddy Rich, Art Blakey, and all those guys that I learned from through my studies.

Larnell: For me in Toronto, specifically in terms of the Pentecostal and the Church of God, it was all heavily steeped in Caribbean music. My parents are from the Caribbean. They're from St. Kitts and Nevis. So we played a lot of soca, calypso, reggae, and zouk, as well as a bit of funk. We used fills obviously to ramp up the energy. But I think the biggest thing about gospel music, and drumming in particular, was to pay attention to the flow and energy of the service and be respectful of the moods. If there was a moment where it was getting really exciting, it was about knowing how to use the drums to continually take it higher, because you're playing the same song sometimes for maybe half an hour or forty minutes. So it was more about taking the energy up.

MD: Was there a point when you saw a change in Toronto?

Larnell: I can say that the crossover point probably came around or before the mid-'90s in Toronto. I'd say guys who were into Dave Weckl started trying to pull Weckl, Vinnie Colaiuta, and Steve Gadd licks off in church. [laughs] Basically if they got their hands on [Weckl's instructional book and video] *Back to Basics*, that's when things changed.

I think drummers started exposing themselves to the modern drumming world and took whatever made sense to use in a service. There was space to be aggressive. And at the same time there were some churches that didn't want that from the drums or didn't have drums at all.

But I don't think it's a negative thing, in terms of what people can do. It's always about what you do with what you have. At the end of the day, in any situation, it's about being musical. So if they're using it in a way



where they're trying to take it away from what's happening in the moment, then that's that. I do see how that stuff gets glorified and how people can be drawn to joining the ranks of drummers by being really "choppy." But that can become a really selfish move and sacrifices the purpose of the musical moment that we have in church.

JT: A record that sticks out for me was *Not Guilty... the Experience* by a gospel artist named John P. Kee [with the New Life Community Choir]. Calvin Rodgers was on drums. There was a song called "Rain on Us," which became famous among drummers because it had a section at the end where the band and choir had a riff and there were drum breaks in between. That sticks out to me as a time when you can see the shift in playing. Guys were getting a lot more aggressive and more technical with things.

The stuff that I grew up on—the '80s gospel stuff—was still bare-bones church recordings. Back then it was about the choir and the song. Musician-wise, nobody really stuck out like that. The music didn't even lend itself to that.

A big influence on all of us was Joel Smith from the Hawkins Family with Walter Hawkins and Edwin Hawkins. Even when Joel did do drum licks, it was all within the song. What he played didn't stick out to make himself be seen or heard. Even with his licks, his chops were completely different from what anyone else was doing at that time. He was always so musical with everything that he did—it never distracted from the song.

Now it's definitely a departure. You have the singers, the band, and then the drummer. And it can get overwhelming sometimes how aggressive the playing gets, to where,

to my ears, some of the stuff that they're playing is amazing—you can't take that away at all—but it just distracts from everything else that's going on and really doesn't make any musical sense, to a point where you're literally blowing over this song for no reason.

So I'd definitely say that it's changed majorly from the stuff I grew up on. If we had tried to play like that, like how guys play now, my father would have yanked me off the drums and I wouldn't have played anymore.

But to be fair, musically, the stuff back then was based around groove. Now with the music—even with the keyboard players, the bass players—everybody is in that same world musically in their head. So a lot of what the drummer is doing is in reaction to what he's hearing, because musically the stuff has changed too.

Someone told me, "Gospel is now almost like jazz-fusion." And technically, it gets that deep with some of the music that's out there. You have to really know what you're doing to even play this stuff, because it goes so deep licks-wise and chops-wise on every instrument, not just drums. So the whole music in itself has definitely pushed now to be way more aggressive musically—some of it's good, and some is definitely almost abusive. Sometimes I can't even concentrate on what's being sung or what's being done because there's so much going on musically that it's distracting.

Bass Drum Technique

MD: Larnell, can you give some insight on your bass drum technique?

Larnell: In church, double kick was a no-no. People couldn't afford it, and it was considered cheating. So a lot of guys stayed



The Official Drums of Jason "JT" Thomas

Yamaha artist since 2004, Jason "JT" Thomas is not only a versatile drummer but also a producer, writer, and singer. He has been in studios and on stages spanning the globe with the likes of RH Factor, Marcus Miller, Forq, Phillip Phillips, and, of course, Snarky Puppy. His solid groove, perfectly timed rhythms, and tasteful use of hybrid drumming, along with his high level of professionalism for each call, keep JT in demand from Dallas to Asia and everywhere in between.

Get to know JT here:
4wrd.it/OfficialThomas



The Official Drums of Larnell Lewis

Yamaha artist since 2005, Toronto-born Larnell Lewis has worked tirelessly to develop his understanding of rhythm and the melodic and harmonic aspects of music making. A musician, composer, producer, educator, and clinician with roots steeped in gospel, Larnell's amazing ability to accurately execute a variety of musical styles has brought him to gigs with artists ranging from Fred Hammond to Michael Brecker, Lalah Hathaway to Steve Gadd, David Liebman to Snarky Puppy. Larnell's hybrid drumming style is exciting and inspiring to watch, as he seamlessly integrates DTX electronics into his acoustic set.

Get to know Larnell here:
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The Official Electronic Drums of Robert "Sput" Searight

DTX artist since 2016, Robert "Sput" Searight is one of the most influential musicians and producers in modern music. Adding his creative heart and incredible talents for artists such as Snoop Dogg, Erykah Badu, Celine Dion, Timbaland, Myron Butler, Kirk Franklin, Ghost Note, and Snarky Puppy, Sput continually proves himself as a multifaceted drummer, keyboardist, and producer. And now with the addition of DTX in his arsenal, there is more inspiration for Sput's musical imagination.

Get to know Sput here:
4wrd.it/OfficialSearight

Snarky Puppy

away from it. But I remember seeing a clip on CNN, I believe, that I did a middle school class project on. They broadcast a Dennis Chambers performance with John Scofield on a song called "Trim." And they had a shot of Dennis where he's using his double pedal and crossing his hands while hitting the cymbals. Watching it, I had no idea that he had a double pedal. This was around 1998, so I didn't have Google. And I taped it and just sat there, and I wore that part of the video out trying to figure out what he was doing. I might've shown a friend or explained it to someone, and they were like, "Yeah, that's Dennis Chambers, and he has a double pedal." I was like, *What?* So from that point I decided that I had to work it out with a single pedal.

I just took whatever I already had in terms of playing double strokes. If you're used to doing quadruplets, or two on the kick and two with your hands, you're on your way. I usually tell people to try doing a double-handed shuffle but put the kick in there as well. Basically if you have the ability to play swung 8ths, straighten those 8ths out and you're on your way to doing consistent 8ths or 16ths on the kick.

MD: Is it a heel-toe thing?

Larnell: I actually play heel-up for a lot of this. I'm touching on two points on the footboard. I'm using heel-up doubles and basically straightening them out at faster and slower tempos. I worked on gradually speeding up and slowing down, playing at one tempo louder and softer, and changing the swing and the volume at the same time. I was just trying to manipulate it whenever I wanted to—basically whatever I could do for control.

MD: How long did that take to develop?

Larnell: I learned to do doubles when I was eleven or twelve, and I started working on consistent singles when I was thirteen or fourteen. I started getting a handle on it after about maybe three years, but it wasn't at top speed until a bit later.

MD: Sput, at certain points in your playing, it sounds like you're using the same technique.

Sput: I can tell you right now, what Larnell is doing and what I'm doing are completely different things. I'm definitely cheating. There's a way to pull out that sound that's easy for me to do because of the pitch of my drums. My floor tom is usually a 16", and it's super-deep. So when I hit it in the middle of doubled fills between the kick drum and floor tom, it sounds like it could all come from my foot. And I also incorporate the deep snare. But I'm doing more of a John Bonham thing.

I can do certain things just from playing



for so long. But the majority of the time I'm incorporating patterns between the floor tom and kick drum and speeding it up to try to make it sound really unique and play off it.

Business Advice

MD: Sput, you're the senior drummer in Snarky Puppy. Do you have any career advice for younger drummers?

Sput: I know it's typical, but I would say that it starts with practice. The way of the environment now, the culture, is the quick fix or quick advance. You can post a video and get a thousand likes, which could turn into a hundred thousand, and you instantly become an internet success. But when that success is happening early on, you're not able to really develop the fundamentals of your craft. If you start getting called at a young age, you stunt your development, because you're a professional now. And yeah, you can learn on the job sometimes, but sometimes you can't—sometimes the gig doesn't require you to learn on the job. So I always say when you're rent free or phone-bill free, that's when you have to put the most time into practicing.

It's having the knowledge and the notion that distractions are always going to be there, no matter what your age. But what you can't get back is that precious time that you can put into your craft. Practice doesn't make perfect, but it makes *permanent*, and I think if you practice in a certain manner, it stays with you for the rest of your life.

Other than that, stay humble and be a good study of business. That's what's left out. We have a passion to play, and that's natural, and really people don't pay us to play. They can't afford that. That's priceless. They pay for your time. And you have to be a good steward over the business of your time.

And that can get lost and people can get taken advantage of. But it all boils down to negotiation.

You're not negotiating your worth. I know that for me, in order to be the musician that I am now—I have a family, I have kids, I have grandkids—I have to be a good steward over my business so that I can take care of the people that I'm responsible for. I think that's left out a lot in the encouragement and the advice that you give this generation of guys coming up. I think they get the advice about the gigs, and how to keep a gig. Of course you have to be disciplined and be able to answer an alarm clock. You have to balance all of the free alcohol you get and all of the free perks of the gig. But in the midst of having fun, you have to be business-minded about it.

You also have to think about the next gig while you're on your current gig. Once this gig is over, the artist goes home. They have the luxury to go on hiatus. I got a Justin Timberlake gig, and he decided he wanted to be an actor as soon as I got it. [laughs] I was playing with Timbaland, and I got the gig by default when [Timberlake] decided to be an actor. So he did the Facebook movie and did a couple other successful movies, and he said, "Okay, I'm an actor now." It was like a three-year period where I thought, *I'm not waiting for Justin Timberlake.*

Successful artists are successful because they worked hard to get where they are and can make decisions based on their convenience. God rest his soul, but I've heard stories about Prince. He never really had a schedule. You'd have to be on call or look out for that email that says to get on a plane tomorrow. That would frustrate me. But then he'd pay you \$10,000 a gig, so you learn how to deal with that frustration really quickly.





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EVANS + SNARKY PUPPY

EVANS HEADS GIVE NATE WERTH, LARNELL LEWIS, AND SPOT THE ABILITY TO FIND THEIR SOUND



Steven Tyler's Sarah Tomek

Greetings from...Nashville? How a girl from Jersey left the nest to realize the drumming dreams of her father and power the solo success of a true rock 'n' roll icon.

Story by Adam Budofsky • Photos by Rick Malkin

Sometimes you just don't know what's waiting for you when you walk off that stage.

I was first convinced of Sarah Tomek's eminent skills on a night when our bands were both on the bill at Asbury Lanes, a bowling alley turned rock club in Tomek's hometown. Yup, the same one immortalized in the title of Bruce Springsteen's famous debut album. The boardwalk calliope might not have come crashing down that night, but the gig nearly did. A raging storm knocked out the club's power for a few hours and left its six-foot-tall, bowling-pin-shaped front sign dangling precariously in the wind. But the electricity eventually returned, the room slowly filled, and the mood improved to downright cheery after my group played what we felt was a pretty strong set.

Then a local band called Ben Franklin took the stage, and... well... let's just say that when Tomek's husband, drummer/singer Larry Florman, later half-joked to me, "She's so good, I don't play drums anymore," my mind immediately returned to that night at Asbury Lanes. As the bowlers threw strikes and gutter balls on either side of them, Ben Franklin absolutely *raged*. Tomek threw out thunderous chops, had a groove to die for, sang backgrounds with the swagger of a lead singer, and wore a huge, ever-present smile that made you feel lucky to be in the same room she was performing in—even if at the same time you were thinking, *Maybe I oughta give up this drumming thing*.

Later I learned that Tomek had spent years slogging it

out on the New York, Philadelphia, and South Jersey scenes, performing with numerous acts, among them the highly regarded journeyman guitarist Glen Burtnik, rocker Bebe Buell, and the top tribute band Lez Zeppelin. Eventually she was invited to drum and lead the band for an up-and-coming crossover country singer named Maggie Rose, a gig that required a relocation to Nashville. Sometime after that, Tomek was "discovered" while playing Aerosmith covers by songwriter and producer Marti Frederiksen, who was in the process of putting together the backing band for singer Steven Tyler's highly anticipated country-rock project. Soon Sarah was building a solid Nashville résumé out of Frederiksen's Quad Studios and performing with Tyler, including his coming-out show at Lincoln Center's David Geffen Hall and subsequent tour. All the while, she continued to appear with Rose, the country-punk artist Raelyn Nelson (Willie's granddaughter), and the rock group she shares with Florman, Them Vibes.

Nope, sometimes you don't know what's waiting for you when you walk off that stage—though Tomek would be the first to agree that being discovered is generally preceded by years of dues-paying. Sitting across from her in a window seat at P.J. Clarke's, from which one can clearly view the glass and concrete entryway of the esteemed Geffen Hall—where Tyler and Loving Mary were rocking the house just twelve hours earlier—perhaps it's only natural to ruminate on the path, and the personality traits, that led her here.



MD: On the way into the city today, there was a talk show on the radio and the topic was grit, which the guest defined as passion meets perseverance. The question was whether it can be developed in people, or whether you just have it. Would you describe yourself as someone who's always just had it?

Sarah: A hundred and ten percent. Maybe it was from my father and seeing his career.

I've just always wanted this. The work has been relentless. Even with this great gig, I'm in four other bands.

MD: You mention your dad, Joe Tomek. What was his career like?

Sarah: My dad was a New York City musician. He wasn't a hired gun, he was very much from the band mentality. The guys in Kiss loved his band, Mushroom. He also played with Richie Havens for a long time.

He did a lot of work at the Record Plant in the '70s, including the preproduction for John Lennon and Yoko Ono's *Double Fantasy* album. The band was later fired because Yoko overheard them making fun of her. [laughs] John wanted to take him on the road, but then he was murdered weeks later.

I just grew into my dad's shoes. He wanted a boy, but he got me. [laughs] He continued playing but never really had a playing career. He did the day-job thing. He could have been a studio cat, though. He was a badass.

MD: You grew up in Asbury Park, New Jersey.

Sarah: Yup. It was an awesome place to grow up, with an amazing music scene and a thriving art culture. And what better situation than to have your father be a drummer and have drums around? We made a deal once—he'd buy new drums and I'd buy the cases. That's how we got our first Yamaha Recording Custom drums, which I still have.

My dad would be super-proud now, but he was hard on me. It paid off, though. He had me in the studio on a click track at eleven. So I have no qualms playing to a click, which everyone in Nashville has to do.

MD: What was your first serious band?

Sarah: Days Awake. We had a good draw in New Jersey and New York. That was the first time I fell in love with being in bands. It was the family vibe of it.

MD: When was this?

Sarah: Around 2003—I was about twenty. We did a couple EPs, which taught me how to be better in the studio. We had a studio in our basement. Before that I was just practicing to records.

MD: Did you take lessons?

Sarah: I did private lessons with Jason Rullo, who's in Symphony X. He was a total mentor to me. Jason was great at teaching me song form, keeping me on a rehearsal schedule, and keeping me healthy—he taught me a lot about vitamins, hydration, stretching.

I also did a summer seminar at Berklee right after high school, which was phenomenal. I got to study with El Negro [Horacio Hernandez]. I always wanted to go to Berklee, but I knew I didn't want to be a teacher, and I didn't want to go into extreme debt. But I continued taking private instruction and playing in different genres. In my later twenties I started playing in the city more. I had a nine-to-five in the music business, but three days a week I'd be in Manhattan playing, getting home at three in the morning. There was an electro band called Hustle Club, an amazing R&B artist named Gedeon Luke, a punk band called



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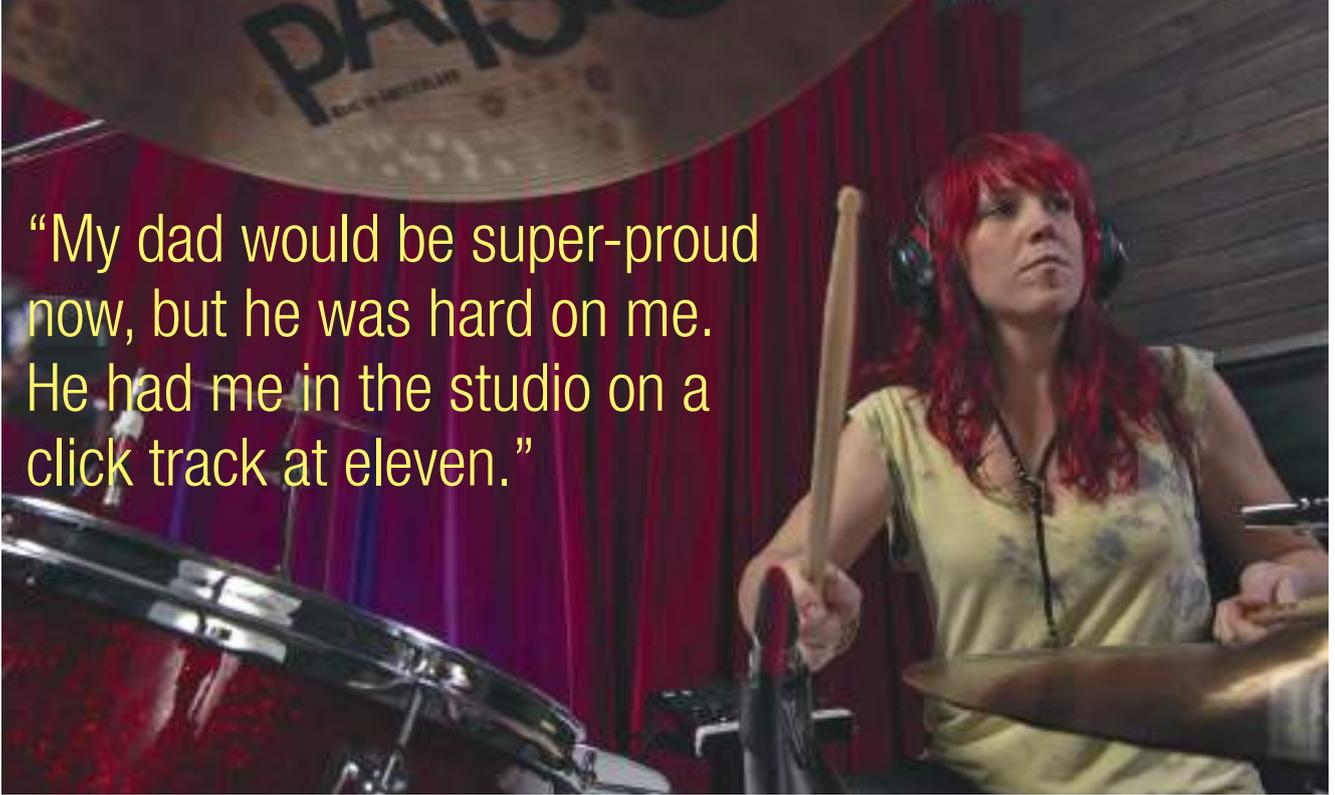
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“My dad would be super-proud now, but he was hard on me. He had me in the studio on a click track at eleven.”



Ben Franklin....

MD: That’s who you were with when I first saw you. One of the things I remember was how well you sang. When did that start?

Sarah: God, I don’t remember. The first time I was in the studio I sang “Come Together” by the Beatles.

MD: You played that song last night with Steven Tyler.

Sarah: Yeah, but I don’t sing on the Steven gig, though he wants me to. Since I moved to Nashville, my ear for harmony has gotten so much better.

MD: How did you hook up with Maggie Rose?

Sarah: Around 2007, Days Awake was working with another Asbury legend, Lance Larson. He brought this girl from Nashville, Maggie Rose, to the Stone Pony, and he wanted us to learn one of her songs and play with her. She was maybe nineteen at the time. Fast-forward to 2012, and I was playing with the Bebe Buell Band—which is ironic, because she’s Steven Tyler’s ex and Liv Tyler’s mother. That band was phenomenal. Anyway, we had a gig in Orlando once, and Maggie’s business partner was there and made the call for me to audition a week later in Nashville for James Stroud, who’s a famous Nashville producer and drummer. So I flew to Nashville and auditioned, and I was offered the gig. I had to be in Nashville in two weeks. So it all happened very quickly. It’s funny how it all stemmed from Asbury Park.

MD: Was it ever a plan for you to move to Nashville?

Sarah: No, I wanted to move to Manhattan or Brooklyn. I thought that’s where it was

going to be for me. But I wasn’t making any coin there. A lot of clubs were closing down.... I didn’t know anything about Nashville at that point. It was terrifying—I quit my job and moved there all alone. But immediately it was a dream. We did 180 dates in ten months, doing radio shows during the day and clubs at night, and I became Maggie’s bandleader. I played exclusively with her for two or three years—I still play with her—and then I started

branching out as I had more time to play with other people. And I was still coming home occasionally. I left my Bonham Vistalite kit and a small Leedy kit in New Jersey, and I would come back and play with Glen Burtnik. I’m still always hustling.

MD: How have you found working in Nashville?

Sarah: Nashville is an extremely male-dominated city/business.

MD: More so than other places?



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Sarah: I believe so. I still hear, "You're the best girl drummer I've seen." My answer is always, "Right, I strive to be the best *girl* drummer—so thank you very much." My father was hard on me, though, so nothing derails me.

The first time I got to track with Maggie was for her single "Girl in Your Truck Song." She had me come into Quad Studios, which is a famous Nashville studio. We went out that night to celebrate with her producer/cowriter at the time, Dallas Davidson. Later we went down the street where some buddies of mine had a residency at a club playing '70s music. They'd always have me come down and play Aerosmith songs. So I sat in on a couple songs, and when I got off stage, the first person I saw was this tall gentleman who introduced himself as Marti Frederiksen. I knew exactly who Marti was, because I'm a huge Aerosmith fan. And it was ironic, because he owns Quad Studios and I was just there that day recording. A couple weeks later I get a call to be in Marti's Americana band, Loving Mary, and also to play with Steven for these solo dates he was doing.

Marti's done so much for my career. He immediately took me under his wing. I think he just saw the excitement in my playing and how good I was on a click.



MD: The Steven Tyler show was interesting in that, without Aerosmith up there on stage, somehow more attention was put on the songs themselves. There were covers and segues, and your parts were so streamlined and purposeful.

Sarah: I'm more of a song lover than a drummer lover. My goal has always been to make the band as comfortable as it can

possibly be, and make the show a success. So what better place for a girl? It's like a matriarchy. Being Maggie's bandleader, I think people appreciate my leadership style. I just want to make it go. My life's a mess, but everyone else around me has what they need. [laughs]

MD: Even though you don't sing with Steven yet, you have a mic on stage.

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Sarah Tomek

Sarah: Everyone's on ears. Wedges are pretty much obsolete on the road. I have a talkback mic—the audience can't hear me—and I'm on a click. I'm announcing the song, counting it in, guiding transitions. And anything can happen during a show. Last night Steven popped a champagne bottle on stage and it got all over the lap steel, and I knew the next song had lap steel, so I had to tell the crew guy to clean it off right away. I'm always staring at the artist, making sure that they have exactly what they need, because the night is all about them.

MD: You're smiling all the time on stage.

Sarah: I can't control it! [laughs] Steven

has literally said to me, "I want you to look meaner." The hardest thing I ever had to do was a mime of Robert Palmer's "Addicted to Love" video, the one where the women have these blank expressions. How can you look upset when you're playing drums? I'm so tense every other second of the day; that's my release. And that energy rubs off. The greatest thing about Steven Tyler is that you're never going to out-perform him.

MD: The stories about Joey Kramer and Steven in the studio with Aerosmith are notorious. Coming into that situation...

Sarah: ...was terrifying. Being a huge Aerosmith fan, I heard all the horror stories.

He'll correct you. He'll come up behind the kit. He knows exactly what he wants from the drums—and thank God! I *want* to be taught. I was playing "Walk This Way" wrong, and he mouthed it for me [sings hi-hat *psst*]. You choke the hat with your left foot to get that; it's not a hit with your hand. But he's been nothing but a gem to work with. He appreciates the dynamics that I play with. And I've listened to his in-ear packs—he likes the drums *loud*.

With the Steven gig the hardest thing for me is trying not to be Joey Kramer. And we're playing Aerosmith songs, so how do you do that? I simplify things. I'm not shuffling the hi-hat as hard on "Cryin'." I'm just trying to keep it more crisp and pristine.

MD: You said before that you're on a click.

Sarah: A lot of the guys are using the SPD-SX pads now for tempo changes and loops. We don't use loops with Steven—it's all live—so I'm just poking at a click track. I like to keep the show on a click, because the guys and girls in Loving Mary are all studio cats, and I like to dig deep for a groove, so I tend to play on the heels of stuff. So putting me on a click keeps me in shape.

It took a while to learn the flow of a show, where I change the tempos. Steven doesn't take a click in his ear, and I don't want to feed him a hi-hat. I want it to be a clean show and let him lead us. It can be a challenge. On "Dream On," for instance, he doesn't like to be pushed.

MD: You rarely played anything smaller than 8th notes last night—for good reason. The songs don't demand it.

Sarah: Being on a gig with someone of this stature, simplicity is the best. There are seven musicians on stage, so I need to create space. And it's about dynamics. They just put triggers on my drum shells—not for sound, but so the vibration of the shell sets off the gates. I have a thumper on my seat, so when the gate opens, my ears open. There are songs we play with brushes, mallets.

MD: There was one song where you went back and forth between them a few times.

Sarah: I haven't gotten the art of that yet. I kind of just throw them down and have my guy bring them back. All of a sudden I have "a guy." [laughs]

MD: What are your short- and long-term goals?

Sarah: Right now I've pretty much hit all my marks for the year, and I can't be any happier. I really want to see the success of Loving Mary and Maggie Rose. She moved me here—she's made my whole life. I want to see this tour through with Steven, and then set new goals.

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Paal Nilssen-Love

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by Ken Micallef

Imagine an organic synthesis of Elvin Jones, Art Blakey, and Milford Graves poured through a thoughtful post-hardcore player, and you have Norway's Paal Nilssen-Love. A busy musician who divides his performances between solo concerts and support roles, Nilssen-Love brings the muscle of Mastodon's Brann Dailor and the hardcore throttle of Shellac's Todd Trainer to free-jazz environments. And he does so with as much sweat as possible. Allying passion and beautiful jazz-based improvisation with supple skills, Nilssen-Love is one of the most innovative drummers to come out of Europe in the last forty years.

Nilssen-Love is more than a musician; he's a creative tornado who has recorded more than fifty albums (including a dozen solo drumming releases), founded Oslo's All Ears and Blow Out! improvisation festivals, runs the PNL Records label, and is an inveterate vinyl collector. At his core, Nilssen-Love stokes a free-jazz flame that inspires thousands of musicians within this popular but stubbornly underground style.

After studying at Norway's University of Science and

Technology in his early twenties, in 1996 Nilssen-Love moved to Oslo, and his career hit warp speed. Since then, in addition to the many solo discs, he's performed and/or recorded with Chris Potter, Mats Gustafsson, Atomic, Frode Gjerstad Trio, and Sten Sandell Trio, overseen duo projects with Ken Vandermark, John Butcher, organist Nils Henrik Asheim, and noise sculptor Marhaug, and regularly performed with saxophone anarchist Peter Brötzmann's Chicago Tentet.

For a quick exposure to Nilssen-Love's work, check out how he smacks the free-jazz hardcore assault of the Thing (*Boot!*), brings Brötzmann to heel (*Woodcuts*), maneuvers the "pools of sweat, slabs of meat" of the eleven-piece collective Large Unit (*Erta Ale*), and keeps his drums close to home on his solo discs *Miró*, *27 Years Later*, and *News From the Junk Yard*. His ever-shifting sound sources, primal tension-and-release allusions, polymetric concepts, dramatic use of dynamics, surprising hand techniques, and dark sound palette create a flowing, turbulent vision from which neither eyes nor ears can turn away.



Petra C v elba r



Zig a K ortnik



Zig a K ortnik

MD: Watching your videos, your hands look welded to the sticks. And you sometimes use a small range of motion. It's like the opposite of the Moeller technique. Are you using more fingers than wrists?

Paal: My dad played drums, and I'm still playing his 1960s George Hayman kit. He used traditional grip. School band stressed matched grip. But in marching band you needed traditional grip for the tilted snare drum, though I didn't use it. When giving lessons I focus on each finger. I also suggest playing single-stroke rolls in the air, not on a drum, and using every finger individually.

MD: You draw a level of subtlety and detail from your left hand that I associate with traditional grip.

Paal: When I was growing up, the drumkit was always there, and I was always playing. If you're going to play the drums, use it as a musical instrument—play and have some fun with it. I've never woodshedded and become depressed because I couldn't play some rudiment. But when I have a couple hours I'll work on stamina and strength, and loud and fast, and fast and quiet. And being sure my shirt is drenched while doing it.

MD: You grew up around your parents' jazz club.

Paal: Yes, Art Blakey played my parents' club when I was eight years old. He encouraged me to play his drums on stage, which I didn't dare to, but he did give me his drumsticks. Blakey came to our house afterwards and we stayed up half the night. He signed one of his LPs for me. That made a great impact on me. Blakey was extremely kind. When he came back a few years later he said, "Where's my boy?" I did play his kit the second time he came.

MD: What other drummers who played the club impacted your future drumming?

Paal: John Stevens, Tony Oxley, Steve McCall, and Billy Higgins all came through.

MD: You sit high, and you seem to play *into* the head.

Paal: I go through phases. For instance, my floor tom is almost on the ground now. I don't know why. I'm playing double-stroke rolls

between the bass drum and floor tom more now. That may be an influence from metal music. And my right-side ride cymbal is really high. I used to have them really low as the throne was going higher. I developed back problems from that. The higher throne helped protect my back.

MD: Does the higher throne influence your sound?

Paal: If you sit low or high, it changes the way you play. When you sit low with the drums all around, you play more laid back in a way. I also play differently depending on where the drums are placed.

MD: In your extended solos, you play more drums than cymbals.

Paal: I'm not always conscious of what I'm doing. But I'm using the cymbals more now than in the past. Maybe I'm more aware of the various overtones that exist in the different rooms I'm playing. For twenty years I traveled with my own kit. Now I find it fascinating dealing with different drumkits.

MD: Do the different sound sources of your kit dictate the direction of a given solo?

Paal: For sure. Let's say I do a gig with Ken Vandermark, who I've worked with a lot. There the drums have more of a rock sound. But all these different drumkits and different rooms affect

the music I play and the way I play. It all becomes part of the improvising.

MD: You're improvising off the room as well as the music?

Paal: For sure. You're improvising off the day you had and whether you went to an art exhibit or whatnot. That happens more now than twenty years ago, when I played the same set all the time. If I use a bigger bass drum than normally, then I'm hearing that against my ride cymbal. I always use my own cymbals.

MD: Do you carry percussion and cymbals on tour?

Paal: I always travel with a heavy case of snare drum, woodblocks, cymbals, gongs, and a bunch of sticks as well.

MD: Your drums have a dark tonality.

Paal: I played the Bison Company snare drum on most records after 2002. It's deeper than a normal piccolo. The Bison drum has great

"I can't slow down if the music is on fire. Even if it's a solo, I try to force myself through the pain and numbness."



Zig a K oritnik



Zig a K oritnik

flexibility. Sometimes I hit the snare drum, then slide the stick on the head from right to left, which alters the pitch. I haven't had another drum where I could do that.

MD: You're a very intense drummer. Are you generally slamming the drums?

Paal: If the music is extreme I will use a lot of force. In *Lean Left* with Ken Vandermark, that can get really loud.

MD: Is your drumming as influenced by jazz as by punk and metal?

Paal: The last couple of years I've been listening to a ton of Brazilian music. Before that I was into Ethiopian music. And there was a

Nilssen-Love's Setup

Drums: 1960s Hayman set including a 10x12 tom, 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms, and a 14x20 bass drum; 5x13 Bison Drum Company snare

Cymbals: Paal will alternate between certain models depending on the volume of the band. His main cymbals include 13" Zildjian Constantinople hi-hats, a 20" Zildjian Constantinople Medium ride (used as a crash), a 1970s 22" A Zildjian ride, a 22" Paiste 602 Medium ride (blue label), a 22" Zanki China Pang, a 1970s 18" Paiste 602 Flat ride, and a 1960s 16" K Zildjian crash.

Percussion: Korean gongs, salsa cowbell, Paiste Sound Disks, various woodblocks, Chinese drums, Styrofoam, metal objects from Ethiopia

Sticks: Vic Firth SD2 Bolero sticks, Jazz brushes, and T2 mallets; various sticks made of bamboo; Brazilian split-sticks; guiro sticks; and other items



Petra C v el ba r

period when I was listening to metal. I didn't try to copy those drummers, but after a while it affects your playing. All of a sudden the different elements of all these musics appeared in my drumming. I'm also fascinated by forró drumming and Bahia. I was in Brazil over Christmas playing with musicians and dancers; it would go on all night. I like to play with drummers who give workshops, from Ethiopia to Brazil. The average guy in Norway doesn't know much about his own folk music or heritage. But in Brazil, Ethiopia, and Cuba it's an entirely different matter.

MD: Back to your solos, how do you chart a direction?

Paal: As soon as I get a feeling of an idea, there's something to build upon. Once I played solo drums for an hour. Fortunately I got into some kind of flow. I try to get energy happening. You hope you will be spontaneous enough, but at the same time you're trying to sustain an idea and develop it. It's not being in control of the music; it's letting the music

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control you. And being conscious enough to send the music in different directions and develop it. You have to make sure you don't trap yourself.

MD: How do you pace yourself?

Paal: I start off high-energy, but if I realize I don't have the chops, I can't slow down if the music is on fire. Even if it's a solo I try to force myself through the pain and numbness in the fingers and thumbs.

MD: How do you play through numbness?

Paal: [laughs] Once I was playing with Peter Brötzmann in Stockholm. I had to play a solo and then a duet, and after a while I could only hold the sticks with my thumbs. I didn't have any feeling in my fingers. But you can't stop; you have to go for it. After a while the blood returned to the limbs and I was okay.

MD: What are the differences between the U.S. and European schools of creative improvisation?

Sweden quite a lot.

MD: What records impacted you when you were growing up?

Paal: Art Blakey records for sure, and records with Tony Oxley, Tony Williams Lifetime, Mahavishnu Orchestra. I also loved how Sunny Murray and Milford Graves reinvented how to play the drumset. You see these drum battle videos between Art Blakey, Max Roach, Elvin Jones, and Sunny Murray; Blakey knocks the shit out of them. I also listened to Steve McCall and Phillip Wilson. Wilson played free music, but he came from a blues background with Paul Butterfield. He played with Peter Brötzmann and David Murray too.

MD: What is the value of silence in your improvisations?

Paal: You can't get the effect of loudness if you don't have quiet. The same thing with playing sparse versus playing very dense.



Petra C y e l b a r

Paal: There are different ways of playing between the two different cultures. Within Europe you have different countries with very different cultures. You have different ways of playing in Holland, Belgium, Germany, and England. You can still hear the differences between a Swedish saxophonist or drummer and an American player. From the '60s you could hear the big differences between all the European players and their respective countries. The Germans were more aggressive, while the Dutch had more humor in their playing. In the '60s, the English drummers Tony Oxley and Paul Lytton were the house drummers at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club. At one point they wanted to explore and experiment, and they created their own music. In Norway there has always been a tradition of finding your own sound. In the whole of Europe every country has its own take on American jazz. Dexter Gordon had a great impact in Copenhagen, for example. Don Cherry affected the scene in

Musicians think they have to play constantly on stage. But if you don't have anything to say, don't say it. You don't have to make a sound just because you are on stage with an instrument. If you can wait and then hit, then you'll feel some different kind of power.

MD: You had testicular cancer in the early 2000s. How did that change your life?

Paal: It changes your whole view of life, everything. I thought I had back pain. I thought I was burned out, that I was working too hard. I was off for half a year dealing with treatment, and then spent two months getting my chops back. The first time I played music together with people after that was very special.

You learn to appreciate the small things in life. It made me love being a musician even more. In the end you feel you're on borrowed time. You realize you can't waste any of the life you've been given.



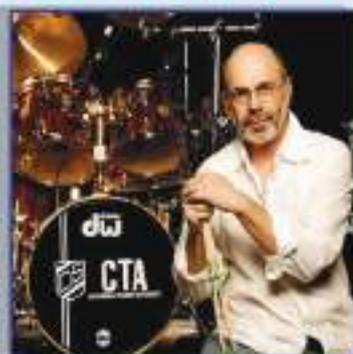


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Victor DeLorenzo

Can't Sit Still

The pinging, clanging, and thumping noises emanating from his minimalistic setup aren't the byproduct of mindless thrashing and bashing. They're the purposeful tones of a seasoned former Femme reclaiming his musical soul.

by Will Romano



Ma tt H a ss

When most of his peers were flying by the seat of their collective pants, Victor DeLorenzo was standing up to be counted with the legendary Milwaukee-based art-punk folk-rock trio Violent Femmes.

DeLorenzo, an experimental jazzier at heart, subverted the traditional drumkit setup by standing on stage while slapping the skins and employing metal brushes to scratch and swirl around his idiosyncratic and rather minimal assortment of drums. Without the use of a hi-hat or other percussive components that some musicians would deem vital for live performance, DeLorenzo attempted to extract the most sound he could from a single drum—and did so from the front of the stage.

In the commercial rock world of the early 1980s, the notion of a percussionist forgoing a throne and a kick drum, performing on the “front line,” and relying on a low-tech custom device dubbed the tranceophone, was perceived as being tantamount to career suicide. In reality it proved nothing of the kind. In fact, DeLorenzo fathered one of the most iconic (if simple) drum breaks in all of ‘80s pop, in the catchy and ubiquitous ditty “Blister in the Sun.”

With Nineteen Thirteen, a new duo he helped form in recent years with Milwaukee-based cellist Janet Schiff, DeLorenzo continues to challenge the preconceived norms of rock drumming. He forges ahead by applying wire brushes, mallets, and multi-rods to a setup made up of one cymbal, a snare, a bass drum, and two floor toms.

Although often labeled jazz, Nineteen Thirteen plays (largely) instrumental music that perhaps more closely resembles art rock or chamber rock. DeLorenzo hasn’t totally shunned the mainstream music business (he rejoined his on-again-off-again gig with the Femmes for a brief stint in 2013), but is apparently most comfortable exploring the outer edges of pop, grooving to the mechanical mannerisms of Schiff’s Boss RC-300 looping device while performing. “The looper has really developed my intuition and listening ability to lock in with grooves being created at the moment,” DeLorenzo says.

Croaking layered bass lines provide the bedrock foundation of the music, as Schiff bows beautifully eerie lead melodies from her cello, a vintage instrument crafted in Romania in the year 1913, hence the band name. The combined effect shoots shivers down the spine yet provides some measure of comfort for the listener—something akin to whistling past a graveyard at midnight. Equally chilling and effective is the band’s partially improvisational music for the multimedia theatrical project *A Woman’s Place*, created by Kelly Coffey, which follows the narrative of five women trapped inside a Milwaukee insane asylum.

Ghostly sonic treasures abound. For its 2016 studio album, *Music for Time Travel*, Nineteen Thirteen repurposed recorded material from 1961 by organist Margy Schiff, Janet’s grandmother, for a spooky cover of George Gershwin’s “Summertime” (which also features veteran upright bassist Rob Wasserman).

Outside of Nineteen Thirteen, DeLorenzo remains active in a number of endeavors across several disciplines. In addition to performing, painting, producing, engineering, writing, and recording—perhaps most notably a 2013 self-titled solo album largely arranged around voice and drums—he is sketching plans for a one-man theatrical play that would involve drumming performances. As with so many aspects of his professional life, DeLorenzo relishes the many creative options at his disposal.

“It will have something to do with the drums, but not exclusively,” Victor says. “I’ll probably have other instrumental music, lights, and some costuming of sorts when I ‘become’ different people. There are so many possibilities.”



Ma tt H a ss

MD: Nineteen Thirteen has used two drummers—you, and on separate occasions Scott Johnson and a fellow by the name of Nez. How did you collaborate with them on stage?

Victor: I didn't want it to be two drummers playing the same thing simultaneously. There were other times we would disregard the other drummer and just play what we wanted to play—time signature and accent patterns be damned. For some other pieces one drummer started a fill and the other drummer would finish it.

MD: Janet Schiff employs a looping device on her cello in a live setting. How do you navigate layers of cello lines?

Victor: Usually the first pass sets up the rhythmic idea, and she approximates some bass part and I set time with her. Then we go from there. It's all being handcrafted and delivered live to an audience. [Schiff tells *Modern Drummer*, "I used to race, run. I was told to look at the gun for the smoke, because the eye is quicker than the ear. So I look to Victor and watch him like a hawk. At the end of a loop Victor and I look at each other and kind of do a 'yea' or 'nay.' If it works we keep it."]

MD: How much experience did you have playing with a looping device?

Victor: None. [laughs] Well, none other than playing in a recording studio and sometimes putting drums on last. You're working with some prerecorded material or corresponding to some time reference, a click or a little percussion instrument, even a melodic instrument. Nineteen Thirteen brought it into a whole other arena of having to do it live. Now I can go with [the created loops]. Even if there's little ticks or skips in the loops, I can compensate for it. I think it's made me a better musician and has pinpointed in my mind how I displace or accommodate different rhythms and accent patterns.

MD: There's a little bit of danger in every performance.

Victor: It was like when I was working as an actor in Amsterdam. The director of the theater, Ritsaert ten Cate, great old Dutch fellow, once watched a run-through of one of the pieces that we were going to perform, and he came to me and said, "Victor, I like what you are doing in the play, but there's one thing that's missing." I said, "What?" He said, "Danger. As a creative artist you must always have

one part of your life in jeopardy." That was something that I carried on in my acting, and it also seeped into my playing.

MD: You recently wrote a column for *OnMilwaukee.com* about your history of standing while drumming. Others have done it too, of course, like Moe Tucker. But with Nineteen Thirteen you're seated.

Victor: Right. There are some times I'll stand up and play a snare or a whole little drum system, but for the most part with Nineteen Thirteen it has a better look if we're sitting.

MD: You had a minimal setup with the Femmes. It fit with the group's arty but accessible approach, and in recent years we've witnessed the ascendance of nontraditional percussion in the

mainstream worlds of rock, art-pop, and EDM.

Victor: Sometimes I wondered if it was the right thing to do. Obviously it was, because it gave the Femmes a unique sound and remains unique to this day, I would think. I don't mean to take credit in an obnoxious way, but looking at *Modern Drummer* and watching different shows on television, whether it be *Saturday Night Live* or something on Palladia [now MTV Live], it appears to be totally acceptable for someone to be playing just a snare drum and a floor tom. No bass drum.

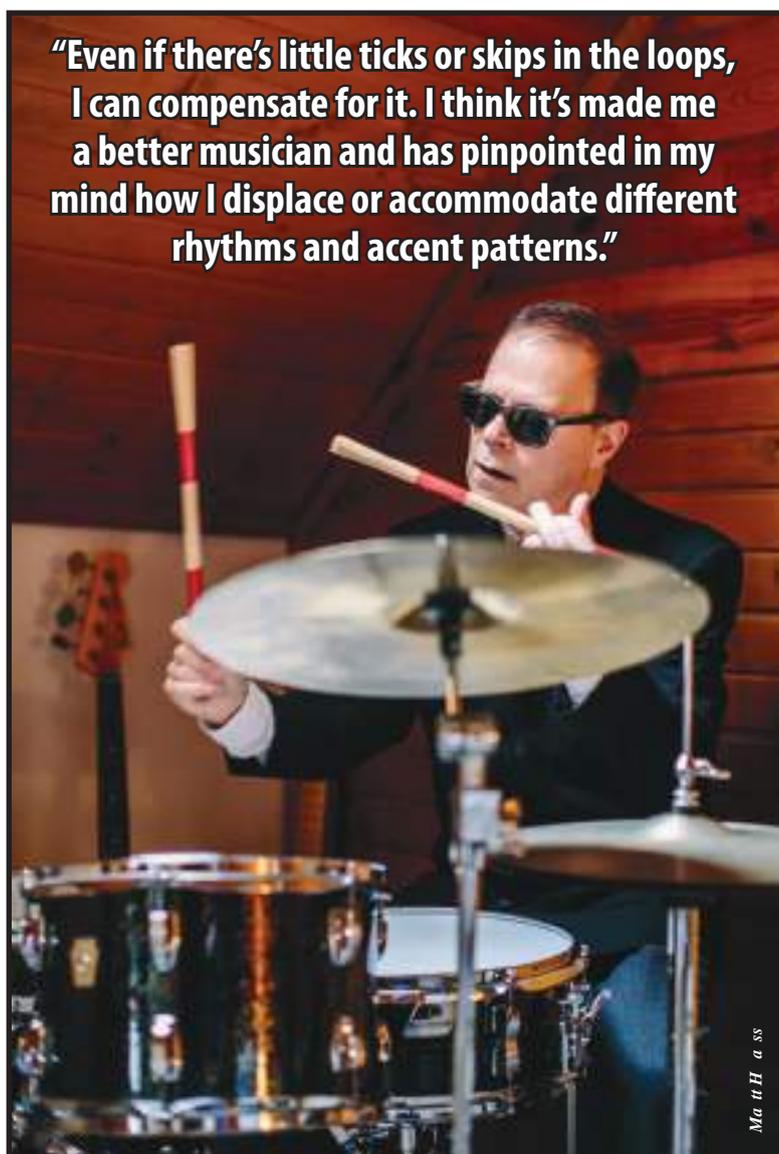
When I was doing that it was heresy. I got all kinds of guff from the record company and even the other two guys in my band, who later said, "Maybe you should start using the bass drum, and maybe we can have some more commercial value."

Of course, I did [play a kit] on the recordings, but live I wanted to get a hell of a lot of sound out of a small setup, which is my trademark. We were playing big festivals and I'd just show up with a

snare, the tranceophone, and a cymbal or two. I'd set up my stuff and all the roadies and sound guys would say, "You're just waiting for all the other stuff to arrive?" I'd say, "No, this is what I play." They'd say, "You get that much sound out of this?" I'd say, "Yeah. I'm a drummer."

MD: You've used the tranceophone with Nineteen Thirteen, but what was it originally designed to do?

Victor: It's a 14" floor tom with the bottom head removed. I placed a metallic bushel basket over the tom, the kind you would use to stoke coal furnaces in the old days. Then I mounted it on a snare



DeLorenzo's Nineteen Thirteen Setup



Victor's current "drum system," including the original trancephone featured on the Violent Femmes' iconic debut album.



The multidisciplinary DeLorenzo painted the art on his front bass drum head, which he named "After Pharmacy, for Him," as well as the cover to Nineteen Thirteen's *Music for Time Travel*.

Drums: Ludwig Classic Maple in black galaxy finish

- A.** 5x14 Acrolite snare (black galaxy sparkle "Blacrolite")
- B.** 14x14 floor tom
- C.** 16x16 floor tom
- D.** 14x18 bass drum
- E.** trancephone

Cymbal: A Zildjian

- 1.** 19" Armand Beautiful Baby ride

Heads: Ludwig Weather Master coated batters and clear bottoms, Remo Coated Ambassador bass drum front head with original artwork

Sticks: Regal Tip Whiskers brushes (plastic); Promark Hot Rods, Broomsticks, brushes (metal), and Elvin Jones Jazz sticks; Vic Firth T6 Custom General mallets

Hardware: DW 6000 series stands, Sonor bass drum pedal with Vater Vintage Bomber beater

drum stand and I'd play it with metal brushes, so you would get kind of a pinging sound. You would also get a more deep-throated sound if you hit the center of the bushel basket, which would activate the head of the floor tom underneath it. That would produce a thud. You could also play the side of the metal bushel basket and it gave you a clanging sound. So you had a ping, a clang, and a thump. Then, if you used the circle on the bottom of the brush handle, you could rub that along the ribbed edges on the top for something like [makes whirring noises]. It isn't just a crazy-looking folk-art object. It really does have some musical value.

MD: The Femmes returned a few years ago and performed festival shows.

Victor: When Gordon [Gano, vocalist/guitarist] told me that he had these offers for the Femmes to play, I said to him, "I'll come back and work with you guys, but I can't just pick up where it left off—misery and despair. I want to see the band grow and hopefully consider doing new music." That was one of the things Gordon had taken away: writing new music for the band.

As a creative, living and breathing musician, you want to work on new music and keep yourself current.

When I was doing the last bit of touring with them, the last four shows I did, the business aspects were interfering with the music to the extent that every night when it came time to play our biggest hit, "Blister in the Sun," Brian [Ritchie, bassist/multi-instrumentalist] would leave the stage due to arguments with Gordon over publishing. It would just be Gordon and me playing "Blister in the Sun," which was totally absurd. Believe you me, we would get earfuls from the promoters when we would come off the stage. It was a nice paycheck, but at the same time I already sold my soul in regards to these guys. What little bit I had regained after being apart from

them I felt was going to slip. I made the decision to not go on.

MD: That's an iconic drum pattern in "Blister in the Sun."

Victor: It's just staggered [hums flams], kind of like handicapped flams. I am proud of that, even in its simplicity. A lot of times I will be watching a sporting event on television and they'll play the riff

from "Blister in the Sun." The audience reacts by clapping along to the drum part. It didn't exist when Brian first played the riff. You can get into that whole discussion of songwriting and what constitutes the writing of a song.

MD: The fewest people get credit in the liner notes, to project an image of the genius sole songwriter.

Victor: I hate that phenomenon, and I've seen it over and over and over again in show business—and in other endeavors involving humans. [laughs] If I look at the two other people who have come into Violent Femmes to play my role, I thought they could play my role but they could never play my part. I was the eccentric proponent. I provided the Keith Moon stand-up-comedy drumming. When we first

started playing, even when we'd set up on the lip of the stage, I was always downstage center. Gordon would be on my left or right and Brian would be on the other side. That was totally different from what anybody else was doing in the early 1980s.

MD: Nineteen Thirteen is likely different.

Victor: I'm looking forward to expanding on the recordings and being able to play some other instruments besides drums, and to think more about what music means to me at this point in my life. There's a sweet combination of nostalgia and also a real hunger for something modern and something unbeknown to me. Hopefully Nineteen Thirteen is the vehicle that will help me discover what those two things mean to me.



Victor and his Nineteen Thirteen partner Janet Schiff





Poly-Math's Chris Woollison

Drawing from sources ranging from King Crimson and Santana to Thrice and the Mars Volta, this British band and its refreshingly chops-*un*-obsessed drummer are boldly staking their ground on the new-prog scene.

by Ilya Stemkovsky

The progressive British trio Poly-Math rocks. Hard. And all without vocals, because the music is already so full. Consisting of guitarist Tim Walters, bassist Joe Branton, and drummer Chris Woollison, Poly-Math has recently released a three-song mini album, *Melencolia*, its latest slice of angular riffage and aggressive beats. The drum sound is killer, with big-sounding rock production but all the minutiae you like to hear when listening to instrumental music. Woollison plays for the song, even if the song is fifteen minutes long and has multiple layered parts and odd times—though he's not shy to whip out the chops when he feels the music needs a spark or the drums need to go toe to toe with the guitars. We wanted to know what makes Woollison and Poly-Math tick.

MD: What led you to play in an instrumental project?

Chris: When we started Poly-Math, I think we all felt that in the math and proggy genres, the vocal can often be a bit of an afterthought and doesn't always sit that well with the style. It was a conscious decision not to go down that route. We aim to keep the attention that a vocal melody does with our guitar melodies and range of sounds. Personally speaking, as a listener I rarely listen to the lyrics in a song but instead concentrate on the instruments and production. So for me it's natural to be in a band with no vocal.

MD: The musicians are proficient, but there doesn't seem to be an emphasis on showing instrumental chops, because the music rocks and it's textural. Is that a conscious decision as well?



Chris: I guess it is deliberate, because I've never really enjoyed listening to flashy, chops-based playing, so my drumming has never really gone down that route. For me, the satisfaction in a drum pattern comes from slowly evolving textures, repetitive phrases, and a solid, rocking beat. So although I do like to change parts quite abruptly and frequently, you'll hear a lot of slow crescendos with subtle developments.

MD: In "Ekerot," you play a cool, open linear pattern with subtle ghosting and tom hits thrown in. How do you come up with those kinds of parts?

Chris: I'd just decided that I wanted to experiment with some linear playing, and this felt like a good time. The guitar and bass are pretty sparse, so it opened up some space for me to play around. It's kind of rare that it happens like that, though. More often I'll try to complement Tim's guitar parts with a similar or interwoven drum pattern.

MD: On "Temptation of the Idler," for the rim-riding pattern that you open the tune with, does that happen because you're looking for colors other than a hi-hat? You do some of that in the middle of "Melencolia" as well.

Chris: Yeah, I'm always up for experimenting with the different sounds of the kit. I need to keep up with the other two, with all their pedals! On our last record I ended up recording a drumkit through the pickup of Tim's guitar, and it sounded awful and awesome at the same time. On this record we used a couple of different kits, one completely deadened with towels on the drums and tape on the cymbals.

MD: Do you use a click?

Chris: I use a click for recording but never live. I think the push and pull that we get is an important part of what makes our music unique, and if we ever played to a click live, it would lose so much of the feel and dynamic range. It was a challenge re-creating it in the studio to a tempo map, but I'm still really happy with the way we don't sound too over-produced or edited, and that it retains some of the energy we create live.

MD: The musical landscape is challenging from a commercial vantage point. How can you stay true to what you guys are doing when the instrumental genre is so niche and not for everybody?

Chris: Well, it sounds like a cliché, but we genuinely only started this band as an outlet for all of us that wasn't ever meant to be gigged or even heard. We had all been in other bands for years where we were pushing really hard for success, and after our respective bands came to an end, we just wanted to play this weird, self-indulgent

music for the sake of playing, with no pressure. So to think that we've even come this far is incredible. I guess we just keep doing what we're doing and hope that people like it.

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Woollison plays a Yamaha Stage Custom kit and a Pearl Eric Singer signature snare. His Meinl cymbals include 14" Byzance Dark hi-hats, an 18" M-Series Traditional Medium crash, a 20" Byzance Extra Dry Thin crash, a 22" M-Series Fusion Medium ride, and a Generation X 12"/14" X-treme Stack. He uses Promark sticks and Remo heads.



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Interview and photos by Sayre Berman

Whitesnake's Tommy Aldridge

Drums: Yamaha Phoenix (PHX) series in textured black sunburst finish

- A.** 5.5x14 Paul Leim signature brass snare
 - B.** 9x12 tom
 - C.** 10x13 tom
 - D.** 15x16 floor tom
 - E.** 16x18 floor tom
 - F.** 18x24 bass drum
- Cymbals:** Paiste
- 1.** 17" 2002 crash
 - 2.** 19" Signature Reflector Heavy Full crash
 - 3.** 20" 2002 Medium crash
 - 4.** 13" Signature Dark Crisp hi-hats
 - 5.** 14" Signature Precision Heavy hi-hats
 - 6.** 18" Alpha Brilliant Thin Swiss crash

- 7.** 19" Rude Thin crash
- 8.** 12" Signature splash
- 9.** 20" Signature Precision Heavy crash
- 10.** 12" 2002 splash
- 11.** 22" Twenty Custom Metal ride
- 12.** 20" 2002 Wild crash

Heads: Remo Coated X14 snare batter and Ambassador snare-side; Clear Emperor tom batters and Clear Ambassador resonants; Clear Powerstroke 3 bass drum batters and Yamaha logo fronts

Hardware: Yamaha Hexrack
Sticks: Promark Shira Kashi Oak 2S Tommy Aldridge signature model

"I'm using the **Yamaha Phoenix** (PHX) kit for this tour, and I also used it on the latest album," says Aldridge, who's been a Yamaha player for most of his professional career. "The Phoenix shell is unique in that it's much thicker than what you would typically expect from Yamaha. It's such a warm-sounding kit, with just the right amount of attack. The drums have a rich, fat low end that I don't get from my other kits. Our soundman is often rolling off low end rather than adding it, which is rare.

"I'm internally miking the toms, and the overheads are really underheads—they're hidden within the Hexrack rail. Internal miking has been around for a long time, and the technique holds huge advantages. You get isolation from one drum to the next, so there's no leakage. Also, the mic is in exactly the same place night after night. Some sound purists may think that it isn't such a good idea to have anything inside a drum, but I don't agree. You do have to be careful, though. If you don't have the mics in exactly the right spot, you might get some mid-range spikes. This can also occur if the mics have small diaphragms. I use mics with really large diaphragms, which minimizes any weird tones, like that inside-of-a-beach-ball sound.

"My cymbal setup is constantly changing, depending on what I have on hand. I go through quite a few cymbals because I play hard. But I'm really partial to Paiste Rude Thin crashes. They have darkness to them but with nice cut. That's a rare combination."



Fundamental Fills

Part 2: Solid 16th-Note Triplets

by Donny Gruendler

During the 1960s and '70s, popular rock drummers like John Bonham (Led Zeppelin) and Ginger Baker (Cream) resurrected massive single-stroke-triplet fills that were initially made famous by jazz greats like Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa, and Art Blakey. Today these powerful fills have once again come to the foreground through the work of popular retro-rock drummers like Michael Miley (Rival Sons), Patrick Carney (Black Keys), and Daru Jones (Jack White).

This month's installment will help you develop single-stroke 16th-note-triplet fills both on the snare and on the full drumset. The following ideas build upon last month's lesson and employ many of the same practice and performance strategies.

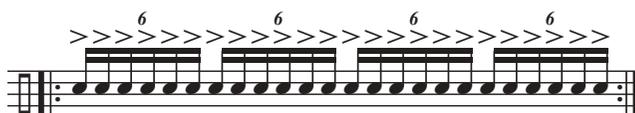
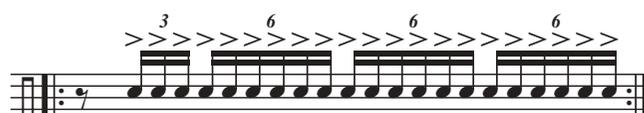
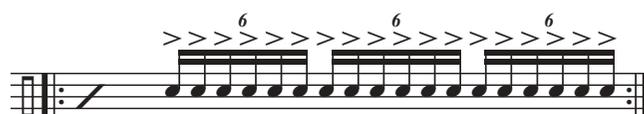
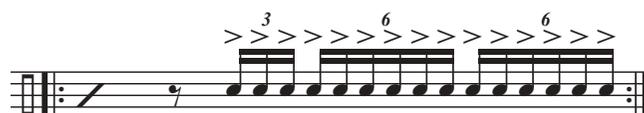
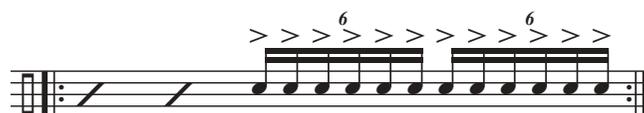
Solid Singles: 16-Note Triplets

To start, let's work through the ostinato and a series of single-stroke, 16th-note-triplet fills. Here's our main pattern followed by the fill fragments.

Main Pattern



One-Measure Fill Fragments



Fill Creation

Here's a demonstration of how to work through each one-measure fill fragment alongside the main pattern. First, pick one measure from Exercise 2. In this case, we'll use the second bar.



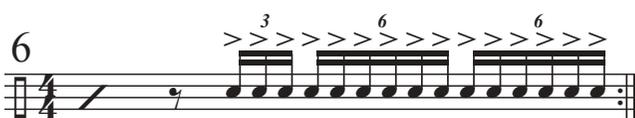
Using a metronome set to 80 bpm with an 8th-note subdivision, play the main pattern during the first three beats of slash notation, and play snare rimshots on the accented 16th notes on beat 4. Put together, the exercise looks like this.



Once the previous steps are comfortable, move the accented 16th-note triplet on beat 4 around the kit. Here's an example.



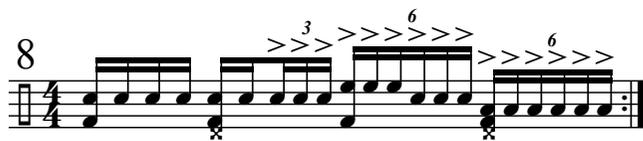
Follow this same procedure alongside another fill fragment. In this instance we'll use measure 5 from Exercise 2.



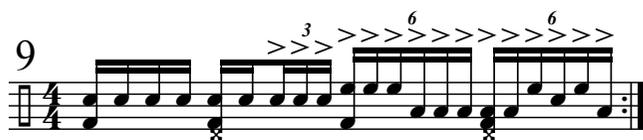
Again, using a metronome set to 80 bpm with an 8th-note subdivision, play the main pattern on beat 1 and the first 8th note of beat 2. Starting on the "&" of beat 2, play snare rimshots for the remaining accented 16th notes to finish out the measure. Here's the full exercise.



Once the previous steps are comfortable, freely move the fill around the drums.



Here's another voicing idea.



Repeat this process for each fill fragment.

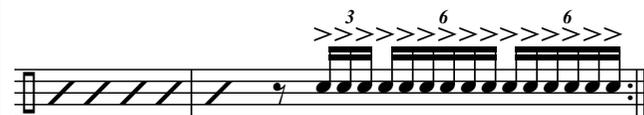
Fill Practice

Now pick any groove within your repertoire and practice fills using the following method. To begin, play three bars of time and then a fill in measure 4.



Fill —

The following example demonstrates this method using the fifth measure of Exercise 2.



Once comfortable, orchestrate the exercise around the drums. Here's an example.



The orchestrations and variations you can come up with using these fragments are unending. But remember that we're striving to develop commanding, confident, and simple fills rather than intricate or syncopated patterns. Have fun!

Donny Gruendler is a Los Angeles-based drummer and president of Musicians Institute in Hollywood. He can be reached at donny@donnygruendler.com.



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Hearing the Click on the "E"

Shifting the Metronome to Improve Time

by Powell Randolph

In this lesson, we'll work on shifting our perception of a metronome so that we're hearing each quarter-note pulse as the second 16th note, or "e," of each beat. Benny Greb has talked about using this concept to help improve timing and subdivisions. I found it difficult to hear the second 16th note as the pulse, so I developed these exercises to help myself. Start at a slow tempo, say, around 75 bpm.

Here's a standard click on each quarter note.

1

Now try hearing the click on the "e" of each beat.

2

At first, try playing Exercise 3 along with a metronome using a quarter-note pulse.

3

Next we'll shift our perception of the metronome to the "e" of each beat. While playing the previous pattern, focus on the bass drum and try hearing it as its own downbeat. The hi-hat and metronome should now sound like they're starting on the "e" of each beat, as notated in Exercise 4.

4

The second measure in each of the following exercises is a test to see if you can switch to an 8th-note groove while continuing to hear the click on the "e" of each beat.

5



6

7

8

Here are some linear grooves with accents on the "e" of each beat.

9

10

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

(e) (e) (e) (e)

In Exercise 11, a cowbell lands on the second 16th note of each beat. Be sure to catch the floor tom on the “a” of beat 1.

11

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

(e) (e) (e) (e)

Here are a few fills that accent the “e.”

12

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

(e) (e) (e) (e)

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

(e) (e) (e) (e)

13

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

(e) (e) (e) (e)

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

(e) (e) (e) (e)

14

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

(e) (e) (e) (e)

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

(e) (e) (e) (e)

Try this hi-hat pattern with different bass drum variations. Here are several ideas.

15

(e) (e) (e) (e)

16

(e) (e) (e) (e)

17

(e) (e) (e) (e)

18

(e) (e) (e) (e)

Lock in the accents with the click in this next example.

19

(e) (e) (e) (e)

In this last example the click falls with the rests on the second 16th note of each beat, so you'll be playing the notes around the metronome.

20

(e) (e) (e) (e)

Good luck with these exercises. With patience, you can start to hear the metronome on different parts of each beat, such as the “&” or “a,” or on the second or third partial of a triplet. There are many other options as well. For example, perceiving the click as half notes on beats 2 and 4 could help you lock in with a standard jazz hi-hat foot pattern. To develop this concept further, try hearing the metronome as more complicated rhythms, such as three-over-two (quarter-note triplet) or four-over-three (dotted-8th note) polyrhythms. Have fun!

Powell Randolph is a drum teacher at Alpha Music in Virginia Beach and plays rock shows with orchestras around North America for Windborne Music Productions. Randolph, a tongue cancer survivor, can be reached through powellrandolph.com.



Groove Construction

Part 5: Ghost Notes Using an Ostinato Approach

by Jost Nickel

Ghost notes are an excellent way to expand your dynamic range. In this lesson, we'll focus on dynamics and technique while working on ghost notes by using an ostinato approach.

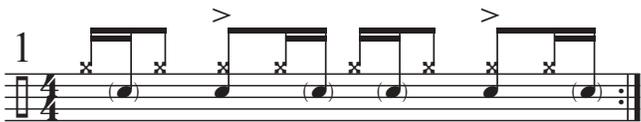
Ghost notes (notated with parentheses) are played very softly, as opposed to accents, which are much louder. Correct dynamics are achieved by maintaining the proper distance between the stick and the drumhead. When playing ghost notes, I suggest striking the snare from about 1 to 2 cm above the head. Accents are played at a substantially greater distance to the drumhead, and using rimshots can amplify their impact. I also suggest playing ghost notes with your wrist as opposed to your fingers. Attempts to play softly with your fingers can result in inaccurately placed ghost notes.

Ostinato Approach

When working on ghost notes, I'll generally take either an ostinato approach or an intertwined approach. This month's instalment focuses on using ostinatos to develop ghost notes. Next month we'll explore the intertwined approach.

An ostinato is a continually repeated musical figure. To demonstrate, we'll use a hand pattern on the hi-hat and snare that contains ghost notes and accents. The pattern remains unchanged as we add various bass drum variations underneath.

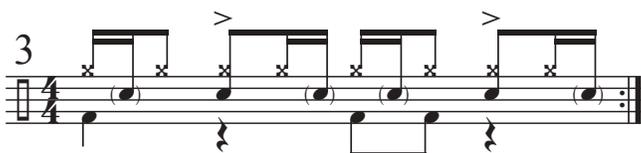
Let's begin with the ostinato. The right hand plays 8th notes on the hi-hat while the left hand plays snare ghost notes and accents on beats 2 and 4.



Next we're going to add bass drum variations. Remember, the hand pattern remains constant regardless of the bass drum figure. We'll use three sets of one-measure bass drum patterns that increase in difficulty. The first set is notated in Exercise 2 and is based on quarter and 8th notes.



Next we'll use one measure from this first set of variations as our bass drum rhythm. In this case we'll take measure 1 of Exercise 2 and place it underneath our hand ostinato.

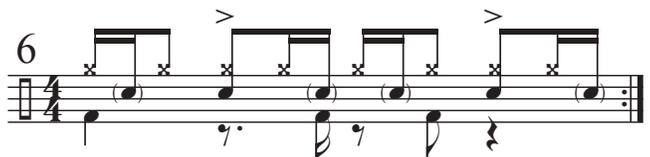
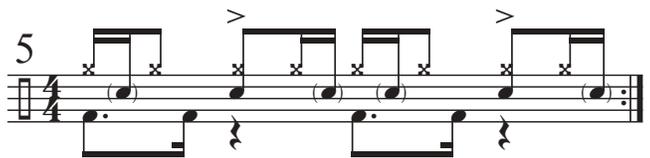


After you have a handle on this groove, try playing measures 2, 3, and 4 from Exercise 2 with the ostinato.

This next set of bass drum variations increases in difficulty.



As we've done previously, we'll play individual measures of bass drum rhythms from Exercise 4 with our ostinato. The following two examples use measures 1 and 2 from Exercise 4.



Our final set of bass drum variations can be found in Exercise 7. To further increase the difficulty, we'll add double strokes within the bass drum patterns.



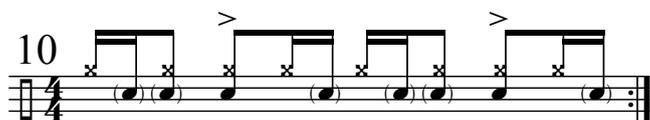
Exercises 8 and 9 demonstrate the ostinato approach with measures 1 and 2 of Exercise 7.





When practicing these grooves, make sure there's no flammimg whenever a ghost note occurs simultaneously with the bass drum.

To conclude, here are two more ghost note ostinatos that you can practice with the bass drum rhythms in Exercises 2, 4, and 7.



If you're interested in these ideas and want more ghost note ostinatos and groove concepts, check out my book, *Jost Nickel's Groove Book*.

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

Jost Nickel is a top session and touring drummer in Germany, and he endorses Sonor, Meinl, Aquarian, Vic Firth, and Beyerdynamic.



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African Pop Meets American Funk

Exploring the Mangambe Rhythm

by Steve Rucker

Popular African pop rhythms from the past twenty to thirty years are starting to appear in American funk music. In this article we'll explore the triplet-based African rhythm mangambe, which we'll apply to a funk setting.

Mangambe, or mangambeu, as it's written in French, is a popular musical style among the people of Cameroon. The primary rhythm consists of the first two partials of a triplet on each beat. The second partial of the triplet is often accented. Here's an example of the mangambe rhythm voiced on the drumset.

Notice that the hi-hat rhythm is very similar to the American shuffle, except that it's displaced by an 8th note. Here's the American shuffle pattern on the hi-hat.

A shuffle-funk groove can be derived from this pattern by adding the bass drum on the downbeat and the snare on beat 3.

Here are some variations of this pattern.

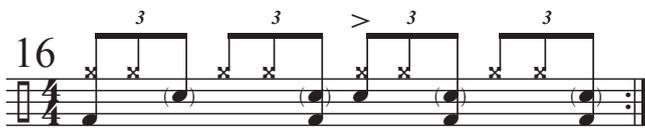
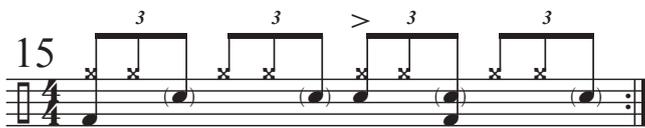
Let's place the mangambe hi-hat rhythm over each of these grooves to create an African-American hybrid.



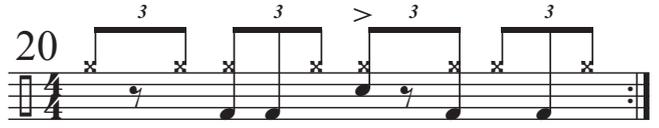
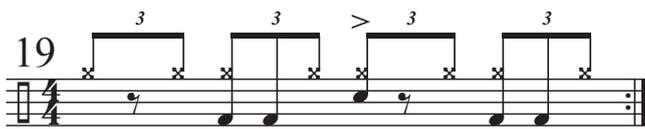
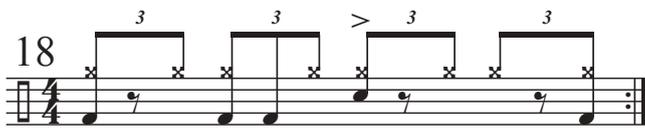
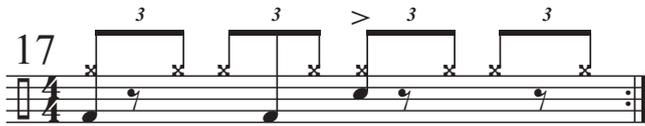
We can now add ghost notes on the snare to give the rhythm a little more density. First practice the hands alone.

As a variation, accent the second partial of each triplet.

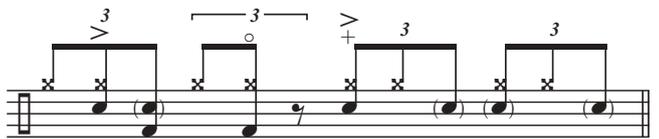
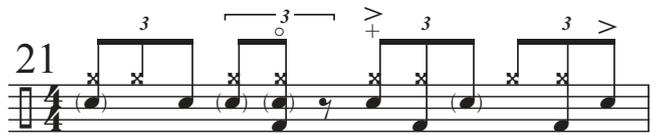
Now add the bass drum variations from the previous exercises. Once you've got that together, try incorporating the hi-hat variation from Exercise 12.



The bass drum rhythms used in the previous exercises are from the standard American shuffle-funk repertoire. Next we'll use some bass drum patterns from African pop, along with the shuffle-funk hand pattern.



Here's a mangambe-funk groove from Jonathan Joseph (Jeff Beck) that begins around 00:32 in the YouTube video "Jonathan Joseph—Exercises in African-American Funk." Note the mangambe hi-hat pattern and the bass drum on the second triplet partials.



For further development of this style, I've co-written a book with Joseph called *Exercises in African-American Funk: Mangambe, Bikutsi, and the Shuffle* (Modern Drummer Publications). Topics include African polyrhythms, practice tips, and an exploration of the mangambe and bikutsi rhythms. The book is available at moderndrummer.com.

Steve Rucker is the director of drumset studies at the University of Miami, and he is the co-author of *African-American Funk*, which is available through Modern Drummer Publications.



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Groove Contraction

Creating Tension and Release

by Aaron Edgar

Groove contraction can create rhythmic tension and release. Similar to how, with implied metric modulation, we can use new subdivisions to trick listeners into feeling like the quarter-note pulse has shifted, we can use the concept of contraction to make tempos feel like they've changed. Unlike metric modulation, however, groove contraction modifies the subdivision while maintaining the original quarter-note pulse.

Let's start with an 8th-note-triplet pattern between the hi-hat and snare (Exercise 1). To create tension, we'll insert another ghost note, which changes the pattern's subdivision to 16th notes (Exercise 2). Employ quiet ghost notes and consistent hi-hat accents in both phrases. Using your metronome, transition back and forth between the following two exercises.

After you've mastered each hand pattern and can transition between the two, it's time to expand them into actual grooves. To create a more dramatic effect, the bass drum and snare pattern in Exercises 3 and 4 were written to sound as similar to each other as possible.

Using these examples in a playing situation can depend on your musical setting. I like to treat the "tension" version—in this case Exercise 4—as a drum fill out of the original triplet groove. Try playing Exercise 3, and on every fourth or eighth bar, play Exercise 4 as a drum fill.

Diddles

Next let's apply diddles to this concept. In Exercise 5 we have a 16th-note funk groove composed of paradiddles between the hi-hat and snare. We'll create our tension using paradiddle-diddles as 16th-note triplets. Alternate between these patterns, playing two bars each. Focus on your accents and bass drum placement—they're meant to resemble each other.



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

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

Moving the second bass drum note in Exercise 6 to the "&" of beat 3 makes these previous two grooves sound closer to one another. However, its current placement is a closer match to the bass drum and hand-pattern interaction in Exercise 5. Combining this with the faster feel of the 16th-note triplets results in an intricate and twisted version of Example 5.

Let's expand this concept further by creating similar feels within quintuplets and septuplets. We'll use a RLLRL quintuplet sticking and a RLLRLL septuplet sticking.

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

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

After you've worked through these grooves individually, it's time to string them together. Transition through Exercises 5–8 in order of their subdivision, starting with 16th notes, then moving to quintuplets, 16th-note triplets, and finally septuplets. The tension increases with each new subdivision as more notes are jammed in between the similar accent pattern. When you get to the end, release the tension you've created by repeating back to the start.

Linear Patterns

We can also apply contraction to linear grooves. Here we'll place less emphasis on keeping the grooves similar and

instead focus on creating a longer phrase that goes through 16th-note triplets, septuplets, and 32nd notes, and then dramatically slows down with quintuplets before repeating back to 16th-note triplets. These 2/4 patterns employ a strong kick on beat 1 and an accented snare on beat 2.

9

R L R L R L L R L

10

L R R L L R R L R

11

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

12

T L R L R R L

Since the quintuplets and septuplets create the most tension, let's use them as shorter transitions between the main 16th-note triplet and 32nd-note grooves. For this we'll use a pair of six-measure phrases. The first phrase consists of four bars of Exercise 9 followed by two bars of Exercise 10. Our second phrase uses five bars of Exercise 11 and one bar of Exercise 12.

13

R L R L R L L R L

L R R L L R R L R

R L R L R L R L R L

T L R L R R L

Taking It Further

These last two examples share a pattern that's based on inverted doubles between the hi-hat and bass drum. In Exercise 14 we're playing 16th notes in 5/4, and in Exercise 15 we modulate the same pattern into 4/4 using quintuplets. Each groove has a snare backbeat on beats 2 and 4, and there's one additional snare to round out beat 5 in Exercise 14.

14

15

Exercises 14 and 15 also sound great between the bass drum and floor tom. Experiment with these patterns as well as the other grooves in this lesson. Writing your own patterns is a great method for working these concepts into your playing. You may not want to pull out this tool on every gig, but in an appropriate musical context, you can use it to create a range of subtle, powerful, and unique rhythmic statements.

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

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



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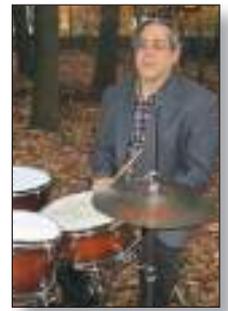
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Five-Note Patterns

Analyzing and Exploring an Odd Grouping

by Greg Sundel



We discussed Tony Williams' use of five-note ride patterns in the February 2015 issue of *Modern Drummer*. In this lesson we'll analyze approaches that Max Roach and Bill Stewart have used to utilize five-note groupings around the drumset, and we'll demonstrate some additional applications of this concept.

Max Roach played the five-note pattern in Example 1 on Bud Powell's "Un Poco Loco." Roach repeats this figure three times before playing a single or diddled stroke to complete the sixteen 8th notes of a two-measure phrase. This pattern is played on the cowbell and toms, and the notated sticking is suggested—see what works best for you.

Bill Stewart applied this concept with the John Scofield Trio on the song "Toogs" from the live album *EnRoute* (Example 2). Stewart's pattern begins with a stick shot—played by pressing the tip of an angled left stick into the snare head and striking it with the right—and then moves to the snare and tom. Practice the figure slowly, and focus on striking the angled stick with the right before tapping the snare with the left.

1

R R L R L

Stick shot

2

R/L L R R L

By playing the figure over five measures, Stewart is able to resolve back to beat 1. Practice this slowly, and keep track of your position in the phrase by focusing on the hi-hat foot.

3

Next we'll use a similar idea by orchestrating a five-note figure between the bass drum and snare. We can use this in a four-bar phrase by altering the ending to resolve to beat 1. Dropping the last two notes of the five-note pattern at the end of this phrase allows it to fit into four bars. Practice this slowly, and count out loud.

4

Now alternate between the bass drum and hi-hat. After you're comfortable with this, try practicing the pattern with either a bass drum or hi-hat lead. Once you can play the figure with both voices leading, switch between them from measure to measure.

5

To spice up the phrase, play rimclicks, the rack tom, and the floor tom with your comping hand. Have fun!

6

Greg Sundel has performed or recorded with Billy Corgan, Lauryn Hill, and Joshua Redman. His book *Drum Your Way* is available through his website, gregsundel.com.



Playing From the Inside Out

Remove the Unintentional

by Russ Miller

This month I'd like to discuss one of the biggest issues I see with young drummers: the loose and questionable sound of unintentional ideas. This usually happens during fills and solos, but it sometimes exists during grooves as well. Many of my mentors referred to this as not playing from the inside out. Let's go over some of the reasons that this happens and how to fix it.

Command of the Physical

Players on every instrument have the challenge of physical execution. Oftentimes this can take over focus, especially in young or developing players. The drums push physical limits because of

"No one is an artist unless he carries his picture in his head before painting it and is sure of his method and composition."

—Claude Monet (master artist)

the four-limb independence required to play them well. One of the reasons independence studies are so crucial is that we need the ability to play things using muscle memory without focusing on it. Our ideas need to be executed cleanly and with intention. I often hear drummers go for fills that sound like they're being created by simply moving stickings around the drums. And many times players go into a solo with no idea of what's about to happen. They rely on their hands and feet to just come up with something. That approach often causes them to lose command of the music.

Steps to Building Intention in Your Playing

The following are the four steps to intention that I use in my lesson series at percussionpathway.com. Let's go over each of them.

1. Start by singing a basic two-beat-fill idea along with a metronome, and then play it in the next bar. The point is to get you to hear what you're doing while you're doing it. Turn on your metronome and let two beats click by in the first bar. Sing a basic fill for the last two beats. Let two beats of the next bar go by, and then play the fill you just sang. Keep repeating this process with different fills. Play only what you sing. You'll soon see that when you play the figure that you've sung, there's much more intention behind it. Record yourself as you practice this, and then review it.

2. Sing a full-bar fill, and then play it. Start by singing an entire bar of a fill idea, and then let one bar go by. In the third bar, play the fill idea that you sang. Let the fourth bar go by, and then repeat the entire four-bar phrase using different fills. This practice improves intention in your fills. It also builds your ability to remember and focus on something over a length of time.

3. Work on focused four-limb-independence studies. The next suggestion is to improve your ability to hear the inner parts of a full groove. Too often we think of a groove as one single thing. To break this "interdependence," sing each voice of the groove while playing all four parts. This will cause you to focus on each limb. I demonstrate this method of independence practice in master classes to show how each limb contributes to the overall groove.

4. Develop your plan-ahead and inside-out skills. Now you're

ready to work on playing what you're picturing in your mind. The pulse originates from inside. Your hands and feet don't create the time; they manifest what you're thinking and feeling. Great groove drummers feel the music first in their hearts and minds, and then create it with their hands and feet. Great jazz drummers have so much intention in their timekeeping and improvisation because they're internalizing the feel, beat, and ideas before they're playing them on the drums. Of course, having an extensive rhythmic vocabulary is a crucial asset (we'll talk about that in another article), but this ability to manifest your mental musical pictures is paramount. You must divorce yourself from a constant focus

on your limbs so that you can focus on a mental musical picture that will drive your limbs to manifest it.

Developing the ability to play what you hear is going to involve a few steps. One exercise is to sing something different from what you're playing. A book that helped me develop this skill is Gary Chester's *The New Breed*. I also have

exercises on this in my book *Transitions*. But really, any page of combination rhythms will work. Sing the rhythms on the page while playing a four-limb groove. Teaching the body to execute things while thinking about something else is step one.

Step two is to allow the body to execute what the mind is creating at the exact same time. To practice this, play a groove for three bars and then simultaneously sing and play a fill in the fourth bar. Record yourself and make sure that you're singing the fill audibly while you're playing it. You're going to have to plan out the fill at some point while you're playing the groove. Now you're playing the drums, rather than waiting for them to play you!

Although it was borne from his work as a visual artist, the Monet quote above holds true for musicians. The mind and heart need to have an internal conversation with the music at all times so that we know what's required. Playing anything more than that will sound forced. True artistry lies in the physical manifestation of the artist's mental picture.

See you next month!



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 information, visit russmiller.com.



Ludwig & Ludwig

Super-Ludwig and Super-Sensitive Snare Drums

by Mark Cooper

The snare drum strainer, which functions as a device to tighten or loosen the tension of the snare wires, has gone through numerous design and concept changes over the years. In the 1920s and '30s, often the only feature that distinguished one company's snare drum from another was the design and function of the snare strainer, so an innovative throw-off mechanism could set a drum company apart from its competition and launch it into the future.

One company, Ludwig & Ludwig, rose to the challenge and introduced a revolutionary new strainer system called the Super-Ludwig. Patented in 1924, the Super-Ludwig was a radical departure from the simple strainers that were available up to the time, offering individual snare wire adjustment. This was especially useful for gut snares, which would loosen under certain weather conditions. With the Super-Ludwig, drummers could also change from a set of silk wires to gut ones in a matter of minutes. The snare strands, which extend beyond the diameter of the head, remained under constant tension even when disengaged from the bottom head. Individual snare adjustment was possible with the aid of a screwdriver.

The Super-Ludwig mechanism was available on wood- and metal-shell drums. The beauty of the design is that it offered exacting individual adjustments while also being easy to operate with a simple on/off action of the throw-off lever, which extended above the top rim. This new strainer caught on with the drumming public, and large numbers were sold. There were some changes in the design over the years, but the basic function remained the same.

Unsatisfied with the success of the Super-Ludwig snare drums, in 1929 Ludwig & Ludwig added more options with the Super-Sensitive model. The new design featured a second set of snare wires underneath the batter head, which could be turned on or off with a simple turn of a handle mounted outside the drum shell. The existence of second set of wires made for the possibility of



1920s Super-Ludwig

several combinations of snare sounds. The 1929 Ludwig & Ludwig catalog proclaimed, "The Super-Sensitive will improve your roll, [and] it will make snare drumming easier and more effective. For fine pianissimo effects, use the inner set of snares only. For medium volume, the regular snares can be employed. If you want tremendous volume in a fortissimo roll, then both sets of snares can be used."

That same year, Ludwig & Ludwig unveiled even more snare drum options: the New Era Sensitive and the Standard-Sensitive. Both models featured snare wires underneath the batter head. The Standard-Sensitive had a simple throw-off that could be used together with or independent of the upper set of wires. Priced about ten dollars less than the Super-Sensitive, it was designed for drummers who wanted to save a little money. A marching version with two sets of snares, called the Super-Power, was made available in 1929.

The most radical design of all was the New Era-Sensitive model. Like the other versions, it had two sets of wires; the main difference was that both sets were installed inside the drum. They could still be used together or independently. The New Era-Sensitive and

Standard-Sensitive drums proved unpopular with drummers, though, so very few were sold. They were manufactured for less than a year, and relatively few are in existence today.

Nineteen twenty-nine marked the beginning of America's Great Depression, and when the Ludwig & Ludwig Drum Company was sold to C.G. Conn, that company continued to manufacture the Super-Ludwig and Super-Sensitive models. But by 1938 the Super-Sensitive model, with its two sets of snares, was discontinued. When the Ludwig Drum Company resurrected the Super-Sensitive name and design in 1961, the internal top snare mechanism option was dropped.



1929 Ludwig & Ludwig Super-Sensitive



COLLECTOR'S CORNER



Walberg and Auge The Forgotten Brand Lives Again



by Harry Cangany

In my book *The Great American Drums and the Companies That Made Them* (Modern Drummer Publications), I began the section on Walberg and Auge by describing them as “probably the biggest unknown name in the history of Twentieth Century American percussion.” That statement remains true twenty years later—but possibly not for much longer. In 2014 software engineer and vintage drum enthusiast Jeremy Esposito reestablished the W&A name and logo. Now the company has released the book *Walberg & Auge: The History and Future of America's Most Innovative and Unknown Drum Company*, which tells the story of the original company that existed between 1903 and 1979. Walberg and Auge was a supplier of hardware pieces and stands to all the major drum companies. Often referred to simply as Walberg, the company

made wire brushes, cymbal holders and stands, hi-hat stands, cymbal arms and mounts, snare stands, spurs, hi-hat clutches, thrones, and a number of other parts.

The two most commonly seen Walberg items on vintage drums today include the shell-mount tom holder with diamond-plate bracket and the skeleton-footboard hi-hat stand known as the Perfection. Walberg also made drums called Perfection, and sold them from its retail store, which was located one floor below its factory in Worcester, Massachusetts. Perfection drums were a regional hit in the Northeast. The drums from the early years were tensioned with thumb rods or rope, while the later models had Gretsch or Rogers lugs. The strainers and holders were Walberg and the shells came from Jasper or Gretsch.

Over time, drum companies took

control over the design of their own tom holders and stands, and Walberg lost business. Rogers had W&A build its Swiv-o-Matic hardware during its first year of production, but then took the line elsewhere.

Jeremy Esposito wanted to resurrect the name of this relatively unknown but respected partner in American drumming to showcase what the former owners (Bernard and Clarence Walberg) designed and to call attention to how integral the company was in the development of American drums. *Walberg & Auge: The History and Future of America's Most Innovative and Unknown Drum Company*, in addition to highlighting this history, presents the future of the brand. That future includes building new Walberg and Auge Perfection drumsets and snares. You can learn more at walbergandauge.com.



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KT-9



FD-9



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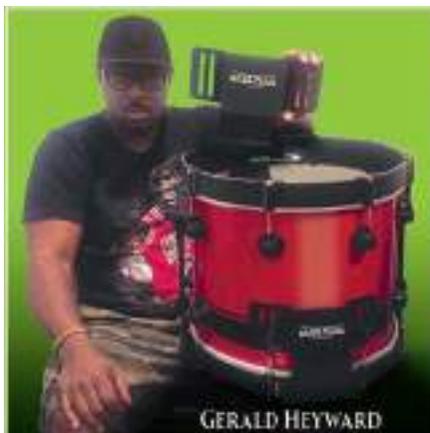
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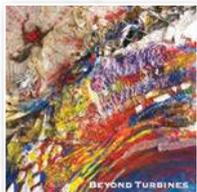
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CRITIQUE

RECORDINGS

Beyond Turbines *Beyond Turbines*

Virgil Donati blowing on a fusion date is always a great excuse to take on more drumming than your ears can handle.



There's no shortage of notes flying from **Virgil Donati** on this fusion effort from bassist Roberto Badoglio, guitarist Bjössi Klütsch, and

keyboardist Steve Hunt. The whole thing has a spacey and textural Allan Holdsworth-type vibe to it, and the tunes give Donati plenty of opportunity to stretch. Check out the way he opens up on his ride on "Tyger," and dig his brilliant accents and blazing technique on "Berlin." Along with all the wild metric modulation and beat flipping, Donati does get a chance to play relatively straight time on the closest thing to a ballad here, "What We Used to Be," though that doesn't last very long, as the drummer breaks it all up with fill after fill of slick hi-hat and kick drum flourishes. A supreme Donati performance. (spicerackrecords.com)

Ilya Stembkovsky



White Denim *Stiff*

The adventurous Austin indie band's new album features changes in approach and in the drum stool.

While most of White Denim's previous albums were self-recorded at the group's own studio, *Stiff* was tracked at Echo Mountain in North Carolina, with producer Ethan Johns. Original drummer Josh Block recently departed the band to support Leon Bridges, which you can read all about in this past July's *MD*. As such, *Stiff* introduces **Jeff Olson** on drums. Johns and Olson go for a punchy, dry sound here, tracking on a 1970s Rogers kit in a small room, run through preamps made originally for the Rolling Stones'



mobile rig by Johns' father, the legendary engineer and producer Glyn Johns. In addition to his kit work, Olson covers synths, vibraphone, and organ on a few tracks, and on "Mirrored in Reverse" he sends a drum machine through a Moog Minitaur. But it's tracks like "Had 2 Know (Personal)" and "Holda You (I'm Psycho)" where he really shines, staying loose and funky while still rocking at a fast clip. "Take It Easy (Ever After Lasting Love)" shows a soul feel in the vein of Al Green, as does album closer "Thank You," which, with its Southern-prog intro and outro, neatly

encapsulates the group's unique spin on things. Olson may be a new member of this veteran act, but his playing here is anything *but* what the album title might imply, and he's clearly a worthy successor to the throne. (Downtown Records) **Stephen Bidwell**

Vektor *Terminal Redux*

The Philadelphia-based quartet's self-described "space metal" brand of progressive thrash takes a turn toward far-flung galaxies.

On Vektor's third full-length release, the group's brand of '90s-informed post-thrash is propelled by drummer **Blake Anderson**'s airtight performances and refreshingly melodic approach to bombast. Anderson's meaty kick and palette of cymbal and snare sounds are typical of the genre, and the drummer aptly demonstrates lightning-fast double kick fluency ("Cyg-nus Terminal," "Ultimate Artificer") and blast-beat domination ("LCD [Liquid Crystal Disease]"). But his idiosyncratic playing helps this well-recorded and punchy album reach a different destination from where most other progressive metal acts are heading. The band's first true concept album, *Terminal Redux* explores science-fiction themes lyrically, but the overall vibe is sure to satisfy thrash and death metal fans looking for something familiar yet fresh and different. (Earache) **Ben Meyer**



Square Peg Round Hole *Juniper*

The instrumental groove-fueled trio's sophomore album features pondering melodies, gorgeously brooding harmonic landscapes—and a drummer who knows just how to underscore them.

Juniper's broad sonic spectrum blends synth-heavy elements into layers of prodding percussive themes. Rhythm connoisseurs will immediately take note of how drummer **Evan Chapman** handily pushes metric boundaries with refined taste. On "Name Not One Man," he spells out a five-over-four polyrhythm, augmenting it with his bass drum before lodging it into a stabbing groove. The outro to "Come/Gone" establishes a three-note motif and at one point extends it across the barline, leaving listeners holding on dearly to the cliff they've just been pushed over. Throughout *Juniper*, Chapman bundles these moments with refined patterns that never feel out of place. Overall, the effort begs one question: Where's this trio going next? This listener can't wait to find out. For more with Evan Chapman, check out moderndrummer.com. (Spartan Records) **Willie Rose**



Naked Truth *Avian Thug*

Komara *Komara*

O.R.K. *Inflamed Rides*

Samuel Hällkvist *Variety of Live*

Pat Mastelotto appears in a variety of projects showcasing his electroacoustic brand of beautiful, percussive noise. Here's a rundown.

Naked Truth pushes the jazz-rock envelope on *Avian Thug*, and **Pat Mastelotto** brings an assortment of strange-sounding metals and a hybrid kit to the proceedings. Check out the circular tom pattern and chiming bells on "Trap Door" for a bit of the band's future-sound flavor.

Komara's self-titled album of aggressive, King Crimson-esque, mostly instrumental rock benefits from excellent production. The lineup of trumpet, guitar, and drums gives Mastelotto space to maneuver, as on the wide-open "Dirty Smelly," which allows for some offbeat hi-hats



and big snare bombs to cut through the tension.

O.R.K.'s *Inflamed Rides* is a vocal record on which Mastelotto brings some heavier rock grooves to the music. With more floor toms than gadgets, the album lets the drummer play it straighter, but not necessarily safer.

Guitarist Samuel Hällkvist's *Variety of Live* is a mixed live/studio album of Euro fusion filled with atmospherics and dynamics. **Stefan Pasborg** plays drums, while Mastelotto is credited for "traps and buttons." It's tough to tell who's doing what, but the drummers work well together.

Mastelotto never rests creatively on any of these recordings, so do your best to keep up. **Ilya Stemkovsky**



MULTIMEDIA

Mark Kelso *Musician First, Drummer Second*

An informative two-DVD set echoing the old but always relevant advice of the importance of being musical on the kit.

There's a lot on the Canada-based drummer Mark Kelso's new DVD set, and in between brilliantly performed jazz, funk, Latin, and rock takes with an assortment of live musicians, Kelso stresses the value of spending time in the practice room, but says how the stage is really the great teacher. Over the course of nearly four hours, Kelso touches on subjects ranging from click tracks and displaced metronomes to quiet playing and non-musical influences. The chapter on working at 30 bpm is especially illuminating and seems like a challenging thing to undertake at home. Taken in pieces, this set can be used as a series of lessons on a variety of topics with an accomplished and erudite instructor, and the cool performances allow you to witness Kelso's concepts in action. The production, camera work, and audio are all top-drawer. (\$20, groovydrums.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



The Big Little Drum Book: Contemporary Concepts for the Modern Drummer

by Kevin Fortunato

Big concepts, little book, and a wealth of information to take your drumming up a notch.

Berklee grad and drum instructor Kevin Fortunato's method book runs a mere twenty-eight pages, but the ideas contained within will leave any serious student with enough challenging material to tackle for years to come. Fortunato presents an "original groove" that's fairly simple, then explains individual concepts to apply to that groove, ranging from "Open Hi-Hats With 3 Note Groupings," to all sorts of different variations of stepped hats (playing the hi-hats with the foot, not the stick) and beyond. The stepped hats are particularly interesting and tricky, especially when Fortunato suggests combining them with assorted ride cymbals and tom-toms. After you've mastered the forty-two "concepts," the author provides eighty-eight groove variations, so it's as if you get that many more versions of the book to work on at your own pace. Some of this stuff is too much to bring to your bar band, but practicing it will certainly tighten up your interdependence and open up your playing. (\$15.95, amazon.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Aaron Sterling's *Sound of Sterloid Vol. 1*

by Michael Dawson

With a mile-long list of recording credits that includes mainstream superstars John Mayer, Taylor Swift, Sara Bareilles, Richie Sambora, John Legend, and Michael Bublé; modern country greats Keith Urban, the Band Perry, and Blake Shelton; and indie/alternative artists Regina Spektor, Gungor, and Ben Rector, you would expect the L.A.-based drummer Aaron Sterling to be spending most of his days jaunting between the finest recording facilities in the world. While he is among the select group of

drummers who still do big-budget records, Sterling has seen a major shift in the business over the past five years, where up to 70 percent of his session work is now done at his home studio.

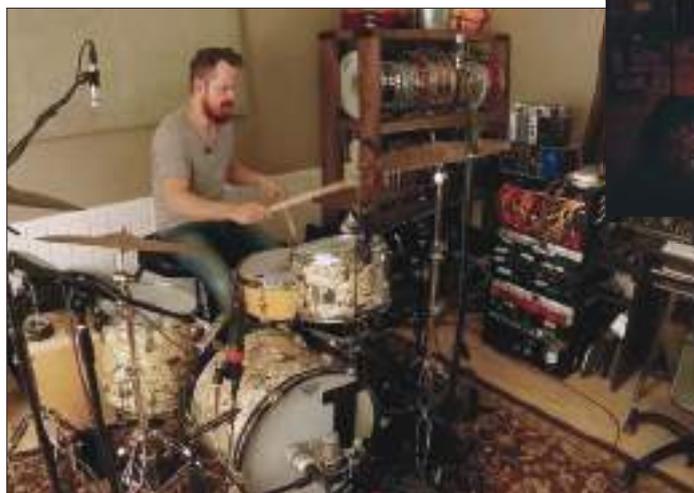
As a result, Sterling has not only had to maintain razor-sharp playing skills, but he's also had to spend a lot of time learning the fine art of audio engineering and producing. "Everyone expects you to have your own studio," he says. "Whether drummers like it or not, they need to learn the engineering aspect of it—if they want to survive.

"I practice getting different sounds on my own all the time," Sterling continues. "I'll give myself challenges to see how close I can get to a certain sound, like something from an old Motown record. And once I feel like I have it, I make a mental note on how I did it."

Earlier this year Aaron decided to document some of his ideas and experiments in the form of an online master class called *Sound of Sterloid Vol. 1*. The nearly three-hour video series is divided into eight chapters that cover topics like snare drum sounds ("The Classic Dead Snare," "Queen of California," "Wide Open and Ringy," and "Worst Snare Ever"), drum technique ("Inverted Paradiddles" and "16ths"), musical practice ("Keith Jarrett"), and the process of recording a song ("Tracking"). The drummer shot the videos himself, using three GoPro cameras, and kept things largely unscripted, which emphasizes the realness of the experience. "It's not a flashy video that looks like it was done for a million bucks," Sterling says. "That's not the point. It's about feeling like you're in the room with somebody and trying to pick that person's brain.

"What I wanted to do was talk about stuff in the way that I normally would," Sterling continues. "Maybe for some people it's a little over their head, and maybe for others it's stuff they already know, but I didn't worry about marketing it a certain way. I just wanted to be myself and talk about the things I deal with on a daily basis, whether it's the super-nerdy recording aspect or how different rudiments affect me."

While each chapter is focused on one specific topic, Sterling left the flow of each discussion open-ended, which also allowed him



to discover new ideas for himself in front of the camera. "It's funny how a lot of the things I talked about are kind of nebulous," he says. "But I feel there are so many ways to make music. The teachers who've inspired me the most are the ones

who tried to teach me to be myself. We don't love Vinnie Colaiuta just because of all the insane stuff he does on the drums. We ultimately love him because he chose to be himself. It's the same thing with Tony Williams, John Bonham, and all of these guys. So I thought it would be cooler to talk about my process in hopes that it inspires people to do their own thing rather than just copying whatever the hell I'm doing."

Throughout the discussions, Sterling showcases why he's such an in-demand player by throwing down some incredibly creative and powerful drumming. Those moments were left just as open-ended and raw as the explanations, to the point where Aaron pokes fun at himself and leaves in bits that others would consider mistakes. "I'm not a talk-show host, and I don't want to fake that stuff," he says. "I'd rather just be on camera and screw up. I'm playing some things that I think sound bad, but I kept them in there. All that realness is much better for people to hear.

"I really like the 'Worst Snare Ever' segment, because I thought it would be valuable to explore the concept of having a drum that you hate but want to figure out how to make it work. I filmed myself trying to make that drum sound good. Half of it sounded like crap, but I think it's good for people to see that journey. After doing that video, I ended up using that snare on a song because I'd gotten so inspired by it."

As for when we can expect the second volume, Sterling says, "I'm open to feedback and questions. If people have other things they're interested in, I'm down to talk about them. I'm curious about how much people are interested in the recording aspect versus the drumming aspect. And I would like to talk about kicks, toms, and cymbals. I feel there are certain things about cymbals that I could discuss, like how massive of a difference it makes when you hit them too hard."

In the meantime you can purchase *Sound of Sterloid Vol. 1* at aaronsterling.com; enter the promo code MD_PROMO between now and September 15, 2016, to receive a \$10 discount.



Metallica's *Ride the Lightning*

Years before the multiple Grammy wins and stadium shows, Metallica proved its worth on its thrashing second album, putting **Lars Ulrich** on the map.

The metal world was introduced to the new sheriff in town when Metallica released its debut record, *Kill 'Em All*, in 1983. It can be argued whether Metallica in fact invented the faster, more aggressive style of metal called thrash, but along with its early-1980s contemporaries Slayer, Anthrax, and Megadeth (collectively known as the "Big Four"), the San Francisco Bay Area-based band helped pioneer a new sound worthy of its name. While *Kill 'Em All* showed a promising act in the early stages of development, Metallica knew it had to avoid a sophomore slump by delivering a follow-up that would stake its claim as *the* metal group of its time.

In the winter of 1984, the band—vocalist/guitarist James Hetfield, guitarist Kirk Hammett, bassist Cliff Burton, and drummer Lars Ulrich—traveled to Copenhagen, Denmark (Ulrich's native country), to begin the sessions for *Ride the Lightning*. Ulrich was only twenty years old at the time, a remarkable fact considering his significant drumming growth from the first record. Slayer's Dave Lombardo and Anthrax's Charlie Benante perhaps brought technically more accomplished playing to their respective bands, but Ulrich is no slouch on *Ride the Lightning's* furious

tempos and intricate arrangements.

The album opens with a bit of deceptive fun as acoustic guitars slowly fade in on "Fight Fire With Fire." This vibe doesn't last long, as the song gives way to sledgehammer cymbal chokes and a crushing double-time snare part where Ulrich is all business. This opening track is the fiercest and most pulverizing song on the album, and while the remainder of the material showcases Metallica's newfound penchant for melodic invention and songwriting dynamics, nothing exemplifies the group's underground street cred better than this brilliant slice of head-banging mania.

The title track is an excellent demonstration of Ulrich's exceptional ability to lock in with Hetfield's rhythm guitar parts on a multi-section opus. The drums are straightforward but effective, and the couple of sections where Ulrich throws down thunderous, tribal tom hits on the offbeats are pure power.

Among the most popular of Metallica warhorses, "For Whom the Bell Tolls" is still played in concert to this day, and it was the signature song for the late Burton, who would die in a bus accident while on tour only a couple of years later. Ulrich's four-on-the-floor kick drum is thick concrete underneath Burton's demonic bass figure, and the drumming continues as a monolithic 2 and 4 throughout—no frills, no cute stuff. The song's coda is yet more bludgeoning toms and cymbal crashes in total lockstep with the guitars.

Side one (remember those?) concludes with "Fade to Black," which was then considered a power ballad and was accompanied by cries of "sellout!" by hardcore metal fans at the time. Thirty years on, history has proven the song a Metallica classic and another well-regarded concert staple. With Hetfield's developing vocal melodicism and a yearning chord progression, the track yet again allows Ulrich to truck through the arrangement in a perfectly supportive role, never overstepping his boundaries.

"Trapped Under Ice" returns to faster



thrash territory and features Ulrich's relentless double bass work, while "Escape" has a cool over-the-barline snare fill in the verses that resolves with a crash on 2. Another immensely popular track that's still a part of any Metallica live set, "Creeping Death" opens with more tomtom fury and continues with interesting syncopations from Ulrich during the choruses. Check out how the drummer keeps the intensity level up throughout the song, he and Burton in total pile-

Ride the Lightning (1984)

Fight Fire With Fire • Ride the Lightning • For Whom the Bell Tolls • Fade to Black • Trapped Under Ice • Escape • Creeping Death • The Call of Ktulu

James Hetfield: guitar, vocals

Kirk Hammett: guitar

Cliff Burton: bass

Lars Ulrich: drums

Produced by Metallica

driving unison. And dig Ulrich's simple decision to go double time in the middle of the record-closing epic instrumental, "The Call of Ktulu," bringing the song to another level without superfluous fills.

Metallica would go on to scale even greater heights of sophistication and technical prowess on its next album, 1986's *Master of Puppets*, and to multiplatinum world domination on 1991's *Metallica* (aka *The Black Album*), but it's on *Ride the Lightning* where the band fully realizes its sound and gets set on the course to becoming one of the greatest and most successful hard rock/heavy metal groups of all time. **Ilya Stemkovsky**

Hot Stuff

Give the Drummer Some: Check out Lars Ulrich's drum breaks during the verses of "For Whom the Bell Tolls," where the music completely cuts out and provides room for quick little tom fills and snare/kick combos.

Roll It: During the chanting "Die! Die!" middle section of "Creeping Death," Ulrich plays rolling fills that end in snare/crash hits. Pure metal.

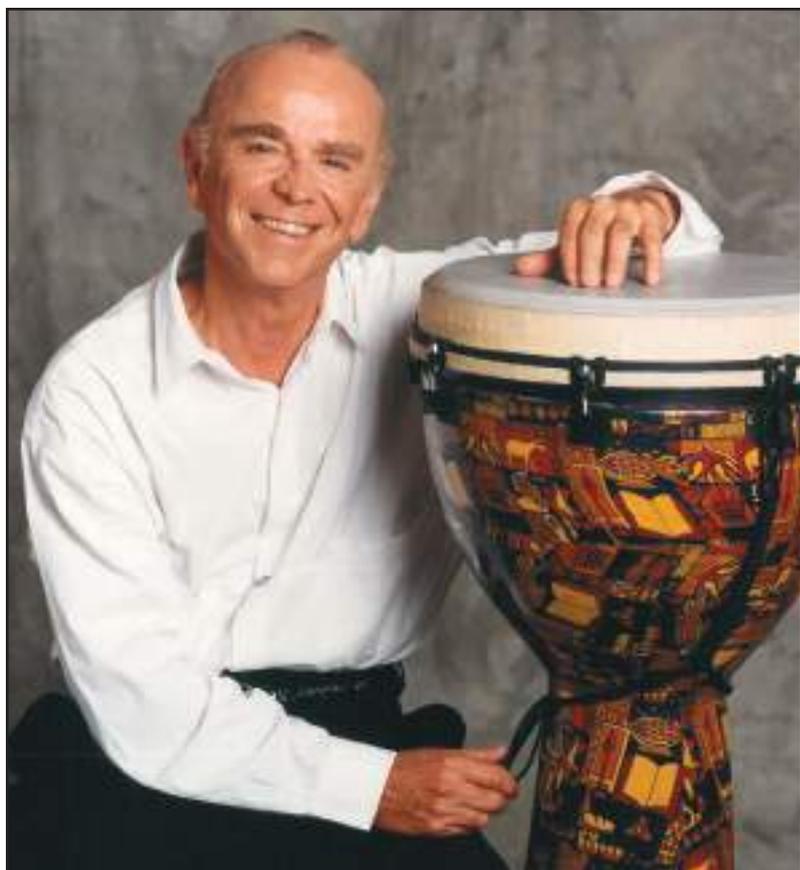
Big Outros: It wasn't yet a clichéd move back then, so dig how Ulrich brings the double bass in during the coda of "Fade to Black." When the snare plays on all four beats on top of the rolling kicks, the power is undeniable.



Remo Belli

1927–2016

Remo Belli started out like most of us: a humble drummer, looking to make a difference on the scene. Even he could not have predicted that, in time, that scene would encompass all of humankind. In this special tribute, players and industry peers share their unique insight into the man who, more than anything, just wanted to hear the sound of people hitting drums.



Remo Belli's passing truly marks the end of an era. I join the world of drummers and percussionists in mourning this great man, and send condolences to his family and team of workers. Drumheads were just the start for Remo. His vision for the healing power of the drum may well prove to be his greatest legacy. We can all look forward to his dream being realized. Meanwhile, I will always miss his genius and enthusiasm. Thank you, Remo, for all that you gave to the world of music.

Peter Erskine

When we think about what has happened culturally with music, from jazz to rock 'n' roll to electronic music and everything in between, we often celebrate the musicians. But we sometimes forget that most of the evolution that happens musically is only

possible through innovations made in the tools available for making music. There are a few true innovators in that regard. Remo Belli was one of them. I'm very grateful for what he has given us, and I'm proud to be associated with his name.

Benny Greb

Remo was not only an icon but a visionary. His work with his wife, Ami, in the field of music and wellness was instrumental in increasing the understanding and furthering the research in that field—to the benefit of all.

Remo and RZ [Sabian founder Robert Zildjian] were great friends, a friendship that went all the way back to when Remo was a gigging musician in Los Angeles. When Remo launched his company, RZ helped out with advice, contacts, and experience—and

even let Remo sleep on his hotel-room sofa during his first few trips to the Frankfurt trade show. They made each other laugh, and is there anything better than that?

I'll always remember with a smile a day that I spent with Remo and Ami in Mexico hiking up the pyramids of Teotihuacan. I learned a lot that day, not just from what he said, but from how he and Ami lived their life together. A very impressive couple. We will miss his friendship and his vision, in business and in life.

Andy Zildjian
President and CEO, Sabian

I feel blessed to have known Remo for nearly twenty years. Throughout that time he was one of the most energized and inspired people in the industry. Regardless of the circumstances, when you saw him he



1957



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**INNOVATOR, VISIONARY, PIONEER,
ICON OF THE PERCUSSION INDUSTRY**

REMO D. BELLI

1927 - 2016

Through his ongoing efforts, the professional, the enthusiast, children, the elderly, those at risk and those faced with both emotional and physical challenges have been brought the joy of drumming. His spirit lives on and we will continue to pursue his vision of making drumming available to everyone. He will be missed.



In Memoriam

was bursting with energy and enthusiasm to share the latest product developments and instruments. It was incredibly inspiring to see someone so passionate and focused, right through into his late seventies. We're now losing the very founders of the industry that we know today. We owe them a lot and have many lessons to learn by looking at their struggles, persistence, innovations, and achievements. There will always be a special place in my heart for Remo Belli.

Pete Lockett

I only got to meet Remo once, when I visited the factory to see the production process. Luckily for me, he was with the wonderful Louie Bellson, and the three of us had a short chat. A fantastic couple of guys. I remember my first, admittedly cheap, awful kit came fitted with vellum heads, and every night was a fight with the tuning key before and after a gig. When Remo came up with the synthetic drumhead, life for drummers changed completely. All of a sudden the drums sounded just like they did the

last time you played them, no worries of temperature and humidity changes that had to be addressed with the calfskin heads, and the blessing of not having to detune the heads after a show. So, Remo, up there in drummers' heaven, thanks from us all.

Ian Paice

The first time I met Remo Belli was around 1975, at Bob Henrit's drum store in London. I was fairly unknown to the general public at the time and rather young. I had some questions about the consistency of double-ply heads, namely Emperors and Pinstripes, which, if my memory serves me correctly, had just come out on the market. Even though he didn't know who I was, Remo was very gracious, and we spoke for a little while. Just a few years later I was taken on as one of the few full endorsers by Remo, and I've now enjoyed over thirty-five years of playing his wonderful heads. We didn't see much of each other over the years, except at the trade shows, and I would bump into him in our mutual favorite restaurant in Sherman

Oaks and chat. He was always gracious and welcoming. We have lost another legend who helped shape our industry with innovation. Buon viaggio, Remo!

Simon Phillips

Remo Belli brought the perfect sound and quality into the drum world. That's why he will remain in our "drum heads" forever!

Ismael Cancel

Remo Belli was a visionary for what he created for himself and those around him in drumming, and he changed the sound of the instrument across all genres of music for many years to come.

Carl Allen

Remo Belli was a very good friend to me and to my father, Bud Bissonette, for many years. I first met Remo in 1982, when I was with the Maynard Ferguson Big Band, and that year he gave me my Remo drumhead endorsement and asked me to play at Remo Hands On Day in Los Angeles. I'll never

the MD Deluxe Stick Bag



Now you can carry up to two dozen pairs of sticks, mallets, and brushes in style with the new MD Deluxe Stick Bag. It's made from durable Cordura fabric and features six deep padded pockets, two tom-hanger cords, a loop handle, a shoulder strap, and a zippered outer pocket for all of your odds and ends, including the latest issue of *Modern Drummer*. The bag is 18" long, 10" wide when closed, and 21" wide when open, and a heavy-duty zipper keeps everything secure in transport.

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“Our next boom to sustaining our industry will come through everyone recognizing that every human is a customer. We have to concentrate on how to instruct and inspire all of humanity.”

— REMO BELLI

The Percussion Marketing Council thanks Remo Belli for his inspiring leadership. Remo was a founding member and continuous supporter of the PMC. We will honor his memory by pursuing our mutual mission of percussion advocacy. His participation will be missed but his passion will never be forgotten.



Percussion
Marketing
Council

The Percussion Marketing Council is a non-profit 501-c corporation dedicated to the advancement, understanding and enjoyment of drums and percussion.
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A grip enhancing rosin powder that absorbs moisture and provides added control of your drumsticks while performing in humid and sweaty conditions. Gently "clap" your hands on the Tacky Sack to apply rosin powder to your palms. Cord included to hang Tacky Sack from your snare drum, stick bag, hardware etc.

#SWITCHTOVATER**VATER.COM****In Memoriam**

forget it; we had a blast together, and that was the day that Remo introduced his Pre-Tuned Drum series. My dad always told me how great Remo was to both him and my mom, Phyllis—who played jazz vibraphone in my dad's band back in Detroit in the early '50s—whenever they would go up to the new Remo headquarters in Valencia, California, to pick up my drumheads. One of my greatest memories of Remo was hanging out with him at the amazing NAMM Show party that he threw at the Hilton Ballroom with tons of great bands.

That was the last time I saw Jeff Porcaro play with Toto. It was also the debut of the new Toto song in 7/8, "Jake to the Bone." Remo hired Toto and *many* great bands to play at his party—he was so amazing! Thanks for the great memories.

Gregg Bissonette

Remo Belli changed drumming and music forever. He was an industry pioneer and a beloved personality who has left a staggering legacy. I've been seeing the Remo logo on drumheads since I was two years old, and I've seen them practically every day of my life since. It's hard to imagine a world without Remo Belli.

Todd Sucherman

As a kid I used to put up all those Remo ads on my bedroom wall—I can picture the Buddy/Bellson and Cobham ones right now—and it was the logo most implanted in my brain over the hours and decades of hitting the heads. To this day I still get that happy feeling when I see a stick-tattooed, brush-blackened Coated Ambassador worn down to the clear ply in the center. It's the quintessential look of drumming to me, from a player's perspective, and Remo Belli made that.

Robby Ameen

Remo had a longstanding relationship with the Zildjian family. He first became a Zildjian artist when on the road with Anita O'Day in the '50s. Shortly afterwards he opened a drum shop and became the largest Zildjian account on the West Coast.

But Remo always seemed to be a man on a mission. He was intrigued by solving problems, which made him a natural entrepreneur. He wanted to solve the problem of the calfskin drumhead, and in doing so he forever changed drumming and created a business that has dominated the drumhead category. But for Remo money and success were never the real drivers. He was more driven by vision. Indeed, Remo has been called one of the greatest visionaries in the music industry.

The vision Remo shared with his wife, Ami, was the connection between music and health and wellness. Together they

funded early research to validate music therapy. Intrigued that the brain was hardwired for music, Remo and Ami understood how music could help treat autism, Alzheimer's, strokes, etc. Thanks to Remo, music therapy has now been embraced by hospitals and by rehab and nursing facilities—which could be considered one of Remo's greatest accomplishments.

**Craigie Zildjian
CEO, Zildjian**

Without Remo Belli, we might all still be playing calfskin drumheads—not that there's anything *wrong* with that. However, any of us who have ever played outdoors, in the heat, cold, or intense humidity, know the inconsistent results that kind of head can produce in less than perfect environments. Remo came up with a logical, affordable, and musical solution for all drummers, regardless of style. I remember purchasing my first Remo head at age eleven, and marveling at how much better it sounded than my standard-issue Sears and Roebuck snare drum head. Thank you, Remo, for your huge contribution to our industry. You were and still are greatly appreciated, and you'll be enormously missed.

Doane Perry

As a Remo endorser since the early 1980s, I had the honor and pleasure to meet and spend time with Mr. Belli on numerous occasions. Not only was he always incredibly gracious and generous, he also showed a genuine interest in me, my music, and my thoughts and opinions on his products—even his wines! He was a true gentleman and a unique innovator, visionary, businessman, and musical contributor in our industry. He will be greatly missed.

Paul Wertico

Remo Belli fit ten lifetimes' worth of accomplishments, inventions, and innovations into a single one. What a forward thinker! To have great ideas is one thing, but to act on them and execute them completely is another. Remo did that! I'll always remember how sweet he was to me at events and gatherings. I am proud to be part of his legacy.

Rich Redmond

I've played Remo heads for more than forty years, though unfortunately I never got to meet Mr. Belli. I'm not too fussy about gear, but a drumhead can sometimes feel more important than the actual drum—and if I end up on a gig with the snare drum covered by something other than a Remo Coated Ambassador, something feels odd to me. The sound and the bounce is wrong.

Morgan Ågren

It's important to note that before getting into manufacturing, Remo was a great drummer and an important part of the West Coast jazz scene. He changed the world of percussion with the synthetic drumhead. His passion was to enhance everyone's life by participating in drumming. In the early days of Drum Workshop, he always took time to give us encouragement and advice. When we would often be way past due in payments, he would personally call—not to ask for payment, but to find out if everything was okay. He is a true legend in our industry.

Don Lombardi
President, Drum Workshop

The Gretsch family joins everyone in the drum and percussion industry in mourning the passing of Remo Belli. As a veteran of that industry myself, I had the pleasure of knowing Remo for many years on a personal and professional basis. My wife, Dinah, and I shared visits with him at trade shows and other drumming events, and we always enjoyed our time together.

But Remo's connection to the Gretsch family goes back much further. My uncle Fred Gretsch Jr. was a little more than twenty years older than Remo. When Remo was touring as the drummer for Anita O'Day and bandleader Billy May in the 1950s, Uncle Fred was running the Gretsch business. He welcomed Remo into the fold as a Gretsch drum artist. In fact, Remo's smiling face graces the cover of the 1954 Gretsch drum catalog—right next to Louie Bellson, and in the company of other drum greats like Art Blakey, Jo Jones, and Shelly Manne.

Just a few years later, when Remo went into business himself, Uncle Fred supported his efforts by becoming a major customer for his Weather King synthetic drumheads. Remo heads are still factory-installed on Gretsch drums today.

Fast-forward to when I entered the drum business fifty years ago. Returning the favor that my uncle had done for him, Remo, who was a little less than twenty years older than me, served as a mentor to me, offering sound business tips and valuable personal advice. Over the ensuing years I came to cherish his friendship, his guidance, and his unparalleled professional example. I will miss those things—and Remo himself—tremendously.

Fred W. Gretsch
President, the Gretsch Company

From the product itself to the people behind Remo, there is no other like it. I'm so thankful to be able to call Remo family, and that would never have been possible without the mastermind behind the company, Remo Belli.

Garrett Goodwin

Remo Belli built a company full of integrity, passion, and consistency. He was a gentleman who surrounded himself with the finest people that carry the virtue and vision that make Remo products the industry standard. I am honored and grateful to have known Remo Belli and to be a Remo artist.

Andrés Forero

For me, three images/memories stand out. First, seeing the mighty Remo crown on Ringo's Beatles bass drum head in 1964. Second, having a tour of the factory with the great man in the mid-'80s, when I first signed with the company (and using the wonderful metal Spoxe in my kits). And, finally, his commitment to wellness and community action through the HealthRHYTHMS programs. Thank you, Mr. Belli.

Michael Blair

There are a few icons within every industry that contribute so greatly to its advancement as to leave a deep and lasting legacy to be revered by generations to come. Remo Belli was one such icon within our industry, as he literally changed the world of drumming forever. He was truly a warm and wonderful man who founded and led a great company. I'm extremely honored to have known him, as are many others at Pearl worldwide. The strong partnership between Pearl and Remo is many decades old, and we are very proud that on most every drum we sell, you will find the name Remo.

Terry West
President and CEO, Pearl Corporation

Remo Belli leaves a legacy with not only the music community but the entire world—much like Steve Jobs or Elon Musk. To have had the pleasure to be in his presence since my high school days, when I got to hang out at the original factory, to later being signed to Remo Inc. as one of the company's early world percussion endorsers, is an absolute honor. Though an innovator and inventor, Remo was more "the Most Interesting Man in the World" than mad scientist. He was a connoisseur, he did everything with class and style, and he will be greatly missed!

Taku Hirano

Remo Belli forever changed the music industry with his innovative products, but he also influenced modern music itself, because his drumheads transformed the sound of our instrument and shaped drumming styles by association. His legacy has influenced all of us in more ways than we can imagine. Thank you, Remo!

Antonio Sanchez

I consider myself lucky to be a part of the Remo family for more than a decade as an endorser. Remo Belli was an innovator, a great man, and a legend in this business. His company set the bar for the production and distribution of the modern-day drumhead, and remains the leader today. We can all thank Mr. Belli for that. Rest in peace, Remo, and thank you for allowing the drumming community to carry on your legacy every time our drums sing with your heads.

Jason Bittner

It was my honor to know Remo Belli professionally and personally for more than thirty years. I respected him as an innovator and a businessman. I admired him as a visionary who saw unlimited potential for percussion to be a part of music, of wellness, and of life in general. And I envied the indefatigable joie de vivre that sustained him for so many years. Remo was one of the "founding fathers" of the percussion industry, and he will be missed by all of us who hit things with sticks.

Rick Van Horn

I never met Mr. Belli, but I would've thanked him for his tireless contribution to the art of drumming, and for allowing me to represent the finest name in drumheads.

Travis Orbin

Remo Belli was a music visionary who realized early on that music education through drumming improves wellness. He was also a cherished lifelong friend and mentor to me. Remo's contributions have made the world a much better and more musical place to live. He will never be forgotten. Thanks, Remo. RIP.

Jay Wanamaker
President and CEO, Roland Corporation US

Remo Belli committed himself and his company to provide drummers the world over with quality products and programs while striving to expand the acceptance of rhythm, and in particular drumming, as an integral component of an individual's wellbeing. Through his ongoing efforts, the professional, the enthusiast, children, the elderly, those at risk, and people faced with emotional and physical challenges have been brought to the joy of drumming. He made the world a better place and touched many lives with the activity of drumming as a life enhancement tool. It was a true pleasure knowing Remo Belli over the past twenty-five years as a visionary, boss, and mentor. I will miss him.

Bob Yerby
Vice president of sales and marketing, Remo, Inc.



Woodstick Groove 2016

This past April, Groove Music for Youth and the Emerald Queen Casino held their annual nonprofit drumming charity event, Woodstick Groove, in Tacoma, Washington. Hundreds of drummers attended master classes and performances while raising money to provide instruments to underfunded schools and at-risk youth. Educator Dom Famularo hosted, and special guests included Gregg Bissonette (Ringo Starr, David Lee Roth), Tony Coleman (B.B. King), Jared Falk (Drumeo), David Garibaldi (Tower of Power), Longineu Parsons III (Yellowcard, Adam Lambert), Jules Radino (Blue Öyster Cult), Mark Schulman (Pink, Cher), Brian Tichy (Whitesnake, Billy

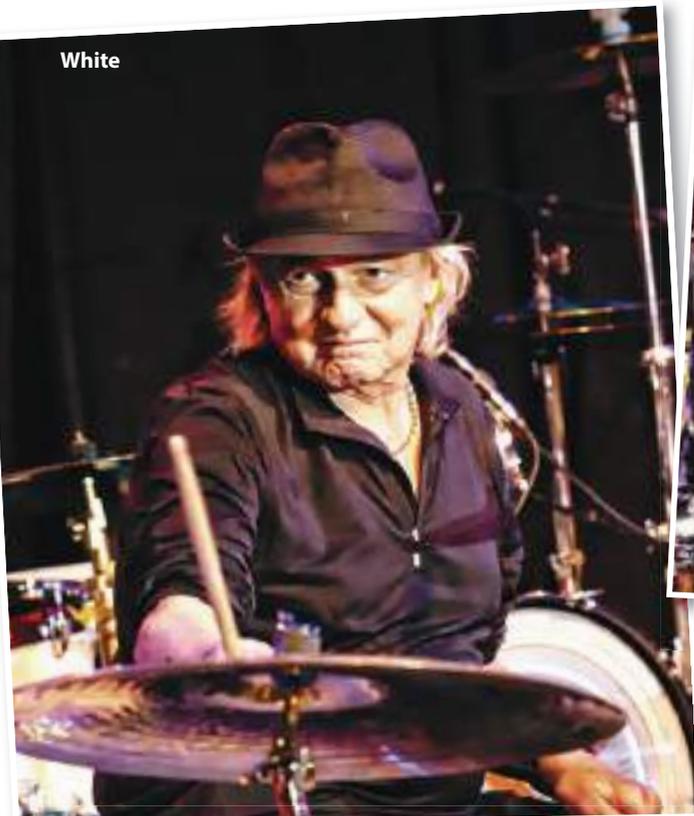
Idol), Alan White (Yes), and Mike Wrench (Upbeat Outreach).

Throughout the day, participants had access to master classes and workshops by Schulman, Tichy, Bissonette, and Wrench. Attendees and guest artists closed the evening together by playing a set of classic-rock and pop songs with a live band. A special tribute to the late Joe Hibbs, a music industry veteran and longtime supporter of the event, was among one of the many highlights of the show. For more information, visit GrooveMusicForYouth.com.

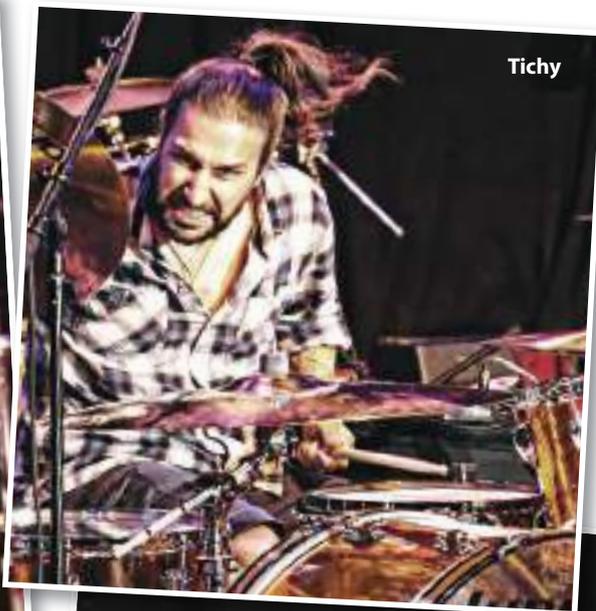
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Photos by Bill Bungard

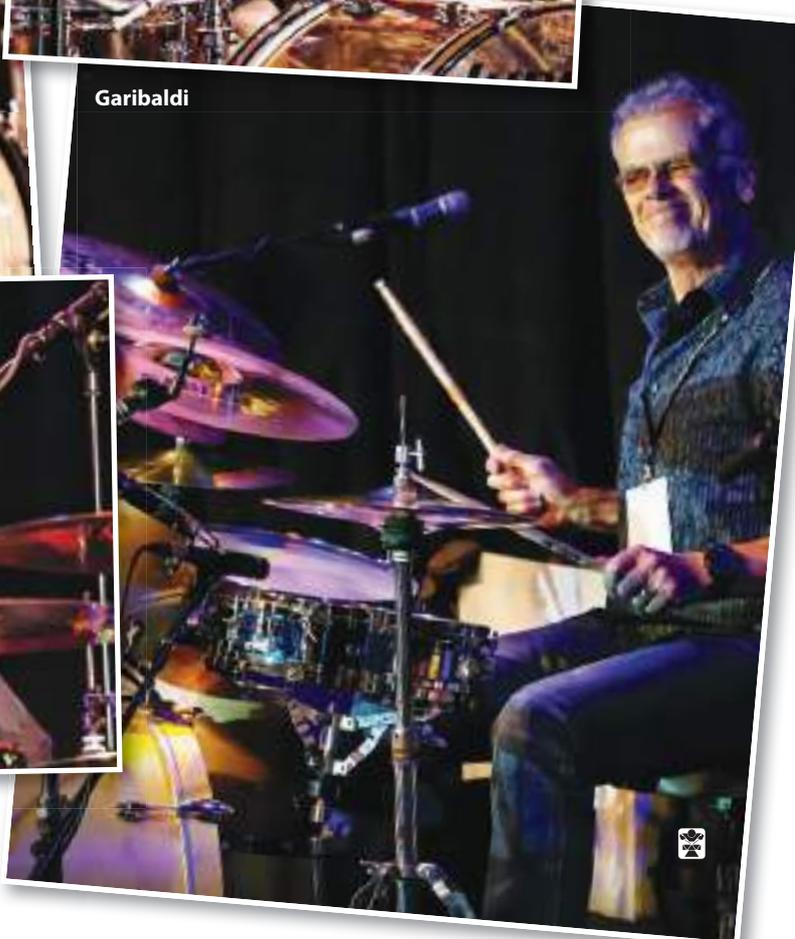
White



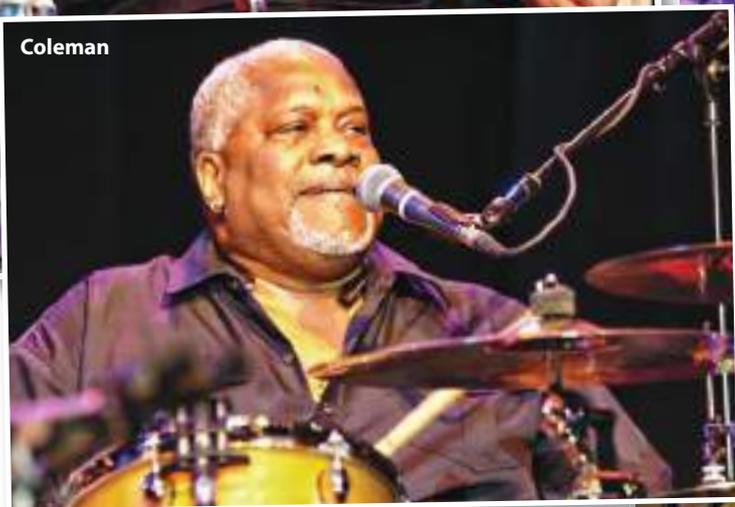
Tichy



Garibaldi



Coleman





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Katrina Restoration

Main photo: Hansen's snare two weeks after Hurricane Katrina.

"I purchased this Yamaha Maple Custom Absolute drumset in 1999," says New Orleans-based jazz drummer David Hansen. "In 2005, Hurricane Katrina sent us on a journey none of us could've imagined. To my amazement, this set survived. My home and studio were covered in nine feet of brackish water for two weeks. I had over \$35,000 worth of drums and world percussion that I'd collected over twenty years. My cymbals, a few brass percussion pieces, and this kit were the only pieces saved.

"I remember cutting the heads off to drain the water and muck," Hansen continues. "I didn't take off the hoops or heads, to keep the shape of the drums intact as much as possible. It was August going into September, and the weather was still very hot and humid. I drained the drums, dipped them in bleach and water, rinsed them, and then left them in my backyard for weeks to dry. At that point I still thought I'd probably have to throw them away. About four months later, though, I brought them to one of many temporary residences and began working on them. I remember taking the hoops off and measuring their diameters—none of the drums were out of round at all. My excitement was overwhelming!

"The drums smelled terrible," Hansen goes on, "so I scrubbed them

with a bleach solution and a deodorizing solution that I got from the Red Cross. I hit all of the chrome with the finest steel wool and then rinsed everything. I didn't unscrew the lug casing because the screws inside the drums were the only parts that rusted. I brushed those and then painted the metal parts with a rust converter that immediately oxidized the metal and stopped any further rusting. Finally, I put on new heads and tuned the drums. The first night performing on them was amazing. Everything I did to get the kit back in playing condition went against anything I'd ever do to my drums, but it had to be done. These drums are my pride and joy. Of all the drums I've owned, this is my most beloved set.

"Following the storm, in February 2006, I booked my trio, the Garden District Band, into a local upscale restaurant. As of this past February, I've performed with this group seven nights a week for more than ten years using this drumset. We've also recorded seven albums with it, and they sound incredible.

"Many of the drummers who sub for me lived through Katrina as well," Hansen concludes. "None of them were able to save any of their drums. They all love my kit and are amazed at what it went through."

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



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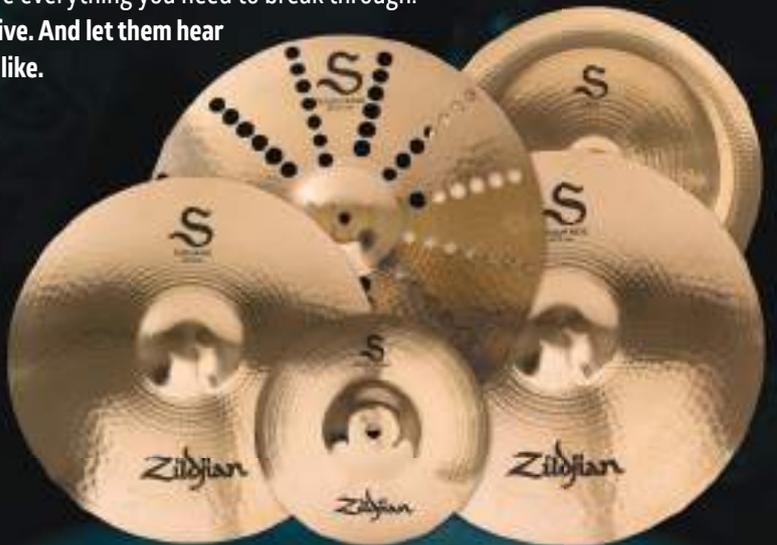
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