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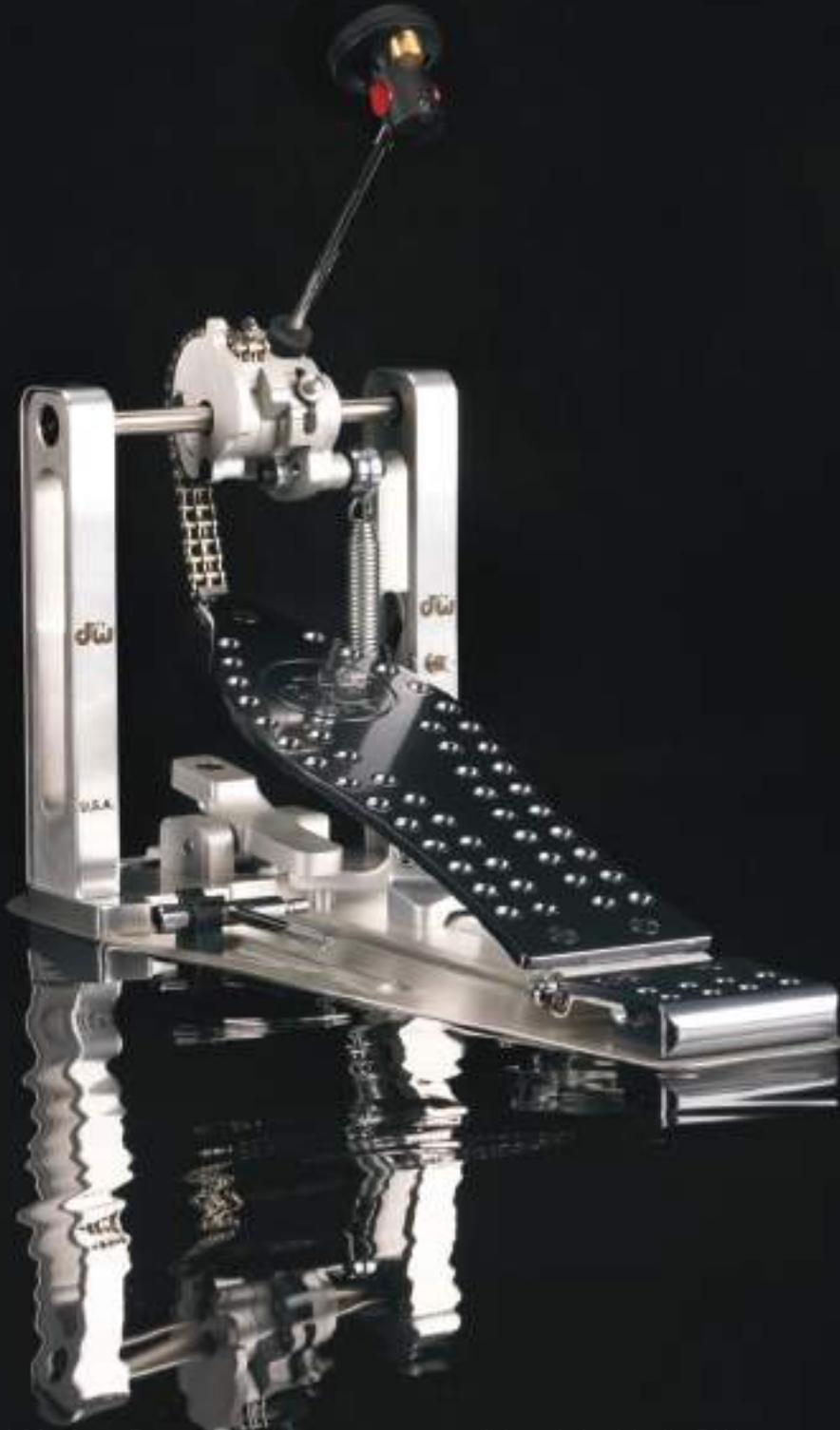
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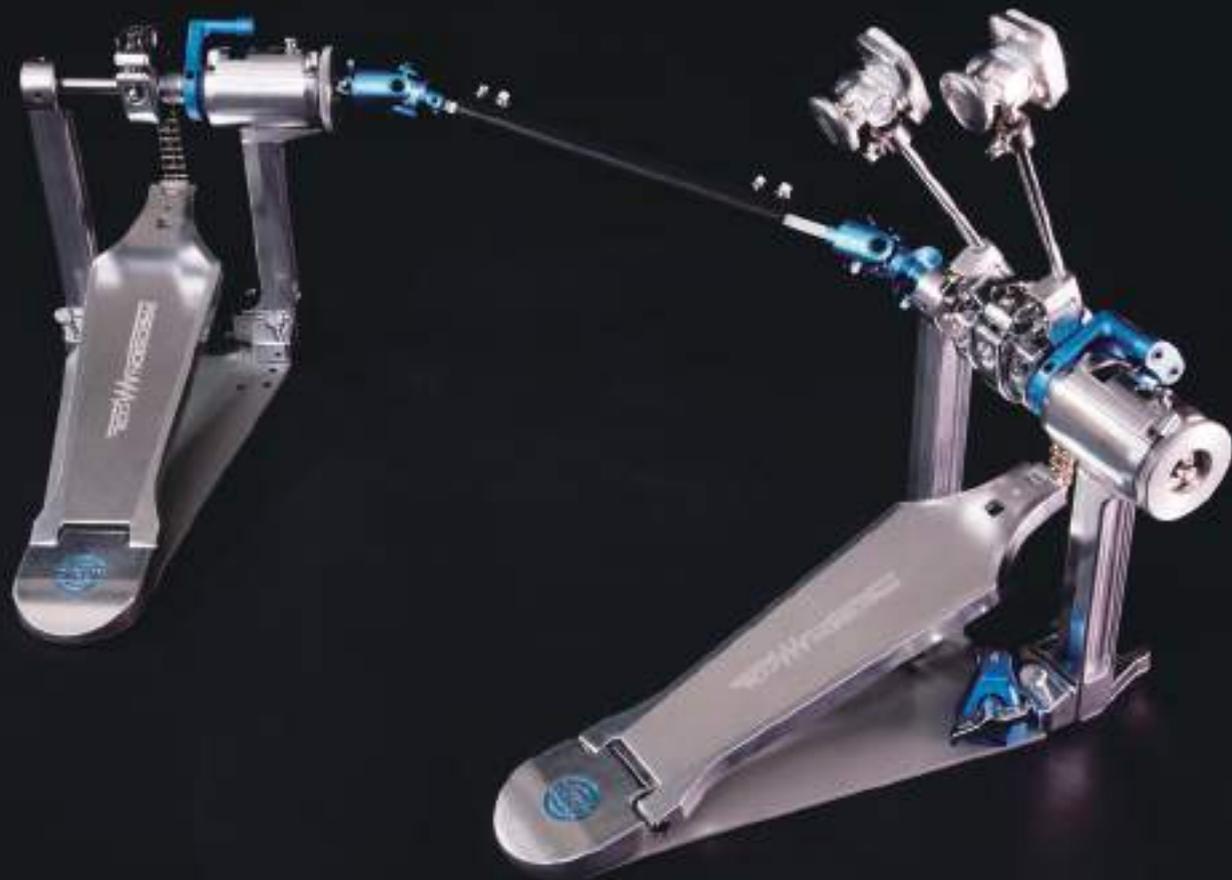
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# Living Colour's Will Calhoun

"The way Elvin Jones hit the toms and the structure of his rhythms was very much a warrior kind of approach, and he swung really hard."

Like his late, great idol—the subject of his brand-new tribute album—this ever-curious world traveler applies ancient wisdom, athletic intensity, and deep listening skills every time he sits behind the kit. by Ken Micallef

Cover and Contents photos by Rahav Segev



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# Your Idols Are Your Teachers

Hi, everyone! As we approach the end of 2016, I'm reflecting back on my editorial from the beginning of the year about setting goals. I stuck to a few of my resolutions, including one of my main ones: finishing up writing and recording new music with my band, Mantus. Like *Modern Drummer* magazine, we're celebrating our fortieth anniversary this year, and even though we say we're recording new material mostly for fun and to give ourselves an excuse to be in each other's company, we take our music-making very seriously and truly hope people will dig it.



I haven't known this month's cover artist, Will Calhoun, for as long as I've known my bandmates, but it *has* been quite a few years. I still recall a phone conversation I had with him, I believe in 1989, while Living Colour was out on one of its first major tours, opening for the Rolling Stones. Will excitedly told me how cool it was getting to sit behind Charlie Watts' drumkit on stage. We joked about how Will was having his drumheads changed almost every night, while Charlie's snare drum still had the same head from the previous Stones tour, years earlier. In fact, pieces of the confetti that was dropped on audiences were still stuck to the rim. It was a lesson for us both.

In his new interview, Calhoun talks about two projects that he's particularly proud of: the latest Living Colour album, *Shade*, which harkens back to the vibe that originally drew fans to the band, and *Celebrating Elvin Jones*, the recording he recently made in tribute to one of his greatest drumming idols. Will's reference to learning so much from Elvin got me thinking about how the players I grew up emulating were, in a very real way, my teachers. I listened to every record and watched every video I could get my hands on and emulated every beat, lick, and feel I heard them play. I learned a lot from dissecting songs of theirs that my band was going to cover, or just playing along to their records or to their songs when they came on the radio.

These days, with technologies like YouTube and Skype, all of us can take advantage of *many* more opportunities to watch our heroes, and even take lessons with some of them, whether they live two towns over or thousands of miles away. Unlike previous generations, today's drummer can analyze every aspect of an idol's playing, often from multiple angles, as many times as he or she wants to. This can obviously be viewed as a very good thing. But I believe there's a negative side as well. For one thing, it's easier to forget that watching your heroes on YouTube doesn't compare to going out and actually seeing them play live, or that viewing educational videos is not nearly as important as playing with other musicians in the same room. And now when I see a video of a very young player with remarkable chops, yes, I appreciate the talent and the potential. But I'm not as impressed or shocked as I might have been at one time, because the drummers of this generation *should* be that good—there are far fewer excuses not to be. I can only imagine what it would have been like in the '60s and '70s if the top drummers of the day had been able to have everything about their heroes laid out in front of them in seconds.

Still, the more things change, the more they stay the same. The power that our drumming heroes have over us is undeniable, and it remains our most important influence. So enjoy the issue, and never stop learning from your idols—remember, they are your teachers!

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**MODERN DRUMMER** magazine (ISSN 0194-4533) is published monthly by **MODERN DRUMMER Publications, Inc.**, 271 Route 46 West, Suite H-212, Fairfield, NJ 07004. PERIODICALS MAIL POSTAGE paid at Fairfield, NJ 07004 and at additional mailing offices. Copyright 2016 by **MODERN DRUMMER Publications, Inc.** All rights reserved. Reproduction without the permission of the publisher is prohibited.

**EDITORIAL/ADVERTISING/ ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES:** **MODERN DRUMMER Publications**, 271 Route 46 West, Suite H-212, Fairfield, NJ 07004. Tel: 973-239-4140. Fax: 973-239-7139. Email: [mdinfo@moderndrummer.com](mailto:mdinfo@moderndrummer.com).

**MODERN DRUMMER** welcomes manuscripts and photographic material but cannot assume responsibility for them.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** U.S. \$29.95, Canada \$33.95, other international \$44.95 per year. For two- and three-year subscription prices go to [www.moderndrummer.com](http://www.moderndrummer.com). Single copies \$5.99.

**SUBSCRIPTION CORRESPONDENCE:** Modern Drummer, PO Box 274, Oregon, IL 61061-9920. **Change of address:** Allow at least six weeks for a change. Please provide both old and new address. Call 800-551-3786 or 815-732-5283. Phone hours, 8AM–4:30PM Monday–Friday CST, or visit Subscriber Services at [www.moderndrummer.com](http://www.moderndrummer.com).

**MUSIC DEALERS:** Modern Drummer is distributed by Hal Leonard Corp., 800-554-0626, [sales@halleonard.com](mailto:sales@halleonard.com), [www.halleonard.com/dealers](http://www.halleonard.com/dealers)

**INTERNATIONAL LICENSING REPRESENTATIVE:** Robert J. Abramson & Associates, Inc., Libby Abramson, President, 7915 Via Grande, Boyton Beach, FL 33437, [abramson@prodigy.net](mailto:abramson@prodigy.net).

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Modern Drummer, PO Box 274, Oregon, IL 61061-9920.

**Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 41480017** Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: PO Box 875, Stn A, Windsor ON N9A 6P2

**MEMBER:** National Association for Music Development, National Association of Music Merchants, Percussive Arts Society

**MODERN DRUMMER ONLINE:** [www.moderndrummer.com](http://www.moderndrummer.com)

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### Mike and Mike MD Podcast

I've been searching for years to find a professional podcast for drumming, and yours is amazing. What you two discuss is crucial to any drummer and relates to all drummers regardless of ability.

Once I slow down from gigging (I'm doing ninety-plus gigs per year plus a full-time job), I'm signing up for Mike's Lessons and am currently about to subscribe to *Modern Drummer*. Your passion makes me hungry to get more information and want to further myself in drumming. Bravo guys, I'm loving it!

**Glenn McCracken**

To check out the *Modern Drummer* podcast with Mike Johnston of [mikeslessons.com](http://mikeslessons.com) and MD managing editor Michael Dawson, head to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

### Favorite Snare Drum Heads

In a recent Facebook and Instagram poll, we asked our followers to tell us about their favorite snare drum head. Do heavier skins help some drummers make it through a weekend of metal gigs? Or do one-ply heads give others the subtlety and crack needed for a jazz or funk date? Here are some of your preferences for outfitting one of a drummer's most important voices.

I use Remo Emperor heads for swing jazz and traditional country music because it resonates well at a mid/high-range tuning. For other genres I'll use a Clear Pinstripe head because when you crank it high it doesn't lose its depth or midrange frequencies.

**Ben Gallegos**

Evans' Hybrid snare batter is one of the best-sounding heads that I've ever used. It's been my go-to for a few years now. It's ultra-durable and has the perfect crack for rock and heavy music, but it's also surprisingly sensitive and handles ghost notes and low-volume playing like a champ. Unless Evans manages to outdo itself, I don't see myself using anything else.

**Dan Romeiro**

I use Aquarian Vintage Classic heads on my snare and couldn't be happier—Coated on the batter and their Vintage Classic Clear on the resonant side. Its durable coating and wide tuning range makes my maple snare one happy camper.

**Sam Schmiedel**

It depends on the snare. My Ludwig Supraphonic gets a Remo Coated Ambassador. If it's any brass drum, I'll use an Evans Coated Genera HD. On almost any wood drum, I'll use a Remo Coated Powerstroke 3. I have a custom 8x14 aluminum drum that loves an Evans EC Reverse Dot snare batter.

**Tommy Maras**

My go-to right now is the Evans Heavyweight snare head. It has a lot of range. You can crank it up and get a really high-pitched crack, or you can tune it low and get that super thick, deep, and fat snare tone. Because I play a brass snare that has a naturally low pitch, I tune it low.

**Ben Bellville**



My choice is Aquarian's Focus-X Coated with a Power Dot underneath. You get the response and feel of a single-ply head with excellent durability. The vented muffling ring helps tame the overtones, but it doesn't completely smother them. Since switching to Aquarian years ago, I found the sound I was looking for.

**Phil Kurut**

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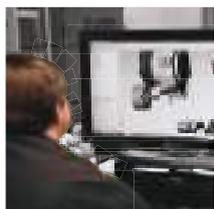
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## EXCLUSIVE ONLINE Q&As

**BRAD WILK** of Prophets of Rage, **DAVID LOVERING** of the Pixies, and **TONY LEONE** of the Chris Robinson Brotherhood stop by moderndrummer.com to give us the inside story on their latest projects.



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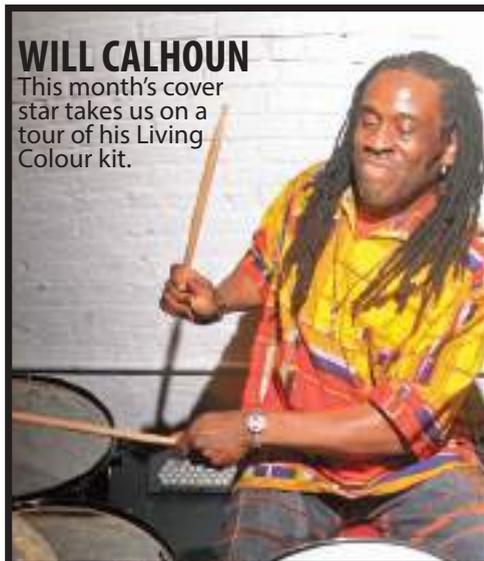
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## WILL CALHOUN

This month's cover star takes us on a tour of his Living Colour kit.



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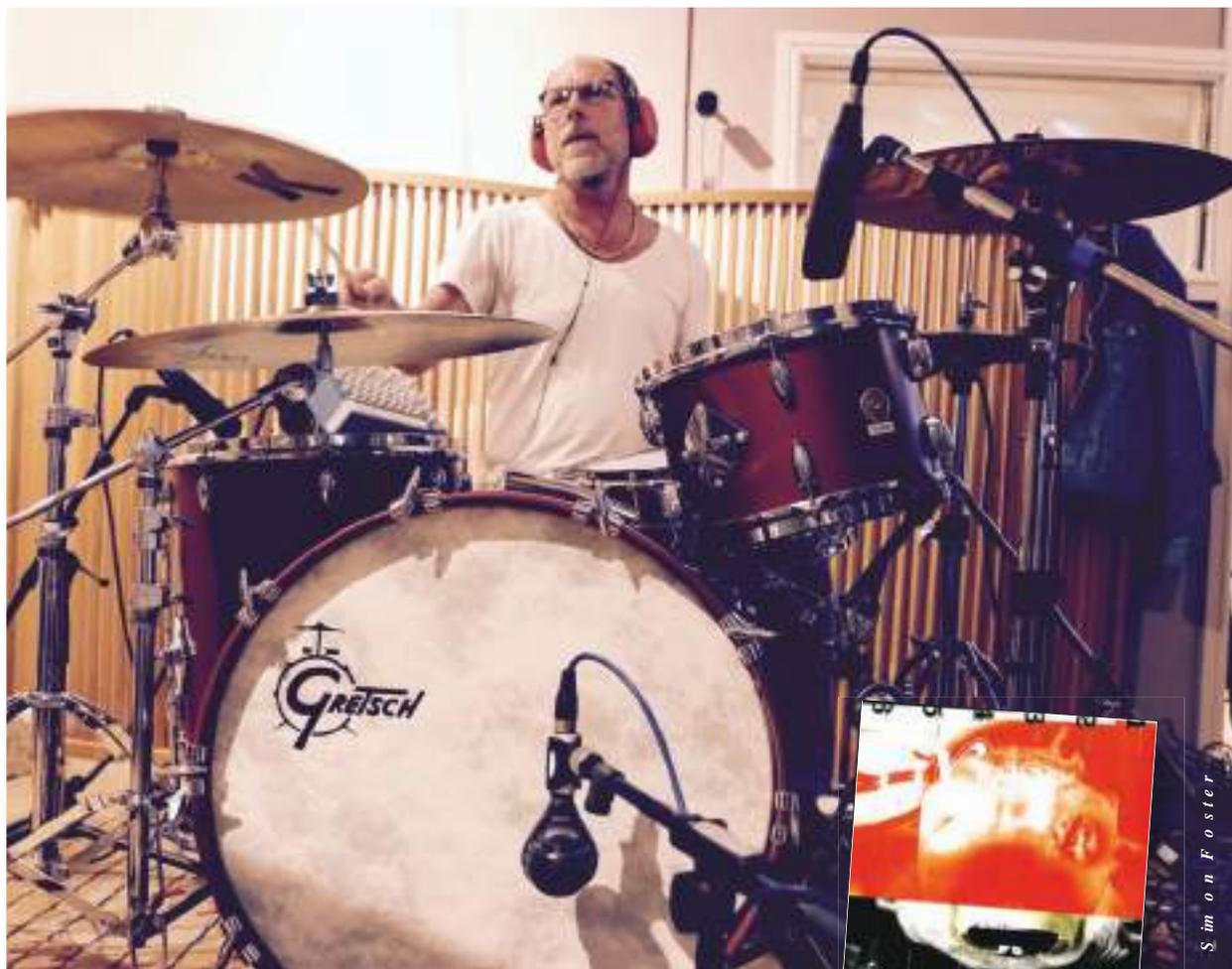
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## Out Now



Simon Foster

### The Pixies *Head Carrier*

For their new album, *Head Carrier*, the iconic indie band the Pixies took extra care in preparing the songs—a welcome change for longtime drummer **David Lovering** compared with past experiences over the band's thirty-year, on-again/off-again history. "One of the things that was great about doing this record," Lovering says, "is that we had about six to eight weeks of preproduction, going to places like Toronto and L.A. and Bath, England, and just working these songs out until I at least was very comfortable with them. So when I did go into the studio—this is the best part about it—I did my drums in three days flat. It was done. And then I had two and a half weeks to kill time, or at least give moral support. [laughs]

"Back when the Pixies first started, we just played in clubs," Lovering continues. "And that's the way you honed songs. The first Pixies album was *Come On Pilgrim*, which was a demo that we did, and then came *Surfer Rosa*. And then it went on from there. And as each album went on, there was much less time to really work out these songs and then go into the studio with limited time and do a record. And I used to hate recording. I just grew to hate going to the studio. I wouldn't say I'm a slow learner, but I like to get things *really* comfortable and finished with the way that I like it. And it was very hard to do things early on. That's not to say that they were bad. I was very happy with all of the albums. But to have less of an opportunity to really work things out was very hard. And, again, having this time to do it, you can work things out. Songs changed immensely in the way they were arranged. Parts became easier to come up with because of the familiarity with it. But it worked out wonderfully."

On *Head Carrier*, Lovering maintains the classic dry snare tone that graces such records as 1989's *Doolittle*. "What's funny is I brought an Acrolite with me to London at RAK Studios, where we recorded this," the drummer says. "And I had five or six other snares that my drum tech, 'Chumpy,' had brought in and loaned me. It turned out that the Acrolite—which I don't play live—was the most-used drum. It wasn't a huge studio, but because of the room, the miking, and the ambient mics, that drum sounded huge. It filled in perfectly. It was funny how a backup drum that I don't really use became the main snare on the record." **Willie Rose**

### More New Releases

**Lean Lean** (Allison Miller) /// **Of Mice and Men** Cold World (Valentino Arteaga) /// **Norma Jean** Polar Similar (Clayton Holyoak) /// **Taking Back Sunday** Tidal Wave (Mark O'Connell) /// **Gang of Four** Live...in the Moment (Jonny Finnigan) /// **Pain** Coming Home (David Wallin, Sebastian Tägtgren) /// **Neurosis** Fires Within Fires (Jason Roeder) /// **Jah Wobble and the Invaders of the Heart** Everything Is No Thing (Marc Layton-Bennett, Tony Allen)

For more with David Lovering, visit [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

## **Brad Wilk** with Prophets of Rage

Prophets of Rage, featuring Tom Morello, Tim Commerford, and **Brad Wilk** of Rage Against the Machine, along with Cypress Hill's B-Real and Public Enemy's Chuck D and DJ Lord, is out on its first tour. "The reason I became a musician is to experience that connection between a band and an audience, and I've always been in bands that had a really strong connection," Wilk says. "This band falls along those same lines. It's awesome to finally be out there and playing to crowds again." The Make America Right Again trek, which donates proceeds from

each ticket sale to a local homeless charity, features material from all of the members' past groups. The political divisiveness surrounding the U.S. presidential election helped give rise to Prophets' formation. "We felt like we needed to do as much as we could for the times right now," Wilk says. "Even if we piss you off, we're happy to do that. Anything other than just neutralization is what we're looking for." **Michael Parillo**

## **Tony Leone** with the Chris Robinson Brotherhood

Longtime New York City drummer **Tony Leone** is out with the Chris Robinson Brotherhood on a North American tour. Since joining the Californian blues-rock band in 2015, Leone finds himself fitting right in. "I had the luxury of coming in after they had done about four years of work," the drummer says. "So it was easy for me to hear what had been done and make adjustments based on my own musicality and experience. I think conceptually I was coming from a very similar place to the guys in the band. We like a lot of the same music. Aesthetically we draw from the same wells for our musical inspiration. So, if anything, maybe I've helped to solidify that common ground."

And with the group, Leone is able to trust his intuition. "For me, 'being myself' is feeling like I'm serving the song and the sound and groove of the band," he explains. "In my opinion, you can't really do that unless there's an open dialogue between all of the members. *What needs to happen here? What are we doing dynamically? Is this feel or tempo working?* That being said, I feel like my transition into the band was really smooth and easy. There was never any pressure on me to play the exact drum parts or re-create anything. So in that regard I was given the freedom to use my own musical instincts."

**Willie Rose**

## **Also on the Road**

**Phil Ehart** with Kansas /// **Jon Fishman** with Phish /// **Mike Mangini** with Dream Theater /// **Dan Molad** with Lucius /// **Stella Mozgawa** with Warpaint /// **Jay Postones** with Tesseract /// **Isaac Teel** with Tauk /// **Tomas Haake** with Meshuggah /// **Dirk Verbeuren** with Megadeth /// **Tyler Ritter** with Moon Taxi

For more with Brad Wilk and Tony Leone, visit [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

## Caldwell University Percussion Camp With *Hamilton's* Andrés Forero

This past July 14, the Caldwell University summer percussion camp hosted a clinic with Andrés Forero—drummer for Broadway's hit musical *Hamilton*—in Caldwell, New Jersey. Over the course of the three-hour workshop, Forero played selections from *Hamilton* and the musical *In the Heights*. "Anything you do should have emotion," Forero said as he offered advice to the middle and high school students in attendance. "Put your heart into it, explore many instruments, and learn everything about the style you choose."

Drummer and educator Joe Bergamini (*Rock of Ages*, *Jersey Boys*, current *Hamilton* sub) also gave a workshop during the day. Past clinicians at the camp include Chuck Burgi (Billy Joel), Glen Fittin (*The Lion King*, Bernie Worrell), Mark Guiliana (David Bowie), Rolando Morales-Matos (*The Lion King*), and Tommy Igoe (Birdland Big Band).

Over the course of a week, the Caldwell University percussion camp provides students with immersion in drumset, world drumming, and classical percussion studies, while also hosting percussion ensembles, master classes, and technique sessions. A Saturday-afternoon student performance concluded the week.



## Madison Scouts Celebrate 35-Year Partnership With Yamaha



This past July 22, the Yamaha Corporation and DCI's Madison Scouts celebrated their thirty-five-year partnership during the corps' presentation of its 2016 production "Judas" for Yamaha staff and executives at the company's Buena Park, California, headquarters.

The lunchtime event was part of the Wisconsin-based corps' California tour, its first visit to the state in ten years. The trip also included performances and competitions at the Rose Bowl, Riverside City College, Stanford University, and other southern California locations.

The Madison Scouts were the first DCI corps to use Yamaha instruments, effectively helping to kick-start the introduction of the company's band instruments in the United States. Thousands of young performers have come up through the corps' ranks, and the Scouts won the DCI Championship in 1988. Today the corps, which was founded in 1938, boasts 150 active members from around the globe, and each member is selected following a highly competitive audition process.

"For more than three decades the Madison Scouts have enjoyed the world-class quality products and support that Yamaha provides," Scouts executive director Chris Komnick says. "We were proud to perform for Yamaha and showcase the talents of our corps for the great people who support music education."



## Bucks County Drum Company and Zildjian Cymbals Contest Winner Gregory Foran

Congratulations to Gregory Foran on winning the Bucks County Drums and Zildjian Cymbals sweepstakes featured in the April, May, and June issues of *Modern Drummer*. Prizes included a three-piece Bucks County Semi-Solid bop kit with a satin wenge veneer finish, as well as a set of Zildjian A series cymbals, including 14" New Beat hi-hats, 16" and 18" Medium-Thin crashes, and a 21" Sweet ride. The total prize package is valued at more than \$3,600.

## Recording Custom

### The Story Continues...

For the first time in its history, Yamaha Recording Custom Series snare drums are available in a variety of metal shell options. Utilizing the invaluable insight from Steve Gadd during the entire design process, the simple snare drum design incorporates a heavy-duty Q-type strainer that is robust yet smooth and features a shell with an outer center bead which helps open up the tone of the drum for crisp, articulate performance. With seven sizes in 1.2mm aluminum, brass, and stainless steel, there is a Recording Custom snare drum to fit your style.

Give the newest snare drums a listen here: [4wrd.it/RC\\_Snare\\_Solo](https://4wrd.it/RC_Snare_Solo)



## Mind Matters

# "You're Too Loud!"

by Bernie Schallehn

I played in bands in high school and college, but then marriage, kids, and a day job took priority. I recently connected with some guys who are in their forties like me and who need a drummer for their classic rock band. I spent a few weeks knocking the rust off my chops, and we've played two gigs so far. After the first show, some of my bandmates came to me and said I played too loudly. I tried to hold back a bit on the second gig, but it made me nervous. My time felt sloppy, and it wasn't quite as much fun. However, I still want to keep playing with this band. Any suggestions?

**D.T.**

The primary reason the practice pad was invented was because drums are inherently loud. (I often wonder how many parents refuse to buy their child a drumkit because they fear violating local noise ordinances.)

Let's start with analyzing the drumkit. Up top you have cymbals. Crashes and splashes can speak in very powerful voices. And if a drummer crashes on the ride, rather than striking it with the tip of the stick, the cymbal will produce a very strong sound. Closed hi-hats are quieter than wide-open ones, which deliver a loud, sloshy tone.

Moving down, midway on the kit are the rack toms. Unless they're miked and cranked through the P.A., their midrange sounds shouldn't annoy anyone. Down a bit further is the snare. Depending on the tuning and type, snare drums can shout very loudly. A snare tuned tightly and struck with slamming rimshots can sound like a .22 rifle.

At the same level as the snare is the floor tom. Again, unless a sound engineer has it miked and cranked in the speakers, there shouldn't be any complaints from the sound of this low-pitched tub. Lastly, all the way down on the ground is the bass drum. Its sound shouldn't be causing your bandmates to criticize, even if you have a very heavy foot.

I wanted to break things down this way so that when you

speak with the rest of the group, you can do so in a well-thought-out manner. Keeping your defensiveness in check, have a chat with your bandmates. Ask them specifically what is too loud. If they respond in a global sense, repeating that your overall playing is ear splitting, then work your way down the kit. Ask if the cymbals seem to be the offending parties. If so, which ones? Are you hitting them too hard, too often, or both? Inquire as to whether your snare hits are irritating them. If every strike on your snare is a rimshot, demonstrate the difference between a rimshot and a regular stroke in the center of the head. What's their reaction? You may also want to try detuning the snare so that it has fewer high-end overtones and a mellower attack.

If things go smoothly during the discussion, you'll have some specific feedback with which to work. If they say you're laying into your crashes too hard and too often, try lightening up and playing fewer accents. You haven't caved; you've negotiated a workable solution. The same applies to rimshots. Perhaps rimshots are simply too loud for the rooms you're playing, and their sharp attacks don't fit well with the music.

I think the reason you felt nervous and as if your time was off at the second gig was because the band negatively evaluated your first performance. I also think that if

you'd played too loudly during your rehearsals, someone would have mentioned this problem earlier.

I have a hunch that the extra punch you infused at that first gig was due to a surge of adrenaline. You quit playing drums years ago, and now you're getting back into it. That's great, but in all that time away from the stage, you may have built up a fair amount of performance anxiety. This should quiet down as you play more gigs and work on your sense of dynamics.

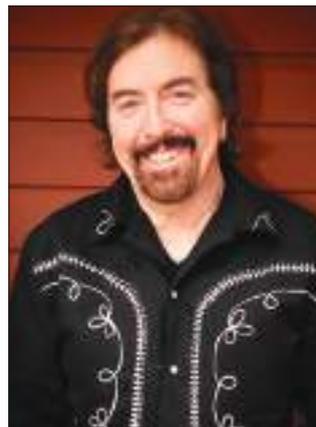
### Dynamics

Swinging for the bleachers in a club the size of a fishing shanty is ridiculous, but I've seen it done—and I didn't stay long, as I value my hearing too much. Dynamics are very important in music, especially when playing smaller rooms. If you can't pull it back enough, try playing with rods or maple drumsticks. Maple will give you the feel of hickory but with less weight. Velocity of the stroke plus the weight of the stick is what determines the loudness of the cymbal or drum being hit. Experiment with thinner sticks too. If you're playing an oak 5B model, try a maple 5A.

### Resources

Watch some videos of jazz drummers. You'll see how adept they can be at dynamics. Their volume goes up in some parts of the song, and then comes down in others.

At one time or another, every working drummer has been admonished for playing too loudly, so you're not alone. That being said, loud drummers continue to reinforce the stereotype that all drums and drummers are too loud. And even though you may be playing at an appropriate volume for the size of the venue, expect that inevitably some patrons are going to complain that the drums are too loud. It just comes with the turf.



**Bernie Schallehn** holds a master's degree in counseling psychology and, while in private practice, held the credentials of a certified clinical mental health counselor and a certified alcohol and substance abuse counselor.

**HOW TO REACH US**

[iq@moderndrummer.com](mailto:iq@moderndrummer.com)





Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson



Jojo Mayer

## THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT.

And Every Length in Between.

Length is just one element in a complex formula that determines the balance, feel and sound of your sticks. Whether you want the reach of a longer stick, the agility of a shorter stick or something in between, Vic's design team is constantly pushing the envelope to create new designs to maximize your performance and keep you outside the box. Like Questlove and Jojo.

# Trilok Gurtu

The more things stay the same for this highly unusual drummer, the more they need to change.



B ar k a F ab iá n o v á

**T**rilok Gurtu will always be unique. His mixture of traditional Indian rhythms and jazz played on a customized hybrid kit looks and sounds singular, from the tabla to those amazing toms that sound like kick drums. But if you've seen Gurtu play recently, you might be surprised to see an actual bass drum in his setup. "I had an operation on my meniscus and cartilage," Gurtu says, "so I could not kneel and play. So I played the same thing, but sitting down. Then I thought, *Well, I have one leg free—why don't I use a bass drum?*"

"I used to play a normal kit in India," Gurtu explains. "When I came to the U.S., I realized that I would not sound like myself if I tried to imitate all the great drummers here. So I made the change of making the drums sound like the tabla. But my bass drum technique is very basic. I can't play like the metal drummers. It just helps me get a push if I need it."

That push is heard on Gurtu's latest release, the exciting trumpet-heavy jazz-fusion album *Spellbound*. "My intent was using all these different musicians from different parts of the globe," the drummer says. "Turkey, Beirut, Norway, Italy, Germany, the U.S. Each CD has to have a theme. So they asked me to do a record of jazz. And I said, 'You mean improvised music?' If it's confined to jazz, I'm left out, because I'm not a jazz purist. I love jazz, but I wasn't brought up with it. Jazz for me is the freedom of improvisation, like Indian music is. I found this cassette of me playing with Don Cherry. So I wanted to dedicate the album to the trumpet, which has contributed to many kinds of music—world music, Cuban, Indian. If you want to overrate something, overrate music. Don't overrate a name given to music."

*Spellbound* shows Gurtu at his best, swinging and laying it down on everything

from tunes made famous by Dizzy Gillespie to a wicked 5/4 take on Miles Davis's "All Blues." And as Gurtu matures, so does his relationship to playing, composition, and improvising. "It's getting deeper," he insists, "and the more spiritual part of it is coming out through my spiritual master, Ranjit Maharaj. There's no fear or doubt about who likes it or doesn't like it. Things have changed and I'm more relaxed. I compose a lot. And it's more confined to music, not to chops."

"I don't make things tricky just to make it complicated. Simplicity has to sound complicated, and complicated has to be simple to play. Musicians would sometimes tell me that something sounded easy but it was hard to play. This is the biggest compliment you can get. Look at Sly Stone with Greg Errico, or James Brown. Sounds simple, but to hold it and play it is not an easy thing. Jazz players can't do that. They

# Nada Surf's Ira Elliot

**After a quarter century in the biz—and all its attendant ups and downs—his unshakable love affair with our instrument keeps him rarin’ to go.**

Trilok Gurtu appeared in the November 1992 issue of *Modern Drummer* when he was fully engaged in John McLaughlin’s groundbreaking trio. Between releasing solo albums and appearing as a sideman for a variety of artists, Gurtu was a member of the group Oregon and has collaborated with Zakir Hussain, Jan Garbarek, and Joe Zawinul.



want to change every two seconds. Once the intention is there, even complicated things sound simple.”

So what’s the big-picture outlook for someone who has played so much high-wire stuff over the years? “Before, music was taking me,” Gurtu says, “but now I say, ‘I will take you. I’m the boss.’ I will conduct now. Whatever I practice now has to groove and sit. People have to move. That’s the aim behind it, even if it’s free. I’ve gotten away from all the notes, from all the intellectual wrestling. Listening to jazz, nobody could dance or swing. Most of it was chops and complicated harmony. If the musicians don’t get it, the people are lost. You’ll have ten, twenty people in the crowd. Dance. Like Monk. He had that.”

**Ilya Stemkovsky**

**N**ada Surf has accomplished that rarest of feats in pop music: surviving the massive out-of-left-field success of an early single—a song titled, indeed, “Popular”—and the all-too-typical insult of then being dropped by the record company that released it. Sometimes you just can’t hold back true talent, however, and the New York City–based trio found a new home with Barsuk Records, which went on to release a steady stream of critically acclaimed Nada Surf albums, including this year’s *You Know Who You Are*.



Ira Elliot, who came to the group from the NYC garage-rock institution the Fuzztones in time to record its 1996 Ric Ocasek–produced album, *High/Low*, has spent the time perfecting the craft of supporting singer/guitarist Matthew Caws’ chiming, often deceptively raw ruminations on love and life. It’s a role Elliot says he was born into. “I’ve always had it in my mind that I’m a lifer,” Ira says. “From the time I was a kid, this is what I’ve thought about all day long. I’m like a teenager where drums are concerned—I’m like an obsessive/compulsive about it. Something about drums invites this sort of madness. It’s a DIY thing; there are so many components—you make it whatever you want.”

A proud Ludwig player, Elliot prefers a 13/16/18/24 Classic Maple setup adorned with Paiste cymbals. “On our last tour I used my ‘72 Ludwig Thermogloss kit,” he shares. “It’s the most friendly, warm, thumpy Ludwig drumset of all time, just the most gorgeous thing. My aesthetic is stuck in the ‘70s. Modern drums and hardware don’t really float my boat.”

There is one recent innovation, however, that Elliot can’t live without, the Porter & Davies BC2 tactile generator, which sends low-end frequencies directly to a drummer’s stool. “That thing is amazing!” Ira says. “You get an immediate connection to the low end, and it allows you to take your bass drum out of your wedge monitors. That’s huge, because not only does it make your mix easier to hear, the stage volume can come down as well. I use the word *traction*—I can really feel the whole band pulsing along, and there’s no delay, so the space between notes is much clearer. It can’t be overstated how important the placement of the bass drum is to a groove. It’s helped me in so many ways, live and in the studio.”

Elliot and the band have been playing festivals and theaters in the States recently, and as of the end of October they’re doing a run across Europe. Included on that leg is a December 2 gig at Paris’s Bataclan club, where, a year ago, a terrorist attack during an Eagles of Death Metal concert claimed the lives of eighty-nine people. “I’m hugely proud that we’re one of the first bands to come back to play there,” Elliot says. “That’s going to be so emotional. We were playing in Philly the night the Paris attacks happened, and I think all of us in the band wrote to our manager the next day and said, ‘When they reopen the Bataclan—and they *will*—make sure we play there.’” Nada Surf has since recorded its version of the Eagles of Death Metal track “I Love You All the Time” for the Play It Forward campaign to raise funds for victims of the Paris attacks and their families.

**Adam Budofsky**



Yamaha

## Recording Custom Drumset

An icon redesigned.

The **Recording Custom series** has a long history in the world of drumming. The kit originally launched in the mid-'70s as the YD-9000, taking on the Recording Custom name in the mid-'80s. Over the years, the Recording Custom has changed in a few ways, but its all-birch shell has remained the unwavering trademark of the series since its inception. Yamaha recently collaborated with drumming icon Steve Gadd to revamp the Recording Custom for 2016. According to Yamaha, the result is a "refined, focused sound with...deeper tones." Let's dig in!

### The Review Kit

We received a six-piece Recording Custom kit with a surf-green finish (list price: \$4,419.99). Included were 7x10 and 8x12 rack toms, 13x14 and 15x16 floor toms, an 18x22 bass drum, and a 5.5x14 aluminum snare. Other finish options include high-gloss solid black and classic walnut, as well as a matte-lacquer wood. The kit features 6-ply North American birch shells with 30-degree bearing edges and redesigned Hi Tension lugs that are weighted to enhance lower frequencies.

A 20" bass drum on a floating riser is also available (and is used by Gadd). The riser minimizes interference from the floor, which results in greater resonance from the shell. Yamaha offers a beater that has an extended rod to ensure that the drumhead is struck precisely in the center. All Recording Custom toms are equipped with Remo Coated Ambassador batter heads. The bass drum comes with a Smooth White PS3 resonant and a Remo Coated PS3 batter. Completing our review kit was the new Recording Custom 5.5x14 aluminum snare.



### The Beauty of Birch

A problem with some shells that are designed for enhanced depth and low-end resonance is the loss of articulation and stick definition when tuned low. However, the Recording Custom shells overcame this obstacle with ease and provided a perfect balance of focused fundamental tone, crisp attack, and quick decay. The extra attack and short sustain were extremely helpful when playing fast, syncopated patterns between the

bass drum and toms, or when embellishing patterns with floor tom hits without overwhelming the balance of the groove with too much resonance. The 16" floor tom instantly recalls the deep, dark, articulate sound Gadd used in his famous linear pattern on Paul Simon's "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover."



The 22" Recording Custom bass drum came with a ported resonant head, and we added a little muffling to minimize some of the resonance and emphasize the drum's naturally deep and punchy attack. With the drum tuned low, you can feel the depth of the tone throughout your body. The attack was more than just a sharp slap, it was a clearly defined point of the beater hitting the head enveloped by a round, deep tone.

As we pushed the toms and bass drum into higher pitches, the resonance remained completely controllable via tuning. In short, the 6-ply Recording Custom birch shells gave us a wide range of sonic options to work with, from deep and punchy to crisp and resonant.

### Recording Custom Snare Options

For the first time ever, Recording Custom snares are offered in several metal options (starting at \$935), including 1.2mm brass,

stainless steel, and aluminum. Each shell features an outward center bead that "opens up the tone of the drum for crisp, articulate performance," according to Yamaha. All of the 5.5x14 Recording Custom snare models come with a set of Steve Gadd signature ten-strand snare wires that are designed to offer additional sensitivity, a more natural tone, and greater dynamics.

The aluminum snare that we received was incredibly sensitive and gave an explosive crack when tuned high. At medium to low tunings, it remained sensitive enough to articulate subtle ghost notes while having a throatier attack with short decay. The versatility of the aluminum snare was a perfect complement to the Recording Custom kit.

**Miguel Monroy**



For a video demo of our Recording Custom review kit, visit [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

Paiste

## 26" Giant Beat and 2002 17" Sound Edge Hi-Hats

Massive models for larger than-life grooves.

This year Paiste introduced a slew of new cymbals, including an entire line of heavily hammered 2002 Big Beats, signature rides for top artists like Carl Palmer and Danny Carey, and some massive hi-hats and rides in the 2002 and Giant Beat series. We were sent a pair of huge 17" 2002 Sound Edge hi-hats and a mammoth 26" Giant Beat crash/ride. Both are made by hand in Switzerland from B8 alloy. Let's check them out!



### 17" 2002 Sound Edge Hi-Hats

Paiste patented the wavy-bottom hi-hat design in the 1970s and implemented it in the 2002 Sound Edge hi-hats to give a well-defined and controllable sound with a sharp, full foot chick. John Bonham used 15"

Sound Edge hi-hats for the majority of his time with Led Zeppelin (he used Giant Beats in the early days with the band), but these classic cymbals are now available in a 17" version for an even more massive sound and additional low-end power without the loss of crispness and projection.

These hi-hats are firm and hefty, so they require a fairly strong stroke to set them into motion. The open and half-open sound is deep yet shimmering, so it fills out a wide range of frequencies. The closed stick tone is crisp and dense, and it has an interesting low pitch that is reminiscent of a detuned sample of traditional 14" hi-hats. The foot chick is strong and wide, which blends well with full-volume ride grooves and tribal tom patterns. These are big, bold hi-hats for big, bold beats.



Evans

## Calftone Drumheads

The strength and stability of synthetics with the mellower sound of natural skins.

Evans is celebrating its sixtieth anniversary with a tribute to the calfskin heads drummers used prior to the implementation of Mylar plastics. These new old-school heads, called Calftone, feature a layer of beige, subtly textured synthetic material over a clear single-ply base (7mil for tom/snare models and 12mil for bass drum sizes). Like all Evans drumheads, the Calftone utilizes the Level 360 collar that's

designed so that the head sits freely on the bearing edge for optimal tuning and tone.

Calftone drumheads are available in sizes ranging from 8" to 18" for toms and snares and 16" to 26" for bass drums. We were sent a 14" snare batter to test. (Bass drum models are available as a standard single-ply and in the EQ4 and EMAD designs, which include built-in muffling systems.)

## 26" Giant Beat Ride

This is a truly giant beast, even for the Giant Beat series, which also includes 22" and 24" crash/rides. I use 24" rides often and have no problem positioning them comfortably or adjusting my touch to control the sustain. The extra 2" of real estate on this 26" Giant Beat, however, make it feel downright massive. (Good luck finding a cymbal case large enough to fit it!) That said, its volume and wash aren't nearly as overwhelming as I expected. In fact, I found the 26" Giant Beat to be incredibly warm sounding and dynamically expressive, even when played at low volumes with small sticks. It has a clear, pearly "ping" that articulates fast rhythms well, and its sustain is deep and rich without becoming too washy. You can crash the edge or roll on it with mallets to get a huge, swelling "whoosh," and the bell is strong and low-pitched. When played side-by-side with a 24" Giant Beat, the 26" blends seamlessly and has a similarly smooth, clean sound, but with fewer high-end overtones, a more defined ping, and a richer bell. Like the rest of the Giant Beat series, which was originally launched in 1967, the 26" is made by hand from B8 bronze alloy.

**Michael Dawson**



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

## How's It Compare?

For our review, we A/B tested the 14" Calfitone with a coated G1 on a 5.5x14 single-ply maple snare with forty-five-degree bearing edges. We tuned the drum identically with each head, starting at a medium tension (each lug pitched to C).

The G1 gave the drum an open tone with a lot of clear overtones and a strong fundamental note. Snare response was super-crisp, as you would expect from a single-ply coated head. The Calfitone was also very sensitive

and articulate, but it had a slightly thicker and darker tone with shorter sustain, punchier attack, and attenuated high frequencies.

When played with brushes and with the snares disengaged, the Calfitone produced a subdued vintage-type sound, similar to what you'd hear on classic jazz albums featuring brush masters Ed Thigpen or Mel Lewis. The Calfitone coating has plenty of texture to make brush patterns articulate and expressive while also being smooth enough to

allow for seamless sweeps.

At a tight tuning, the mellower sound of the Calfitone helped minimize the metallic-type overtones that we experienced with the G1, which resulted in a thicker, deeper timbre. Medium-low and low tunings on the Calfitone brought out more punch and smack, as opposed to the more open sound and spraying overtones we experienced with the G1. We couldn't get the Calfitone to sound as super-deep and thuddy as the G1 at the lowest tuning range,

which is likely a result of the Calfitone being a bit thicker and less malleable than the G1. Regardless, the Calfitone does exactly what it's claimed to be able to do, which is to offer a bit of the warmer, darker, and rounder tones of traditional calfskin heads in a modern, synthetic design. It is an ideal choice for jazz, Americana, and folk styles, singer-songwriter sessions, and any other setting requiring a throwback aesthetic.

**Michael Dawson**

**Check out a video demo comparing the coated G1 to the Calfitone at [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com).**

# Van Kleeef

## All Titanium and B20 Bronze Snares

Sleek, single-metal designs by one of the industry's rising stars.

**Sheffield, England-based VK Drums** has quickly risen to the top of the high-end custom-shop heap with its elegant and highly musical range of snare drums. We tested a trio of titanium, stainless-steel, and aluminum models in the March 2016 issue, which came equipped with stainless-steel hardware and straight hoops. Now the company is offering a snare that is fabricated entirely from titanium (except the heads and wires, obviously) and a 4mm cast-bronze drum with matching bronze hoops. We were sent one of each to review.

### 6.5x14 All Titanium

One of the lightest drums we've ever tested, this gorgeous 6.5x14 snare features VK's new titanium straight hoops, and

every piece of hardware is made from titanium, including the lugs, throw-off and butt plate, VKey drum key (which stores on the inside of the throw-off lever), tension rods, bolts, washers, and internal dog tag ID. The drum came with a Remo Coated Ambassador batter head and a Clear Ambassador snare-side. The snare wires are Puresound's Custom Pro model, which have specially designed end plates to reduce sympathetic buzz and come with Speed Release straps that allow the wires to be removed quickly and easily.

This 10-lug snare has a dry but colorful tone with a great balance of focused fundamental pitch, singing overtones, and short decay. Its sensitivity is superb and sympathetic buzz is minimal. Medium tension elicits a nice "thwack" with a controlled pitch dip. Tighter tunings have a drier sustain



All Titanium



**B20 Bronze**

and snappier attack, plus continued depth and power. Medium and low tensions are this snare's forte, however, whether going for an open Dave Grohl-style smack or a deep and focused disco-type punch. No muffling is required at any tuning, since the sustain is naturally short and contained, though a single Moon Gel may be desired to attenuate high-end overtones for a record-ready studio sound. List price is \$1,499 and includes a VK-branded Hardcase case with a titanium badge.

### **5.5x14 Cast B20 Bronze**

Quite the opposite of the ultra-light All Titanium snare, this super-heavy cast-bronze beast is made from B20 alloy (the same as what's used for most high-end cymbals) and features 5mm cast-bronze straight hoops and stainless-steel hardware (claws, lugs, internal dog tag, throw-off and butt plate, and embedded VKKey). The drumheads and wires are the same as on the titanium

model. The shell is 4mm thick, which contributes to the drum's hefty weight and massive sound.

Like the titanium drum, the B20 bronze snare has excellent sensitivity and a well-balanced sound containing strong attack, good articulation, and musical overtones. This drum has more bite and spread than the titanium, which gives it additional power at high volumes. Tight tunings produce a lot of bark and snap, while medium and lower tensions accentuate the punchier lower-mid frequencies. In our testing, this B20 cast-bronze snare was most at home at a medium-tight tension for maximum volume potential within a very balanced, musical voice. List price is \$2,500.

**Michael Dawson**

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

CRX

## Stack Packs

Pre-paired cymbals for a variety of short, trashy effects.

**CRX is the China-made sub-brand** of TRX cymbals designed to offer professional-quality sounds at competitive prices. The latest offerings from CRX include a collection of ten Stack Packs designed to create white-noise special effects. The collection comprises various combinations of splashes, Chinas, and perforated Stackers from the Classic, Xtreme, and Rock series. We were sent eight of the ten pairs to review. We've divided those eight into two groups: those incorporating 8" to 12" cymbals and those incorporating 10" to 14" models.

### 8"-12" Packs

The smallest Stack Pack in our review group, the Hi-Trash, included an 8" Rock splash and a 10" Classic China. It produced a short, tight, controlled burst with no discernable pitch or sustain. The Hi-Trash is a good option for playing fast, syncopated rhythms at softer dynamics. (Mark Guiliana's playing style comes to mind.) The next smallest pair, the Hi-Flange, included a 10" Rock Stacker (with five 1" holes) over a 10" Xtreme China. This combo also produced a short, tight sound with a hint of metallic overtones.

For a slightly wider but still controlled tone, there's the 10" Rock Stacker over 12" Rock China (Mid-Flange) and the 10" Rock splash over 12" Classic China (Mid-Trash). Both pairs had a nice, trashy attack that opened up with a bit more white noise. The Mid-Trash was my favorite of the smaller group of Stack Packs; it produced a quick but balanced trashy sound that could be used for short, bursting accents or as a ride source for articulating fast rhythms or forceful quarter notes. The Mid-Flange had more midrange overtones, which gave it a more electronic-inspired voice.

### 10"-14" Packs

For effects sounds with a bit more sizzle, CRX has paired a 10" Classic splash over a 14" Rock Stacker (Lo-Sizzle), a 14" Classic Stacker over a 14" Rock China (Crasher), a 12" Xtreme splash over a 14" Classic China (Lo-Trash), and a 10" Classic Stacker over a 14" Xtreme crash (Mid-Sizzle). The Mid-Sizzle had the longest sustain plus a lingering rattle. The Lo-Sizzle had the second longest sustain and a higher pitch. The Crasher had the tightest tone and shortest sustain, and the Lo-Trash had the most familiar "stacker" sound, with a medium-length sustain and a dense, trashy tone.

The Crasher and Lo-Trash pairs are the best choices if you're looking for a stacker that can be used to play single hits or to articulate tight rhythms, while the Lo-Sizzle and Mid-Sizzle are better for single accents because they take a bit longer to settle down. My favorite of the larger models was the Lo-Trash, but they all offered something unique within the world of compact special effects cymbals.

The prices of the Stack Packs are very competitive, ranging from \$139.99 for the small Choke combo to \$259.99 for the larger Crasher pair, so you might want to experiment with a few different sets to home in on which ones work best for you.

**Michael Dawson**

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





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# Will

For decades Living Colour's connoisseur of all things rhythmic has journeyed to the far corners of the globe to perform, search for rare instruments, and jam with local musicians. Now he's released a highly personal tribute to the most adventurous time traveler in drumming history, the U.S.-born and raised jazz musician Elvin Jones. Sometimes the most exotic adventures are waiting for you right at home.



Story by Ken Micallef  
Photos by Rahav Segev

# Calhoun



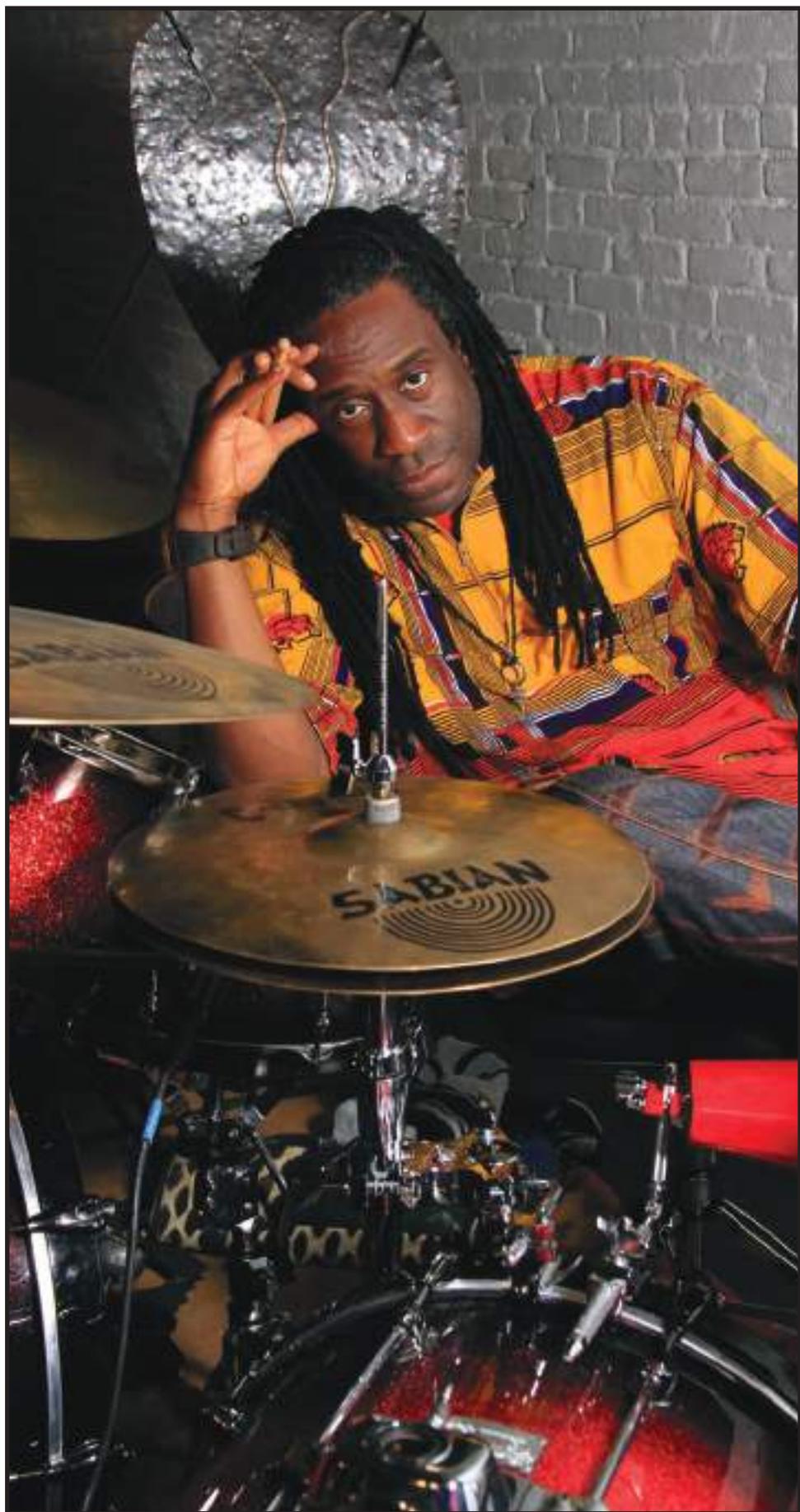
**W**ill Calhoun's Bronx, New York, home is a wonderland of drums, art, music, records, more drums, and more art, much of it acquired during his many tours as a member of the platinum-selling band Living Colour and his personal journeys as world traveler, sound conjurer, and eternal student of all things musical and magical.

Calhoun's 1930s-era house occupies a Tudor-style block around the corner from his childhood friend Steve Jordan. His home is practically a museum, but also an incredible learning opportunity. Calhoun has traveled from the Republic of Congo in Africa to Recife in Brazil to factories in China in his search for musical wisdom, a journey to unlock secrets buried to time as one civilization has conquered another, the loser's history lost to the ages but open to curious souls with the means and intellect to unearth knowledge.

Calhoun welcomes us in, and though he's sporting a dislocated thumb wrapped in a bandage, he still reaches out to clutch my hand. Gold and platinum records hang on a wall, and as we walk through the house, Will describes his drums, percussion, and artwork.

"That tall female-looking drum is more of an art piece," he explains. "It's a pregnant woman/drum representing fertility and life, a low-end-sounding drum." Calhoun taps the instrument; it produces a deep, booming tone. The blond head of another drum, a round, orange-colored one, is made from the skin of a camel's neck. "It's a ceremonial drum from Mali, the Dogon country," Will says. "The camel's neck is similar to thin leather or goatskin used for making drums and for Dogon music. The neck skin is hard; you have to heat it up to get a better sound, by holding the drum close to a flame. The Dogon would also boil the camel skin; it comes out like a rope, which they used to tie up furniture, weapons, etc. I had to negotiate with a hunter in Mali for that drum."

An incredibly loud set of Vietnamese woodblocks stands next to the fireplace, and a doumbek from central Ghana lies on the floor. A bay window reveals a log drum from the Republic of Congo. A Moroccan doumbek produces a variety of pitches and resonances. An oblong plate adorned with intricate carvings depicting people, places, and history hangs on another wall. "That's also from the Dogon people in northern Mali," Calhoun says. "It explains a hundred-year-old family history and lineage. In Dogon country, 'hello' could be three hours long! History matters." A humongous African wooden bird, a carved Brazilian warrior ship, an ominous ceremonial mask from West Africa, and a small table inlaid with the depiction of a working woman, bought in Belize at a roadside market



# “Elvin made me think about rhythm and music and time in a different way. He bent time.”

for thirty dollars, are equally startling pieces.

Next we walk down a narrow staircase, and we're greeted by a tremendous wall of drums that fills half of the basement. There, stacked one atop another, is a Moroccan wedding drum, a Muffintop snare drum, a '30s Ludwig snare, a set of Sleishman drums, a set of Smithsonian-bound drums engraved with African symbols, a handmade Moroccan snare, an elephant-wood snare, a Baltimore Drum Company snare, a '20s-era Ludwig field tom, boobams, a Brazilian-made metal snare, an Italian-made Phidrums snare, and a large silver ThunderEcho Trash Kat.

A deep interest in exploring the past extends well beyond collecting visual-arts artifacts and instrumental crafts and well into the realm of sound, as Calhoun immerses himself in the legendary music of our drumming forefathers, boldly seeing how he can add his own voice to the music as it stretches out into the future. *Celebrating Elvin*

*Jones*, Will's new album on Motéma Records, gathers the drum master's music—and some of his collaborators—not only to pay respect but also to further explore its possibilities. Jones helped revolutionize jazz as a member of the John Coltrane Quartet, then took the art even further as one of the leading jazz drummers in the world from the 1960s to the late 1990s. Calhoun is honored and excited to nudge it into the ears of further generations.

Calhoun surrounds himself with a stellar cast on *Celebrating*: bassist Christian McBride, saxophonist Antoine Roney, pianist/keyboardist Carlos McKinney, and trumpeter Keyon Harrold. Innovative keyboardist Jan Hammer, a member of Jones' trio, joins Calhoun for a reprise of “Destiny,” and the late Senegalese master percussionist Doudou N'Diaye Rose, his sons, and Calhoun perform a blowout version of the traditional Japanese folk song “Doll of the Bride.” Album highlights include “EJ Blues,” a staple of Elvin's live

performances, and “Whew,” which originates from Jones' 1969 album, *Poly-Currents*. Wayne Shorter's “Mahjong” appeared on the saxophonist's 1965 release *JuJu*, and Elvin's wife, Keiko, composed “Shinjitsu.” The thoughtful “Sarmastah” is Calhoun's sole original composition on the album.

While Calhoun has kept busy crafting his Elvin tribute, he and his bandmates in Living Colour have written and recorded an album of new material, *Shade*. The pioneering rock group sounds rejuvenated and inspired; Will's mammoth groove, massive drum sound, and cracking rhythms propel the titanic guitars of “Black Out,” the riotous pummel of “Glass Teeth,” the slow-mo funk slammer “Invisible SS,” the punk rocker “Patterns in Time,” the funk rocker “Come On,” and Biggie Smalls' “Who Shot Ya.”

From *Celebrating* to *Shade*, Will Calhoun provides a role model for grooving, creative, thinking drummers the world over.



Andre Betts

# “Those first Living Colour albums are classics. We’re

**MD:** Why an Elvin Jones tribute album now?

**Will:** It’s actually late now, both for me and generally speaking. Sometimes the industry creates obstacles for art. You may want to express yourself in a certain way, but the industry is thinking about press, downloading, release dates—the formatted formula to being an artist, which if you’re thinking spiritually is not realistic. Art comes when it comes. I try to accomplish as much as I can in my rare

downtime. I wanted to do something really meaningful on the Elvin project; I didn’t want to wing it. I strategized the project: interviewed musicians who had played with Elvin, met with his widow, Keiko. I researched all of Elvin’s music. I listened to his John Coltrane material, and I really love the album *Elvin Jones Is “On the Mountain”* with Gene Perla and Jan Hammer. That record is brilliant. I used to see Elvin and Gene do clinics at Drummer’s World, so I knew Gene

had a close relationship with Elvin, so I spoke with him too.

**MD:** Your approach to Elvin’s music is quite different.

**Will:** I always heard Elvin in my mind in an electric setting, without necessarily compromising his music by playing with loud guitars; Elvin always sounded electric to me. “*On the Mountain*” was performed with acoustic drums, acoustic bass, Fender Rhodes, and Moog. It’s an acoustic/electric record. Christian McBride came on board, as did Elvin alumni Antoine Roney and Carlos McKinney.

**MD:** For those who don’t know, what is Elvin’s contribution to our art? Why should young drummers, for instance, care?

**Will:** Elvin is an important part of drumming history. He came along at a time when jazz drumming had an established, carved-out language. Elvin changed the rules. No disrespect to Max Roach or Art Blakey, who were geniuses—Elvin’s thing was just different. Difference creates depth to an industry. Like a Tesla car, Elvin was a game-changer at a time when the standard approach to jazz consisted of a certain kind of language.

**MD:** When Elvin played live, something descended into the room; the atmosphere was physically altered.

**Will:** I saw Elvin play many times during my life. We did a clinic together once with Giovanni Hidalgo at [New York City rental/rehearsal/performance venue] SIR in the early 1990s. I was blown away. He was incredible! I played first, then Giovanni, then Elvin, and then the three of us played together. One of my best friends is Bemshi Shearer, whose mother is Lois Shearer, one of Elvin’s best friends. After seeing me play with Living Colour at CBGB before we released our first record, she told me that my drumming reminded her of Elvin. She was where I first heard all these stories about Elvin.

**MD:** You’re playing Elvin’s tunes on the record, but you don’t play anything like



## Favorites

**Various** Gretsch Night at Birdland (Philly Joe Jones, Art Blakey, Charlie Persip, Elvin Jones) /// **Miles Davis** Nefertiti (Tony Williams) /// **Tony Williams Lifetime** Believe It (Tony Williams) /// **Elvin Jones** Is “On the Mountain” (Elvin Jones) /// **Jeff Beck** Wired (Narada Michael Walden, Jan Hammer, Richard Bailey, Ed Greene) /// **Billy Cobham/George Duke Band** Live (Billy Cobham) /// **McCoy Tyner** Super Trios (Jack DeJohnette, Tony Williams) /// **Jimi Hendrix** Band of Gypsies (Buddy Miles) /// **James Brown** In the Jungle Groove (Melvin Parker, Clyde Stubblefield, John “Jabo” Starks) /// **Funkadelic** Hardcore Jollies (Jerome Brailey, Tiki Fulwood, Buddy Miles)

moving forward while keeping the older, traditional production.”

Elvin, intentionally.

**Will:** I played the record for Bemshi, and she noted that I made the record my way. Elvin influenced me as an artist, not only as a drummer.

#### TUNING FOR ELVIN

**MD:** For the Elvin Jones project, did you tune your drums differently from the way you do for Living Colour?  
The drums are very wide open.

**Will:** I always tune open, even in rock situations. I try to bring the jazz aesthetic to my commercial projects. I also chose a really open-sounding recording studio with a big live room and thirty-foot ceilings. We used old German mics, but not a lot of close miking. We placed microphones around the drums. Things aren't so individually miked. I was going for an old-school approach. More ambient miking.

**MD:** Did you change your rock tuning?

**Will:** Yes, slightly. The toms are higher in pitch. It's the same tuning I used when I played with McCoy Tyner at the Blue Note recently. I play two 18" bass drums—one for fullness, and the other for indigenous ancestral tones. Both bass drums and toms are tuned higher. Ironically, my snare, which is 13", is tuned lower than my rock snare drum.

**MD:** How did you choose or design your Mapex drums?

**Will:** When I chose the shells at Mapex in China, I wanted to build a drumset that had the depth of straight-ahead [jazz] but that would also work when I play world music. I wanted to be able to step on the gas a little bit if I needed the music to get heavier, and not feel like I'm being overbearing. When some jazz kits are tuned really high it can sound like the drums are distorting. So I wanted these drums to have a couple extra gears to shift into if I needed it.

**MD:** What else contributed to the drum sound on *Celebrating Elvin Jones*?

**Will:** First of all, clear Evans J1 heads. When you tune coated heads up high you can become married to that sound. Clear heads stretch a bit more for me. If you want to go down a half step or two on your tuning and still play the same music, you can with clear heads. If you go down a half step with coated heads, it's very noticeable. It's very articulated. With clear heads you can tease the sound a little bit between the top and bottom heads to still get the higher

sentiment, but at a lower frequency.

**MD:** How many plies are in the Mapex Saturn shells?

**Will:** The snare and tom shells are four plies of maple and two inner plies of Walnut. The shells are actually quite thin at 5.1 millimeters, to increase their resonance. The bass drums are six plies and thicker to help increase the power. The bearing edges are flawless.



## Recordings

**Living Colour** Vivid, Time's Up, Stain /// **Will Calhoun** Native Lands, Life in This World  
/// **Will Calhoun Quintet** Live at the Blue Note /// **Dhafer Youssef** Electric Sufi /// **Will Calhoun, Doug Wimbish, Vinx** Jungle Funk /// **Jack DeJohnette** Music for the Fifth World  
/// **Oumou Sangare** Seya



## FINDING ELVIN JONES

**MD:** What are some of your favorite Elvin moments from specific albums?

**Will:** “The Drum Thing” with John Coltrane from *Crescent*. It’s so unusual and unique; it’s almost like seeing someone coming out with a fashion that hasn’t been released yet. It’s very African, very ambient, very hip, cool, and it swings.

**MD:** In the liner notes to *Celebrating Elvin Jones* you write, “Elvin Jones’ unique and uncompromising contribution to jazz and the world of music are invaluable. He has influenced my approach to music in all genres.” Can you elaborate on that?

**Will:** Elvin bent time. He sometimes played rhythms with his hands while his other two limbs were doing something totally different. He made me think about rhythm and music and time in a different way. Elvin’s concept of time wasn’t one metronomic piece. Elvin’s time was continuous. The 1 is there, but everything isn’t pronounced all the time. There’s life to his time feel; it’s elastic. Elvin taught me how to use elasticity within the hi-hat, kick, snare, and toms. Within the time frame, the music might be in 4/4, but you can wrap that 1 around four times before you get to 2.

**MD:** Also in the liner notes, you reference Elvin’s rhythmic connection to the Congo [the two countries that border Africa’s Congo River—the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo].

**Will:** Congo drumming...I don’t like when the word *primitive* is used as a description; it’s like you’re referencing whales and elephants. But Elvin’s time and approach to the drumset is very similar to Congolese drumming. It’s profound, melodic, and specialized. Sometimes Elvin sounded like a warrior. He had these almost war-dance kinds of sounds. The way he hit the toms and the structure of his rhythms was very much a warrior kind of approach, and he swung really hard.

## ELVIN, TRACK BY TRACK

**MD:** One of the tunes on the album is “EJ Blues.” On which Elvin record does that appear?

**Will:** I’m not sure; that’s on a lot of the bootlegs that I have. I would take my Walkman to the Village Vanguard and record Elvin when he performed. “EJ Blues” was usually a set opener. I always loved that song. When I met [saxophonist and former Jones band member] Sonny Fortune, I discussed the songs that were on my cassettes. He helped me to understand Elvin’s repertoire. I have a few cassettes of Elvin playing at the Village Vanguard from the early ’80s.

**MD:** Your solo in “EJ Blues” is really slamming and clear. Great combinations. And you open “Whew” with a brief solo.

**Will:** “Whew” appeared on Elvin’s album *Poly-Currents*. That little drum preface is me warming up before the take. I usually don’t leave those in, but this time I did. Just me kicking into the track. It’s like you’re fixing your shirt; it’s part of the reality of getting prepared to start the song.

**MD:** Coltrane’s “Harmonique.”

**Will:** That’s a classic.

**MD:** Then your composition “Sarmastah.” Some hip brushwork there, and a great pulse.

**Will:** Elvin was the king of playing really slow swing time, and with brushes. I always enjoyed him playing that kind of time. The most humorous part of an Elvin Jones gig was watching him play really slow ballads. He would moan. He had that gravelly moan—you could hear it. He played such slow time you’d think, *Okay, he’s going to lose it*. Then he’d play a big fill, and bam! It would blow wineglasses off the tables in the Vanguard. Elvin would moan, then right back into the time. It was one of the most entertaining aspects about watching him play. I wanted to do something similar to where Elvin plays really slow, so I composed “Sarmastah.” I’m also playing a twelve-string guitar on this track. Many people may not be aware

# NEW GAUGE SERIES DRUMSTICKS

that Elvin was a good guitar player.

**MD:** New York City musicians don't really play that kind of slow tempo anymore.

**Will:** To lock in that slow tempo during the take I made a loop. Everybody has their mental version of playing slow, right? When we cut "Sarmastah" the guys were going a little bit left, so I made a loop. You can play whatever you want, but *that's* where the time is. I didn't have them play to the loop; I had it in my headphones. I made a cheesy digital loop from a drum machine. After we recorded it I played the tune back, took out my drums and put the loop in—the guys were all in time.

"Sarmastah" means mystic. And Elvin mystified me with this thing! Sometimes Elvin would go "ting, ting, ta-ting," very slowly. One time he sounded like he actually stopped the time for a couple seconds. People in the club were put into a state of sonic suspended animation. I thought, *I can't play a slow tempo like Elvin, but I can do something similar.* I was fooling around with this melody on acoustic guitar and Antoine Roney jumped on it and said, "Let's cut it right now." It's a mood piece.

**MD:** You also cover Wayne Shorter's "Mahjong."

**Will:** I'm playing a Manding rhythm there. The hi-hat and bass drum have one sound; one pedal is hitting the hi-hat and smaller bass drum at the same time. The other bass drum plays the other two notes. It's a high-low-low rhythm. Three notes in the phrase. The hi-hat is on the 1 and 3 [in 6/4]. It's a straight West African rhythm.

**MD:** You're mostly playing rims in "Mahjong"?

**Will:** Mostly on the rims. Also toms and some ride cymbal; that's what the smaller drums would play in a Manding percussion section. Some guys in the percussion section would just play the crack, or main downbeat, in the first part of the pattern with a stick. Other guys would play the lower bass-frequency rhythm. That's how the percussion section would sound if you broke it down. I'm

playing the Manding on the kit where you get to hear the entire rhythm. I was trying to replicate that moving-across-the-Serengeti vibe, but not too busy and not too defined.

**MD:** "Shinjitsu" is anthemic and powerful, but brief; you're playing mallets and your Boomywang there.

**Will:** Keiko Jones wrote that, and Elvin played it at every gig. It was taken from a Japanese folk song. Elvin would play that song for almost twenty minutes in concert. It's so "Elvin," I couldn't *not* put it on the record. In his version there was a big section he soloed over. He would do that whole mallet thing. I wanted to play the melody only as a blessing, because he would always play that at his shows. I have another song with a similar vibe on the record, "Doll of the Bride," so I paid my respects to Elvin by just playing the melody of "Shinjitsu."

**MD:** Are you playing hand drums and drumset in "Shinjitsu"?

**Will:** No, that's Doudou N'Diaye Rose and four other sabar hand drummers. Then I join in playing a two-bass-drum ostinato while soloing with my bare hands on the snare and toms. I'm trying to make the connection to Doudou N'Diaye Rose's concept, which is 40,000 years old. I recorded him with four of his sons in Senegal. I met him, went to his house, and he was super-kind. He said, "Young man, what would you like to do?" I said I wanted to record his patterns, which I didn't understand. He very slowly



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# Zildjian

DRUMSTICKS

## Will Calhoun

broke down many ancient rhythms. I was in Senegal playing a jazz festival. Doudou was very polite; he asked me what my thing was all about. I said, "Me? Are you kidding me?" I was there to see him! He was blown away by my Korg Wavedrum. He freaked out when I brought out the effects pedals and started playing with distortion and delay. He told one of his helpers, "Get me one of those!" They had no idea. I have video of Doudou playing my Wavedrum with his African stick.

**MD:** What's happening in your drum solo after the brass section in "Doll of the Bride"? Is that you with Doudou?

**Will:** That's the cadence that Elvin wrote. You can find fifty versions of "Doll of the Bride" on YouTube. That song is forty minutes long. Elvin solos a while out front, then he plays the cadence, then a Latin part comes in. There's also a pre-cadence. That's how Elvin did it. My fifteen-minute version is condensed! It was an entire set of music when you'd go see Elvin perform.

**MD:** "Destiny" is up-tempo and burning. Kind of the rock tune of the record.

**Will:** That's one of my favorite Elvin recordings ever, from *Elvin Jones Is "On the Mountain."* A brilliant combination of Gene, Jan, and Elvin. It's great to hear Elvin playing with the Fender Rhodes and Moog. Jan Hammer was also a game-changer. That's an incredible album. And "Destiny" always got under my skin. I know it by heart. The song is a unique arrangement, and the duo between Jan and Elvin is great. It's so hip, and I love that cadence. And the way Gene wrote the tag with the time changes—simply brilliant.

When I was mixing the Living Colour album *Shade*, up in Rhinebeck, New York, I called Jan, who lives nearby, and asked if he would record "Destiny" with me. He said "Yeah." It was incredible. Jan recorded it, edited it, and mixed it for me. Jan mixed Jeff Beck's *Wired*. He also recorded and mixed Tony Williams' *Joy of Flying*. We cut it with Christian McBride on bass. A few weeks later I was playing 55 Bar with Mike Stern, and while I was setting up my drums, Gene Perla walks in and says, "Jan says you covered my song, and he said it's incredible. I want a copy!" It was great to hear Gene say that.

### LC BACK IN THE SHADE

**MD:** What's the approach on *Shade*?

**Will:** It's very blues based. All the songs are written by the entire band. We recorded a cover of Robert Johnson's "Preachin' Blues." Ed Stasium, who mixed our first two records, mixed *Shade*, which is a good thing. We needed to bring some of that sound back to Living Colour, the sound that put us on the map. We got away from that sound for a bit, and we went through problems in-house as well. Ed helped spell out who we are. Niko Bolas and Chris Lord-Alge also mixed a few tracks. Andre Betts produced the record, and he brought an urban, edgy element to the recording.

Those four guys and the band are trying to maintain who Living Colour is and where we came from. Those first albums, *Vivid* [1988], *Time's Up* [1990], and *Stain* [1993], are classics, and we shouldn't get away from those sonically, although we're in a new era. We're moving forward while keeping the

older, traditional production. So I'm excited about the mixes and the new music.

**MD:** Is there a theme to the new album?

**Will:** It's political, it's blues, it's funky, it's rock. We covered Biggie Smalls' "Who Shot Ya" and shot a video for that. Among other things, the lyrics deal with gun laws, which is not only about white police officers killing black people. There are a lot of other issues—apathy, freedom, love, and life.

### IMPROVISING WITH WAVES AND A KAT

**MD:** In an online tutorial video, you're playing the Korg Wavedrum and another electronic device that looks like a suspended thunder sheet. You're getting incredible sounds from that setup.

**Will:** That's the Alternate Mode jamKAT. I use that, the Korg Wavedrum, and the Roland HandSonic. When soloing I play a drumset, but I always go into that jamKAT world. People are always mesmerized by its sounds. I'm not patting myself on the back, but I purposely want to get in front of a rock 'n' roll crowd with the jamKAT and the other pieces; I want them to experience the music I create with those devices, which I consider to be timeless, title-less music in a sense. It's electronic, it's African, it's ambient, it's European, Brazilian, it's dance and disco, hip-hop, underground metal, avant-garde. I create all these sounds and build loops.

I'm also using these platforms to create art. I turn off all the stage lighting and solo with jamKAT loops using light sticks. I did it for fun with Living Colour, then I filmed it and began experimenting. I played a solo



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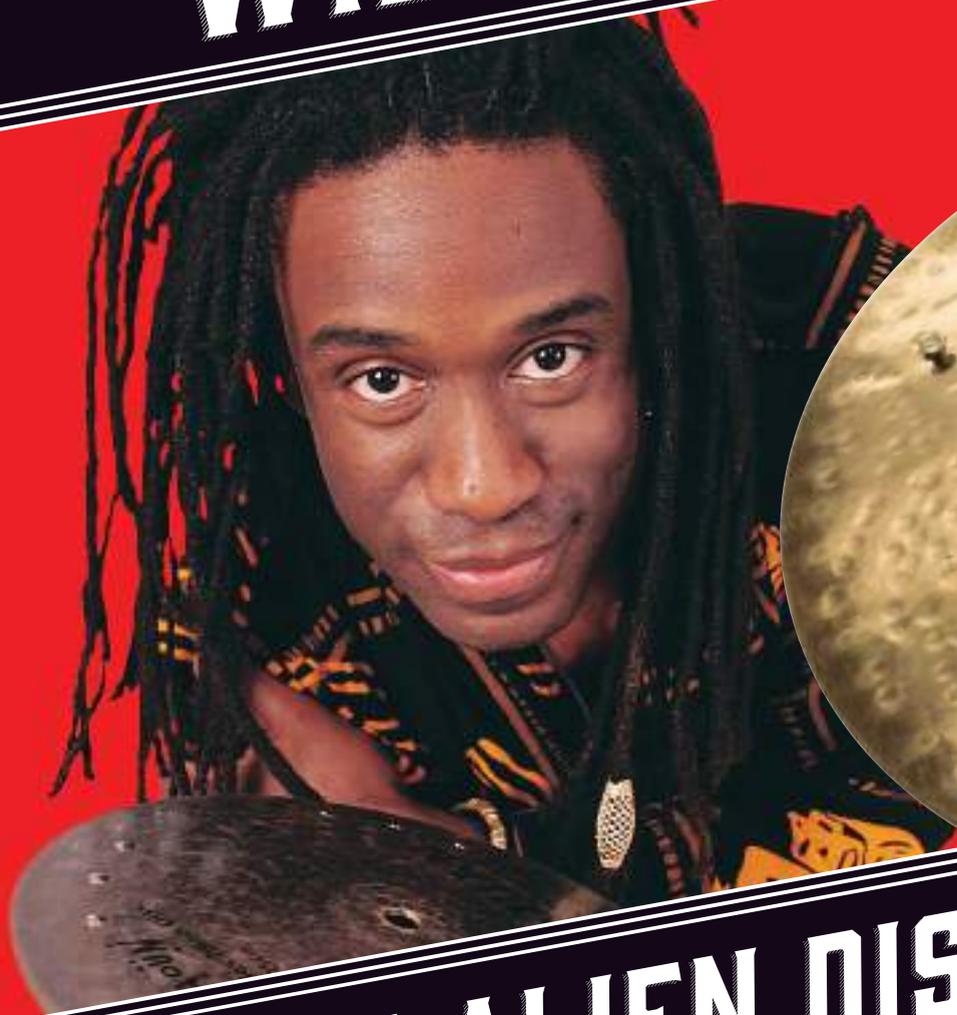
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# WILL CALHOUN



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## Will Calhoun

set in California with the jamKAT, and a guy from the video/art company SceneFour asked to film and photograph my solos, which we did. You only see the streaks of light. Not me, not the kit. So we took hundreds of photos of the performance and then chose thirteen. These pieces became my latest art series, titled "AZA." Anyone can visit WillCalhounArt.com, browse, and purchase personally signed canvas pieces from the collection.

### CALHOUN'S CONSTRUCTIONS

**MD:** What are you currently doing on the set to improve? Do you even think purely as a drumset player anymore?

**Will:** Yes, but not in a singular way. I think of the drumset as a tool. It's like a frying pan—a great object that you can create many styles of meals with. I practice on a Moongel Workout Pad. I practice Ted Reed's *Syncopation* full speed ahead. I still practice rudimental things on the full kit. I still love watching and listening to Tony Williams. I went to Berklee, but there was a long line of students waiting to study with Alan Dawson, the genius. I was in Berklee for four years and I never had the opportunity to study with him. I studied with Tommy Campbell, John Ramsay, and others who studied with Alan Dawson, but I wish I had studied with him. But I was a student, I was broke, and Alan's lessons were a bit of distance away from Berklee. My most challenging practicing is studying Lenny Nelson's videos. He's a brilliant Bostonian whose knowledge of the instrument is beyond normal human consumption.

**MD:** You were at Berklee after Jeff "Tain" Watts and Marvin "Smitty" Smith?

**Will:** Yes, at the tail end of that era. They got the last of the good soup! The school changed a lot, plus it's \$60k a year now.

**MD:** What kinds of chops-builders do you give your current students?

**Will:** The metronome is king. Set it to two different paces, and record everything you practice. I believe in practicing exercises in groups of tens, twenties, fifties, or hundreds. Then you make a graph. I give my students an exercise at 68 bpm on the metronome, playing alternating left and right 8th notes in unison with the sound of each metronome tick. Record that and listen. Draw a line down the middle of a piece of paper. Depending on whether each stroke is early or late with the metronome tick, you put the mark before or after the line. After ten strokes and you've notated each strike, that will give you an idea of where exactly you need to get your time and sticking

together.

Also listen to the sound, making sure the volume of each stroke is the same. Play everything evenly. I start out from there, then increase the level of difficulty. Playing loud, playing soft, playing with accents. You have to learn vocabulary words before you can build sentences.

**MD:** Where do you teach?

**Will:** At Universal Music Production Center in Hackensack, New Jersey, and at Drummers Collective [in Manhattan], by request only.

**MD:** What books do you use with students?

**Will:** Ted Reed's *Syncopation*, Fine and Dahlgren's *Accent on Accents*, Robert Starer's *Rhythmic Training*.

**MD:** Did you enjoy your Berklee experience?

**Will:** Yes and no. They present the tools; you have to build the house. You have to figure it out. I learned from Boston, a city where there are great book and record stores, from doing sessions, from professors who gave a damn, from John Ramsay and Tommy Campbell, and most importantly I learned from my friends at Berklee: Billy Kilson, Gene Jackson. I learned from great drummers who helped me. Living in the dorms was a bit rough, but you make it work!

I come from a very academic family. I didn't want to attend college; I wanted to hang in New York. The city was incredibly happening in the '80s. But I have my mother's vision—she's an academic—and it was a great education. I graduated with a degree in recording engineering [now music production and engineering]. I'm glad I did my four years and got out of there!

**MD:** How do you speak to the business of being a musician now?

**Will:** Now you have to know the terrain. Before you could just be a musician and hire a manager. Now you have to cook the food and serve it. More than ever, musicians have to understand the internet, contracts, the law, intellectual property, your worth, what you can resell, publishing, copyrights. It's become more defense than offense. Now you don't need a record deal—you can sell online. It's changed from an industry creating your community to you creating your own community.

**MD:** Your many years of study have enabled you to play so many different styles of drumming.

**Will:** Thanks to Living Colour, I was able to begin my research while traveling the world. I enjoy being in Living Colour, where I can play rock 'n' roll and everything else!



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# Calhoun's Living Colour Kit

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**A.** 6x13 Black Panther Nomad snare  
**B.** 8x10 tom  
**C.** 9x12 tom  
**D.** 14x14 floor tom  
**E.** 16x16 floor tom  
**F.** 18" gong drum  
**G.** 18x20 bass drum

- Cymbals:** Sabian  
**1.** 14" Calhoun Mad Hats  
**2.** 4", 6", and 8" Alien Discs with rivets  
**3.** 19" O-Zone crash with rivets (prototype)  
**4.** 21" AA Bash ride  
**5.** 21" Calhoun Lunar ride with one rivet  
**6.** 18" HHX Evolution crash  
**7.** 16" HHX Click Hats  
**8.** 18" Hammerax Boomywang

**Percussion:** Meinl cowbell

**Heads:** Evans Black Chrome snare batter and clear 300 bottom, Black Chrome on both sides of left bass drum and on gong drum, Red Hydraulic tom batters and Clear G1 bottoms, and EMAD batter and Black Chrome front head on main kick drum

**Hardware:** Mapex 800 Series Black Plated stands and single pedal, Sleishman twin pedal, Porter and Davies BC2 throne with backrest and Stone Thrones seat cover, Grombal cymbal sleeve protectors

**Sticks:** Vic Firth Calhoun series

**Electronics:** Korg Wavedrum, Alternate Mode JamKAT with DITI interface, Yamaha SPD-SX, effects pedal board designed and built by David Koltai from Pigtronix, Audiofy in-ear monitors

We recently caught up with Calhoun at a Living Colour show and chatted with him about the gear he's using on tour to support the band's latest release, *Shade*. His Mapex Saturn series kit is outfitted with some new prototype heads. "I'm experimenting with Evans' Red Hydraulics," Will says. "They allow me to smash the drums in a big room without having too many overtones."

Calhoun explains the reasoning behind his tom sizes. "I like to have a 2" spread between drums, because it allows me to cover a lot of genres—jazz, rock, funk, metal, and so on. "My snare has a 6x13, 2.3 millimeter brass shell," Will adds. "I wanted the brass to be thinner so I could get a nice ring, but it's not too much. I decided to go with that size because I can still play loud but not have too many overtones."

Explaining the recent addition of an 18" HHX Evolution crash to his setup, Calhoun says, "I

was looking for a crash that was still bright, like a 17" AA, but I wanted a little bit of a dark dive after you hit it. The HHX Evolution has a nice bell and a good crash. I'm also using Calhoun Mad Hats. The bottom is a lot heavier than the top. It's a thicker sound, so I'm able to cut through the volume of the rock guitars and bass while at the same time having some subtle dynamics to play jazz, funk, and hip-hop."

Calhoun concludes by talking about one of his favorite pieces of equipment. "The original Wavedrum is one of the most intelligent electronic percussion instruments ever built," he says. "You can go in and make this your own electronic dream sound piece, which is what I've done. Of all my electronic gear, this is what I'm most attached to."

To take a tour of Will's kit, visit [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com).

**GEARING UP** ON STAGE AND UP CLOSE

Interview and photos by Miguel Monroy





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# Trivium's Paul Wandtke

Career highlights like playing with the alt-goth band Kill Hannah, a traveling production of *Rock of Ages*, and a Nirvana tribute act—in which he's singing and playing guitar—might not seem typical for a lead-up to joining an established metal group. But looking back on it, they sure seem to have done the trick.

Parents have forever lectured their teenage kids to work hard and make a good impression, and teenagers have always rolled their eyes in response, certain that such adult concerns will never affect them—or at least not for a long, long time. Chicago native Paul Wandtke is proof that working hard and making positive impressions early in life *does* matter. Selected from a group of seriously talented candidates, with an assist from a strong personal recommendation by drumming great Mike Mangini, Wandtke found himself on a dream drumming gig. And he wasn't even looking for it.

It seems that Wandtke's time studying with Mangini and rock and fusion legend Rod Morgenstein at Berklee College of Music in Boston left a lasting impression. In

2015 the journeyman drummer was coming off some van tours with upcoming acts and two six-month runs with the successful *Rock of Ages* franchise, and was a year into fronting the tribute project that he'd founded, Smells Like Nirvana, when he got the call that the popular metal act Trivium was interested in auditioning him as a replacement for its current drummer. "I think the biggest push for them to trust me was Mike Mangini's recommendation," Wandtke says. "They'd read about me and checked out all of my videos online. They were talking to eight to ten other guys at the same time, and as it started getting closer to the date of our first show and the guys got to know me, things started moving to my favor. I was just doing my Nirvana tribute. I was surprised to even get the call."

Story by Ben Meyer • Photos by Scott Uchida







Wandtke began pounding away at grunge covers with his older brother and a few friends at the tender age of ten. "I was skateboarding all day, every day, and getting into punk," he recalls. "I was listening to NOFX, Lagwagon, Screaching Weasel, and Operation Ivy, and then I started getting into older stuff like Ozzy, Black Sabbath, Metallica, Mötley Crüe, the Doors, and Hendrix. It was kind of a turning point for me. I guess everybody wanted to be Tommy Lee at some point growing up." When most kids are consumed with baseball or the newest Xbox title, Wandtke was

already forming the skills that would ultimately lead him to appear on stage in front of 40,000 screaming fans at Slipknot's riotous December 2015 Knotfest México concert. It was his debut gig with Trivium.

Leading up to the show, Wandtke spent time meticulously preparing the band's material, including creating custom tempo maps in Apple Logic to perform with. "We had four solid rehearsals in Orlando, Florida," Paul says, "but I knew about the show a month in advance. It was a sixty-minute set. They have a rehearsal space

with a kit, and they just fly me in from Chicago whenever they need me. When Mike Mangini emailed me about Trivium, I knew this was going to be solid. He said, 'I have a melodic metal band looking for a drummer that may be right up your alley.' I was thinking, *This can't be some low-caliber gig. This has to be something big.* I just feel so lucky. It's crazy."

Debuting with a major international act in front of a screaming festival crowd can be quite an intimidating prospect. Wandtke worked through his anxiety with some sage advice from a friend. "The largest crowd I'd played for [before that] was around 5,000," he says. "I messaged Alan Childs, the drummer from the Las Vegas version of *Rock of Ages*, who'd played with David Bowie [on the singer's

## Tools of the Trade

Wandtke tells *Modern Drummer* that for Trivium's live shows, he's assembled his dream rig, which starts with a Tama Starclassic Performer Bubinga/Birch set in satin pearl white finish with black nickel hardware. "I'm so stoked to be a part of the Tama family," says the drummer, whose setup includes 8x10 and 9x12 toms, 14x16 and 16x18 floor toms, and two 20x22 bass drums, plus an 8x14 S.L.P. Big Black Steel limited edition snare. "I really like how Tama drums are so warm but still have so much attack that they cut through the mix."

Wandtke also uses Tama hardware, including pedals and stands from the company's Star, Roadpro, and Lever Glide series. "I've been experimenting with Iron Cobra Power Glide and Speed Cobra pedals," he shares. "I grew up with Tama Iron Cobras, so I can really tell that the new innovations on both of these pedals seem to make them a lot smoother and faster than before." Among the Tama accessories he puts to good use are the Rhythm Watch Mini RW30 metronome, Ergo-Rider Trio throne, and Cobra Clutch.

Wandtke's cymbals, all from Meinl's Mb20 line, include 15" Heavy Soundwave main hi-hats, 14" Heavy Soundwave auxiliary hats, 18" and 19" crashes, a 20" Heavy Bell ride, and either an 18" Rock or Soundcaster China. "The reason I love Meinl's Mb20 cymbals," Paul says, "is because they have a short sustain, which I think is perfect for metal. You don't really want long-sustaining cymbals when playing fast sections."

Wandtke's Evans heads include a Heavyweight snare batter, G2 tom batters, and EQ4 bass drum batters. In addition, he uses PureSound snare wires and says that he always warms up backstage with Evans RealFeel bass drum pads.



Glass Spider tour], and I asked him how I should prepare for playing in front of a crowd that size. He said, 'Once you're on stage, just kill it. Look out into the crowd, soak it in, and then just enjoy it.' An hour before we hit the stage, I was really nervous, but then when we got on stage and the crowd started chanting our name, I started to feel

more relaxed, like, *They're here to see us play.*

"At one point," Wandtke continues, "I was supposed to do a twenty-second drum solo at the end of the song 'Pull Harder on the Strings of Your Martyr.' Then the power on all of the band's amps went out, so I had to do a longer one. It kind of worked in my favor, because I got to play a little longer. Overall, the show was great. The band said that they'd never had so much fun playing live with a drummer before."

The skills that helped Wandtke to secure the Trivium gig actually went beyond his drumming, further demonstrating the level of dedication and drive he possesses. "The reason I started my Nirvana tribute was because that's the band that got me into music, and I thought that [playing guitar and singing] would be a fun challenge for me," Paul explains. "I've always been a drummer, and I didn't even know if I could pull this off."

"During my last six-month *Rock of Ages* contract, because I had so much downtime, I practiced guitar and vocals for like six hours a day. Honestly, I'd taken a break from the drums. I was sick of looking for work as a drummer, and I wanted to take on the challenge of playing guitar and singing. I was hoping that this project would be a step toward putting together an original band. Then I got the call from Trivium. In *Smells Like Nirvana* I get a little taste of what it's like to be a frontman, and that's translated into my drumming. When I showed up for rehearsals with Trivium, I noticed that I'm listening differently now and relating to challenges that singers face. In my eyes, Nirvana is basically the Beatles with distortion and feedback and screaming vocals, so there's a lot to learn from their music."

Besides enjoying playing in front of huge festival crowds and living his dream of touring with an established act, Wandtke also feels fortunate to have gotten to know a few of his childhood heroes along the way, including Nikki Sixx of Mötley Crüe and Sixx: A.M. "Mötley Crüe was the first '80s band I got into after my punk phase as a kid," Wandtke says. "It's so weird to be hanging out with Nikki, years later. We did the Carolina Rebellion festival together, and he invited [Trivium singer/guitarist] Matt Heafy and me onto his bus. We just talked about vocal techniques and stuff. I've always



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**“Paul has always displayed relentless preparation skills, chops, song-learning systems, and a real respect for music and those around him. He gets along with people and is among the international group of great, professional drummers.”**

**—Dream Theater’s Mike Mangini**

looked up to Nikki because he was one of the visionaries and a writing force behind Mötley Crüe.

“I feel like every gig I’ve done has been a stepping-stone to this point,” Wandtke continues. “If I was asked to give advice to aspiring drummers, I’d tell them to get into wedding bands or something. You learn about song form, playing different tempos, and actually getting paid. Having a solid repertoire is smart too. You should know artists and particular songs and feels. A lot of kids that I talk to say, ‘Man, I would never

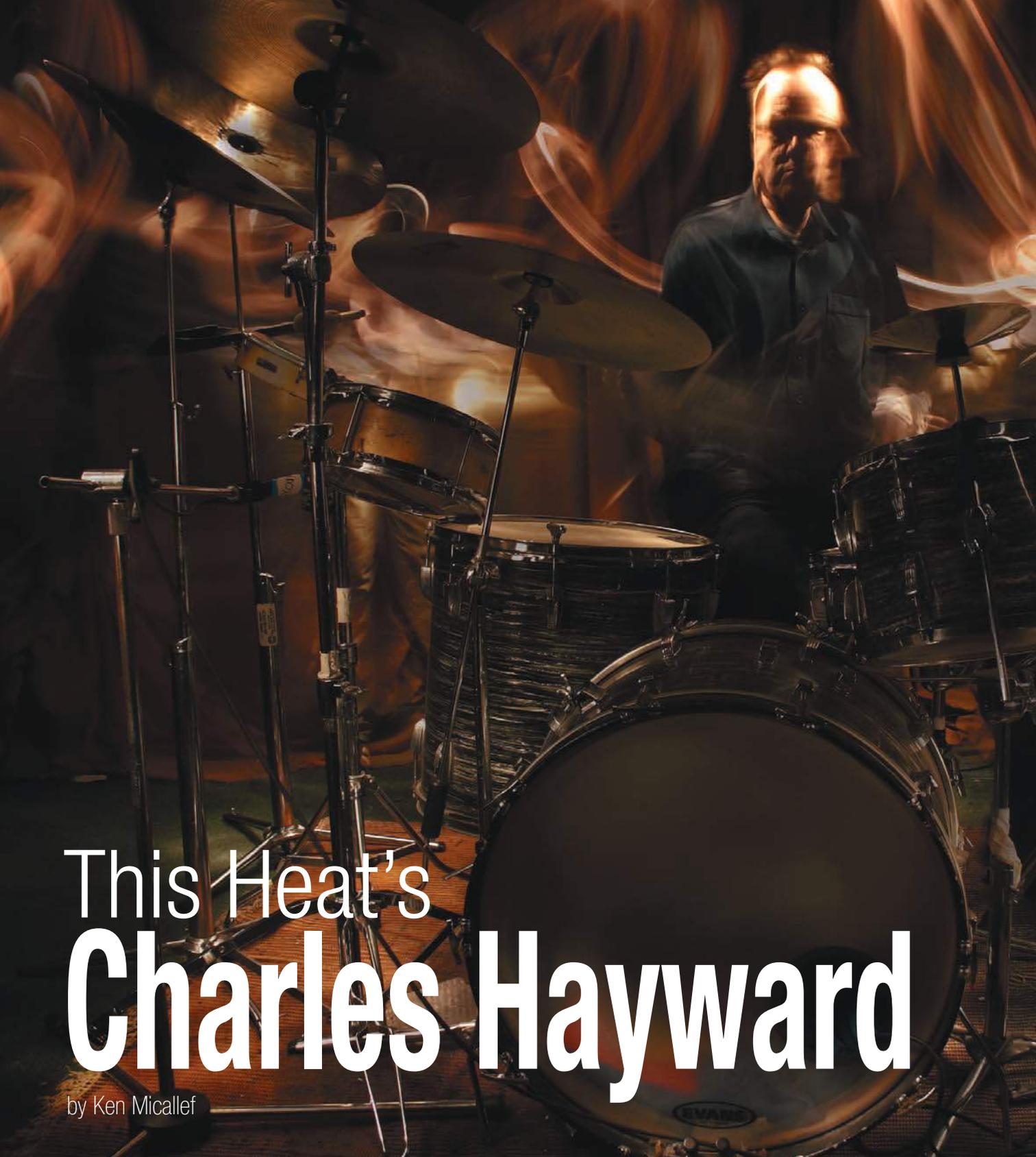
learn how to cover a song.’ I’m like, ‘How else do you learn?’”

Trivium spent early 2016 touring the U.K., Japan, and Australia, and then conquered the European and North American festival circuits. Currently the band is headlining shows with Sabaton and Huntress on its *Silence in the Snow* fall tour. “My original plan of being a high-profile drummer is starting to happen now because of Trivium,” Wandtke says. “For fifteen years I was looking to join a band that was doing high-caliber stuff. Now I’m getting to put my best foot forward. I’m

just working on keeping the Trivium camp happy and delivering the best work I can for them, and between [commitments with the band] I’ll fill in dates with Smells Like Nirvana when I’m home.

“Being in Trivium has been a life-changing experience for me,” Wandtke adds. “To be on tour and experience this lifestyle is amazing. These guys actually have fans! I know that sounds weird, but I hadn’t had that kind of experience. The closest was doing *Rock of Ages*, but I was in the pit for that. I feel humbled by this whole experience.”





# This Heat's Charles Hayward

by Ken Micallef

Coming out just as the era of prog rock gave way to the tidal wave of punk rock, England's This Heat was largely drowned out by the overpowering sounds of the sonic revolution. But the group was as innovative as any of the leading creative lights that came before or after—and only three recordings were released during its existence. Today, however, the sounds on them, including the drumming, resonate more than ever.



L e w i s H a y w a r d

On its three proper studio recordings, the Brixton-based art-rock band This Heat, featuring Charles Hayward on drums and keyboards, Gareth Williams on keyboard, guitar, and bass, and Charles Bullen on guitar and clarinet (all three also contribute vocals and tape manipulation), mixes strains of Krautrock, dub, reggae, rock, and musique

concrète into a highly idiosyncratic sound. On 1979's self-titled debut album, 1980's *Health and Efficiency* EP, and 1981's *Deceit*, This Heat references the rigid polymetric flavors of Gentle Giant, the tape-splice innovations of Pierre Schaeffer, and the DIY ethic and energy of punk rock, all combined into a noisy ball of art-school discipline

and seer-like musical vision. Though at first largely unknown outside the U.K., the group has attained an ever-growing cult status among followers of fringe-dwelling modern music, as well as a number of well-regarded contemporary acts, including Caribou, Hot Chip, and LCD Soundsystem.

"I've been relearning the drum parts that this maniac twenty-eight-year-old came up with," Hayward says with a chuckle while talking with *Modern Drummer* from his home in England. "He was nutty! I always tried to let the playing do the work. We generated music by improvising and then recording everything to tape. Then we'd isolate small sections and build around or from that."

With little commercial success to show for its innovations, This Heat broke up in 1982, but Hayward continued to work, evolve, and perform. Today his solo recordings far outnumber those of his original band, but the impact of This Heat's experiments on his current musical identity remains firm. Following the band's dissolution, Hayward worked with many likeminded musicians, and recorded the notable records *Survive the Gesture* (1987), *Skew-Whiff* (1990), *Switch on War* (1991), and *My Secret Alphabet* (with multi-instrumentalist Nick Doyne-Ditmas, 1993). And being not completely unfamiliar with (relatively) more conventional music, Hayward worked with acts as diverse as the post-punk group the Raincoats and pop band Everything but the Girl. But he never strayed too far onto the path, regularly joining up with ensembles like the New York noise contortionists Massacre, featuring the underground heroes Bill Laswell and Fred Frith. Further Hayward projects include *Shape Moreton*, which explores soundscapes and improvisations; *Clear Frame*, with the British avant-gardists Lol Coxhill and Hugh Hopper; and the electronics/bass/drums trio *Monkey Puzzle Trio*.

Even considering all that has followed it, This Heat's brief output remains prescient. The group's debut, recently reissued on vinyl, along with *Health and Efficiency* and *Deceit*, follows a trajectory from punkish grooves propelled by "motorik" rhythms and brisk guitar to full-on noisescapes. This Heat forecasted industrial dance music while alluding to the abstract experiments of Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry's *Symphony for One Man Alone*, Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Gesang der Jünglinge*, and the Groupe de Recherches Musicales. Some *This Heat* selections sound nearly conventional, while others rely on distorted tape loops and guitars, humming motors, low-end tonal pads that recall synthesizers, and monotone

## Charles Hayward

vocals. Oscillators purr and repeat; drum rhythms loop; what sounds like a blanket of struck scrap metal rumbles alongside cut-time and 4/4 beats.

Even today it's difficult to imagine exactly what This Heat's compositional approach was. "Maybe a song I'd written would sit on top of something else we had," Hayward explains. "We wrote songs and had ideas, and we sometimes had preexisting grooves. We weren't heavily dividing things metrically; everything came from playing."

Hayward took on various guises in This

Heat, from rudimentary beatkeeper to arrhythmic sound stylist. "When playing like that, stiffness is not part of the deal," Charles says. "You're just playing, and however it feels is how it sounds. Our approach was related to ethnic or folk music, which became world music. We learned by repetition."

This Heat's members listened to everything from Balinese gamelan and pre-Christian Greek music to Stockhausen, Miles Davis, Syd Barrett, and even Kool and the Gang. Just as the Beatles and Pink Floyd

experimented with found sounds and tape splicing, This Heat took experimental ideas further than anyone could have imagined. Though the musical conception was advanced, '70s-era recording techniques proved limiting. "Often a drum take would be recorded with the other two instruments," Hayward says. "We might be hoping for a good drum take, but if the other instruments didn't sound as good, we would overdub those parts."

As a young drummer Hayward had surprisingly standard, if wide-ranging, heroes. "I liked Ed Thigpen with Ella Fitzgerald," he says. "I saw them live, as well as Mike De Silva with Sammy Davis Jr., when I was a twelve-year-old. I also liked the Shadows' Brian Bennett, Ringo Starr, and Keith Moon. Also Robert Wyatt of Soft Machine, Christian Vander from Magma, Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, and Ornette Coleman's drummer Charles Moffett." At the same time, Hayward might have been consumed by the production sound of a snare reverb heard on a pop 45.

This Heat explored sonic concoctions to enable its concepts, which was reflected in Hayward's unusual hardware embellishments. "I'd use an empty chocolate tin and a toy snare drum made by a company called New Era, who made high school band instruments," the drummer recalls. "I used those two pieces to my right like a pair of timbales. I made little tunes between the two drums. It became a way to add color to a ride cymbal part."

After the demise of This Heat, Hayward formed Camberwell Now, an equally adventurous trio that released four recordings: *The Ghost Trade* (1986), *Meridian* (1983), *Greenfingers* (1987), and a compilation, *All's Well* (1992). "The songwriting with Camberwell Now was taken from specific imagery, like water or plants or knowing or not knowing," Hayward explains. "We had a tape switchboard of four cassette decks with two signals per machine. Each cassette deck went through something like a Morse code key. It could only play a selection of eight sounds at any one time. That might be loops of our voices slowed down with no breaths. Or bass guitar played with metal knives that would give you this haze of four notes in a chord. We would record to one of the tape decks and let that tune hang over the rhythm. When I played a particular cymbal crash it would signal a sound running from the tape. Things would often magically happen in sync. Or we'd make the tapes based on reducing a song to a keyboard part with eight notes. It wasn't improvisation based, but rather working

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from songs.”

Hayward’s explorations continue today. Recent recordings include the psychedelic improvisations of 2010’s *GOL/Charles Hayward*, 2004’s Gulf War–inspired *Switch on War*, and 2011’s *One Big Atom*, which jumps between songs, collage, found sounds, and noise. When reflecting on his initial solo recordings, Hayward is inscrutable. “*Survive the Gesture* was a series of songs about not finding myself in the music,” he laughs. “The drums were one part of the music. My playing has gotten better because I’m not obliged to focus on the drums, but rather the music. *My Secret Alphabet* slowly moves away from songs and becomes more fields of sound.”

*One Big Atom* was described by the independent music magazine *Forced*

*Exposure* as “another departure for Hayward, taking songwriting further into the personal and political, shifting focus towards a ‘dread bass’ sensibility.” “*One Big Atom* is the first album I’ve engineered myself,” Hayward says. “I’m happy with the eclectic nature of the sound. I used a lot of editing as part of the process. I’m often editing *after* the attack of the sound. Not Pro Tools, but I won’t tell you how I engineered it. The music is made up of edits. There’s some tape editing—I edited digitally but without looking at a screen. And no computer was used except for mastering.”

Hayward’s 2012 release, *Trademark Ground*, explores, among other things, the sonic variety inherent in percussion, piano, and vocals—tranquil music with undertones of animus. “I’ve performed it live,” Hayward says. “It brings people into the noise thing.

Grown men show up with tears in their eyes. It’s piano songs with brief drum interludes.”

Living simply with his family in a small apartment, with no car or television, Hayward is free to follow his muse, wherever it may lead. “I’m into odd meters within improvisation at the moment,” he says. “Building up structures that have odd meters within them while I’m improvising. Once I’ve recognized what the structure is, I repeat it. Or—and it’s quite simple—I might play 5/4 and bring it down to 4/4 within an improvisation. You play a rhythm and then remove the last beat in the measure. Initially people think they’re listening to 5/4, then it becomes 4/4. I like the idea of shortening and lengthening the measure, and creating cycles within that. I work on those within improvisations and other situations.

“I’m trying to find a way of thinking compositionally while playing or improvising,” Hayward adds, “such as playing eight bars of seven and a bar of eight—that’s one off the top of my head.” Indeed, working off the top of one’s head might not be every drummer’s preferred method, but if Hayward has proven one thing, it’s that a career spent gleefully following the muse wherever it may lead *can* be long and fruitful.

## Tools of the Trade

“My set consists of gifts and chance encounters,” Hayward explains, “so I have a very intense relationship with it. In many ways it is a map of my life and has chosen me rather than the other way round. It’s the kit I’ve used since Quiet Sun [guitarist Phil Manzanera’s pre-Roxy Music band, which also predates *This Heat*], and some of it dates back to my very first drumkit.”

Hayward’s all-Ludwig kit consists of a Supraphonic snare drum, two rack toms, a floor tom, and a bass drum, augmented by a vintage Leedy Broadway snare (no bottom head, tuned low), a vintage New Era school snare, and a New Era tambourine. Other percussive oddities include woodblocks, cowbells, trays, hubcaps, and cracked cymbals placed on top of the drums. Products from Sabian, Paiste, and Zildjian make up Hayward’s cymbal selection, joined by a Han Chi Chinese cymbal and a steel saucepan lid. Vic Firth sticks, Flix Jazz brushes, and Evans and Remo drumheads round out the arsenal, which is completed by a pair of homemade mallets.



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These unique cymbals are designed for drumset players and hand percussionists. All models can be played with sticks, mallets, brushes, or simply only with bare hands, allowing for a wide spectrum of sonic textures. All the cymbals are dynamically extremely responsive, ideal for percussionists performing in acoustic environments, as well as close-mic studio situations. The models are named in relation to something in the natural world: elements such as wind or water, the rattle of a reptile, the climate and geology of a region, or astronomical occurrences. This series is designed to enhance the artistry and creative expression the musician can achieve with intimate and dramatic cymbal soundscapes.

# Nate Lotz



Getting to the creative heart of the matter with Halsey's beatkeeper.

by Ilya Stemkovsky

**N**ate Lotz isn't interested in showing you how fast his doubles are. As the drummer for the electro-pop starlet Halsey, Lotz works an electronic/acoustic hybrid kit with precision, but he's much more focused on that magic that happens when the imaginative stuff comes out. "My favorite drummers are saying something on the drums," Lotz says. "I don't care about being the fastest drummer or the most in-time drummer. That's been my journey for a couple of years. Let's get in a room and do something creative."

Raised in a remote town in Colorado, Lotz was drawn to the lights and opportunities of Los Angeles, and once he arrived he began a steady workman existence playing every sort of gig imaginable. Eventual tours and recordings with Eric Hutchinson and La Sera led to working with Ryan Adams on his version of Taylor Swift's 1989 album. Nowadays Lotz spends his time doing sessions, laying down some serious rock with bands such as Blacktop Queen, and touring with new artists like Halsey, whose profile continues to rise. Just don't expect any gospel chops coming from the drums when Lotz is on stage.



**MD:** It was interesting going through some YouTube videos of you from a few years back and seeing how you paid your dues with all kinds of bands before arriving at your current, minimal approach with Halsey.

**Nate:** As I've gotten older I've zoned in on finding my specific voice that people will call me for. But five years ago I was doing anything and everything under the sun. [I'd go from] a wedding gig to a jazz gig to sight-reading a musical to a church gig, all in the span of one week.

**MD:** You have those skills because you listened to a lot of different music coming up?

**Nate:** It was early in high school that I got really into drums and figured out that it was my passion. It was anything from Green Day to Thrive to Alkaline Trio to the Sex Pistols. There were no bands coming through Steamboat Springs, Colorado, so it was the one local music shop and the listening station there. My music teacher in high school was a drummer, and he turned me on to Elvin Jones and Art Blakey and opened up the jazz thing. Those drummers were aggressive, the same kind of aggressiveness I was hearing in rock music. Later, at Musicians Institute in L.A., I realized you can be in different bands, as opposed to being in one band that gets really

famous or doesn't. MI exposed me to different ways to make a living.

**MD:** Halsey's album is heavily produced. What was the direction when it came to figuring out the live drums for the show?

**Nate:** It was a mixture of me and the musical director. We conceptualized the hybrid kit and sorted through the drum sounds from the record. We had a folder of samples, like "verse snare" and "chorus snare." And it became, *What am I going to play, and what are we leaving in the track? What should I put on the acoustic snare or kick trigger, and what should I put on the pad?* It was a song-by-song, under-the-microscope process. Once it all gets distributed onto the kit, it comes to life quickly, but before that it's a very technical process. We've got everything miked up and recorded during rehearsals, so we can play it down and listen back through a PA and then decide, "That sound needs to come down," or "That sound needs to be panned left."

**MD:** What's the live electronic setup for Halsey?

**Nate:** I've got the Roland SPD-SX, a kick trigger, a snare trigger, a side electronic kick drum, and another external pad. I'd say 60 percent of the set is played on the SPD-SX, and 40 percent is on the acoustic kit.

**MD:** Ryan Adams' music is obviously much more organic.

**Nate:** We made the *1989* record, and it was the opposite of the Halsey stuff. No click. Only real drums. And we'd only do a couple passes and you'd just feel it out in the moment. If there were things that weren't technically perfect, that was okay. It would be character. It was a whole other side of opening up the musical brain. I still play with Ryan in the studio, maybe recording a song for another artist, trying out different things. It's a very organic, open, creative space. Working with him has affected everything I do musically in a positive way.

**MD:** Did you use his gear or bring your own?

**Nate:** Ryan has a kit [in his studio], set up and ready to go. He has cymbals and snares, but I would also bring my own and swap those out. The kick and toms are the consistent house kit.

**MD:** How do you juggle playing on softer electronic pads and then rocking out with Ryan Adams? Do you do anything specific to keep your hands in shape?

**Nate:** Recently, after Halsey soundchecks, I'd play along with music or put a click on for an extra hour. Just improvising, and not being super-methodical. No paradiddle pyramid. Just doing more stuff that challenges my brain and creativity. When I got back to L.A. after the tour, it made me feel sharp. Sometimes, on a day off at home, I'd put together an odd kit setup I'd never played before and try to have fun with it. And I'd try to develop something new or creative to bring to the table for the next time I'm on a session or in a room with people. I'd do that more than reading out of a book and trying to get faster.

**MD:** How does this approach feed your creativity in the studio?

**Nate:** Sometimes I'll play something off the grid, and they'll like it and write a song on top of it. And sometimes there will be a loop already and I'll play something on top, very much on the grid. It all comes back to the Ryan Adams thing. It opened me up to find my own voice. Before, I'd play something to make a producer happy or play what I thought someone else would play. Now I feel comfortable in a session to do my thing. And if you like it, cool, we can have a good relationship.

## Tools of the Trade

Lotz plays a C&C white/black Tuxedo kit with a 22" bass drum, a 16" floor tom, and either a 13" tom or a Roland SPD-SX sampling pad, depending on the session. His Istanbul Agop cymbals include 16" Traditional hi-hats, a 24" Joey Waronker ride, and a 20" Mel Lewis 1982 ride. His batter heads include Remo Emperors on all drums except the bass drum, which has a Powerstroke 3. His stick model of choice is the Vic Firth X55B.





# The Feelies' Stan Demeski

**Few groups enjoy as loyal a fan base as the Feelies, whose handful of '80s albums had a profound influence on many a guitar-oriented alt-rock band. The days of bottomless major-label budgets are long past, though, and since the group has always been staunchly independent, working only when and where the members want to, its longtime drummer has learned to balance performing with more traditional work opportunities. But his ability to rock it like the old days hasn't diminished one bit.**

**W**alk by Stan Demeski's North Jersey home on any given night and you'll probably hear the veteran indie-rock drummer woodshedding.

After he gets home from his day job in the parts department at a machine-tool manufacturer (a full-time gig he's held for seventeen years), Demeski spends an hour or so each night working on exercises from *Stick Control* or prepping for one of the handful of shows the Feelies have been playing annually since reuniting in 2008. Demeski hasn't been a full-time drummer since being fired from the alt-rock band Luna in 1996, but he remains devoted to the drums and is perfectly content to do most of his playing these days in his basement to an audience of none—a far cry from the days in the '80s when the Feelies were opening big shows for R.E.M. and Lou Reed, and when Luna seemed destined to break through in the '90s.

"I don't want this to come across the wrong way, but

I really feel very little need to play in front of people anymore, and I really haven't for a long time," Demeski tells *MD* over the phone. "I'm most happy when I play in my basement. I'm very grateful people pay twenty bucks to come see my fifty-five-year-old ass play with the Feelies. But if they didn't, I'd just go to work."

During much of the '80s and well into the '90s, drumming was Demeski's full-time job. He joined the Feelies after the band issued its influential 1980 debut album, *Crazy Rhythms*—an apt title given former drummer Anton Fier's frantic yet machinelike timekeeping—and stayed with them for nearly a decade as they flirted with mainstream success. By the time he was out of Luna, Demeski was a married father of two with a house in the suburbs. His priorities had shifted from providing the beat to providing for his family, so he entered the 9-to-5 world and has remained there ever since.

**D:** You make a point of saying you haven't been a full-time drummer since you were fired from Luna in 1996. When that happened, did it feel like that phase of your life had ended, or did you still have the desire to pursue music as a career?

**Stan:** I started working at a local farmers market, and I was trying to see if I could get anything going musically. But the writing was on the wall that it was time to stop at that point. I got fired right before I turned thirty-six. I had a house, two young children....

But I kept my playing up and started playing with my in-laws in the band Speed the Plough, and now my son plays drums with them. We would play on the weekend, but I really didn't play a whole lot other than that. For most of those years I would come home from work and play guitar. Playing drums after a while, I felt like I had wasted a lot of time. But then in 2008, when the time was right, the Feelies got back together.

**D:** The Feelies seem to have a fairly light workload, but the band has been active this year with the reissues of 1988's *Only Life* and 1991's *Time for a Witness*, a two-night stand in New Jersey to mark the group's fortieth anniversary, and a new album in the can. Is there an urge to keep it going as is?

**Stan:** I think it might have to change at some point. We might have to move toward more acoustic stuff so we can do house concerts and stuff like that. I can see myself playing for another five years or so at this level, unless I have any health problems. Although I know work is going to get a bit more demanding, because I'm

about to be [promoted]. The good thing about playing when you have a full-time job is that it really recharges you for the full-time job that burns you out so much. I'm going to go as long as I can. I've invested too much time in it not to.

**MD:** The two groups you're most commonly associated with—the Feelies and Luna—share a Velvet Underground sensibility. Was Moe Tucker's approach to rhythm and percussion something you gravitated toward during your formative years?

**Stan:** There were several things that influenced me back then. One of them was Moe Tucker, though I couldn't figure out what the heck she was playing until Luna opened up for the Velvet Underground reunion tour in the early '90s. I was into American and British punk rock. Even though I liked and appreciated a lot of overplaying—fusion and stuff like that—really straight, basic music appealed to me. And then along came the advent of rhythm machines and drum programming. That

was taking drummers' jobs away, and I was like, *Why don't I just play like that? Maybe they'll use me instead of a drum machine.* Part of it was hearing Steve Reich and stuff like that, which was kind of repetitive. Stripping things down to the bare bones really started clicking with me in the late '70s and early '80s.

**MD:** When many people think of the Feelies, they think of the speedy,

jittery energy Anton Fier brought to the first album. With you on drums that vibe was still there, but dialed back a bit. Was that a conscious creative move or just the byproduct of your being your own drummer?

**"I'm going to go as long as I can. I've invested too much time in it not to."**

## Feel These: 5 Great Demeski Performances

**"The Undertow"** (from the Feelies' *Only Life*). Demeski taps out a jittery, Hoboken-y variation of the Bo Diddley beat, which creates a darting wall of rhythm with Dave Weckerman's percussion.

**"The Final Word"** (from *Only Life*). Wrist-burning 8ths on the ride cymbal and sweet fills that whiz by in a blur make for some of the busiest college-rock drumming ever.

**"Too Far Gone"** (from *Only Life*). You can feel the drum machine's influence on Demeski's playing in the unwavering, unaccented hi-hat 8th notes pulsing through this minimalist rocker.

**"Time for a Witness"** (from the Feelies' *Time for a Witness*). Dig the way Stan plays it tight and steady against Weckerman's rattling percussion on this garage-y freak-out.

**"3 Minutes in Brussels"** (from Luna's *Penthouse*). From Demeski's last stand with Luna, the loose and sexy groove on this hazy jam feels like a self-assured, slightly stoned older sibling to all the anxious rhythms the drummer cranked out with the Feelies.

## Tools of the Trade

Demeski plays either a 1993 Ludwig or early-'60s Gretsch drumset. His cymbals include two 18" crashes (one Zildjian and one Sabian), a 20" Zildjian Medium ride, and 14" Zildjian New Beat hi-hats. His hardware includes a Tama Iron Cobra chain-drive bass drum pedal "with that really nice and heavy Low Boy beater," which has a counterweight. He uses a variety of Promark products, including TX2SW model sticks, and Evans heads, including G2 Coated snare and tom batters and G1 Coated or Clear resonants. Occasionally he'll use an Evans Heavyweight head on the snare.

**Stan:** Frankly, I tried my best to play like Anton when I first started playing with them, but I couldn't come in and just play his parts perfectly. They seemed more interested in playing more experimental-type music than anyway, like the score they did for the movie *Smithereens*. A lot of times it was them telling me what to play, as best they could articulate it. It could still get frantic, though. Especially when we were doing "three drummer" shows, where Anton came back for a handful of shows on drums, Dave [Weckerman] was on percussion, and I was basically playing a kit without a kick drum or cymbals. But my version of the band was the fastest, though we're not as fast as we used to be. [laughs]

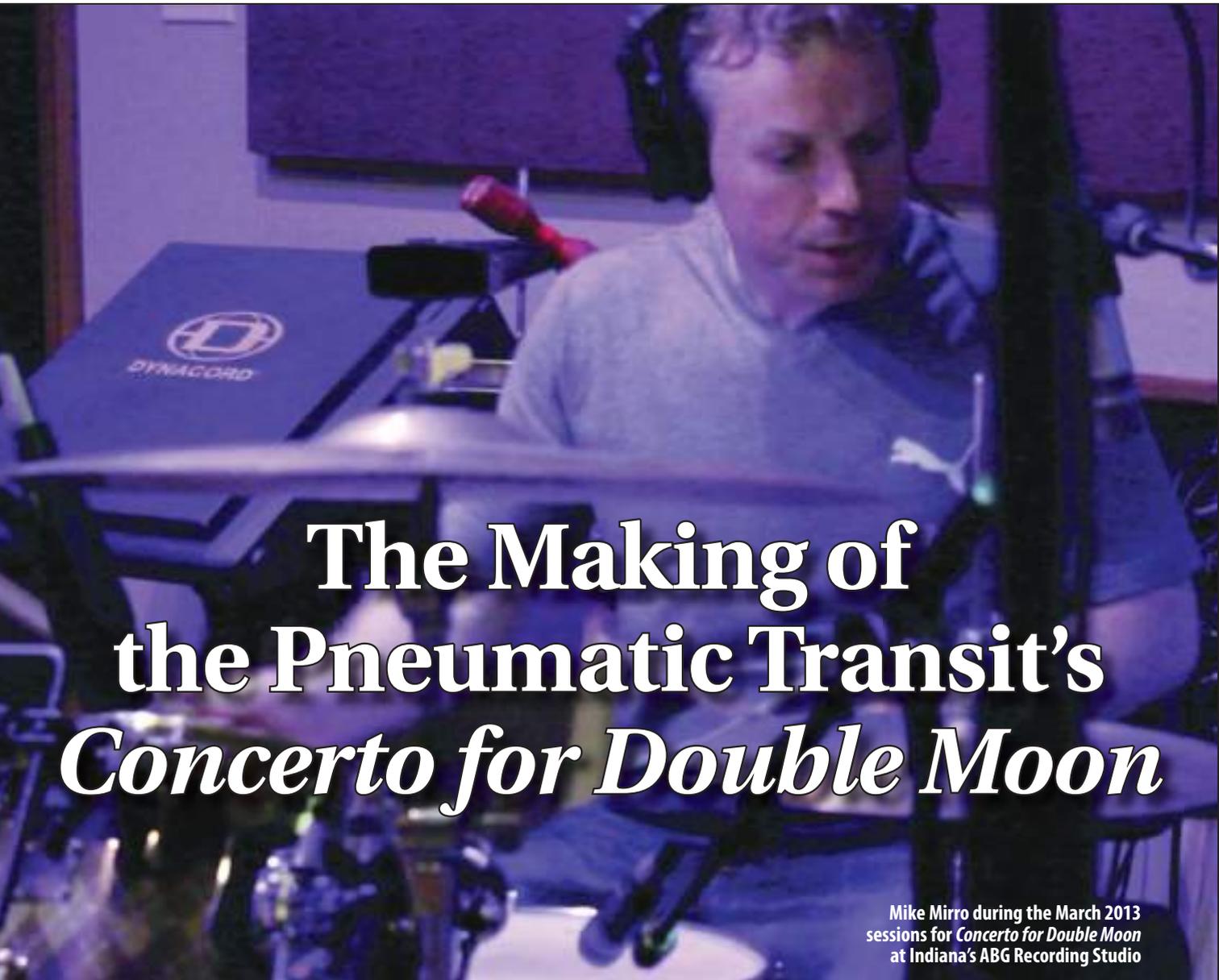
**MD:** As everyone has gotten older and evolved as players, have you settled into a different sweet spot tempo-wise? Are you concerned with playing things as fast as they are on record?

**Stan:** I prefer to play things as fast as possible. But the songwriters don't want it that way anymore. Even though he's sixty-six now, Dave can actually do a lot of the stuff [up to tempo] because he's just playing singer. It's no real big stretch for him. But [singer/guitarist] Glenn Mercer and Bill Million are a little older now, and they just don't want it that fast anymore. People used to tell us we played too fast back in the old days anyway. We play them a little slower now, and I think it does benefit a lot of the songs.

**MD:** But live you still play the 8th notes pretty fast with your right hand, on the hats, ride cymbal, or toms. Are you using any tricks to "cheat" as you get older? Lighter sticks?

**Stan:** Lighter sticks? No! I'm using basically the heaviest stick Promark makes, the 2S wood tip. I use the American Hickory models, as the oak ones are a bit too bright. I can get more bounce and volume out of the heavier sticks, and I don't have to play as loud. I can let the stick do more of the work.





# The Making of the Pneumatic Transit's *Concerto for Double Moon*

Mike Mirro during the March 2013 sessions for *Concerto for Double Moon* at Indiana's ABG Recording Studio

**More than a decade after taking over kit duties in the progressive jam band Umphrey's McGee, KRIS MYERS sings the praises of the band's original drummer, MIKE MIRRO, a gifted player who died way too young.**

by Michael Parillo

It's not so common to find a prominent touring and recording drummer dropping MD a line to help promote *somebody else's* project. But that's exactly what happened when Kris Myers asked us to check out *Concerto for Double Moon* by the Pneumatic Transit, featuring Myers' predecessor on the Umphrey's McGee throne, Mike Mirro, in what would turn out to be his final album. Mirro passed away in January 2014, at age thirty-six, before the album was completed.

"He did an incredible record, and I want to pay homage to him," Myers says of Mirro, whom he replaced in Umphrey's McGee in

2003, when the founding member left the band to attend medical school. "I felt it was my duty to come forward and tell people about this awesome album. It's a classic throwback and a modern fusion record, and not a lot of people are doing that these days. I was really blown away by Mike's performance—I think it's his best one ever."

Myers' description is apt: *Concerto for Double Moon*, conceived and written by guitarist Jeff Zampillo and released digitally late last year, manages to recall dreamy progressive rock from the '70s while incorporating hard-hitting tones and of-the-moment ideas.

The project began in 2013, after Zampillo left the band Exotic Animal Petting Zoo and started shedding his ambitious new material with Mirro in the drummer's basement, just blocks from his own home in Crown Point, Indiana. Mirro and Zampillo had met around a year earlier when they were invited by guitarist Marco Villarreal to a jam at the local club Zodiac Lounge.

"We linked up a lot," Zampillo says of that first encounter with Mirro, "and it was cool because he listened. There was this chemistry, and you want to hold on to that." Zampillo's dynamic new music wouldn't



quite have fit with either player's former group. "Mike had come from this jam band that's all shiny happy people, and I'd just got out of this band that was dark and in your face and pissed off at the world," the guitarist explains. "That combination was what we were looking for, I guess."

*Double Moon* features sax and strings, distorted riffs and hushed moments, flurries of composed notes and expansive improvised solos; its many odd time signatures demand focus from the players. Yet, Zampillo says, "I think Mike and I honestly practiced like three hours, altogether, for the whole record. Did you ever see the movie *Ed Wood*? Our approach can be summed up from this scene: Ed Wood gets this half-assed shot, and it looks really bad, but he's like, 'Perfect!' That's how Mike and I would be about everything. The rest of the time we just hung out and got to know each other."

Listening to Mirro's super-sturdy, I-can-play-anything-you-throw-at-me drumming, you'd assume he spent long days shedding *Double Moon*, and it certainly doesn't sound like the work of a guy who'd left the industry a decade earlier. "His performance is brash, bold, beautiful, and gentle," Myers says. "He's holding down the fort at times, and he's also playing with the soloists and playing

something very appropriate, all the way down to the fills. The rhythms are menacing and twisted and intense.

"He had a real natural ability to play a lot of different styles," Myers adds. "He didn't go to school for that; he just knew it. Whatever Mike was feeling at that time, he would do it and he would succeed." On "Icarian Games," Mirro nails intense snare singles in unison with Zampillo, blazes intensely behind a furious guitar solo, and then settles into a tasty funk beat. By contrast, on "An Atlas of Oceanic Coves" he breathes deeply, meditating on a slow, airy groove before injecting an infusion of fills, ever longer as they go, over a fadeout of strings and guitar.

"He had this ability to think in terms of less-obvious subdivisions," Zampillo says. "If I threw him something in seven, there are a lot of drummers that will just outline seven: 'Hey, I'm playing in seven.' Mike would bring it down to further subdivisions, like the 32nd note. He made the playing less angular, so it flowed more. It didn't even sound like an odd meter. And he understood how to read the music and know where to place certain accents. There was never anything he played where I was like, 'No, man, that's not gonna work.'"

It's heartbreaking that Mirro never got to see the completion of the album, or even play on the closing track, which Zampillo wrote for him as a solo vehicle; on that tune drums are handled, very ably, by Michael Shell. "We were getting ready to start writing for the second album, even though the first one wasn't fully tracked," Zampillo recalls. "Mike and I wanted to keep the creativity going. In an hour we could get so much done. We just had that vibe."

"Mike was a great guy and down to earth," Myers concludes, discussing how he and Mirro formed a friendship within the Umphrey's McGee family. "He was a very selfless person. He was a character; he was kind of eccentric and said some pretty goofy things at awkward times, kind of like a lot of drummers do. [laughs] I bonded with him there.

"I always admired his talent. It was a clean, flawless approach with a vicious spirit. I'm still playing some of Mike's parts note for note."

Go to [thepneumatictransit.bandcamp.com](http://thepneumatictransit.bandcamp.com) to stream or purchase *Concerto for Double Moon*.



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# The Drummers Of *School of Rock:* *The Musical*

**Dante Melucci and Raghav Mehrotra** blaze a new route to success on Broadway—from behind a drumset.

by David Ciauro

In 2003, Jack Black played down-on-his-luck guitarist Dewey Finn in the feature film *School of Rock*. The comedian was surrounded by a talented cast of child actors playing fourth-graders attempting to win a battle of the bands to help pay Dewey's overdue rent. The plot was particularly well suited for the Broadway stage, and the legendary composer Andrew Lloyd Webber (*Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Cats*, *Evita*) created an adaptation that many have hailed as his best show in years.

Broadway beckons the best and brightest of all ages, and young performers are often standouts on stage. With *School of Rock*, however, the call goes beyond the need for the standard triple threat of extraordinary acting, singing, and dancing talent. Most of these kids are in fact quadruple threats: They sing, act, dance, and play...scratch that—they rock. To get a firsthand account of the demands of playing the unique role of Freddy, the rambunctious but misunderstood drummer, we spoke with thirteen-year-old Dante Melucci, who debuted the role on Broadway, and eleven-year-old Raghav Mehrotra, who took over the part after Melucci's run and who many saw for the first time during this year's televised Tony Awards ceremony.

Melucci's love for music and theater began at an early age. "My dad was always playing the Beatles when I was little, and I always loved music," Dante says. "I saw some plays when I was younger, and it just looked like fun. I'm very imaginative, so pretending to be in someone else's life always interested me."

With the Beatles in heavy rotation in his house, it's no surprise that Melucci cites Ringo Starr as one of his biggest influences. (Also on that list: Dave Grohl, Travis Barker, and Tré Cool.) While his imagination is what sparked his interest in drumming, Dante learned early on that more pragmatic tendencies, like being

prepared, would be critical to a successful life in the limelight. "In most of my life I'm pretty shy," he says, "but when I feel prepared, the nerves go away, because I know what I need to do and how to do it."

Mehrotra began playing drums when he was three and admits that musical theater wasn't always on his radar. But he loved the *School of Rock* movie, and because he was already following a disciplined practice schedule for his drumming, he was well prepared when the opportunity to play Freddy presented itself. "Before the show, I practiced a half hour to an hour a day," Mehrotra says. "I'd start by playing some stuff I already knew and then work on something I wanted to learn. For example, I did a cover of Snarky Puppy's 'What About Me?' I practiced four hours a day for two days to get that down. Little challenges like that keep me motivated to practice, and when I complete those challenges, it makes me feel really good." In addition to Snarky drummer Larnell Lewis, Raghav says he loves Billy Cobham, John Bonham, Buddy Rich, and Steve Smith.

Before *School of Rock*, neither Melucci nor Mehrotra had performed on Broadway. Late in 2015 there was an open call at the Winter Garden Theatre. Melucci landed the part of Freddy and began rehearsing the show's Off-Broadway production at the Gramercy Theatre. Once the cast was finalized, the show moved to Broadway. "The process was pretty stressful," Melucci says, "but we eased into it because we did preview shows for a month before opening night. After two weeks of previews, I wasn't really nervous anymore. The directors told us to make sure we make every show feel like it's our first, so I keep my adrenaline up to give it that energy. But once the curtain goes up, I'm in the scene and not focused on my nerves."

Melucci



Mehrotra's journey took a bit longer. "I think I was number 628 of the 22,000 people that tried out," Raghav says. "I didn't get a callback from that audition, but I guess they'd kept me in mind, because I eventually did get a call. After about seven more callbacks, I got in as a swing for Dante's character, Freddy." Mehrotra echoes Melucci's sentiments about dealing with preshow jitters. "I don't really get nervous anymore, but my first show was very nerve-wracking. Broadway is the top of theater. It's an honor to be here, so there's a lot of pressure to be good."

Listening to these young gentlemen speak, you find an evident passion for playing drums and performing. Even though both admit that the drumming aspect was the least stressful part in regard to what the role demanded, they strove to grow as musicians and performers. Melucci received some sage advice from Mick Fleetwood at the opening-night after-party. "He told me to

remember that drumming is about the space between the beats more than anything else," Dante recalls. "As I got more comfortable on stage, I focused on making sure I always played for the song."

The physical and mental demands of being in a Broadway production are grueling enough for adults. But the most challenging aspect that both young drummers agree upon is the hectic schedule and keeping up with schoolwork. "After I get out of school," Mehrotra says, "I take a train into the city for the show, do the show, get home by midnight, get up for school again.... But I'm managing to keep up all A's, so I'm really happy about that. The family rule is that if your grades drop, you have to stop."

So, do Melucci and Mehrotra also agree that it's worth it? Absolutely. However, they acknowledge that if they were passionate about drumming but didn't want a career in the entertainment industry, it would be less so. "If you *really* want to do it, you're gonna use every free moment you have to work on [your craft]," Melucci explains. "I like the painter Bob

Ross, and he once said, 'Talent is pursued in interest.' Maybe it comes easier for some people, but I think if you have the right mentality, anyone can achieve it."

"Practice is the key to getting everything right," Mehrotra adds. "Then there's a world of opportunity that you're prepared for when it comes to you. But you do have to work hard."

The future is rife with opportunities that the *School of Rock* drummers are eager to explore. Aside from the stage, both have expressed an interest in playing in the pit for a show, as well as doing recording sessions. Melucci got to be part of the official cast album, which was recorded at the famed Avatar Studios in Manhattan with Grammy-winning producer Rob Cavallo. "I really want to continue drumming, maybe be in a band with my friends, and I really want to continue acting," Dante says.

For Mehrotra, the acting bug isn't biting as hard. "I don't mind acting if I'm playing an instrument," he explains, "but I'm not much of an acting person. I play instruments. I'm taking jazz lessons and learning how to read and write music, so if in the future I wind up in a studio and I'm presented with sheet music, I can do it. The only con doing the show is that our only off day is Thursday, so that's the only day I get to practice. If I don't keep practicing, my drumming will go down the drain. If I just keep playing the material I already know over and over again, I don't get to expand on my skills."

Melucci and Mehrotra may have differing personalities and priorities, but their level of passion for the performing arts is very much the same. It will be fascinating to watch how their careers progress, and what we might someday learn from their experiences. One takeaway from their stories is already clear, however: A combination of hard work and unrestrained creativity makes for an excellent start to an exciting journey.

Mehrotra





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# Fundamental Fills

## Part 4: Triplets With a Right-Hand Lead

by Donny Gruendler

During the 1970s and '80s, session greats Bernard Purdie, Steve Gadd, and others resurrected and embellished on the right-hand-lead triplet fills that were made famous by jazz greats like Jo Jones, Louie Bellson, and Sonny Payne. Some of today's top drummers—Steve Smith, Keith Carlock, and Stanton Moore, for instance—continue the tradition of these fundamental yet sophisticated fills.

This lesson focuses on right-hand-lead fills using 8th-note triplets. The following exercises start on the snare and toms before moving to the bass drum and cymbals. These fragments should also open many creative doors to additional fill ideas.

To make the most of the following exercises, first become comfortable playing downbeat accents and upbeat accents, and with connecting a downbeat accent to an upbeat accent. Let's look at each in detail.

### Downbeats

1

We'll play the accented downbeats with the right hand while filling in the last two unaccented partials with the left hand.

2

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

### Upbeats

3

Now we'll play accented upbeats with the right hand while filling in the first two unaccented partials with the left hand.

4

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

### Connecting a Downbeat to an Upbeat

Now we'll connect a downbeat, such as beat 1 of Example 5, to an upbeat (the "&" of 2).

5



Play the first beat of this phrase as single strokes, and then combine the previous stickings.

6

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

Let's work through a series of 8th-note right-hand-lead fill fragments. Here are our one-measure ideas.

7

### Fill Creation

Here's a demonstration of how to apply the previous sticking patterns to each one-measure fill fragment. We'll use the first measure from Exercise 7.

8

Set your metronome to 100 bpm with an 8th-note-triplet subdivision, play right-hand rimshots for each accent, and fill in the unaccented triplet partials with the left hand. To maintain a steady pulse, play quarter notes on the bass drum, and play the hi-hat on beats 2 and 4 with the foot. All together, the exercise is played like this:

9

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

Once Exercise 9 is comfortable, orchestrate the accents around the toms. Here's one possibility.

10

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

Finally, try moving the snare or tom accents to the bass drum and cymbals. The left hand will continue filling in the unaccented partials. Continue to play beats 2 and 4 with your hi-hat foot. Here's an example.

11

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

Let's apply this method to another fill fragment. In this instance, we'll use the fourth measure of Exercise 7.

12

Again, play right-hand rimshots for each of the accents, and fill in the unaccented notes with the left hand. Continue to play quarter notes with the bass drum and beats 2 and 4 with your hi-hat foot. All together, the exercise is played like this.

13

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

Once the previous steps are comfortable, experiment with orchestration by moving the accents around the toms. Here's an example.

14

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

Try replacing the snare and tom accents with a bass drum and cymbal voicing while playing the unaccented notes with the left hand on the snare. Continue playing beats 2 and 4 with your hi-hat foot. Repeat this process with each fill fragment.

15

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

### Fill Practice

Once you're comfortable with these concepts, pick any triplet-based groove, such as a shuffle, half-time shuffle, or traditional

swing beat, and practice your fills in the context of a four-bar phrase.

16

Fill —

Here's an example using the fourth measure of Exercise 7 with accents on the toms.

17

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

Try orchestrating the accents on the bass drum and cymbals. Repeat the process with each fill fragment from Exercise 7.

18

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

**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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# Swiss Rudiments

## Basel Drumming, Part 2

by Claus Essler



### MUSIC KEY

Flam

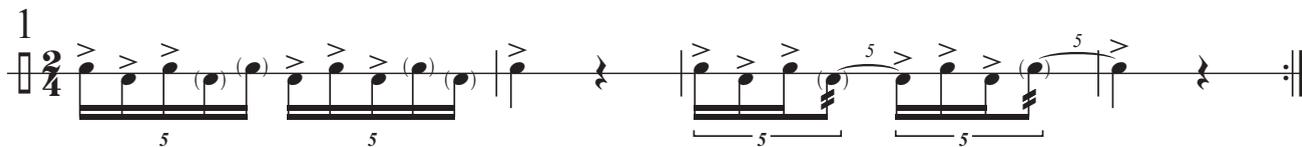
R.H. 

L.H. 

This month we'll continue exploring Swiss rudimental drumming with some additional patterns and combinations. We'll also cover their interpretation to help develop the style's authentic phrasing. Once again, we'll use a style of notation developed by late educator Dr. Fritz Berger, as illustrated in this lesson's key.

Last month we worked with a rudiment called the complete final stroke of 7. In Exercise 1, we'll develop a reversed version of the final stroke of 7. Using a quintuplet subdivision helps to structure things rhythmically. The authentic phrasing would be difficult to achieve if we only thought in terms of a 16th-note subdivision. The first and second bars form the figure's basic rhythmic structure. In the third bar, the fourth and fifth partials of the quintuplet are doubled to form a roll.

1



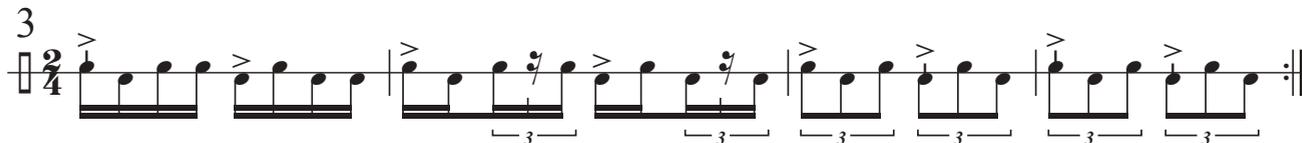
Exercise 2 is a rather typical combination that uses final strokes of 7 and the doublé while adding a triplet pattern to the end of the phrase. The second line of this exercise demonstrates how these figures should be phrased, and dynamic markings apply to both phrases.

2



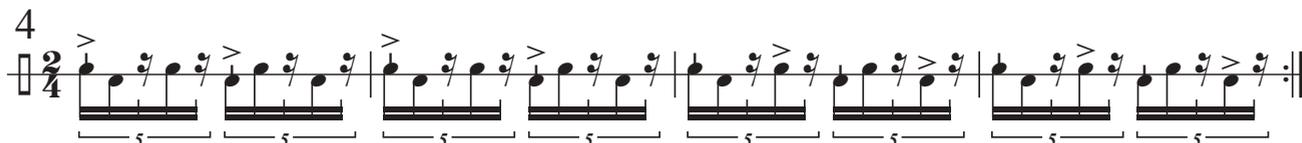
Exercise 3 combines a single paradiddle ("mill stroke" as the Swiss say) and the flam accent ("flammed triplet" in Swiss nomenclature). Notice that the sticking in this exercise does not change—only the distances between the notes do. This concept is attributed to Jim Chapin's idea of collapsed rudiments, as discussed last month.

3



Exercise 4 builds upon the previous example by adding an accent variation and is notated in more of an authentic stylistic phrasing.

4



Exercise 5 combines flammed triplets, doublés, flammed five-stroke rolls, and the final strokes of 7. Once again, the second line of notation demonstrates this exercise's phrasing.

Exercise 6 consists of two staves in 2/4 time. The top staff begins with a 5-measure phrase marked with a fermata. The first three measures contain triplets of eighth notes, each marked with *fp* and an accent (>). The final two measures contain quintuplets of eighth notes, marked with *f* and an accent (>). The bottom staff mirrors the top staff's structure but uses quintuplet subdivisions for the eighth notes in all measures.

Exercise 6 introduces a new pattern. The first and third measures feature the “Maermeli” stroke, as well as elements that we’ve already covered. Again, the quintuplet subdivision in the second line of this example helps to develop the phrasing.

Exercise 7 consists of two staves in 2/4 time. The top staff begins with a 6-measure phrase marked with a fermata. The first two measures contain triplets of eighth notes, marked with *p* and *f* respectively. The next two measures contain triplets of eighth notes, marked with *p* and *f* respectively. The final two measures contain triplets of eighth notes, marked with *fp* and *f* respectively. The bottom staff mirrors the top staff's structure but uses quintuplet subdivisions for the eighth notes in all measures.

Exercise 7 introduces a typical “Tagwacht” combination that consists of the single reveille stroke (known as a double drag tap in the U.S.), a nine-stroke roll, and a reversed version of the single reveille stroke. Note the similarities between the reversed single reveille stroke and the Maermeli stroke—only one note is missing between the two. A Swiss “Tagwacht” (a piece to wake up people) always includes these elements, and we’ll hear more about that kind of composition next month.

Exercise 8 consists of two staves. The top staff is in 6/8 time and features a 9-measure phrase marked with a fermata. The first three measures contain eighth notes, marked with *f*. The next three measures contain eighth notes, marked with *p*. The final three measures contain eighth notes, marked with *f*. The bottom staff is in 2/4 time and features quintuplet subdivisions for the eighth notes in all measures, marked with *f* and *p* respectively.

For more on the history and background of European rudimental drumming, check out the forthcoming international version of my latest book, *Camp Duty Update*. If you have any questions, feel free to email them to [iq@moderndrummer.com](mailto:iq@moderndrummer.com).

Claus Hessler is an active clinician in Europe, Asia, and the United States. For more, visit [claushessler.com](http://claushessler.com).

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



# Groove Construction

## Part 7: Broken 16ths

by Jost Nickel

In this lesson we'll use a three-rule system to create grooves with 16th notes that are broken up between the hi-hat and snare. Generally I feel that the two cornerstones of any groove are the snare accents and bass drum figures. Often when playing with others, the bass player interacts with the kick pattern, and the guitar sometimes accents beats 2 and 4 with the snare.

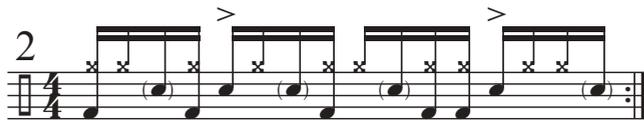
The hi-hat pattern and ghost notes tend to characterize a groove's underlying feel. If you start with a solid foundation in the snare and bass drum, you can incorporate interesting ghost notes and hi-hat figures around it. For this lesson, we'll build grooves off of the following bass drum and snare pattern.



The goal is to embellish the main pattern by breaking up 16th notes between the hi-hat and ghost notes on the snare. We'll do this by starting with three simple rules:

1. The right hand plays either singles or double strokes.
2. The left hand plays singles.
3. Play the hi-hat before and after each snare accent.

The application of these rules can produce a variety of results. Here are a few possibilities.



Breaking rules in music has often led to new developments. We'll experiment with our second rule and add some double strokes with the left hand on the snare. Adding two ghost notes in a row to your grooves can create a nice variation. Exercises 6 and 7 demonstrate this concept.



We've previously been playing the hi-hat before and after each snare accent because replacing these notes with ghost strokes can be technically demanding. Now we'll break our third rule and add ghost notes in these positions.



All of the patterns in this lesson use the same skeleton groove. If you'd like to create more grooves with broken 16th notes, choose a starting phrase from the following exercises and continue as previously described.

I'm aware that groove creation is highly dependent on individual taste. Don't be put off by the fact that there are so many possibilities. The aim is to find one great-sounding groove without getting lost among all the possible options.

While exploring these concepts, it's imperative that you adhere to the three rules for a long enough period of time to discover patterns that you enjoy playing. You should have the feeling that you're still creating exciting grooves without becoming bored. After that, feel free to break the rules.

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

**Jost Nickel** is a top session and touring drummer in Germany, as well as an international clinician endorsing Sonor, Meinl, Aquarian, Vic Firth, and Beyerdynamic.

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



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# Interleaving

## An Alternative Approach to Practice

by Dan Macy

A typical practice session is often laid out in a format that sports psychologists call “block learning,” where you repeat the same skill over and over for a predetermined amount of time. If you’re practicing four different skills (A, B, C, and D) for, say, an hour, a block schedule would look like this: AAABBBCCCCDDD. That could translate to fifteen minutes spent shedding rudiments, then left-hand lead, then double bass, and finally polyrhythms.

Research has shown that there’s a more effective way of practicing, called interleaving. A practice session using the interleaving technique would resemble this: ADCBDABCDACB. Instead of working on one particular skill for an extended period of time, you jump back and forth between skills.

Why is interleaving more productive? This approach teaches you (or your students) to think on your feet and prepare for the unexpected. There are bound to be surprises during a gig. A cymbal can come loose, a head can break, or the monitor can stop working. What do you do? Interleaving trains the brain to be flexible and perform well on the fly. Practicing this way combines building basic skills with the added element of surprise, which makes us better prepared for real-life playing situations. Numerous studies in a variety of contexts have shown that, in the long run, practicing in an interleaved fashion leads to better performances than practicing the same skills in larger blocks does.

Now let’s take a look at how you can put interleaving into practice. Here’s a classic exercise that focuses on learning different subdivisions of the quarter note.

Exercise 1: A sequence of subdivisions on a single staff in 4/4 time. The subdivisions are: 1 (quarter note), 3 (quarter note triplet), 5 (quarter note quintuplet), 6 (quarter note sextuplet), 7 (quarter note septuplet), 7 (quarter note septuplet), 6 (quarter note sextuplet), 5 (quarter note quintuplet), and 3 (quarter note triplet). The sequence ends with a double bar line and a fermata.

To practice that exercise in an interleaved fashion, mix up the subdivisions so that they’re in a random order and are never played twice in a row. (If it’s too complicated to play each subdivision only once at first, try playing two beats of each.)

Exercise 2: A sequence of subdivisions on a single staff in 4/4 time. The subdivisions are: 2 (quarter note pair), 3 (quarter note triplet), 5 (quarter note quintuplet), 6 (quarter note sextuplet), 6 (quarter note sextuplet), 3 (quarter note triplet), 3 (quarter note triplet), 5 (quarter note quintuplet), 6 (quarter note sextuplet), 6 (quarter note sextuplet), 7 (quarter note septuplet), 6 (quarter note sextuplet), 3 (quarter note triplet), 3 (quarter note triplet), 6 (quarter note sextuplet), 3 (quarter note triplet), and 6 (quarter note sextuplet). The sequence ends with a double bar line and a fermata.

Another way to practice interleaving is to switch between several unrelated exercises every minute. You could have your students work on doubles for a minute, and then switch to a new fill. Then they could try playing doubles around the kit, followed by a minute of a samba groove. After that, switch to a groove using left-hand lead. Then work on paradiddles. Next, work on the fill a little longer. Follow that with a minute of a groove that’s already mastered, and finish up the session with more paradiddles. The key is to not spend too much time on each skill. Jump around.

As you’re incorporating this concept of interleaving into your practicing and teaching, make sure to mix in new and challenging material with old and familiar ideas. This process may feel haphazard and a bit out of control at first, but that’s the point. The goal is to learn to switch back and forth between various challenges in order to train your body to handle anything that could arise on the gig. Good luck!



# Jazz Comping With Quarter-Note Triplets

## Swinging an Offbeat Figure

by John Xepoleas

In this lesson we'll **liven up our jazz comping** with offbeat quarter-note triplets. We'll incorporate this grouping into a swing feel, apply it to four- and eight-bar phrases, and move it around the drumset.

Let's start by getting a good feel for the first note of an offbeat quarter-note triplet, which lands on the second partial of the 8th-note triplets on beats 1 and 3.

Now we'll complete the figure by adding the first and third triplet partials of beats 2 and 4.

If you find it difficult to play this comping rhythm along with the jazz ride pattern, try starting with quarter notes on the cymbal.

Once you're comfortable, alternate between two bars of the pattern and two bars of a swing feel.

Now we'll play the quarter-note triplet rhythm during the last two bars of an eight-bar phrase. Notice that the rhythm creates excitement and anticipation as it leads to the end of the phrase.

Next we'll practice moving this figure around the drums. In Exercise 6, the left hand starts on the snare and then moves clockwise to the rack and floor toms.

For this example we'll create an interesting effect by moving the left hand between the toms.

Now we'll move the left hand between the snare and tom.

Finally, let's apply this concept to a four-bar phrase.

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

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



# A New Realm of Groove

## Exploring Feel With Odd Subdivisions

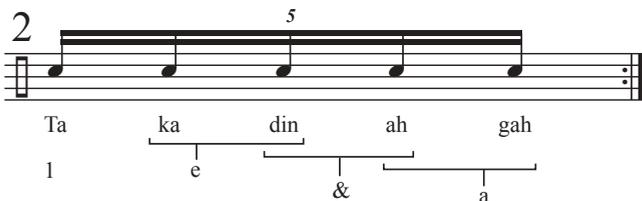
by Aaron Edgar

**It might initially seem strange** using the term “groove” in conversations about patterns based in odd subdivisions. But examples of these phrases being used in popular music are abundant. A perfect song to demonstrate this concept is Snoop Dogg’s track “Protocol,” from *More Malice*, which is clearly phrased in septuplets.

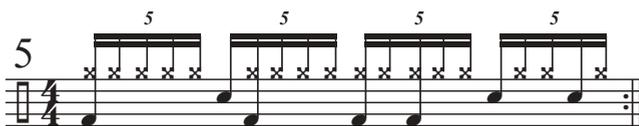
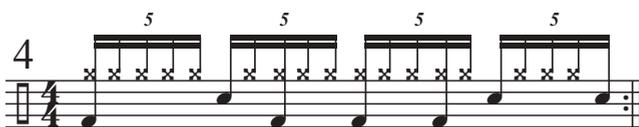


The septuplet note placement in the groove in “Protocol” creates some interesting aspects within the feel. Using this subdivision allows the final kick in each beat to be placed slightly later in the measure than if you were using 16th-note triplets. Also, the hi-hat placement falls roughly on the first three 16th notes of the beat, but the notes are slightly skewed, which creates a lazy, swung bounce with a unique twist.

To create septuplet ideas from scratch, start by replicating the rhythmic structure of more ordinary grooves. We’ll use a simple set of rules to assign a 16th-note subdivision to quintuplet partials, and we’ll count them using an Indian system that assigns the syllables “ta, ka, din, ah, gah” to each of the five partials in the quintuplet. The downbeat remains the same, so the first note of each quintuplet, or “ta,” will represent our quarter note. The “e” of a regular 16th-note subdivision can be represented by either the second or third quintuplet partials (“ka” and “din”). The “&” can be represented by the third and fourth quintuplet notes (“din” and “ah”). And finally, the “a” can be represented by the last two quintuplet notes (“ah” and “gah”).



We’ll start by using full quintuplets on the hi-hats to replicate the 16th-note hi-hat groove shown in Exercise 3. In Exercise 4, we change the hi-hat pattern to quintuplets and use a later placement for each of the original offbeat 16th notes—the “e” becomes the third quintuplet partial (“din”), the “&” becomes the fourth quintuplet partial (“ah”), and the “a” becomes the fifth quintuplet partial (“gah”). Exercise 5 demonstrates an alternate variation with earlier bass drum and snare placements.



In Exercise 6, the bass drum falls on every third 16th note. To replicate this feel in quintuplets, we’ll play every fourth note on the bass drum until beat 4, as noted in Exercise 7.



In Exercises 8 and 9, we have a three-note pattern—a bass drum note followed by two hi-hat notes—that’s applied within a 16th and quintuplet subdivision. Keeping a strong backbeat on beats 2 and 4 helps anchor the groove. In Exercise 8, there are four bass drum notes between beats 1 and 4, and in Exercise 9 there are five bass drum notes within the same time frame.



# Staying Current

## 3 Keys to Keeping Relevant Without Losing Your Identity

by Russ Miller

Everybody faces the challenge of staying current. It happens in just about everything in life. The music business in particular always seems to be looking for the next new thing, which can be a problem because it ignores the fact that truly great music should stand the test of time. I believe that some of today's most popular artists won't even have one song that will still be played ten years from now. Most cover bands play songs from twenty or more years ago, which is partly due to the fact that much of today's pop music is created on machines by non-musicians, and as a result those songs don't translate very well to a live-band setting. I also feel that many of these songs aren't crafted with much depth.

The pressure to stay current definitely applies to drummers, especially those who want to participate in the commercial music business. The conversation here

focuses on how to stay relevant within your personal playing.

For years I would see someone play something cool on the drums and think, *I have to learn to do that*. In some cases it was helpful to do so, but as I matured I realized that I was largely chasing what other people were doing instead of focusing on what *I* was going to do.

There's an epidemic of copycat drumming going on right now. Many players use the exact same licks, sounds, and setups. I think the confusion lies in thinking that staying current means imitating others. To the contrary, staying relevant means constantly evolving. So how are *you* going to evolve? Let's take a look at some possible ways.

### ■ ve Many Influences

First let's talk about being influenced by a larger selection of drummers, including

some who could be younger than you. This may be hard for you, as it is for me. We often develop an unhealthy ego as we age. I have a quote in my notebook from the great jazz drummer Tony Williams: "Don't confuse experience with mastery." Doing something for a long time doesn't make it perfect. Be open-minded when you listen to a younger player. You might spot a few flaws in his or her playing, but also some things that are really happening.

For instance, I see a lot of younger jazz musicians playing in a style that I don't really dig. I grew up playing time in the style of Shelly Manne and Art Blakey, so when I hear younger drummers playing more freely, it's hard for me to grasp. But I need to set aside what I think is wrong with that approach and appreciate the artistry involved. Then I try to sit down and work on these concepts to combine them with

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"I'm not trying to stay in the same place, and I'm not trying to compete with what's currently in fashion. That would be dishonest. But, at the same time, I'm different, and the music reflects that to some degree."

—Eddie Money (recording artist)

my more old-school approach, in order to create my own version of the current style.

### Search Out New Ideas

Actively searching for new ideas is a crucial component to staying on top. There comes a point in your life as a musician when your extensive experience puts a sizeable distance between you and the newest generation of players. Many big band musicians felt disconnected with bebop, and a lot of modern jazz musicians looked down on early rock 'n' roll. I find it interesting that after our favorite period of music has ended, many of us feel that the next one seems worse.

If you're a doctor, you have to constantly research new techniques and medications. If you're a lawyer, you're always keeping

up to date with new case precedents. We musicians should be just as serious about our jobs. That means we need to always be listening, studying, and applying new ideas.

### Stay on Top of Technology

I sometimes see players who are using the exact setups they've been using for thirty years. Does that mean there hasn't been a technological advancement in gear that they see valuable? Or are they just too stubborn to try anything new? I've been heavily involved in gear design over the years, so I know that companies are constantly innovating the instrument. You might dig vintage tones, but there might be some new gear whose sound you'd be perfectly happy with, without having to deal with dated, flimsy hardware.

Staying on top of electronic percussion is key as well. Electronics are a huge part of contemporary music making. Make sure you have some electronic gear that can be customized to what you do musically. And make sure your skills with that gear are at a point where you can manipulate it quickly and effectively.

Good luck finding your own ways to keep current without abandoning the things that make you unique. It's an ever-evolving process.



**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 [russtmiller.com](http://russtmiller.com).



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# John Colpitts on Carmine Appice

Rock 'n' roll, especially in the pre-corporate '60s, has always attracted some larger-than-life personalities. And in the drum world they don't get much bigger than Vanilla Fudge's mustachioed slugger, Carmine Appice, who's squeezed more fun and adventure out of gigs with Jeff Beck, Rod Stewart, and others than most of us could dream up in a lifetime.

After finding himself on an unusual gig with the *MD* Hall of Famer, John Colpitts—a prolific player whose rhythmic voice permeates many corners of the indie/art-rock world—found himself thinking long and hard about the at-times controversial musician, and he arrived at some unexpected conclusions.

My appreciation of Carmine Appice didn't come easily. Vanilla Fudge sounded robustly melodramatic, even while their instrumental prowess was undeniable. I fell prey to the fallacy of naturalism; I sought an ill-defined authenticity in my musicians, and anything that carried a scent of ginned-up showbiz and canned glamour was discarded immediately. Vanilla Fudge sounded like a repackaged version of psychedelia to my ears. It wasn't made by guys in a deranged LSD cult like 13th Floor Elevators. It wasn't Jimi Hendrix or the Beatles. The Fudge didn't even write their own hits!

In the late '80s my relationship to Carmine Appice was muted. I always lived in rural areas, so I never caught wind of a clinic. His drumming books were on the fringes of my consciousness, but I wasn't aware of Appice's wider influence. I certainly didn't realize that if I was attempting to sound like Bonham, I was actually approximating sounds from the Appice palette.

Cut to a few years later. I'm living in Brooklyn and trying to carve out a niche for myself as a performer. My band Oneida is grinding it out in the tiny clubs I still frequent. Experimental pioneers are my touchstones. Drummers like Devo's Alan Myers, Pere Ubu's Scott Krauss, and Television's Billy Ficca share space with my adoration of Keith Moon, John Bonham, Tony Williams, and Billy Cobham. Some of us remember that it was hard to see footage of vintage live performances in the late '90s, because it was either unavailable or held by a few archivists. But on our tours Oneida would sometimes stumble upon a cache of live rock videos at the homes of local bands. Wolf Eyes' Aaron Dilloway showed us a 1969 Alice Cooper Band performance; Matt Sweeney pointed to Dr.

Hook's bizarre drunken transcendence on Musikladen.

We talk a lot about technique and equipment in the pages of *Modern Drummer*, because it's important and gratifying. But it's hard to quantify spirit. It's tough to explain why musicians with self-taught technique still transport millions of people. Spirit may be an analogue to what Tom Wolfe called "the right stuff" when he tried to explain certain test pilots' ability to survive one of the world's most dangerous

**"I watched for the first few moments with a dismissive laugh, but quickly my laughter turned into awe. The performance is a master class in what it means to rock."**

jobs. There are some really tremendous technicians out there who just do not communicate, in poet Dylan Thomas's words, "the force that through the green fuse drives the flower." So I was still trying to sort all that out when I discovered the legendary Vanilla Fudge performance of "You Keep Me Hanging On" from The Ed Sullivan Show in 1968.

I had no context or expectation before I saw the clip. The camera starts with a wide angle on the band, dressed in the late-'60s sartorial puff-pastry style that's perfectly accompanied by the three giant backlit screens of Joshua Light Show-esque pulsating psychedelic chaos. Organist Mark Stein starts a glacial, descending Hammond organ phrase. The band looks

awkward yet self-possessed. A low-angle shot on guitarist Vince Martell makes him look dwarfed by the Marshall stacks behind him, his hair an immobile helmet perched atop a florid map of facial hair. Bassist Tim Bogert seems like a professor dressed in hippie clothes, his face a rictus of pure agony during his backing vocals, his collar two talons of orange drooping down the front of his shirt. Stein wears a large white handkerchief around his neck and flails his hands widely with a giant, inappropriate (to the lyrics) smile plastered on his face. Appice might not look any less silly than the rest of the band, but he wears his red velvet jacket and untied pink handkerchief with aplomb.

The spectacle is dated, yet it's undeniably a performance for the ages. It's a rare document of a band truly embodying showbiz clichés with enough irrational commitment that they "shoot the moon" and end up landing in a place of sublimity. I watched this document for the first few moments with a dismissive laugh, but quickly this laughter turned into awe. This performance is a master class in what it means to rock.

Rock in this case is an untamed energy. It's strange; it's brutal and somewhat ham-fisted. But like the subtle ballet of a well-oiled NFL offense, there's a grace and inevitability to the performance. It points toward virility in a demonstratively abstract way. The band is singing about the agony of a confused relationship, but the members are also clearly confused. Stein's smiles and Martell's un-germane "Come on, sock it to me now!" clash with the song's content. More than anything else, this performance is a celebration of torture, or a paean to masochism. They flip the song on its head and make it absurd. But it's Appice's cymbal grabs, stick twirls, and dramatic delivery that lead the charge. I may be a drummer, but this is Appice's band, and his moment.

In Appice's new memoir, *Stick It!*, he talks about having a panic attack when the elevator operator to the Sullivan studio theater offhandedly tells him that 50 million people will be tuning into the performance. But if there's ever a moment where a band rises to a critical occasion,

it's here. Appice writes that following this performance, Vanilla Fudge's already successful debut album sells another 250,000 copies within the week. Appice, at the peak of his fame, avails himself of every willing and damaged groupie that crosses his path. To be honest, even in the context of the gag-inducing *The Dirt* or *Walk This Way*, the book is shocking and often descends into a depraved moral vacuum. It's hedonism at its darkest and most abject. We're asked to witness that now-infamous mud shark incident with Led Zeppelin at Seattle's Edgewater Hotel to an atomic degree.

As I plowed through the stories in *Stick It!* I began to wonder why this was the portrait that Appice wanted to share with us. If you wanted to find wisdom behind this master of the drums, you'd be disappointed. But you might find exactly what you'd expect from a rock demigod in a Fu Manchu mustache who cavorted on tour in the '80s with Rod Stewart in a loosely organized rabble of band and crew called the Sex Police.

There is no moral currency in playing the drums well; however, a high level of performance represents a primal energy, which is exciting, which suggests the impulse to life and, of course, sexuality. There are many ways this attraction can be exploited, and throughout the course of *Stick It!* we're shown a guy who exploited his attraction to its bitter end. Aspiring technicians and musical types might not find everything they're looking for in this book, but then again, there's that intangible Appice spirit, which is difficult to extract from a book, and which illuminates the Fudge, Cactus, and all the great bands and performances the drummer has driven over the course of his amazing career.

But I'd like to finish the thread in what I hope is understood to be a celebration of Appice and his musical spirit. Last year I spent a number of weeks at Rikers Island, teaching percussion to inmates with Amy Garapic, Carson Moody, and Matt Evans, of the percussion trio TIGUE, for Make Music New York. Rikers is just as horrifying and blandly institutional as you might imagine. It's an alien and destructive place with a chaotic energy that radiates just beneath the surface of every interaction. The Make Music New York teachers used congas and djembes, generously donated by Remo, and during our weekly classes with a handful of women inmates, tried to prepare them for an in-house performance that would launch the Make Music New York Festival. Our performance would be closed to the public and exclusive to an audience of female inmates. As the show date approached, we

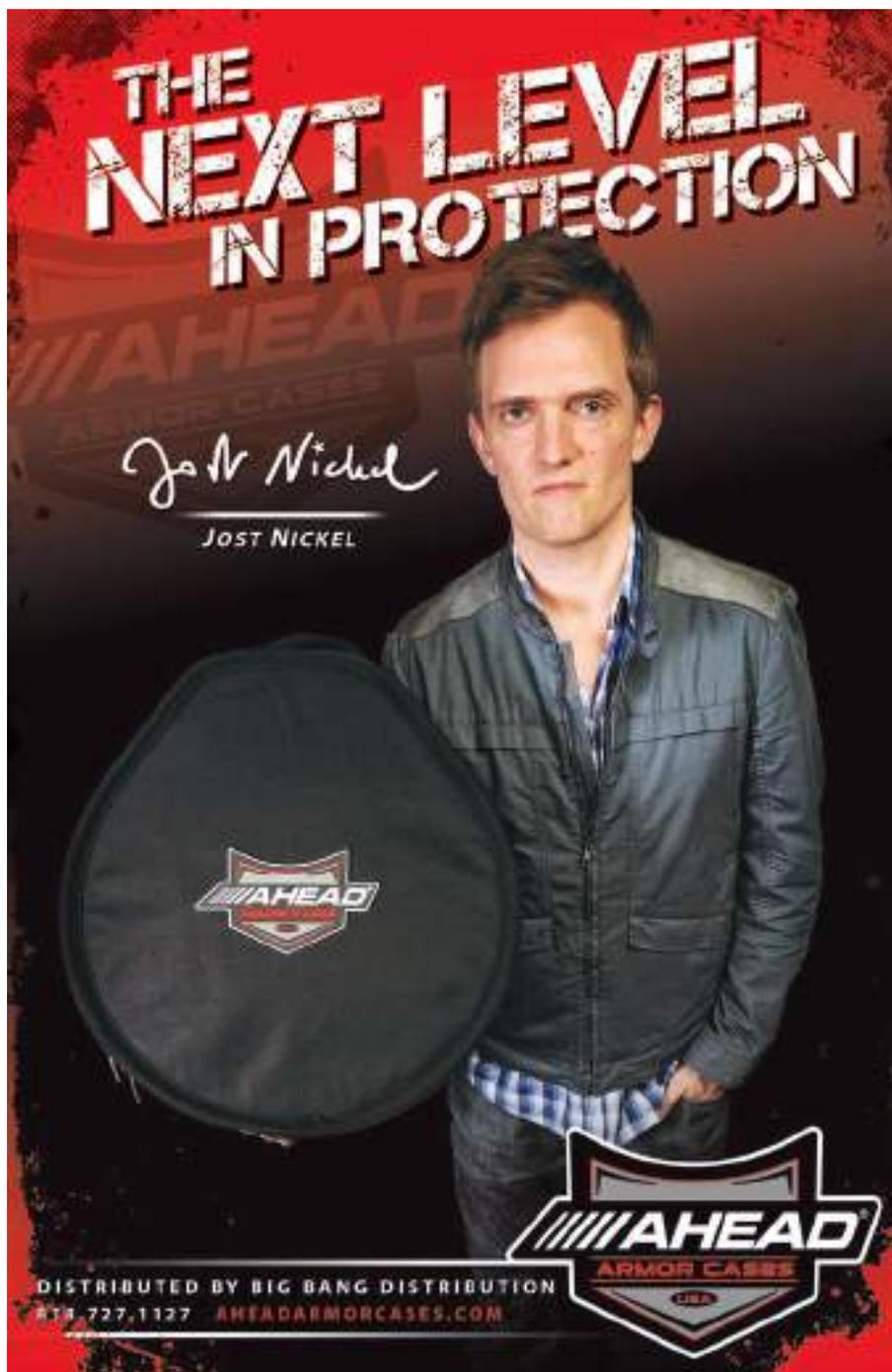
were told there was a small chance that Carmine Appice would be joining us. We taught the drummers his unreleased piece "Urban Jungle" and worked hard on the rhythms and on soloing concepts.

When the day finally came and Carmine stood in front of women who had no sense of his legacy, his charisma hit the room like a wave. He leapt to his feet, started clapping out the groove, and within seconds had a roomful of inmates stomping and singing along.

It was a revelation. I was witnessing a

performer who could transform a crowd by just clapping. As a member of the djembe corps behind him, I tried to elevate my performance to attend to his magnetism. Though it's an overused cliché, he transported us. We were not on Rikers Island. We were witnessing a great performer, but we were also witnessing ourselves.

Rikers is a desolate and forgotten place where warmth and human spirit are in short supply. Appice opened the walls and brought some love into the place. This is his legacy.



# Q Drums Gentleman's Series Snare

by Nate Bauman

This month we sat down with Jeremy Berman, a highly respected drum tech and renowned builder and the founder of the Los Angeles-based manufacturer Q Drums, to get a little background on his career. We also checked out his latest offering, the Gentleman's Series copper snare.

Berman has been making drums since the '90s, and his résumé as a drum tech includes Nine Inch Nails, Muse, Queens of the Stone Age, Eagles of Death Metal, Jimmy Eat World, Katy Perry, Gwen Stefani, Slipknot, and Norah Jones. Berman got his start in the industry working at Guitar Center in Orange County. "I started playing drums late," he says, "when I was around sixteen. But the first time I sat at a kit, I was hooked. I eventually found myself working at GC, which was where I met John Machado. He was vice president of Orange County Drums and Percussion at that time. Every time he came in, I'd ask if they had any openings.

"Then I was in a serious car accident, and it changed my whole perspective on things. John came in after my accident, and I put all of my cards out there. I told him I wasn't a salesman and didn't want to sell gear anymore. I wanted to learn how to make drums. I had a woodworking background, so he finally gave me a shot. For the first year and a half, I was sanding shells day in and day out, and I loved every minute of it. Things just blossomed from there.

"It was a small shop and there were only a handful of employees, so John let me run with it," Berman continues. "Scrap wood was fair game, so I went through a phase of making some silly stuff. How deep can I make a bass drum? How many materials can I use in one drum? I thought some of these crazy ideas would sound good, but they didn't." [laughs]

After spending a few years refining his skills, Berman eventually began to spearhead his own projects at OCDP. In 2004, OCDP artist and Nine Inch Nails drummer Jerome Dillon called Machado looking for someone to tune a kit that Berman had built, because it was the first time NIN leader Trent Reznor was using acoustic drums on a record (the *With Teeth* album). John recommended Jeremy for the sessions, and when the band geared up for a world tour to support the album, Jeremy was asked to join them as the full-time drum technician.

In 2009, Orange County Drums and Percussion closed its custom shop, which meant that Berman was without a place to build drums when he was home between tours. After securing a workspace



and procuring some proper tools, he began building drums for fun. During this time, Jeremy was hired to tech for Katy Perry's drummer, Adam Marcello. Perry's team requested a second kit in addition to Marcello's Shine acrylic set, so Berman volunteered to build it. That kit was used on the majority of the tour, and Q Drum Company was born.

One of Berman's latest creations is the Gentleman's Series copper snare drum. Inspired by Ludwig's classic Black Beauty model, the Gentleman's Series snare differs in that it's 7x14 rather than 6.5x14, is made from seamless copper instead of brass, and has eight lugs, not ten. It's a modern spin on a classic design. And because it's made from copper, it produces a slightly darker sound. The tuning range is exceptional, and it sits very well in the mix no matter what genre is being played.

The Gentleman's copper snare comes with hand-filed snare beds that have been pressed into the seamless shell. The drum is outfitted with standard 2.3mm triple-flange hoops, twenty-five-strand brass wires, Remo heads, and a Trick throw-off. The shell is left without a clear coat or stain finish.

Muse's Dominic Howard and Nine Inch Nails' most recent drummer, Ilan Rubin, have used this snare in the studio and on tour. Rubin tells *Modern Drummer*, "In the world of custom drums, where obnoxious finishes and odd drum construction often come first, Q Drums focuses on tonal quality. While pushing construction techniques and respecting what was done right in the past, all my needs—and then some—are met." For more on Q Drums, go to [qdrumco.com](http://qdrumco.com).



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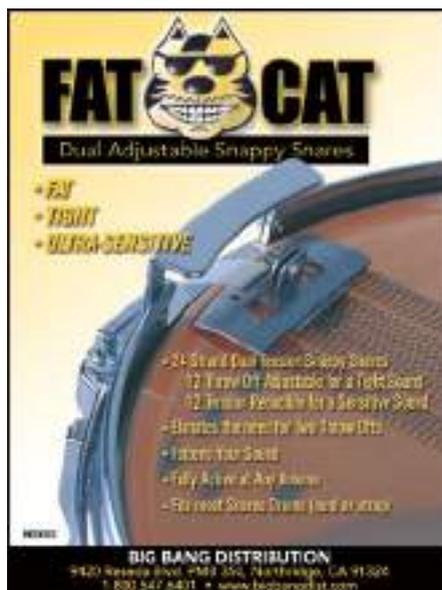
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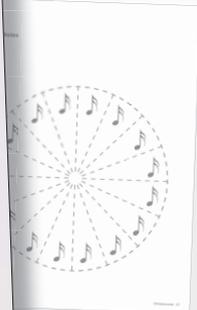
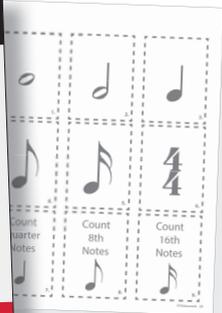
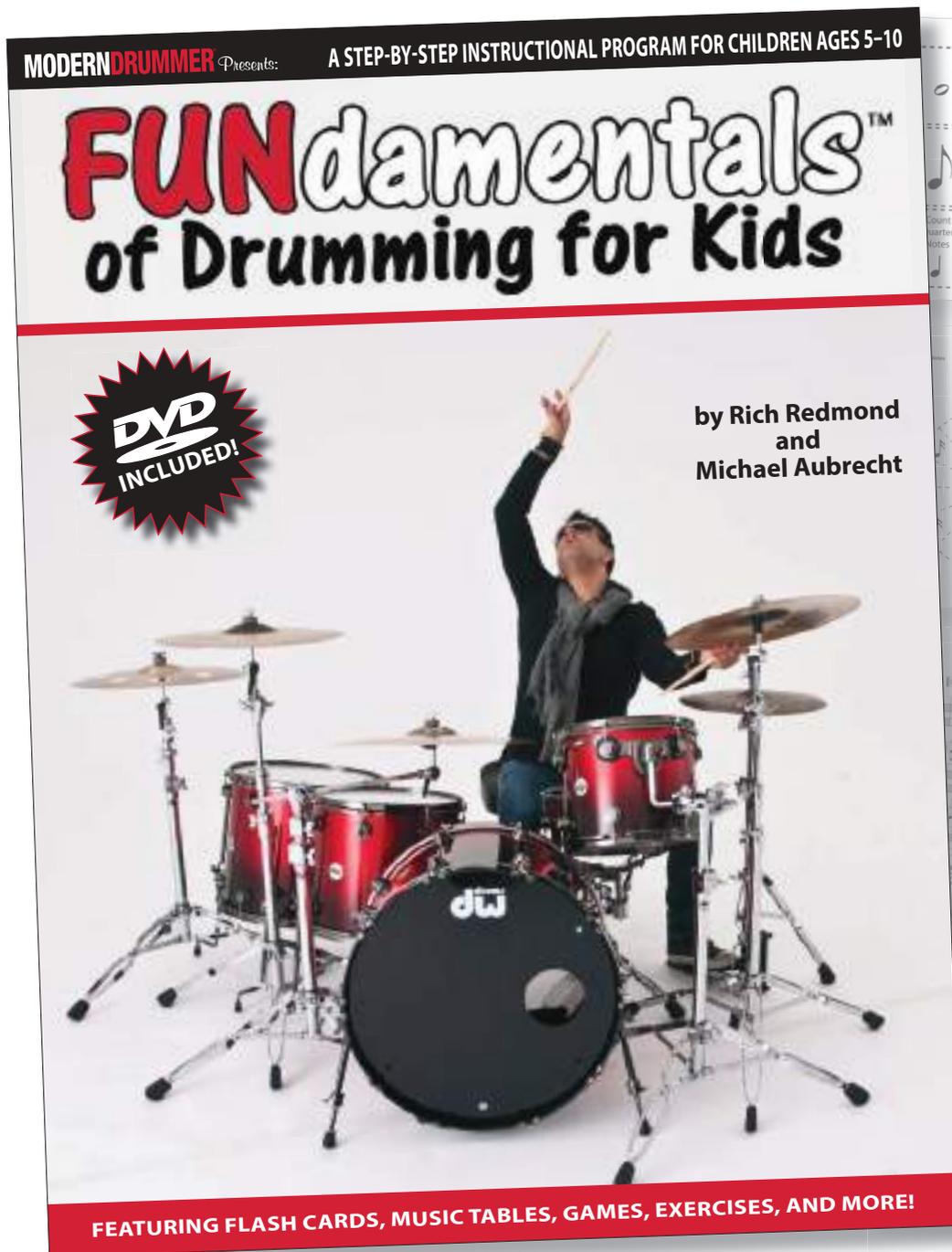
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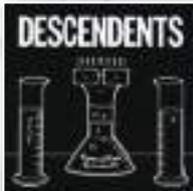
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# CRITIQUE

## RECORDINGS

### **Descendents** *Hypercaffium Spazzinate*

**Bespectacled singer and mascot Milo Aukerman may have gone to college, but it's bandleader Bill Stevenson who's been taking punk drummers to school for nearly four decades.**



Bill Stevenson turned fifty-three this year. Over the last few years, the high-mileage engine that has powered Descendents, ALL, and Black Flag survived not one but two life-threatening conditions: a bratwurst-size pulmonary aneurism and a baseball-size brain tumor. But those worried that the

godfather of SoCal pop punk may be breaking down—or worse yet, slowing down—need not fret. Descendents' focused and energetic seventh studio album finds its hulking drummer, like a fine-aged Sumatra, only getting stronger over time.

Stevenson's classic devices—blistering surf beats and protracted single-stroke snare rolls—are deployed liberally, most notably on the barnburners "Testosterone" and "Fighting Myself." The drummer feasts on the meaty mid-tempo standouts "Shameless Halo" and "On Paper," peppering each with aggressively bodacious fills. Long lauded for having the fastest right hand in the land, Stevenson unfurls a slick inverse lick throughout *Hypercaffium*: rapid-fire left-hand 8ths on the snare paired with crashing right-hand quarters (see the bombastic album opener "Feel This"). "Human Being" shows that the self-dubbed Drum Ogre can still eat up odd time, while similar sub-sixty-second tracks like "We Got Defeat" and "No Fat Burger" push the bpm well past the red line.

But, as always, it's Stevenson's gift for earnest songwriting that truly defines this Descendents record. The brutally personal tracks "Without Love" and "Spineless and Scarlet Red," as well as the triumphant closer "Beyond the Music"—a tender paean to his bandmates—induce goose bumps with their raw emotion, while their author's playing has never sounded more urgent and on point. (Epitaph) **David Jarnstrom**

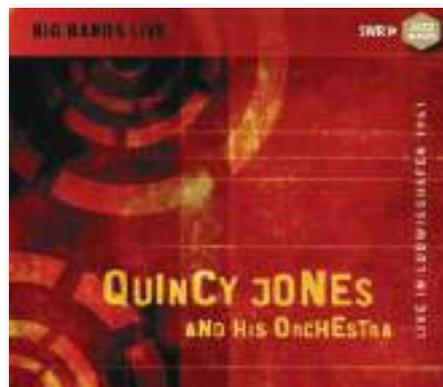


Chris Korb

### **Quincy Jones and His Orchestra** *Live in Ludwigshafen 1961*

**This edition of the legendary arranger's big band was previously captured live on Newport '61. Despite the erratic mix on this set from Germany, hardcore Q-philes will want it too.**

The impressive lineup featured on *Live in Ludwigshafen 1961* and the previous Newport set boasts topflight soloists, including saxophonists Phil Woods and Sahib Shihab. A notable plus here is trumpet star Freddie Hubbard, who wasn't present at Newport. It's a tuneful, rollicking set and a welcome opportunity to enjoy drummer **Stu Martin** (1938–1980), who, despite an impressive jazz career through the '60s and '70s, remains underappreciated. The rocket-tempo bopper "Air Mail Special" shows just how hard Martin could kick a big band. He did the same for the orchestras of Maynard Ferguson, Basie, and Ellington. And his formidable small-group credits include dates with Donald Byrd, Art Farmer, and Gary Burton, as well as the avant-garde unit the Trio. This spirited, previously unreleased date is a worthy tribute to Martin's commanding talents. (SWF Jazzhaus) **Jeff Potter**



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# CRITIQUE continued

## Hedvig Mollestad Trio *Black Stabat Mater*

While the concept of music as academic pursuit has been known to carry certain derogatory connotations—"boring," "noodly," "Nigel Tufnel playing guitar with his foot"—the conservatory days really paid off for this trio, which recently released its fourth studio recording.

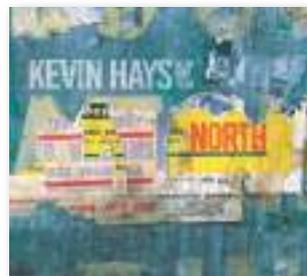
Hedvig Mollestad, Ellen Brekken, and drummer **Ivar Loe Bjornstad** make their bones mining the section of the musical Venn diagram where Mastodon, Miles Davis, and Pink Floyd overlap, weaving frantic, serpentine grooves and singable riffs into lengthy compositions. Though Black Sabbath-obsessed guitarist Mollestad is ostensibly the star of the show here, the songs depend on the inseparable rhythm section to cohere, thriving most notably when Brekken and Bjornstad emerge from the chaos to explode into the type of slinky 12/8 grooves that Sabbath's Geezer Butler and Bill Ward exceeded at. Bjornstad avoids the temptation to let sterile double kick work lend the songs prefab heaviness, opting instead for snare-accented patterns reminiscent of Elvin Jones' approach. Where lesser outfits drown under the weight of their own complicated compositions, the Hedvig Mollestad Trio handles odd time signatures and abrupt transitions with a fluid musicality. (Rune Grammofon) **Keaton Lamle**



## Kevin Hays New Day Trio *North*

Old friends reconnect to lean hard toward the future.

Over his fifteen previous discs, Kevin Hays has been a consistently swinging, lyrical, and adventurous pianist/composer whose roots spring from jazz, classical, and beyond. A few years ago, Hays reconnected with an old roommate, drummer **Greg Joseph**, who in turn introduced him to bassist Rob Jost. Fortuitous indeed. The resulting trio—on their second disc together—is an ideal ensemble for Hays' concepts. Joseph intuitively complements Hays' unspooling, over-the-bar soloing, conversing with the pianist's fluid rhythms while maintaining an intense forward momentum. On a delightful reimagining of "Scrapple From the Apple," Joseph is potent, driving his ride above swirling drum waves. In contrast, on "Elegia" he provides lilting, sensitive support. "Violetta," a number based in a South American folk feel, is performed in a brisk (and trickily phrased) 5/4. Joseph initially pops the tune along with light brushes then escalates into thriller grooves. Hays should hold fast to this unit. (Sunnyside) **Jeff Potter**



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EDDIE TABORI - FOUNDER & MENTOR



**T.R.A.P.**  
THE RHYTHMIC ARTS PROJECT

## Night Verses *Into the Vanishing Light*

The band's second album—and first with veteran producer Ross Robinson (At the Drive-In, the Cure, Korn)—succeeds by keeping it real.

*Into the Vanishing Light*, released this past July after months of anticipation, doesn't disappoint. The eleven tracks' highly textured soundscapes stray into some pretty dark corners, and muted, meaty drum tones and raw, animalistic playing from drummer **Aric Improta** tie them together. Improta's cymbal-smashing onslaught on album opener "The Future as History: I Love You Dead," clever use of stick clicks in his groove on "Panic and Pull Your Heart Out," and slippery, blistering hi-hat/ride 32nd-note patterns on "A Dialogue in Cataplexy" showcase his unique voice, captured masterfully by Ross Robinson without the veil of manufactured perfection. The performances on this album are real, visceral, and sweaty, which is refreshing these days. (Graphic Nature/Equal Vision records)

**Ben Meyer**



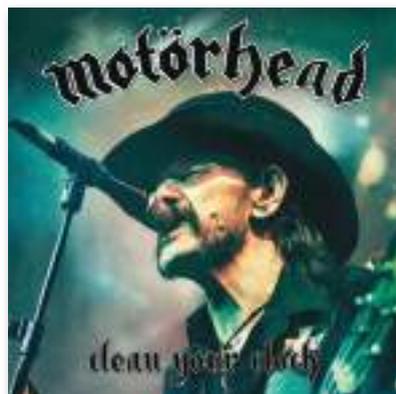
## MULTIMEDIA

### Motörhead *Clean Your Clock*

A fitting final live release from the rock legends.

Recorded just weeks before frontman Lemmy Kilmister's death, this CD/DVD set features blistering performances from two November 2015 Motörhead shows in Munich, Germany. Lemmy's voice shows signs of ailment and seventy years of road life, but the band is tight as ever, with drummer **Mikkey Dee** bringing an all-out assault on "Bomber" and "Overkill" with the energy of someone half his age. The drum solo in "Orgasmatron" has plenty of double bass but also shows a dynamism as Dee works his snare and hi-hats with jabs that'll get you doing more than banging your head. The audio is loud and raw, and the video has plenty of camera angles of Dee doing his thing. There have been many live documents of Motörhead over the years, and while it's certainly not the definitive concert statement from the band, *Clean Your Clock* would appear to be the last we'll get, and a fine swan song of rock potency it is. (UDR)

**Ilya Stemkovsky**



# Life IS DIGITAL.

ELECTRIFY YOUR DRUMMING



**Kenny Aronoff**  
drumming legend

"I use electronic drums to practice at home when I'm not working in my studio. I do my warm up ritual and prepare for sessions, tours, clinics and other live shows. On stage I use electronics to trigger hand claps and kick drum sounds."

**Nick Werth**  
Ghost Note

"Integrating the electronic with the acoustic is not the future... it's the here and now. The limits of my electro-acoustic setup are only determined by my imagination."

**Didi Negron**  
Cirque du Soleil Amaluna

"Acoustic drumming allows you to communicate through the sound of each specific drum. Adding electronics gives you access to many sounds, lets you take your drumming to another level and awakens the hybrid musician within you."

**Darryl Howell**  
Nicki Minaj

"Music is always changing and, as musicians, we must change with it. For drummers, e-drums are the 'instrument' of change."

**Antoine Fadavi**  
rising star

"Drummers used to start on acoustic drums and graduate to electronic drums later. But, with technology being such a big part of life for my generation, starting on e-drums is just as natural and sometimes more practical."



# Dafnis Prieto's

## *A World of Rhythmic Possibilities*

by Ken Micallef

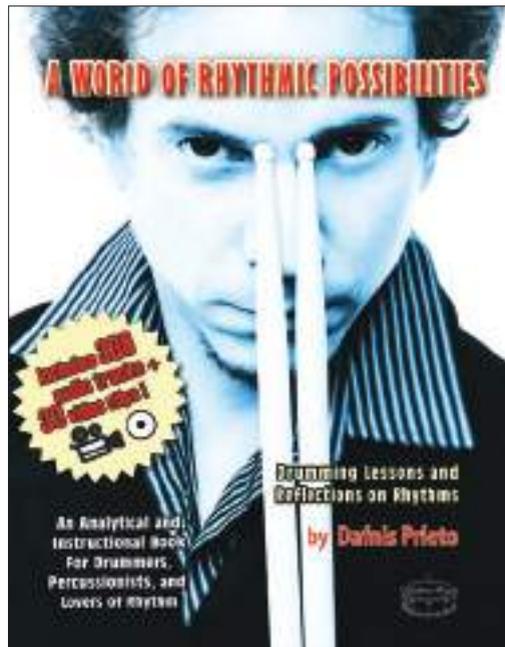
**D**rummer, composer, and MacArthur Fellow Dafnis Prieto has for years thrilled audiences with his execution of complex Afro-Cuban rhythms and his unerringly musicality. Whether performing a solo over a son or rumba pattern—subdivided, displaced, and syncopated—or simply grooving a mambo with the likes of Michel Camilo, Steve Coleman, or Henry Threadgill, Prieto always operates at full tilt, his mastery allied to classical training and deep jazz immersion.

After such dynamic recordings as his 2008 album, *Taking the Soul for a Walk*, and the Dafnis Prieto Si o Si Quartet's 2009 release, *Live at Jazz Standard*, Prieto relocated to Florida, where he now teaches exclusively at the University of Miami. He has also assembled an instructional work, *A World of Rhythmic Possibilities* (Dafnison Music).

"The most important concept I touch upon in the book is rhythm," Prieto explains. "I wouldn't play the drums simply for technique's sake; that's just a means to an end. The end is the musicality of how you play the rhythms, not necessarily technique. The book combines the values of both rhythm and technique."

Prieto created exercises for independence and coordination with overviews of specific rhythms, as well as themes not often discussed among drummers: spirituality, emotion, and perception. "I reveal insights about what I've learned spiritually and emotionally through drumming," Prieto says. "People may think you're out of your mind talking about this, but to me it's all integrated: music, spirit, emotions. I tell stories of spirituality, giving and receiving from the audience; every audience gives you a different magnetic feel and level of consciousness. The spiritual aspect is what determines the music. I even discuss levitation."

Prieto devotes an entire chapter of the book to bebop jazz innovator Max Roach, titling the section "Max in Clave." "I explore a specific Max Roach drum break that he recorded with Charlie Parker on 'Klact-Oveeds-Tene,'" Prieto explains. "Once I learned



that break, I couldn't help but place a clave on top of it. The first part is three beats; the second part is five. In the second bar it starts with the five; it's the same rhythmic phrase, though it starts in different places. Out of that, I started singing the rhythmic phrase and playing the clave, and after a while I became more adventurous with it. I started looping the phrasing that's in three. Then I counted how many times it came around over the clave. I did the same with the five-beat phrase, then created combinations of five. That produced an astonishing number of rhythmic possibilities. That is often how I work with rhythm."

After entering the book's secret code at [dafnisonmusic.com](http://dafnisonmusic.com), the student can unlock audio and video clips, all designed to bring clarity to the wealth of material found in *A World of Rhythmic Possibilities*. "I recorded the whole book musically, 338 audio tracks for 275

pages," Prieto says. "Some friends thought I should chop the ten chapters into ten books, but I didn't agree. I'm not trying to show off or make big solos or go outside the scope of the book. I'm trying to specifically illustrate the content. You can read and follow along."

While Prieto won't guarantee drummers a gig after they work through *A World of Rhythmic Possibilities*, he believes its study of rhythms, in all their universality, can help drummers to be their best musical selves, regardless of genre. "We all deal with the same things, the same insights," Dafnis says. "We all deal with independence, dynamics, coordination, the emotional aspect of drumming. It's not about genre; it's about a world of rhythmic possibilities. It's about language."

The final takeaway? "A sense of humanity, a sense of consciousness, of self-discipline, creativity, inspiration, and dedication," Prieto says. "These are all qualities that any serious drummer has considered, and this will help them to get to the depths of their art. The exercises are from the inside out, from one like me who has experienced them. It's about the sound we carry within ourselves."

### Study Suggestions

"The main syncopation exercise I use is displacing *Stick Control* [exercises] over the clave," Prieto explains, as Example 3.21 from page 63 of *A World of Rhythmic Possibilities* illustrates. "Let's play a paradiddle as in *Stick Control*," he begins, "the fifth pattern on the first page [Single Beat Combinations]. Play it in straight 8th notes with a one-bar clave pattern on top of it, in 16th-note

subdivisions. After you're able to play the paradiddle on the snare drum with both hands, have your right hand play the clave on the hi-hat using quarter notes. Next, play *Stick Control* pattern #5, syncopating the second and fourth 16th notes. Now you're displacing *Stick Control* in relation to the clave. That's an absolutely fantastic syncopation exercise."



## Sweetwater GearFest

This past June, the music instrument retailer Sweetwater Sound held its annual GearFest in Fort Wayne, Indiana, with a crowd of more than 12,000—the highest attendance at the free event since its launch in 2002. During the customer-focused festival and trade show, visitors interacted with manufacturer reps and checked out their latest gear. The two-day event included manufacturer exhibits, workshops, clinics, live demos, performances, and equipment sales.

The festival's opening day treated attendees to a performance and Q&A session with the progressive metal band Periphery, featuring Matt Halpern on drums. The group performed several songs and answered questions about its gear, the music industry, and how band members balance touring with other entrepreneurial endeavors. On the second day, during an intimate clinic, studio legend John "JR" Robinson discussed recording and miking techniques. Robinson

demonstrated various studio methods by playing along with classic tracks by Michael Jackson and Eric Clapton while recording his own performance; he then played the recording back to reveal the results of his techniques. Styx drummer Todd Sucherman unleashed chops, technical prowess, and witty humor during his clinic, while offering advice on gear choices and how to grow musically.

Other highlights included performances by Chad Wackerman (Allan Holdsworth, Frank Zappa) and Cora Coleman-Dunham (Beyoncé, Prince), as well as a seminar on cymbals from Sabian representative Bob Rupp. Drumsets from the touring rigs of Neil Peart and Alex Van Halen [left] were also on display. In excess of 400 instrument and pro-audio manufacturers occupied more than twenty tents outside the building. Sweetwater plans to hold the next GearFest in June 2017 at its Indiana headquarters.

**Text and photos by Miguel Monroy**



Coleman-Dunham



Sucherman



Halpern



# BEST OF THREE

TAMA, MEINL, & Modern Drummer are offering one lucky winner their choice of one of these new Retro finish Limited Edition Starclassic Performer B/B kits. Each is complete with hardware, hand-picked MEINL cymbals, and a one year subscription to Modern Drummer.

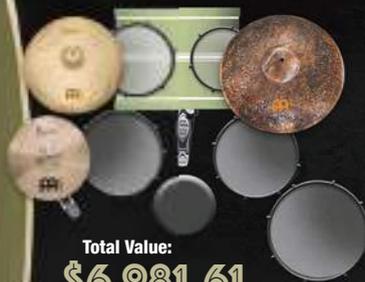
To enter the contest and for complete contest details and pricing, go to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com)



## OPTION 2

6pc 16x22" BD limited edition Starclassic Performer B/B kit complete with hardware and MEINL Byzance cymbals

*Tempest Green (TGS) finish*



Total Value:

**\$6,981.61**

Consumer Disclosure: 1. To enter, visit [www.moderndrummer.com](http://www.moderndrummer.com) between the dates below and look for the TAMA Drums Contest button (one entry per email address). 2. ODDS OF WINNING DEPEND ON THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE ENTRIES RECEIVED. 3. CONTEST BEGINS SEPTEMBER 1, 2016, AND ENDS NOVEMBER 30, 2016. 4. Prize Drawing: Winner will be selected by random drawing on December 6, 2016. Winner will be notified by phone or email on or about December 8, 2016. 5. Employees, and their immediate families, of Modern Drummer, TAMA Drums, Meinl cymbals, and their affiliates are ineligible. 6. Sponsor is not responsible for lost, misdirected, and/or delayed entries. 7. Open to residents of the U.S. and Canada, 18 years of age or older. Void in Quebec, Canada; Florida; New York; and where prohibited by law. 8. One

# GIVEAWAY!

## OPTION 1

4pc 14x22"BD limited edition Starclassic Performer B/B kit complete with hardware and MEINL Byzance cymbals

*Electron Blue (EBS) finish*



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## OPTION 3

4pc 14x24"BD limited edition Starclassic Performer B/B kit complete with hardware and MEINL Byzance cymbals

*Fire Brick Red (FRS) finish*



Total Value:

**\$6,089.61**

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prize awarded per household per contest. 9. One (1) winner will receive from TAMA, MEINL, & Modern Drummer their choice of one (1) of the 3 prize options as described above. Approximate retail value of the 3 prize options as described above. Approximate retail value of contest as described above. 10. Sponsored by Modern Drummer Publications, Inc., 271 Route 46 W, H-212, Fairfield, NJ 07004, 973-239-4140. 11. This game subject to the complete Official Rules. For a copy of the complete Official Rules or the winner's name, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Modern Drummer Publications/Tama/Official Rules/Winners List, 271 Route 46 W, H-212, Fairfield, NJ 07004.

## Into the Woods

**"I've been playing drums for almost forty years,"** says Ken Hawkes of Lynn, Massachusetts, a Berklee grad and current drummer for the band Undercover. "During that time I've tried many brands of drums and hardware. I wanted to make my own snare drum that was different from anything else I'd seen, played, or heard. I think drummers, more than any other musician, are always searching for something that's totally different and personal."

Hawkes bought the shell and hardware several years ago, and sent it to PTech Percussion Technologies in Quincy, Massachusetts, to have the bearing edges and holes cut by Michael Ambroszewski, a former master builder at Grover Pro Percussion. "It's an 8-ply Keller shell with polished brass hardware from Precision Drum Company," Hawkes says. "I then sent it to my brother, Steve, who's a master pyrography artist. Pyrography is an art form that involves using different tools and tips, plus various heat settings, to burn designs onto wood."

"Steve and I had been talking for a while about designs to burn onto the drum," Ken explains. "We talked about some of the art he had already made for other people, but nothing really grabbed me. After my dad died, Steve called me and asked about doing something in his memory, and we agreed to do that."

Steve had the idea to use an outdoor concept with animals that their dad had rescued or that would visit their home looking for

snacks. "The squirrel on the drum came from a baby that fell out of a tree when we were very little," Ken says. "We nursed it and it lived in the house until it was strong enough to be released. The deer represents us living in a house in the woods and seeing wildlife outside our windows every day. The rabbit was a big black one that stayed around the property and played with us in the yard. The raccoons were frequent visitors that would sit with you like pet dogs and eat Cheez-Its. We also had two pet raccoons that we nursed back to health after they were abandoned."

Because of the drum's maple shell, Steve had some challenges that wouldn't have existed with a softer wood. "He had to use a higher temperature," Ken explains, "so creating different textures became a bigger challenge. Steve said that while burning it you could smell the sugar in the wood, and that it smelled like cotton candy."

"The snare has a nice crack to it," Ken adds. "When I play a rimclick on ballads, it sounds really nice. I love the ring. This drum, out of the many snares I have, has become my primary gigging choice. I couldn't be happier."

You can check out Ken's band, Undercover, at [undercoverrocksyou.com](http://undercoverrocksyou.com); for more on Steve's art, search Facebook for "Steven Hawkes' Pyrography."

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



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Nia Lovelis / Hey Violet