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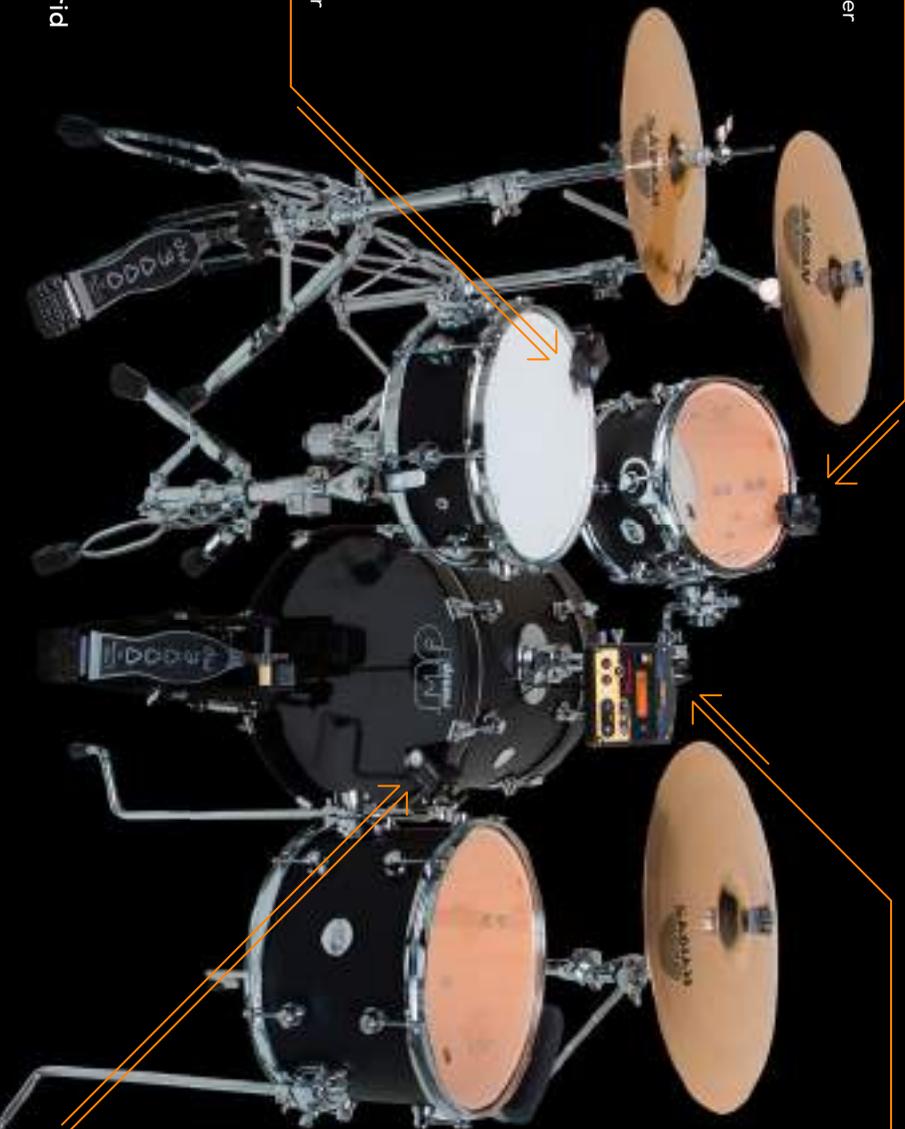
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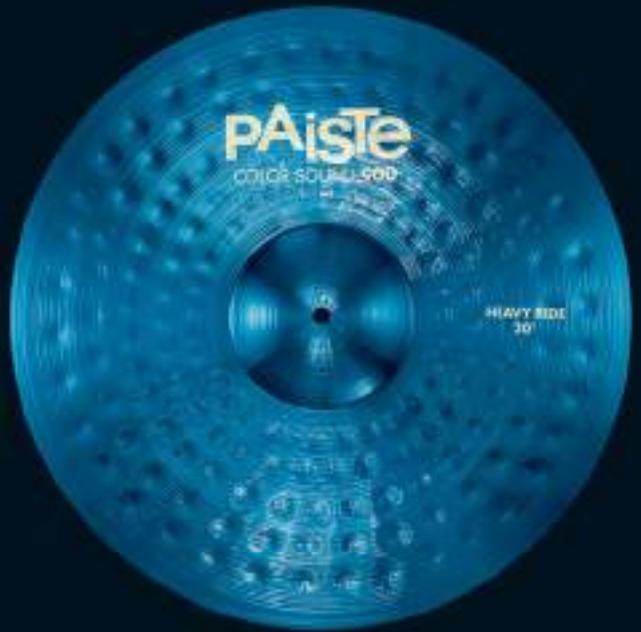
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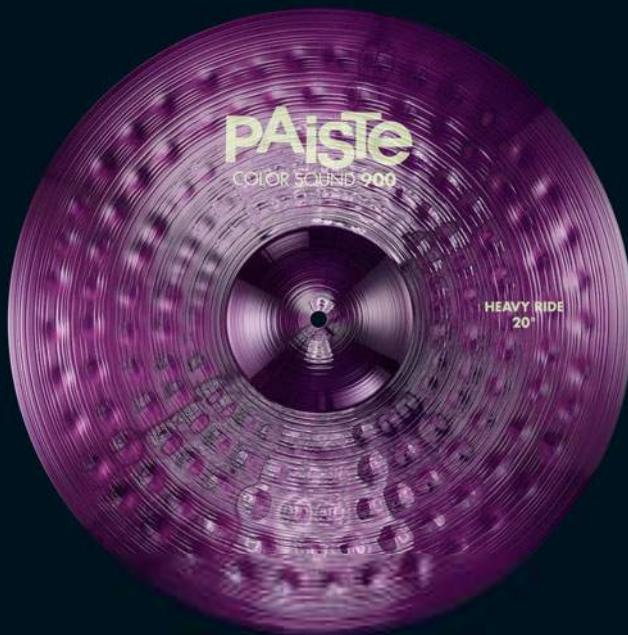
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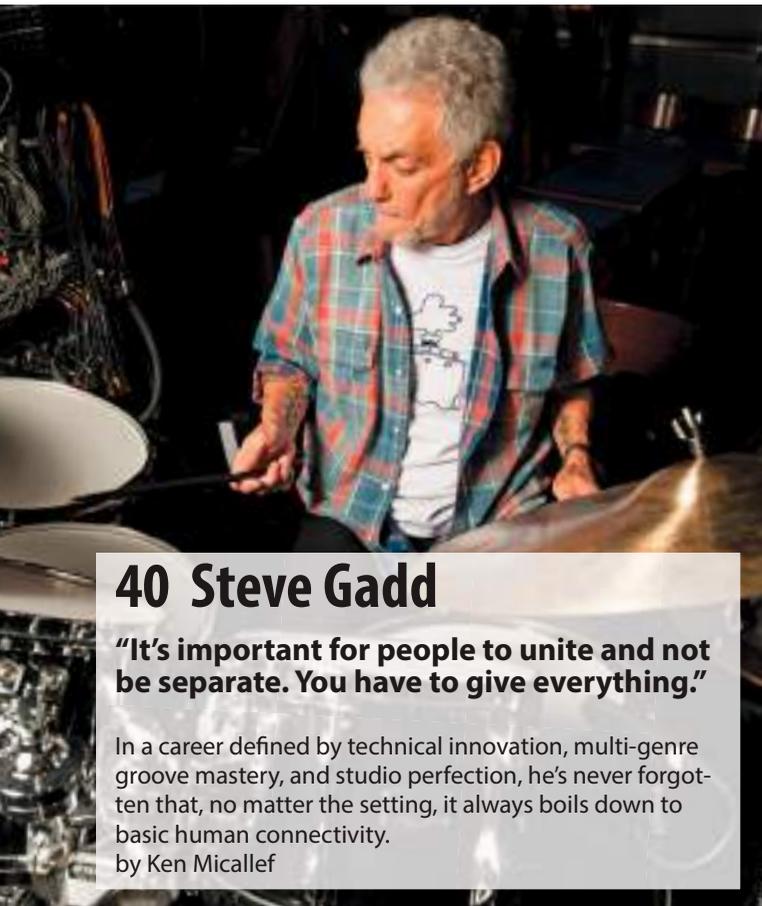
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40 Steve Gadd

“It’s important for people to unite and not be separate. You have to give everything.”

In a career defined by technical innovation, multi-genre groove mastery, and studio perfection, he’s never forgotten that, no matter the setting, it always boils down to basic human connectivity.
by Ken Micallef

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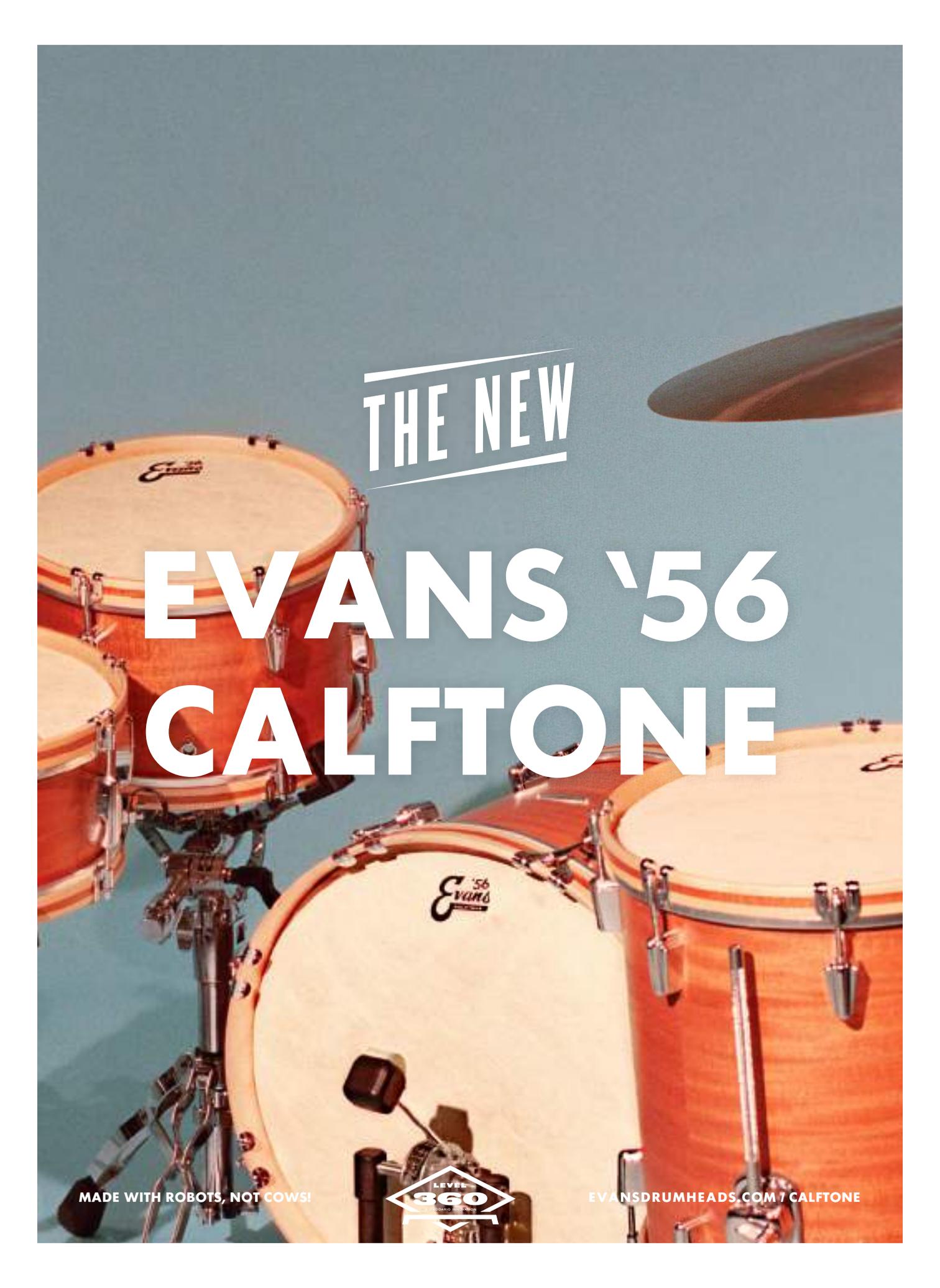
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Influencers

"If I am an influence, I hope I'm a good one," said this month's cover artist, Steve Gadd, in his very first *Modern Drummer* cover story, in 1978. "I don't play to be an influence. I feel a responsibility to the music I play. Let's say being responsible to the music is the first step in accepting responsibility for people coming up."

When *MD* first published this quote, Gadd had previously, and responsibly, laid a solid foundation beneath Van McCoy's hit "The Hustle," arguably redefined the concept of a pop groove on Paul Simon's "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover," and torn through an everlasting solo on Steely Dan's "Aja." These few examples from Gadd's '70s output, and countless other accomplishments since, still resonate throughout the drumming community today. (For recent evidence of Gadd's impact on our subscribers and social media followers, check out this month's Readers' Platform.)

For me, Gadd is an incredible influence and inspiration. From the aforementioned tunes and more, there are countless "Gaddisms" that I revere and unsuccessfully try to master in practice. But one track—"Nite Sprite," from Chick Corea's *The Leprechaun*—holds a special place in my personal drumming-performance hall of fame. Gadd's brilliant dynamic control, paradiddle permutations, samba approach, and blazing chops adorn the song before he launches into a melodic yet fiery solo at the piece's climax. Gadd's playing on this track blew my mind. After listening to it for the first time, I scoured the internet, probably via Netscape Navigator at that point, for any transcription I could find of his performance. The song inspired me to shed and, through some of the online notation I pored over, ignited an interest in transcribing his and other drummers' parts on my own.

If Gadd was hoping to be a good influence close to forty years ago, his music certainly still hits home now, especially as evidenced in his story in this month's issue.

And on the subject of influencers and inspiration, this month we're announcing our 2017 Readers Poll results. We'd like to thank every one of the voters for the overwhelming participation this year in choosing their favorite, most inspiring players. And we'd like to congratulate each and every winner and nominee. Check out the results on page 28, and enjoy the issue!



Willie Rose
Associate Editor



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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 2017 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.

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. 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.

MUSIC DEALERS: Modern Drummer is distributed by Hal Leonard Corp., 800-554-0626, sales@halleonard.com, www.halleonard.com/dealers

INTERNATIONAL LICENSING REPRESENTATIVE: Robert J. Abramson & Associates, Inc., Libby Abramson, President, 7915 Via Grande, Boynton Beach, FL 33437, 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

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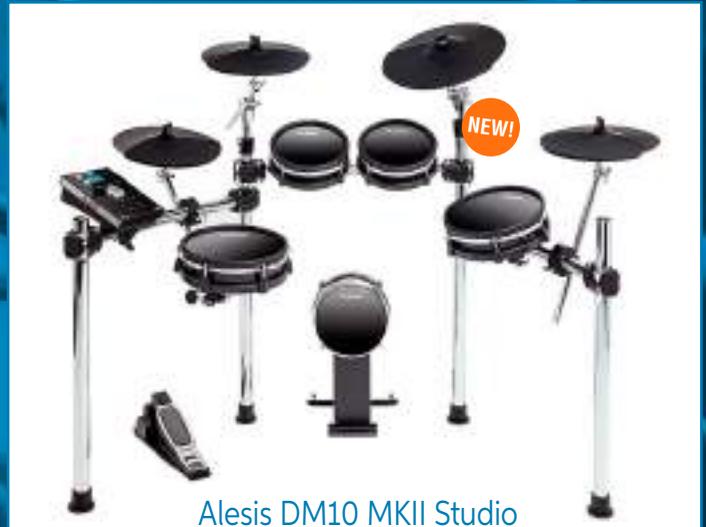
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What's Your Favorite Steve Gadd Track and Why?



For drummers, it could be hard, if not impossible, to pick out one standout track from the extensive and legendary career of this month's cover artist, Steve Gadd. His feel and explosive solo on Steely Dan's "Aja," the inventive groove on Paul Simon's "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover," and the genre-melding jazz and fusion work he's done with Chick Corea on tunes such as "Samba Song" and "Nite Sprite" only offer a glimpse into Gadd's lasting impact on the drumming world. Here our social-media followers give us their thoughts on some of their favorite Gadd tracks.

"Aja." It's a perfect marriage of texture, technique, sensitivity, bombast, patented licks, and signature grooves, and it's as close as anything to a complete representation of the drummer's taste, feel, agility, imagination, and musicianship.

Seth Cashman

His drumming on the Chick Corea albums *The Leprechaun* and *My Spanish Heart* really changed how I looked at the drums. "Nite Sprite" from *The Leprechaun* has some of his most intense, articulate playing, with an amazing solo to boot. And "Love Castle" from *My Spanish Heart* has all of the taste, touch, interplay, and groove that you could ask for.

Zachary Connolly

"50 Ways to Leave Your Lover." It has a recognizable, repeated drum riff that anyone can play. But to create it—that's pure genius!

Jacques Leboeuf

"50 Ways to Leave Your Lover." I was instantly obsessed with that opening groove, and I still am. Absolutely brilliant!

Roy Mayorga

Learning "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover" in *Advanced Funk Studies* introduced me to him, but his work with Steely Dan has kept me a fan all these years.

Will Thomas

"Aja." It's tasteful, classy, and laser-perfect, with the deepest groove. I think that's the best Steely Dan has ever sounded. They can kill a drum track by making someone do it over and over to where it's perfect but no longer feels good. They lucked out with Steve Gadd.

Bryan Keeling

"Late in the Evening" by Paul Simon. It floored me when I found out Gadd played the Mozambique pattern with four sticks on the record to get that fatter sound, especially when he goes to the ride pattern on the bell. The first time I started digging into that groove, I knew I had to make sure I brought a shovel.

Kade Parkin

On the album *Burning for Buddy: A Tribute to the Music of Buddy Rich* with the Buddy Rich Big Band, Steve plays "Love for Sale." His pickups are spot on. He just plays quarter notes on the ride, and it swings like crazy. It was one of my first encounters with jazz and big band.

Daan Quittner

"Dear Alice" by Chick Corea. The first time I heard it, it opened up a whole set of possibilities that had never occurred to me before. The groove, the collective improvisation within the group, and the way Gadd finds ways to keep upping the intensity all left a huge impression on me.

Lawrence Nagel

"50 Ways to Leave Your Lover." I had to learn the song for my first final in music school because I didn't have left-foot [coordination]. Gadd introduced a whole new world of drumming to me through that simple yet insane beat.

Trevor Davis

Want your voice heard? Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and keep an eye out for next month's question.

Longtime Praise

I've been a subscriber practically from the very beginning, and I want to thank you for all the good work you do. Your magazine is well crafted with something for everybody. Well done.

I want to send a special shout-out to Russ Miller. His column is consistently mature and pertinent to the working musician. And I also recently started listening to *Modern Drummer's* Mike and Mike

podcast while spinning on my bike. So far every podcast has been interesting and informative. I always learn something new. There's no trash talk and no hype—it's just an honest discussion. How refreshing.

Mike Grodner

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Out Now



Tijana Martin

Justin Peroff On Spiral Stairs' *Doris and the Daggers*

Scott Kannberg, the guitarist, vocalist, and founding member of the trailblazing '90s underground indie-rock band Pavement, recently released *Doris and the Daggers*, the second album credited to his pseudonym Spiral Stairs. The recording was originally intended to be tracked entirely in one week in Seattle. But work was derailed and the release had to be postponed after drummer Darius Minwalla unexpectedly passed away in his sleep before the sessions began. (Minwalla, a member of the power-pop group the Posies for more than a decade, also recorded Spiral Stairs' first release, *The Real Feel*, and had played with Kannberg in his post-Pavement project Preston School of Industry.) After receiving the news and stepping away from the studio for a few months, Kannberg recruited Justin Peroff, the longtime drummer with the indie-rock collective Broken Social Scene.

Peroff tells *MD* that Minwalla was heavy on his mind when he joined the project. "I had some big shoes to fill," Peroff says. "When Scott initially gave me the call to sit in the drum throne once occupied and mastered so beautifully by our dear friend Darius, I was both completely terrified and entirely flattered. I ultimately chose to take this as an opportunity to honor Darius. He was central to my so-called 'process.' I thought about him the whole time. He was an incredible human being."

Peroff's straightforward feel and well-placed, melodic ornaments adorn *Daggers'* brooding ten tracks, enacting an approach the drummer attributes to a potpourri of influences. "Perhaps my approach to my instrument stems from the environment, community, and era in which I grew up while I was getting to know it," Peroff says. "I entered high school in '91 and was drawn toward Mobb Deep, Sonic Youth, Tower of Power, and Eric Dolphy with equal passion and curiosity. I also loved metal. Hip-hop, though it was born fifteen years or so prior, was seeping into popular culture in a bigger way then. The whole Seattle scene was exploding; U2, Madonna, and CeCe Peniston were dominating radio; and the internet wasn't yet a household name. It was an interesting time for music. Perhaps the nature of how drum breaks are sampled and manipulated in hip-hop music has directly influenced how I write and perform drum parts. Who knows? Hopefully it's constantly evolving."

Willie Rose



MORE NEW RELEASES

Billy Childs *Rebirth* (Eric Harland) /// **Kneebody** *Anti-Hero* (Nate Wood) /// **Condemned** *His Divine Shadow* (Tyson Jupin) /// **Aimee Mann** *Mental Illness* (Jay Bellerose) /// **Minus the Bear** *Voids* (Kiefer Matthias) /// **KXM** *Scatterbrain* (Ray Luzier) /// **Gladys Lazer** *Veronica* (Gal Lazer) /// **The Shins** *Heartworms* (Joe Plummer)

Anton Fig With Paul Shaffer and the World's Most Dangerous Band

After spending twenty-nine years holding down the coveted drum chair in the World's Most Dangerous Band—later rechristened the CBS Orchestra—for David Letterman's NBC and CBS late-night programs, Anton Fig has become a road dog of sorts. The drummer has been touring frequently with guitar dynamo Joe Bonamassa since Letterman's retirement in 2015, and this spring and summer he'll regroup with Letterman bandleader Paul Shaffer and the World's Most Dangerous Band for shows behind their new self-titled March release, which features guest vocalists including Jenny Lewis, Bill Murray, and Darius Rucker. "Even though it had been a year or more since we'd played together, when we got into the studio it felt like no time had elapsed," Fig says of the sessions. "It felt like we were going to be in the studio and then do the show the next day."

When asked to compare touring life to television gigs, Fig describes a completely different kind of rhythm.

"I go out and play really hard for six or seven weeks, and then come back and take a little time off," he says. "With Letterman, it was rehearsal and the show—really concentrated playing. You're on for six or seven weeks, with a week or two off here and there. [On tour] it's over two hours a night. You have to build up the stamina."

Patrick Berkery



Q&A

More with Justin Peroff, Anton Fig, and Jeff Friedl at modern drummer.com

Sandrine Lee

Alan Soodgrass



Jeff Friedl With A Perfect Circle

Devo, Puscifer, and Ashes Divide drummer Jeff Friedl is backing the hard rock supergroup A Perfect Circle on its first U.S. tour in six years, with dates booked through early May. Although Friedl started playing with the band in 2011, he says that longer musical relationships with APC guitarist Billy Howerdel, bassist Matt McJunkins, and vocalist and Tool frontman Maynard James Keenan give him the confidence to occasionally stretch in between slamming home the group's powerful songs. "I definitely try to keep the integrity of the songs intact at all times," Friedl says. "With that said, I'm lucky to have nothing but trust from Billy, Maynard, and the band to use my discretion to change grooves and fills, and to improvise as I see fit. There are certain grooves and fills that I leave locked in, but there are others that I always play differently depending on what happens in the heat of the moment. I've spent a lot of time working with Billy and Matt in Ashes Divide, and also with Maynard in Puscifer, for the better part of a decade. So we have a great trust and workflow with each other."

While building the chops necessary to handle the burning fills he plays night to night with A Perfect Circle, Friedl brings a musical mindset into the shed. "I honestly just practice playing through the songs to build endurance," he says. "With any band I play in, instead of working on exercises out of books, I generally try to use musical applications to work on speed and power. What better way to work on a problem than to work through it in context? That way you're always playing musically with whoever it is, and not accidentally blowing chops." **Willie Rose**

Also on the Road

Steve Jordan with John Mayer /// **Phil Selway** with Radiohead /// **Ryan Meyer** with Highly Suspect /// **Rick Allen** with Def Leppard /// **Rikki Rockett** with Poison /// **Phil Ehart** with Kansas /// **Barry Borden** with the Marshall Tucker Band

Lehman College Hosts KoSA NY's Annual Percussion Day



David Manzano

Santos (left) and FogoAzul NYC

This past November 19, Lehman College in New York City and the Johnny Pacheco Latin Music and Jazz Festival hosted KoSA NY Percussion Day. Internationally renowned artists presented a variety of master classes and clinics, and the event culminated in an early-evening jam session and performance.

The day began with a set by the Lehman College Jazz Ensemble under the direction of professor Allan Molnar. Jazz drumming legend Mike Clark (Herbie Hancock) then gave a clinic using the ensemble's set as a vehicle for critique, offering suggestions to enhance the group's performance. Brazilian percussionist and KoSA faculty alumnus Marcus Santos performed next with the Brazilian percussion ensemble FogoAzul NYC, which is directed by Stacy Kovacs. Santos and FogoAzul played several traditional Brazilian numbers and gave a hands-on clinic on percussion techniques and samba-reggae ensemble rhythms. Drummer, percussionist, and educator Aldo Mazza presented an interactive workshop on southern Italian frame drums and African rhythms, and incorporated the ideas into a

drumset performance.

Workshops concluded with performances by the Celia Cruz Bronx High School of Music's percussion ensemble, under the direction of Penelope Smetters-Jacono. Afterward, former New York Philharmonic percussionist and Lehman adjunct professor Arnie Lang, along with NYU percussion professor Jonathan Haas, reviewed and critiqued the performance for the benefit of the participants and audience. A concert finale featured Marcello Casagrande and Mateus Gonsales (who comprise the group Duo Clavis), Santos, FogoAzul, Mazza, and Molnar, among others.

Lehman College and the Pacheco festival presented a special award to KoSA founders Mazza and his wife, Dr. Jolán Kovács, in recognition of their two decades of work, passion, and dedication in global percussion education. Event sponsors included Ludwig, Sabian, Evans, Promark, Istanbul Agop, LP, Innovative Percussion, Gibraltar, Remo, KickPort, Vic Firth, Lang Percussion, and Lehman College and the Johnny Pacheco Latin Music and Jazz Festival.

WHO'S PLAYING WHAT

Austin D'Amond (DevilDriver), **Andrew Lee** (St. Paul and the Broken Bones), **Robert Sweet** (Stryper), **Nate Werth** (Snarky Puppy, Ghost-Note), **Brooks Wackerman** (Averged Sevenfold), **Keith Hall** (Western Michigan University), and **Max Nudi** (independent) have joined the **Yamaha** artist roster.



D'Amond



Lee



Sweet



ALESIS[®] *STRIKE SERIES*



Electronic drums. Acoustic soul.

Sabian

Artisan Elite Series Cymbals

A limited range of dry, low-pitched rides and hi-hats from Canada's top cymbalmaker.

Sabian has spent the past few years refining its manufacturing process to incorporate more traditional old-world-style techniques. First it released a slew of nasty, gnarly Big & Ugly raw-looking and dry-sounding rides. Then came the sophisticated and tasteful Vanguard series, which is an adaptation of designs that Sabian acquired after purchasing the Turkish-made Crescent brand. The original Sabian HH series also got remastered, and now the company is adding a small selection of hi-hats (14" and 16") and rides (20" and 22") to its high-end Artisan range, called Artisan Elite, that integrates some of the dry, dark qualities it unearthed when developing the Big & Ugly line.

14" and 16" Hi-Hats

The objective with the Artisan Elite hi-hats was to create something that's "deeper, darker, and dirtier," as explained on sabian.com. To achieve that, the cymbals are processed with extensive multi-peen, high-density hammering. The lathing technique leaves traces of raw, oxidized bronze on the surface of the top and bottom sides of the cymbals, which is said to add complexity to the tone while also making the foot chick stronger.

All Artisan Elite cymbals are made from B20 bronze, which is a highly musical alloy that's eighty percent copper and twenty percent tin. The 14" hi-hats (\$609) have a medium-light top and a medium-heavy bottom. They have a great combination of crispy articulation, medium-low tone, and quick, controlled sustain. The foot chick is strong and clear, and the stick sound carries a bit of chunky metallic bite without sounding clunky or heavy. These hi-hats responded great to light, delicate dynamics, yet they had plenty of volume and projection for more aggressive styles. I foresee many Sabian artists, across a multitude of genres, flocking to the 14" Artisan Elites for their great versatility, both live and in the studio.

The 16" Artisan Elite hi-hats (\$739) have bigger, flatter bells than the 14" pair, and they're weighted differently. The top cymbal is light, and the bottom is medium. The flatter bells help lower the pitch, and the lighter weight gives them a softer feel without going so far as to make them sound hollow or fluffy. The sparse lathing helps add complexity and control, which is helpful for keeping these oversized hi-hats from becoming unruly when played open. I'm a fan of combining 16" crash cymbals to create deep-sounding/soft-feeling hi-hats. The 16" Artisan Elites provide a similarly breathy, low-pitched tone while also having more clarity, power, and presence.

20" and 22" Rides

Like the 16" hi-hats, the 20" (\$449) and 22" (\$589) Artisan Elite rides have wide, low-profile bells, which produce rich, deep tones that are well-integrated within the overall cymbal sound. The stick sound on both cymbals is deep and woody, and the sustain is dark but dry. The medium-light 20" Artisan Elite ride produced a full, breathy crash with a fairly muted sustain, which is great for situations where you want to be able to punch accents without obliterating the mix with tons of wash.

The medium-light 22" Artisan Elite ride had a lower pitch and a bit more wash than the 20", but the sustain and decay remained controlled and quick. I felt that the 22" was more versatile than the 20" because of its more open tone, fuller crash, and richer stick click.

The bells on both Artisan Elite rides are incredibly musical, and there's not a huge volume spike when going from riding on the bow to striking the bell. The rides also have a fair amount of flex and wobble. They excel when played at low to moderate





volumes, and they'd be a great choice for studio situations where you need to minimize cymbal bleed into the drum mics.

The Artisan Elite lineup is gorgeous looking and sophisticated sounding. The cymbals incorporate some of the dry, complex qualities created by employing old-world manufacturing techniques while maintaining the full-frequency and focused tones that have made Sabian a favored brand among many types of drummers.

Michael Dawson

Gibraltar

G Drive Stealth Pedals

Simple, smooth, and powerful options in a sleek black design.

In addition to continuously redefining what can be done with drum racks, Gibraltar has a solid reputation for producing simple, functional, and affordable bass drum pedals. What we have for review this month is a pair of competitively priced G Drive Stealth pedals (single and double) that are designed to provide power, speed, and dependability without breaking the bank. Let's check them out.

Common Traits

G Drive Stealth pedals feature all-black parts (excluding the chrome cams, bearings, and tension screws). The footboards are Gibraltar's G-Class design, which are smooth and contoured to make them comfortable and responsive whether



you play with or without shoes. The cams are rounded to provide a consistent, quick, and powerful throw. Two chains are employed to increase stability and durability and to nullify side-to-side sway.

The beaters have two usable sides: one with a bare, round hard-plastic surface, and one with a patch of hard felt. The beater height locks into place with memory locks, and the bearings that connect the spring to the axle have three indicator notches to make it easy to recall your preferred beater angle setting. The footboard height is independently adjustable from the beater angle via a drum key-operated screw on the cam.

The baseplate is made of aluminum to increase stability without adding weight, and it includes a drum key holder and retractable spikes that can be engaged to lock the pedal into place. My favorite feature on the G Drive pedals is the large hoop clamp thumbscrew that extends above the right-side pillar (rather than being positioned below the footboard). This makes tightening the pedal to the hoop super-easy and quick.



9811SGD Single Pedal

The G Drive Stealth single pedal is a no-fuss, set-it-and-forget-it option for drummers who don't want to get bogged down with too many features and functions. Out of the box, it's preset to a fairly universal setting, with the beater angle and spring tension set in the middle position. I prefer to have as much throw as possible from my pedal, so I moved the beater angle back a notch. At that setting, the spring tension felt a bit tight, so I loosened the spring and lowered the footboard a bit. Now the pedal was dialed in and ready for action.

The G Drive Stealth single pedal had a fast, consistent throw with the same acceleration from start to finish. I'm accustomed to pedals with oblong cams that accelerate quicker as the beater gets closer to the drum. But once I got acclimated, the G Drive Stealth felt completely transparent; it reacted seamlessly with my foot regardless of how fast or loud I played. Quick, clean doubles were just as easy to execute as simple, powerful strokes. The felt beater produced a classic punchy tone, while the plastic side provided a denser sound with increased attack.

9811SGD-DB Double Pedal

The G Drive Stealth double pedal was just as simple and high functioning as the single. The main pedal performed identically to the single-pedal model, and the secondary pedal was easy to dial in to achieve a matching feel. The universal joints on the connecting rod are well made, so there's no give or lag at the connecting points. This translated into a smooth, quick feel with a strong, fast throw. The footboard has a rubber gripper placed on the underside of the heel plate, which helped keep the pedal from sliding out of position during use. The retractable spikes also improved stability. I don't use double pedals often, but when I do I don't want to waste time tweaking too many features and settings. The G Drive Stealth is designed to be a utilitarian double pedal that's simple and dependable. I like that.

Michael Dawson

Evans

UV1 Drumheads

A new silkscreened coating cured with ultraviolet light for increased consistency and durability.

Evans' research team spent several years experimenting with new ways to improve upon one of its most widely used products—the single-ply coated drumhead. The result is the UV1, which is available in 10"–18" sizes and incorporates a new coating process designed to improve consistency and durability. We were sent a complete set to review, so let's check them out.

How It's Made

The first thing I asked the rep at Evans was if the UV1 was replacing the company's popular single-ply coated drumhead, the G1. He assured me that it wasn't. So how is the UV1 different from the G1?

Like the G1 and all other Evans drumheads, the UV1 utilizes the company's proprietary Level 360 technology, which incorporates a steeper collar and a rollover hoop to allow the head to sit evenly on the bearing edge and to extend the tuning range. G1 and UV1 drumheads are also both made from a single ply of 10mil plastic. But the UV1 uses a translucent film whereas the film for the G1 is clear. The biggest difference between the two models, however, is in how the coating is applied and dried. The G1 coating is sprayed on to the plastic with a gun and is dried with air. The UV1 coating is silkscreened on and is then cured with high-intensity ultraviolet light.

UV curing has been around since the 1960s and is widely used in the automotive, telecommunications, electronics, and graphics arts industries. The paint is set and dried via a photochemical reaction rather than through the application of heat or air. The advantages of UV curing include shorter production time, reduced waste, and minimal loss of coating thickness. UV-cured coatings are also said to be more resistant to scratching and chipping. So the UV1 drumhead should be a game changer when it comes to consistency and durability. But how does it sound?

In Use

We tested the UV1 on a set of maple toms (10", 12", 14", and 16") and on a 6.5x14 stainless-steel snare. The toms were originally outfitted with Evans J1 drumheads, which are 10mil thick and are etched to create a coating-like texture. The J1s gave the drums an open, full-range tone with balanced high-end brightness and low-end fatness. The overtones were a little excessive, so I muffled the J1s with small pieces of gaffer's tape. Swapping on the UV1s gave the toms that focused, warm, punchy, and crisp tone that I had coaxed from the J1s but with much less effort. I simply brought up each tension rod evenly, about a full turn above slack, and there it was. No fine-tuning of the lugs was required. The UV1 made the toms sound a bit deeper, warmer, and punchier than the muffled J1s without shortening the decay or darkening the overall tone. They simply sounded great, right away. And the coating showed no sign of wear



at the end of our month-long test.

On the stainless-steel snare, the UV1 introduced some nice midrange punch that wasn't there when the drum had on the stock single-ply coated batter. The UV1 provided some of the focus and snap that you get from a single-ply coated head with a dot underneath while still providing great rebound across the entire head. (Dotted heads sometimes feel a bit unresponsive and flat when played lightly in the center.)

The UV1 sounded best on this particular snare when tuned medium-tight. It reined in just enough overtones to keep the drum from ringing excessively, but it still sounded open and articulate. The silkscreened coating, which stops before the collar, held up great, displaying no visible scars after being submitted to several hours of hard accents and rimclicks played with the tip of the stick digging into the head. The UV1 coating also has a very consistent texture that allowed for smooth and even swishes when played with brushes.

Evans is charging a bit extra for the UV1 drumheads (\$19.99 for a 14" versus \$17.60 for a G1, for instance). But if our testing is any indication of their durability, it's likely that you'll be spending less money in the long run if you switch from standard single-ply coated heads to the UV1s, because you won't need to change them nearly as often.

Michael Dawson



A&F Drum Co.

4x14 Raw Brass Snare

A contemporary take on iconic turn-of-the-century drums.



There's a new player on the high-end drum scene. The Antoun and Family Drum Company was founded in 2012 in Austin, Texas, and entered the market in early 2016. A&F began as a collaboration between drummer/designer Ramy Antoun (Seal, Black Eyed Peas, Ed Kowalczyk) and local craftsman Steve Furcinitti (Furcinitti Custom Drums), with the focus on making limited-edition drums that blend, as they put it, old-world craftsmanship with new-world sounds.

4x14 Raw Brass

A&F's first offering was a 4x14 raw-brass snare intended to replicate the sound and feel of some vintage pieces in Antoun's arsenal, specifically a 6x14 thumbscrew-tensioned snare from Germany and a 1920s nickel-over-brass six-lug Ludwig. We checked out a 4x14 raw-brass snare at Antoun's studio, where he also had the company's proprietary 7-ply maple and 7-ply mahogany drumkits set up to demo. Both kits sounded larger than their modest sizes (12" and 14" toms and 20" kick), and they featured the same rustic-looking hardware and hoops as our review snare.

The floor tom on the mahogany kit also had a snare strainer installed on the bottom head. (A&F calls its toms with snare beds and wires Snoms.) A&F also offers a 6.5x14 brass snare, as well as some quirkier models, like a 3x12 brass Rude Boy (\$625) and a 4x18 Gun Shot (\$1,075).

The 4x14 limited edition Raw Brass drum (\$1,200) has a weathered finish that's designed to oxidize over time. The fourteen-gauge brass shells, which are handmade and finished by the A&F team, feature a forty-five-degree inner bearing edge and a slight forty-five-degree outer edge. The round, solid-brass lugs (Antoun's patented design), the badge, and the hardware have leather gaskets at the shell contact points. The air vent has no grommet, and the strainer is a George Way-style beer tap model. The strainer, lug screws, and screw clips are the only parts not made in-house.

If you're a fan of the warm yet brash sound of brass snares, this A&F is a delight, possessing a wonderful earthy honk. It offered a broader tuning range than the shallow depth would suggest, and the snares were sensitive regardless of tuning or where I played on the head. Also, small adjustments in tuning or muffling changed the character of the drum entirely, making it

a highly versatile option.

The stock Remo Coated Ambassador batter head allowed plenty of colors to be explored with sticks, brushes, mallets, and other implements. When I tried a Coated Vintage Emperor, the drum offered a meatier palette that was very pleasing. High tunings produced a Roy Haynes-type crackle and pop that still maintained some body, and tuning the drum just above the wrinkle point made it sound similar to a field drum. A medium-high tension offered potential for this drum to be employed in orchestral work, and it produced robust rimshots appropriate for rock and funk.

A&F is producing the 4x14 Raw Brass in a limited run, so the drum isn't cheap. But given its versatility and the potential time and money saved searching for a vintage equivalent, some might consider it a bargain. According to the company's website (anfdrumco.com), it can make kits and raw-brass snares in any size, from 6" to 22" in diameter and between 3" and 18" in depth. (A 5x14 raw brass snare sells for \$900.) If your local shop doesn't carry any A&F stuff yet, follow the company's social media pages for examples of how great its drums sound.

Stephen Bidwell

Sunhouse

Sensory Percussion Electronic System

Innovative technology that combines the natural expressivity of acoustic drums with the limitless power of software.

The goal for Sunhouse's super-advanced Sensory Percussion system is to, as much as possible, remove machinery from the experience of performing with electronics. With no buttons to push, pads to strike, or knobs to twist, Sensory Percussion is designed to allow you to keep playing your acoustic drums as you always have while unearthing a bold new world of digital sounds, effects, and processing via a set of high-tech sensors and the company's proprietary software. This isn't just another electronic system with basic drum triggers sending simple on/off messages to a MIDI controller to fire one-shot samples and loops. It's much deeper—and more humanistic—than that.

Smart Technology

The Sensory Percussion system includes small phantom-powered sensors housed inside a clamp that connects to the hoop of a drum (snare, tom, or kick). The sensors feed signal to the software installed on your computer via any third-party audio interface and a standard XLR cable. When you play the drum, the software analyzes the signal coming in from the sensor and applies it to various controls. You *can* use the system to trigger basic drum samples from your acoustic kit. In fact, it does that marvelously well. But that's just the tip of the iceberg. Let's dig in a bit deeper.

Dialing In

The Sensory Percussion system interprets where and how you strike a drum in exacting detail. So rimshots, cross-sticks, stick shots, shell hits, and center/edge strikes can all be utilized to control the software, whether that's to play different sounds, control effects processors, or transmit MIDI controller information (pan, pitch, volume, blend, etc.). In order to dial in the system so that it reacts properly to your own playing style, you have to first calibrate the software, in Training mode, by striking each zone of the drum (e.g., center, edge, rim tip, and rim shoulder) twenty or so times at different dynamics. The snare and toms have the most regions to establish, but you can also train the software to differentiate between different bass drum sounds (digging into the head versus letting beater rebound and rim/shell strikes with sticks).

The training process only took a few minutes to complete, and once the zones were established I could immediately open up one of the preset banks and begin triggering different sounds by hitting the drum in various ways. At this point, the drum acted similar to a multi-pad, with each zone triggering separate samples. From there, you can adjust the Blend parameter to erase the boundaries between the zones to get a seamless transition between the sounds assigned to the different regions. This is the first step in getting the Sensory Percussion system to respond in a natural, organic way.



The Advanced Features

Once the software is trained to recognize the various zones of the drum and the blend is adjusted to eliminate jagged jumps from one sound to another, you can get super-creative by applying different effects to each zone and then controlling them in a multitude of ways depending on how you strike the drum. At this point, the system responds completely organically to your playing, seamlessly incorporating effects (EQ, amp simulation, delay, reverb, compression, filter), controls (timbre, velocity, speed, LFOs), and layers of sampled sounds on top of your acoustic tones. (You can also use the system with mesh heads for a completely electronic approach.)

Having the unending options that the Sensory Percussion software provides can lead to a state of creative paralysis, so I suggest that you begin by messing around with the presets that come with the software before you dive too deeply into building your own sound banks and effects controls. Once you get comfortable with how the system works, you'll inevitably find some exciting new ways to augment your acoustic drumming or to create fresh electronic textures with an amazing amount of human nuance.

To get a feel for how far you can go with Sensory Percussion, check out Sunhouse's YouTube channel, which features demos by a handful of cutting-edge jazz and electronica drummers, including Marcus Gilmore, Kendrick Scott, and Ian Chang. List prices range from \$699 for the Starter kit (one sensor and the software) to \$1,575 for the Complete setup with four sensors and the software.

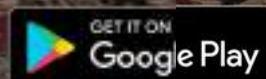
Michael Dawson



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Simon Kirke



The Free and Bad Company cofounder releases a solo album that reaffirms his place in the top tier of rock drumming, as well as his stature as a solo artist to be reckoned with.

John Fell



These days Simon Kirke is on top of the world, and it's easy to see why. His new album, *All Because of You*, is a joyous celebration and possibly the best thing he's done yet as a solo artist. The recording features eleven tracks chock full of hooks and happiness, with an interesting mix of styles. Among the genres Kirke covers are reggae (an organic take on the Bad Co. staple "Feel Like Making Love"), gospel ("Into the Light"), and jazz-tinged balladry ("Melting on Madison"). And, of course, there's a balls-out rocker right out of the Bad Company playbook, "Trouble Road." For that track Kirke enlisted Allman Brothers/Gov't Mule guitarist Warren Haynes, and he's supported across *All Because of You* by the Chicago-based band the Empty Pockets.

When *MD* spoke with Kirke in 2014, he was embarking on a Bad Co. multi-city tour alongside fellow classic-rock legends Lynyrd Skynyrd. Compared with today, it was *not* a good time for him. "I was struggling with my then-marriage," Kirke says. "Plus, as of about a year now, I'm sober. I've come through all of that with a new perspective, and my current fiancé, Maria, has given me hope for the future. And many of the songs on the album reflect that with her in mind."

All Because of You was coproduced by keyboardist Josh Solomon, who also arranged for the contributions of a string quartet and a gospel choir. "The recording was done on the west side of Chicago," Kirke says, "in the Empty Pockets' studio, which was about the size of a phone book—or maybe two phone books tied together! We cut everything live with some overdubs, but I was astounded at the quality of the sound."

Fans of Kirke's famously big Bad Co. drum sound should be more than satisfied by the album. "Josh's drummer, Danny Rosenthal, had this old set of Ludwig Super Classics with some

big, oversized Zildjians," Simon explains, "which I augmented with my DW snare drum to get the sound I wanted. But what I'm actually most proud of on *All Because of You* is my singing. Josh and his wife, Erika, took me aside and gave me the most amazing vocal exercises." Kirke also plays acoustic guitar and ukulele on the album, and he wrote half of its tracks.

For a musician as successful as Kirke, it's notable that even at this stage in his career he's open to coaching. But perhaps his modesty shouldn't be so surprising; recognizing his own personal weaknesses has led Simon to serve on the board of two alcohol-addiction-oriented help groups—the New York City–based Road Recovery organization and the Right Turn



rehabilitation center of Arlington, Massachusetts. "As someone who tries to stay sober," he says, "I attempt to help teenagers and adults stay away from the crap that I went through for many years. I give them a guitar or a tambourine or just tell them to sing. Within a month to six weeks they're chatting, gregarious, and coming out of their shell. I'm not saying that every single one of them is a success story, because not all of them are. But music has always been the soother of the savage beast within."

This year Kirke plans to follow up the release of *All Because of You* with support tours in America and the United Kingdom. **Bob Girouard**

Kirke uses DW drums, Paiste cymbals, and Promark sticks.



Mastodon's Brann Dailor

As you read this, Mastodon's brand-new album is dropping all over the world. As usual, fans will get exactly what they expect—plus a little something new.

Mastodon's discography follows a linear pattern, where each release moves into new sonic territory, making it a time capsule of sorts. Although this approach has earned the group a loyal and diverse following, it's a challenge to accurately explain a record before fans get a dose of it, even for drummer Brann Dailor. "Being so inside since its inception, I don't know if it benefits anybody to hear my perspective," Dailor says regarding the mercurial metal band's seventh studio album, *Emperor of Sand*. "One of the reasons sound is so powerful is because each person perceives it differently."

Dailor does gamely offer some hints, saying that the new material is deep and conceptual, with songs that contain a balance of hooks and expansive bridges. Helping to render the music once again is producer Brendan O'Brien, who last worked with the band on its highly regarded 2009 release, *Crack the Skye*, also a dense concept album. "We typically have a wall of sound, but on this particular album we were looking for some breathers," Dailor explains. "We were in that realm of 'Brendan O'Brien's heavily decorated Christmas tree,' where you

can barely see the branches because of all the ornaments."

As opposed to earlier efforts, this time the group had a majority of the vocal ideas ready before recording. Historically the music has

come first for Mastodon, and lyrics—another of Dailor's main responsibilities in the group—get shoehorned into the barrage of riffs. "Lyrics don't come as easy as drumming does for me," Dailor

says. "After my drum tracks are done, it takes me the rest of the recording process to figure out what I want to say without being a complete and total cheeseball."

While the subject matter of



Mastodon's music has been more personal since *Crack the Sky*, the band uses uniquely imaginative metaphors to tell its stories. The action in this album's narrative takes place in the desert, where the protagonist has been handed down a death sentence from a sultan in the Sudan. "It's all a metaphor," Dailor explains, "for going through cancer—surviving and succumbing to the disease. We've had a lot of cancer close to the band over the past couple of years. Lyrically, we knew everyone was going to want us to talk about that. But instead of making it too literal, we made a story to kind of go along with it."

Before he puts pen to paper, though, Dailor gets a sense of how he wants his drums to sound based on the vibe of the songs, and he prepares a selection of snare drums from his impressive collection to suit each track. "I sent an email [to the other band members] with a link to a clip of 'Barracuda' by Heart, to use as a jumping-off point," Brann says. "A lot drier, up front, and natural." Though he's been a faithful Tama endorser for many years, Dailor admits that the hoarder in him comes out in his approach to snare drums. "I'll play Tama snares all day long, but you're not going to *not* have a '70s Black Beauty in your arsenal," he chuckles.

Mastodon hits the road this month with support from Eagles of Death Metal and Russian Circles. **David Ciauro**

Photos by Jimmy Hubbard



Brann Dailor endorses **Tama** drums, **Meinl** cymbals, **Vater** sticks, and **Evans** heads.



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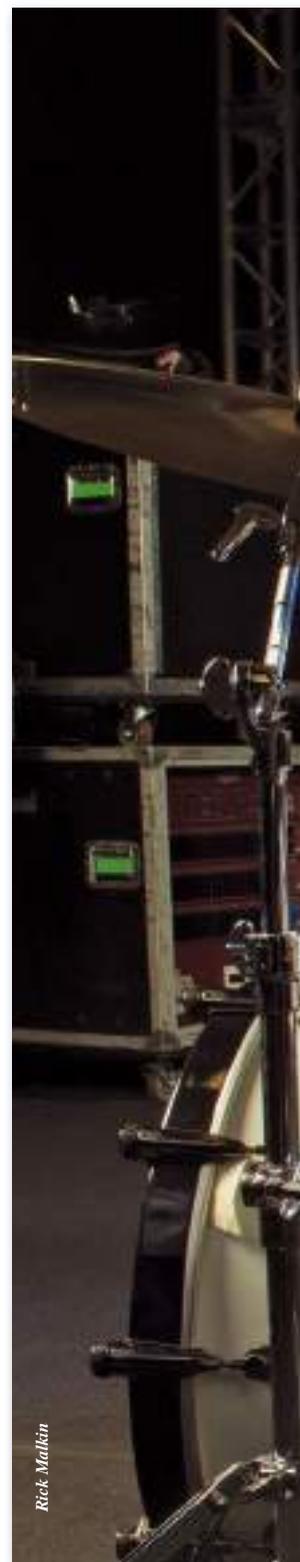
Peter Erskine

It's tough to imagine a more thoughtful player than Peter Erskine. In his introduction to Erskine's June 2016 *MD* cover story, Rick Mattingly compared Peter's career to a highway constantly under construction, and it's an apt metaphor. Long ago the drummer fully embraced the idea that a true artist is never "complete," and as such he is forever in a state of searching, discovering, sharing, refining, adding, subtracting...*evolving*. Drummers have instinctively picked up on this, and for forty-plus years—since his early forays with Stan Kenton's big band through his classic recordings with the legendary fusion band Weather Report, right on up to his remarkably prolific solo output—they've looked up to Erskine as an example of the sorts of careers they imagine for themselves. And yes, that's exactly the sort of stuff the Hall of Fame was invented for.



Past Hall of Fame Winners

2016: Vic Firth	2006: Charlie Watts	1996: Vinnie Colaiuta	1986: Tony Williams
2015: Ian Paice	2005: Stewart Copeland	1995: Elvin Jones	1985: Louie Bellson
2014: Carmine Appice	2004: Mike Portnoy	1994: Larrie Londin	1984: Steve Gadd
2013: Bernard Purdie	2003: Simon Phillips	1993: Jeff Porcaro	1983: Neil Peart
2012: Phil Collins	2002: Steve Smith	1992: Max Roach	1982: Keith Moon
2011: Jim Chapin	2001: Dennis Chambers	1991: Art Blakey	1981: John Bonham
2010: Hal Blaine	2000: Dave Weckl	1990: Bill Bruford	1980: Buddy Rich
2009: Mitch Mitchell	1999: Roy Haynes	1989: Carl Palmer	1979: Gene Krupa
2008: Ginger Baker	1998: Ringo Starr	1988: Joe Morello	
2007: Jack DeJohnette	1997: Terry Bozzio	1987: Billy Cobham	



Readers Poll Winners



MVP/Rock/Educational Product **Steve Smith**

His return to the stage with 2016 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductees Journey had many a drummer scooping up tickets at a furious pace, subsequently pushing him to the top of the Rock category in this year's poll. But Steve Smith has never been one to let a "mere" international arena tour get in the way of his copious other projects, and last year he somehow had time to put together the multimedia book/vinyl project *The Fabric of Rhythm*, perform with the WDR Big Band, and release an album with Steps Ahead, making him a shoo-in for the MVP category. Oh, and he put out *Pathways of Motion*, a method book/DVD package that was received so well by *MD* readers that it too landed at the top of its respective category this year.

MVP

2. Mark Guiliana
3. Will Calhoun
4. Robert "Sput" Searight
5. Shannon Forrest

Rock

2. Tommy Aldridge
3. Will Calhoun
4. Sarah Tomek
5. Barry Kerch

Educational Product

2. Jim Riley, *Survival Guide for the Modern Drummer* (book/CD)
3. Mark Guiliana, *Exploring Your Creativity on the Drumset* (book/DVD)
4. Aaron Sterling, *Sound of Sterloid* (web video series)
5. Dafnis Prieto, *A World of Rhythmic Possibilities* (book/online audio and video)

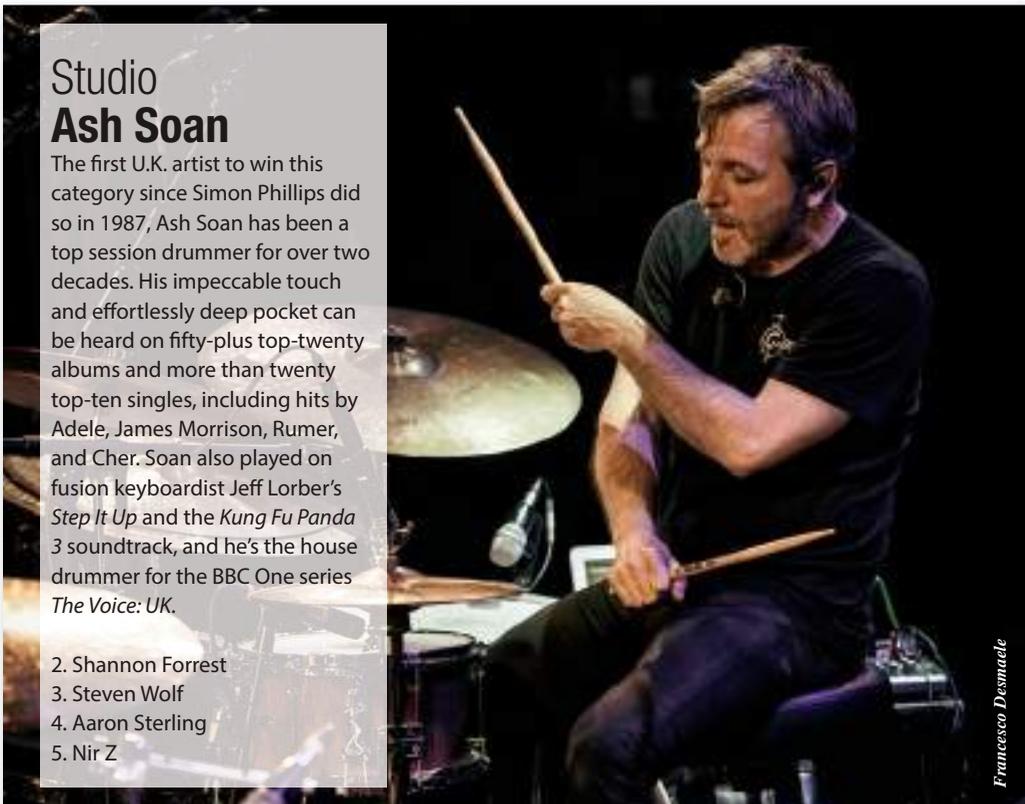
the 2017 *Modern Drummer* Readers Poll Winners



Prog **Mike Mangini**

He was already a favorite among progressive metal fans before joining the genre giants Dream Theater in 2010, due to his astonishing playing with shred-guitar legend Steve Vai, thrash heroes Annihilator, and many others. But as a result of the nearly nonstop live and studio work he's done with Dream Theater since then, Mike Mangini is at a whole *other* level now. In 2016 DT fans witnessed exactly how far Mangini has elevated his drumming—heck, how far he's raised the art of progressive drumming itself—during the group's year-long tour supporting its two-plus-hour thirteenth studio album, *The Astonishing*. It's a title Mangini fans are only too happy to apply to the drummer himself.

2. Craig Blundell
3. Aric Improta
4. Jimmy Keegan
5. Navene Koperweis



Studio **Ash Soan**

The first U.K. artist to win this category since Simon Phillips did so in 1987, Ash Soan has been a top session drummer for over two decades. His impeccable touch and effortlessly deep pocket can be heard on fifty-plus top-twenty albums and more than twenty top-ten singles, including hits by Adele, James Morrison, Rumer, and Cher. Soan also played on fusion keyboardist Jeff Lorber's *Step It Up* and the *Kung Fu Panda 3* soundtrack, and he's the house drummer for the BBC One series *The Voice: UK*.

2. Shannon Forrest
3. Steven Wolf
4. Aaron Sterling
5. Nir Z



Deneba Peniston



Jazz/Recorded Performance, Audio Mark Guiliana

The year 2016 was a landmark for jazz/electronic drummer Mark Guiliana, who toured extensively in support of the first acoustic jazz album under his leadership (*Family First*) and experimental electroacoustic recordings by trumpeter Dave Douglas (*Dark Territory*) and saxophonist Donny McCaslin (*Beyond Now*). Guiliana continued breaking ground in the duo Mehliana with keyboardist Brad Mehldau, touring as a trio with renowned guitarist John Scofield. And Mark and his cohorts in McCaslin's group also served as the backing band on the legendary David Bowie's twenty-fifth and final release, *Blackstar*, an album so forward looking and well rendered that *MD* readers put it at the top of the audio portion of this year's Recorded Performance category.

Jazz

2. Ralph Peterson
3. Scott Amendola
4. Carl Allen
5. McClenty Hunter

Recorded Performance, Audio

2. Robert "Sput" Searight, Larnell Lewis, and Jason "JT" Thomas, *Culcha Vulcha* (Snarky Puppy)
3. Joshua Wells, *IV* (Black Mountain)
4. Matt Wilson, *Beginning of a Memory* (Matt Wilson's Big Happy Family)
5. Deantoni Parks, *Technoself* (Deantoni Parks)



Alternative Abe Cunningham

It's been more than twenty years since the Sacramento-based band Deftones redefined alternative music with its unique brand of dark, experimental post-hardcore metal on its debut album, *Adrenaline*. Abe Cunningham has been at the helm the entire time, delivering hard-hitting, groovy tracks that blend the snappy snare and nuanced hi-hat work of Stewart Copeland with the reckless abandon of Mitch Mitchell and the powerful pocket of John Bonham. Deftones released its eighth studio album, *Gore*, last year, which landed at number two on the Billboard 200 chart.

2. Ira Elliot
3. David Sandström
4. Josh Block
5. Nate Lotz

the 2017 *Modern Drummer* Readers Poll Winners

Metal Jay Weinberg

It's not much of a surprise why *MD* readers put Jay Weinberg in the top spot of this year's Metal category. Playing with Slipknot is the gig Weinberg has been preparing for all his life. Adding his personal touch to the band has paid off big time, not only for Jay's stature in the metal world but also for the band, whose future many observers wondered about following the departure of founding drummer Joey Jordison. No one needed to be concerned, though; Weinberg has taken the mantle like a champ, slaying listeners with his debut Slipknot recording, *.5: The Gray Chapter*, pounding it out during the group's famously brutal live shows, and inspiring legions with his August 2016 *Modern Drummer* cover story.

2. Alex Rüdinger
3. Eloy Casagrande
4. Gil Sharone
5. Brann Dailor



Alex Solca

Up & Coming Chris Turner

With its 2015 release, *Lost Isles*, the rising U.K. technical metalcore group Oceans Ate Alaska tore through the modern hardcore scene with jagged time signatures, blazing riffs, and breakneck drumming. The band's primary composer and chops-blurring drummer, Chris Turner, has been powering the band on international tours throughout much of the past two years. With a new OAA record in the works, there's much more to look forward to from the fiery sticksman.

2. Loniel Robinson
3. Louise Bartle
4. Chris Woollison
5. Jonathan Pinson



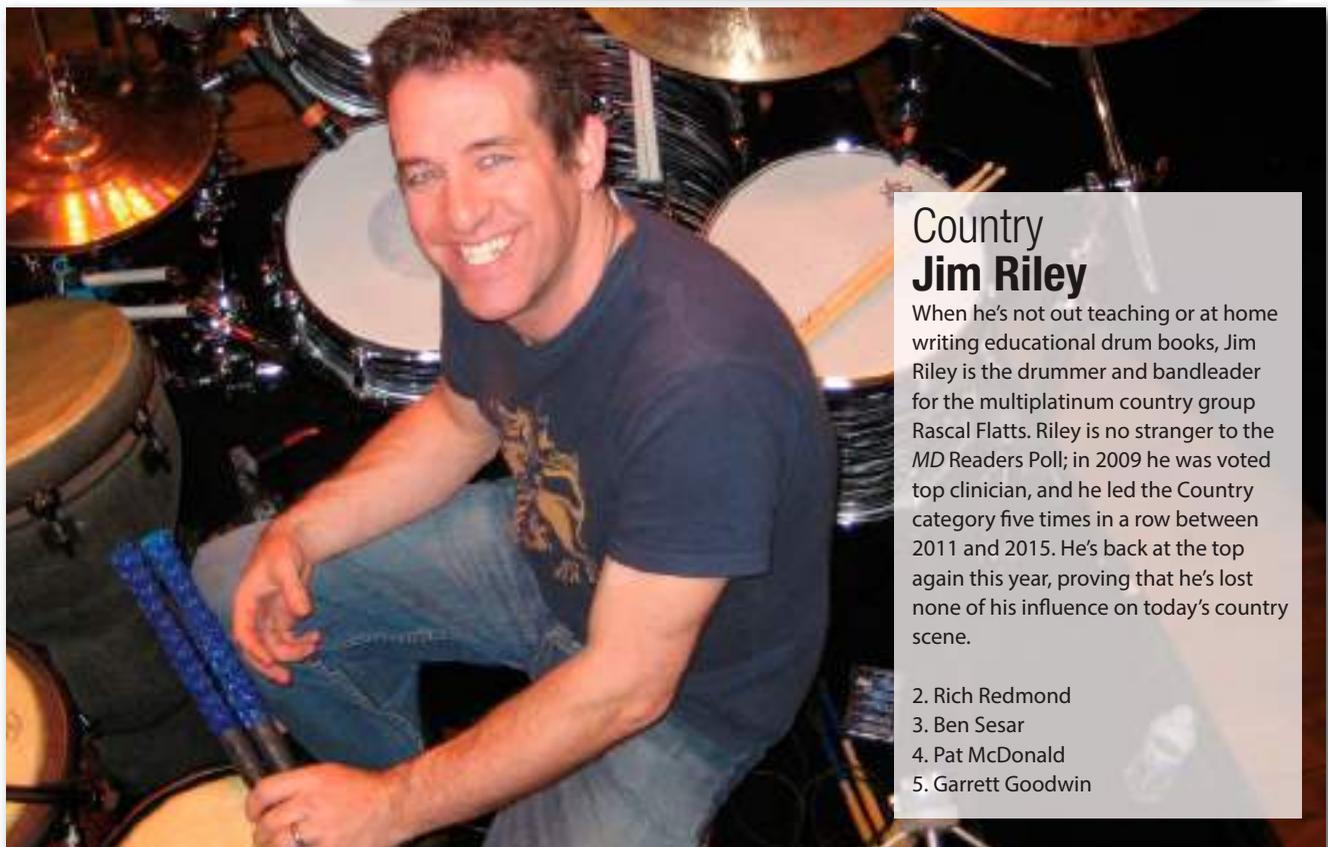
Ryan Watanabe

the 2017 *Modern Drummer* Readers Poll Winners

Fusion **Jojo Mayer**

As one of the most innovative pioneers of drum 'n' bass and fusion for more than twenty years, it's no surprise Jojo Mayer has nailed a top spot once again in the *MD* Readers Poll. Whether he's touring with his band, Nerve, or releasing his highly acclaimed educational DVDs, Mayer continues to stay at the top of his game. *MD* last featured him on the cover of our May 2015 issue.

2. Anika Nilles
3. Robert "Sput" Searight
4. Adam Deitch
5. Cliff Almond



Country **Jim Riley**

When he's not out teaching or at home writing educational drum books, Jim Riley is the drummer and bandleader for the multiplatinum country group Rascal Flatts. Riley is no stranger to the *MD* Readers Poll; in 2009 he was voted top clinician, and he led the Country category five times in a row between 2011 and 2015. He's back at the top again this year, proving that he's lost none of his influence on today's country scene.

2. Rich Redmond
3. Ben Sesar
4. Pat McDonald
5. Garrett Goodwin



CONGRATULATIONS!

JOJO MAYER
Winner - Fusion



MARK GUILIANA
Winner - JAZZ, RECORDING
PERFORMANCE - AUDIO
MVP: Educational Product



JIM RILEY
Winner - COUNTRY
Educational Product



WILL CALHOON
MVP: Rock



NEIL PEART
Winner - RECORDING
PERFORMANCE - VIDEO



CHRIS TURNER
Winner - UP & COMING



ANDRÉS FORERO
MVP: JAZZ



TERRENCE HIGGINS
MVP: JAZZ



NIR Z
Studio



RICH REDMOND
Country



GARRETT GODDWIN
Country



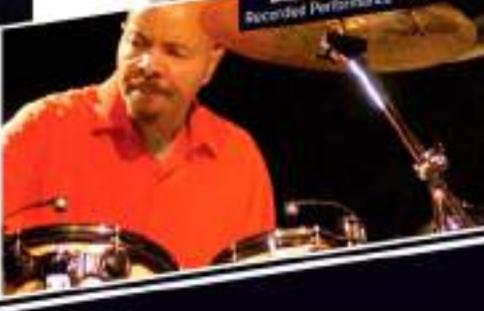
CLAUS HESSLER
Circus/Educator



DAFNI PRIETO
Educational Product



CHESTER THOMPSON
Recording Performance - Video



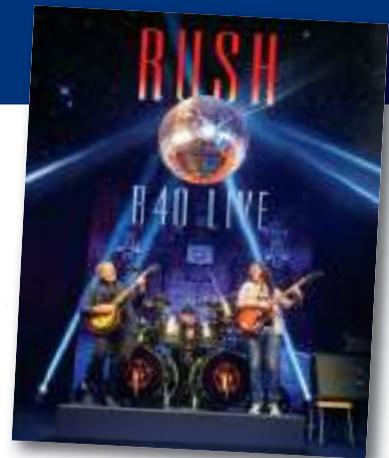
the 2017 *Modern Drummer* Readers Poll Winners



Pop/R&B **Josh Dun**

Josh Dun has been touring the world virtually nonstop for the better part of the past two years with the genre-melding, chart-topping duo Twenty One Pilots, in support of the smash 2015 record *Blurryface*. On hits such as "Stressed Out," "Ride," and "Heathens," Dun blurs lines between pop, punk, rock, reggae, and electronica, while tastily garnishing vocalist Tyler Joseph's infectious hooks with deep grooves. In 2017, Dun's reign continues, with current Twenty One Pilots dates booked through April.

2. Rashid Williams
3. Carter McLean
4. Terence Higgins
5. Andrés Forero



Recorded Performance, Video **Neil Peart** *R40 Live* (Rush)

2. Daniel Platzman, *Smoke + Mirrors Live* (Imagine Dragons)
3. Chester Thompson and Ralph Humphrey, *Roxy: The Movie* (Frank Zappa)
4. Mikkey Dee, *Clean Your Clock* (Motörhead)
5. Rat Scabies and Andrew "Pinch" Pinching, *Don't You Wish That We Were Dead* (the Damned)

Clinician/Educator **Thomas Lang**

International clinician, educator, author, and monster technician Thomas Lang spent much of the past year juggling tours with rock/metal guitarist Paul Gilbert, teaching, and organizing educational events such as his Big Drum Bonanza and Drumming Boot Camp. And along with appearances on the 2016 releases *The Great Unknown* by Eric Gillette and Gilbert's *I Can Destroy*, the drummer recently launched an online school, Thomas Lang's Drum Universe, further deepening his continued commitment to music education.

2. Benny Greb
3. Mike Johnston
4. Jost Nickel
5. Claus Hessler





PETER ERSKINE
HALL OF FAME



TOMMY ALDRIDGE
Rock



CARL ALLEN
Jazz



ABE CUNNINGHAM
WINNER: Alternative



MIKKEY DEE
Recorded Performance
Video



JOSH DUN
WINNER: POP/R&B



ANDRES FORERO
Pop/R&B



SHANNON FORREST
MVP, Studio



GARRETT GOODWIN
Country



BENNY GREB
Clinician/Education



MARK GUILIANA
WINNER: Jazz
WINNER: Recorded Perform.
MVP, Educational Product



TERENCE HIGGINS
Pop/R&B



THOMAS LANG
WINNER: Clinician/
Educator



NATE LOTZ
Alternative



MIKE MANGINI
WINNER: Prog



CARTER McLEAN
Pop/R&B



NEIL PEART
WINNER: Recorded
Performance, Video



RICH REDMOND
Country



JIM RILEY
WINNER: Country
Educational Product



LONI ROBINSON
Up & Coming



ALEX RUDINGER
Metal



BEN SESAR
Country



GIL SHARONE
Rock



STEVE SMITH
WINNER: MVP
WINNER: Rock
WINNER: Educational Product



CHESTER THOMPSON
WINNER: Rock
Recorded Performance,
Video



CHRIS TURNER
WINNER: Up &
Coming

ARIC IMPROTA
Prog

DANIEL PLATZMAN
Recorded Performance,
Video

DAVID SANDSTROM
Alternative

ASH SOAN
Studio

AARON STERLING
Studio
Educational Product

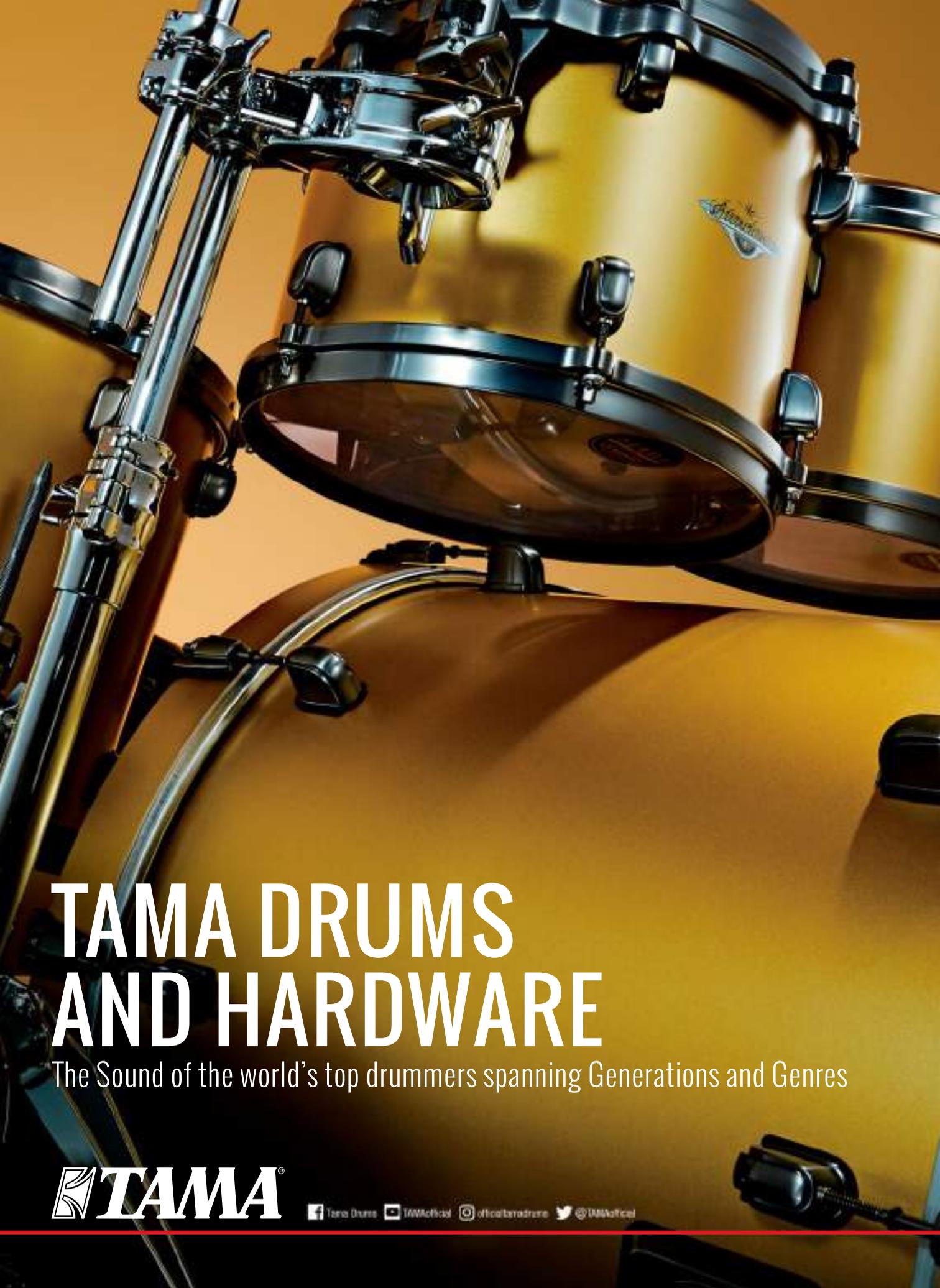
MATT WILSON
Recorded Performance,
Audio

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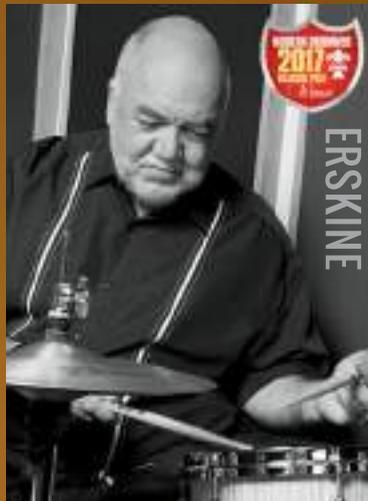


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ERSKINE



SEARIGHT

Photo: Marco Hamming



RÜDINGER

Photo: Christie Barnes



DEITCH



NILLES



CUNNINGHAM



CASAGRANDE



DAILOR



IMPROTA



FORERO



KOPERWEIS

...ALL OUR ARTISTS WHO RECEIVED RECOGNITION IN THIS YEAR'S MODERN DRUMMER READERS POLL!

HALL OF FAME PETER ERSKINE

ALTERNATIVE

#1 ABE CUNNINGHAM

MVP

#4 ROBERT 'SPUT' SEARIGHT

RECORDED PERFORMANCE, AUDIO

#2 ROBERT 'SPUT' SEARIGHT

METAL

#2 ALEX RÜDINGER
#3 ELOY CASAGRANDE
#5 BRANN DAILOR

PROG

#3 ARIC IMPROTA
#5 NAVENÉ KOPERWEIS

FUSION

#2 ANIKA NILLES
#3 ROBERT 'SPUT' SEARIGHT
#4 ADAM DEITCH

POP/R&B

#5 ANDRÉS FORERO
Andrés endorses TAMA hardware only

Steve Gadd

The Innovator

Jazz fans lucky enough to be in New York City this past November had the opportunity to see three great masters pour out their hearts, extend their technique, and recapture past glories. Pianist Chick Corea, bassist Eddie Gomez, and drummer Steve Gadd, accompanied by tenor saxophonist Ben Solomon, performed practically the full song cycles from two epic '70s-era Corea masterpieces, *Three Quartets* and *The Leprechaun*, downtown at the Blue Note.

Joining friends on a whim, we found ourselves sitting directly behind maestro Gadd and his Yamaha Recording Custom drumset, positioned at the side of the stage. The buzz generated by Gadd's rig, even when he wasn't sitting behind it, was palpable. The pure piano-black drums. The heavily taped Zildjian cymbals. The music-stand-turned-stick-holder. The low-slung toms and floor tom. You could practically hear the history of contemporary drumming just staring at the kit.

Soon the electricity between the musicians was flying fast and furious. Reading charts for the bulk of the night, Gadd nailed every change, grooved hard as only he can, and swung ferociously through the music's complex passageways and extremely demanding arrangements.

Three Quartets and *The Leprechaun*, along with *My Spanish Heart*, *Friends*, and *The Mad Hatter*, constitute some of the most complex, inspired, and exciting music of both Corea's and Gadd's career. In 1996, Universal Records released *Return to the 7th Galaxy: The Anthology*, a collection of recordings from 1972 to 1975 that included Corea's original fusion outfit, Return to Forever, performing its debut, *Hymn of the Seventh Galaxy*, with Gadd on drums—pre-Lenny White, who appeared on the official release. Hearing Gadd's funky cowbell beat-downs, Afro-Cuban

meltdowns, and joyous solo assaults in that primal fusion setting was a revelation.

Steve Gadd's entire *career* has been a revelation—of musical innovation, genre-expanding groove mastery, and epic session-musician perfection. Those old enough to remember how Gadd overturned the music industry during the 1970s know how truly mind-boggling were his now-legendary performances and recordings. Long before Dave Weckl or Vinnie Colaiuta, practically eons before Dennis Chambers, Omar Hakim, or (fill in the blank), Gadd brought a level of precision to studio drumming and an impossibly deep groove signature to his live drumming that was unequalled and incredibly inspiring.

In the early to mid '70s, Gadd reinvented jazz and pop drumming as we knew it: the crunching solo and Afro-Cuban-tinged outro of Steely Dan's "Aja," the rudimental finesse and inspired innovation in Paul Simon's "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover," the exploding cannons of Rickie Lee Jones' "We Belong Together," and the relentless grooving on recordings by Hubert Laws, Steps Ahead, Chet Baker, Stevie Wonder, White Elephant, the Brecker Brothers, Paul McCartney, Weather Report, and so many more.

Still performing and touring the globe with Eric Clapton, James Taylor, and his own groups, Gadd has no intention of slowing down. Recent projects include new recordings with Corea and a tour to follow, further gigging with Clapton and Taylor, and new music from the Steve Gadd Band, which released the DVD *Way Back Home: Live From Rochester* last September. So even if you're too young to have experienced Gadd's overwhelming artistry back in the day, you've still got ample opportunity to witness the master in action. Steve recently took time out to discuss some of his groundbreaking early work and make the connections that keep him relevant with so many of us to this day.

Story by Ken Micallef • Photos by John Fell



MD: There's a video where you're playing "Bye Bye Blackbird" on only a snare drum with brushes. It's powerful and simple. It almost has an aspect of prayer. The "Prayer for Peace" page on your website contains quotes from scholars, sages, wise men—is that part of your attitude toward life?

Steve: Yes. I feel it's important for people to connect and to unite and not be separate. Separation isn't good. My wife is a very spiritual person, and I share those beliefs with her. We chose quotes that represent the way we both feel in terms of spirituality and trying to be nice to people. That's how we feel about people and what we do.

MD: That's part of your success—you know how to work with people and be sincere.

Steve: Well, you have to give everything. And also, being forgiven is important in terms of how to get on with life—giving [forgiveness] and being forgiven, all those things.

MD: Playing *Three Quartets* with Chick Corea at the Blue Note, you read all the music. Are you still often required to read charts?

Steve: No, but it definitely helps. If I'm going on tour with someone I haven't played with or haven't played with in a long time, I will listen to the music and make notes. Most of the artists don't have charts. But reading helps me organize those things. And I was sure glad I could read *Three Quartets* instead of only playing that music from memory. But I don't read as often as I used to. I don't live in L.A. or New York, where that work happens, or where I would get called for last-minute gigs for movies or things that require heavy reading. That work is still out there, but you have to live where that work is.

MD: Do you still enjoy traveling the world?

Steve: I love to play, and it's great having friends and fans who like what you do and are accepting of what you do. But the traveling is not easy. If you travel today, security is a nightmare. But nothing is ever perfect. Thank God I do something I love for a living. Unfortunately, that's the easy part of what I do. Getting to where I do it is more work. That's just the way it is in the business.

MD: At the Blue Note gig your cymbals were heavily taped, to where there was no ring whatsoever. Why did you do that?

Steve: Because we weren't using a lot [of music] in the monitors, and the cymbals were too loud for me to hear what was going on. Taping the cymbals to that degree made it possible for me to play more comfortably and still be able to hear what was going on from the other musicians.

MD: You don't use in-ear monitors?

Steve: I've never really gotten used to them.

The cymbal sound in those things is odd. I miss some air and some top end with in-ears. I have to try harder to get to like those.

MD: What did you have in your monitor mix at the Blue Note?

Steve: I had Chick's piano and Eddie's bass, a little bit of the horn, and a little bit of my bass drum.

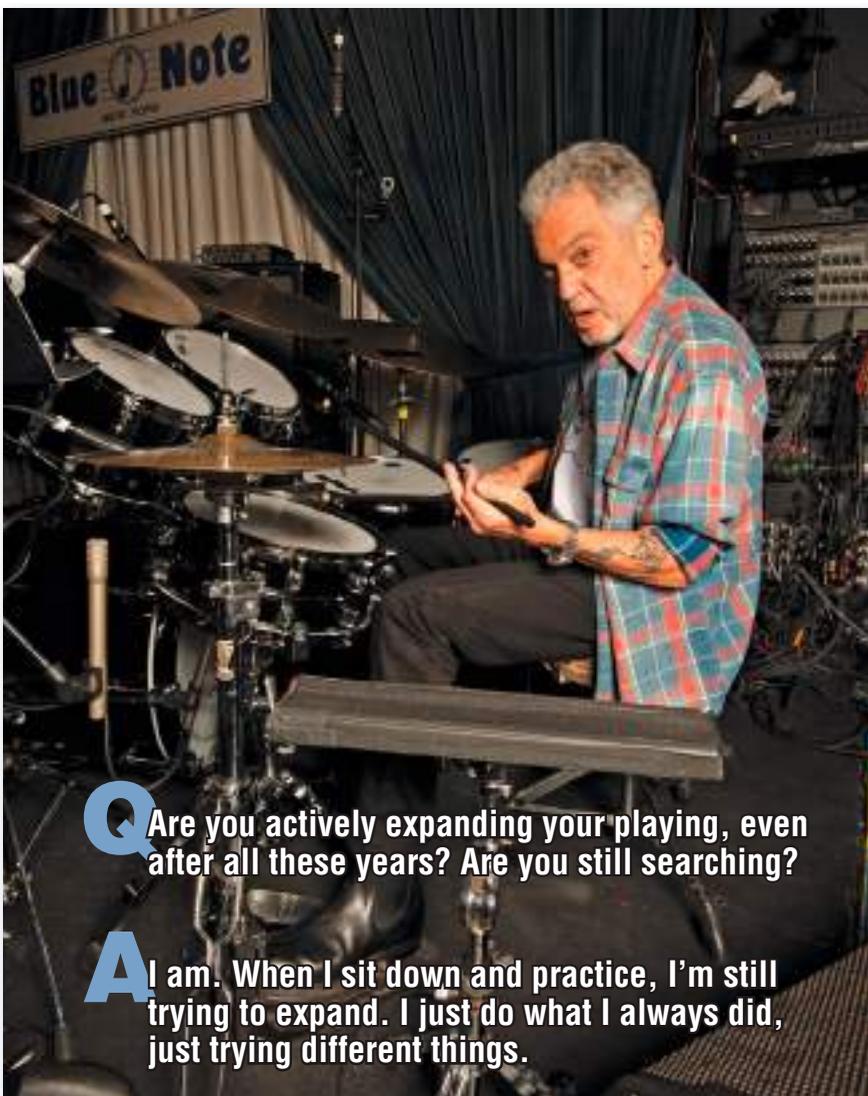
Steve's Double Pedal

MD: I also noticed you were using a double pedal, which was surprising. You only used it

drum parts. Or to be able to do a triplet thing rather than purely doubles. I'm more comfortable doing certain parts with the double pedal rather than trying to play them really loud with the single pedal.

MD: And you use two different types of beaters with the double pedal?

Steve: There was a felt beater for the right pedal and a wooden beater for the left pedal. I didn't use it as much with Chick as I do in other situations. But I've been doing it for so many years now, it's just up as part of



Q Are you actively expanding your playing, even after all these years? Are you still searching?

A I am. When I sit down and practice, I'm still trying to expand. I just do what I always did, just trying different things.

in specific areas of certain songs. How long have you had a double pedal?

Steve: I've been using it for a while. I use it sparsely. There's a few things where I feel comfortable enough incorporating that. But it's not like I'm "a double bass drum player." I dabble with it. I'm still learning.

MD: Does the double pedal give you more power when incorporating it with tom fills?

Steve: Yes, and sometimes I'm using it to give a little more clarity to faster bass

the kit whether I use it or not.

MD: It must come into play on more groove-heavy gigs.

Steve: Yeah, it helps if you're playing really big endings and you've got to fill up some space. It gives you more power in the bass drum. And there are certain fills, little technical things you can do in solos, that feel good with the double pedal. The more it's there, the more I try things and the more I learn about it.

MD: Do you lead with either pedal depending on the phrase?

Steve: I try to. There are certain things I try to be able to do with either foot. I experiment with different things like that. I'm always looking for the way that's the most comfortable. If I get that together and then work on it from the other side, to get it equally comfortable using either the left or right pedal, that's my goal.

MD: Are you actively expanding your playing, even after all these years? Are you still searching?

Steve: I am. When I sit down and practice, I'm still trying to expand. I just do what I always did, just trying different things.

Practice Like Steve

MD: What do you practice now?

Steve: I'll sit down and see how the kit feels. Inevitably I'll start out, whether I'm sitting at the practice pad, playing some rudiments. I'll play single-stroke rolls, double-stroke rolls, or combinations of rolls; single strokes, paradiddles, and ratamacues and flamacues—things to help warm up. Exercises that get the blood going so that when playing more technical ideas I don't strain a muscle. I just start slow and work into it and then see where it leads. One thing I always try to do is, if I play a four-note pattern, for instance,



I'll start it on different parts of the beat. So 1 is in different places within the pattern I'm playing. In terms of where the bar is, 1 always stays the same. So you're changing the 1 of the pattern while maintaining the time.

Let's say you were doing Swiss flam

paradiddles. You would play four of them, starting with the flam on 1. Then start the pattern on the second 8th note of the bar. It's the same thing; it just starts on a different part of the bar. So you don't have to relearn a thing technically. But when you start it on a different part of the beat, your whole body has to make an adjustment. It's another type of independence, being able to know where the time is and always knowing where the big 1 is in terms of playing in a four-bar phrase and being able to subdivide it and knowing where you always are.

MD: One thing that's marked all of your recordings, epitomized on tracks like Chuck Mangione's "High Heel Sneakers" and Steely Dan's "Aja," is that every note is played with complete conviction. That's the kind of conviction I might only have when I'm angry. But you always play with that intensity.

Steve: I don't know where that conviction comes from. Probably from wanting the music to feel

as good as it can feel. That's the motivation when I play—to make it as good as it can be with the people I'm involved with at that time.

MD: Steve Jordan once told me that the session drummers in New York were so busy during the '70s that you had your own work



Gadd's Setup

Drums: Yamaha new Recording Custom in solid black finish

- A. 5.5x14 Steve Gadd signature snare with steel shell
- B. 7.5x10 tom
- C. 8x12 tom
- D. 13x14 floor tom
- E. 16x20 bass drum (with lift)

Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1. 14" hi-hats (old Turkish K bottom cymbal on top and A Custom top cymbal on the bottom)
- 2. 20" K Dark Thin crash
- 3. 20" Classic Orchestral Medium Light ride
- 4. 20" K Constantinople Medium

Heads: Remo

Sticks: Vic Firth Steve Gadd signature sticks and brushes

Hardware: Yamaha double pedal and cymbal stands, DW 5000 hi-hat stand

Percussion: LP cowbell

Accessories: Earthworks mics

Steve Gadd

line, Radio Registry, where you'd call in for your next session. When there was so much work in the city, how did you maintain that level of conviction and consistency in your drumming from session to session?

Steve: You get in a zone. I was in the right place at the right time. I was going through a lot of things in my life that weren't happy. It was painful.

The music was the one thing that gave me purpose, happiness, and joy with other people. There were parts of my life that were not working out then, and it was really painful. From my dad dying to splitting up with my first wife—and we had two kids. All those things are part of the emotion of playing music. It all comes out. But music made me happy. And I sure needed that at that time.

MD: It's easy to find clips of you playing from every decade of your career. There's one from around 1970—one of the oldest—where you're playing "Cissy Strut" with the U.S. Army Big Band. The groove is rock solid, and you're playing very hip ideas. But if you had to critique the young Steve Gadd in that video, what would you say?

Steve: Well, you can tell I was young and searching, but I was open to different kinds of things. I was doing the best I could.

Steve's Yamaha Recording Custom Kit

MD: What were some of the things that you wanted to have addressed with your new Yamaha Recording Custom outfit?

Steve: I was interested in working on the bass drum sound. And that to me is a big step. I love the way it sounds. We also worked on changing how the hardware is mounted on the toms to create more resonance. I like drums that have a range, both pitch-wise and volume-wise. And these drums open up; they don't choke. The bass drum sounds good. They've really made improvements on the snare drum too. I love how dedicated Yamaha is to their instrument, to the drums.

MD: How has the snare sound improved?

Steve: Here's my thing. I like a Remo Diplomat head on the bottom. To me that makes a big difference. If you put a Diplomat head on the bottom of one of those drums, it opens it up. The drum doesn't choke when you hit it loud. It just gets better. And it's easier to get a sound on it. You can crank it up and it sounds good; you can loosen the top head and the snares and make it sound trashy—you've got a lot of different ways to go with it. Whereas if you leave the Ambassador head on it, you can get a good

sound, but it's good in one area and if you try to go away from it, it loses it. But the snare drum has a better dynamic range now.

MD: Do you want to hear different sounds from your drums than you did twenty years ago?

Steve: I've always liked different sounds. The music dictates what I'm going for. I love the sound of drums. I look for a similar thing, no matter what, in the purity of the tone. But I don't know if they'd be the same notes from one session to another.

MD: Your drum sizes have stayed consistent.

Steve: Yes, I start with a 10" and go to a 12", then a 14" or 16" on the floor. Sometimes I'll use a 12" and 13" on the bass drum and a 14" or a 16" on the floor.

MD: Your cymbals have been consistent as well?

Steve: Yeah.

MD: Do you ever use traditional grip anymore?

Steve: I do on Chick's gig.

Whose Drums?

MD: On what might be considered your landmark recordings—Steely Dan's *Aja*; Chick Corea's *Friends, Three Quartets*, and *The Leprechaun*; Paul Simon's *One-Trick Pony*; and records with Rickie Lee Jones,

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Tijay Iyer, Chick Corea



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Steve Gadd

Tom Scott, Brecker Brothers, Steps Ahead, Bob James, Stuff, and Chuck Mangione—your drumming is easy to recognize. It's so distinctive. Even listening to Leo Sayer's "You Make Me Feel Like Dancing" on a transistor radio as a kid, I could hear the press rolls and the groove. It was so infectious and strong and identifiable as Steve Gadd. On all those huge records, were you playing your own drums or a studio kit?

Steve: I think it was half and half. Some of the stuff was rental gear, and some was my own drums. In those years a lot of the studios had drums. It's hard to remember what I was playing. What year was *Aja*?

MD: *Aja* was 1977.

Steve: Those could have been my drums. It's hard to say. But they probably were Yamaha drums. I was with Yamaha back then.

MD: Did you bring your own cymbals to every session?

Steve: Yes, I had my own cymbals. Back in those early days you'd use the studio's bass drum and tom-toms. You'd bring a trap case with your foot pedals, a snare drum, and your seat, and a cymbal bag. You'd have a trap case with a chain and a lock on it, and a cartage guy. He'd bring the trap case to where you were going to play. He'd get there and you'd set up the hardware and the studio drums. If they were doing dates from like ten to one, two to five, seven to ten, the studio often had its own kit. Atlantic had their own kit, a set of Sonors. It changed as the '70s went on; people started to book blocks of time for projects, and they'd want you to use your own gear.

Steve in Session

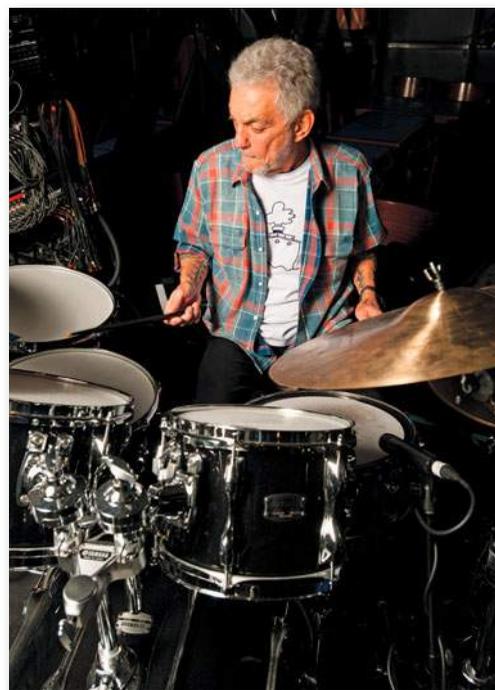
MD: You're playing on the outer limits of creativity on many '70s pop-oriented records: "Chuck E's in Love," "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover," "Late in the Evening," "You Make Me Feel Like Dancing," "The Hustle." You took a lot of chances. Did you feel you were pushing the envelope?

Steve: I felt like I was trying. I was looking for different types of fills. You'd get a lead sheet, and there were certain sections of the song, and at the end of one section going into another they'd want the drummer to play a fill. I would try to figure out as many different ways to do it that were interesting and still musical. That helped me to get through the many hours I spent in drum booths, waiting for someone to tell me something or waiting for the producer and the artist to listen to something. Then they'd come back and say what they wanted, whether it was the same

thing or something different. While that was going on and I didn't feel I needed to listen to the playback, I would stay in the drum room and practice. I would just think of different things to do with the hi-hat, just for my own sanity. Sometimes practicing would lead to creative things that I could use at another time on a session.

MD: I saw a video of you in session, and you listened to the song a couple times, then asked to hear a specific part, then cut it in one take. You were doing more listening than playing. In those situations, what were you listening for?

Steve: In general, if you go in the studio and people start describing the song and asking for specific things, their words will put thoughts into your head about music you haven't heard yet. Often you'd have to



erase those ideas, because the things that may happen in your head from this guy talking about music before you heard it had nothing to do with music. It's always clearer if you listen to the piece before anyone says anything about the music. Either let them play it on the piano and sing it, or if there's a demo listen to that. Look at the lead sheet while you're listening. And listen a couple of times. So then, when they're talking about it, you've got something to relate to. You look at the lead sheet, make sure letter A is where it should be. Then you're not just talking at random. They can give you a letter or a dynamic, and you've got something to apply it to, to make it clearer.

MD: Describe a day in your life in 1970s New York.

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Steve: You might do a jingle from ten to eleven. It could be a record date from ten to one and another one from two to five. And one from seven to ten. Often, after that we would go to Mikell's uptown to play with Richard Tee and Cornell Dupree and Gordon Edwards. Mikell's was the place to go, and we played some great music. The audience seemed to feel as good as we did playing. That's when it becomes spiritual and it feels magic. And you didn't want to say no to anything, because it was all so much fun. And it provided the opportunity to meet other people who were good musicians and who wanted to do the same things you were doing. The guys I met in those years are still my friends.

MD: I had heard that Rickie Lee Jones' "Chuck E's in Love" was a hard session and that she was hard to work with.

Steve: That wasn't hard. There was a song on *Pirates* called "We Belong Together"...

MD: Yes, your drumming is incredible on that track! Explosive.

Steve: She had a problem with other people playing that track. I went in and was able to understand her, even though she was having a hard time explaining it to other people. She had trouble getting the music the way she wanted it. But we had no problems. We had a ball doing "Chuck E's in Love" too.

MD: There are so many "Aja" stories. One is that you cut it on the first or second take. One goes that you were asleep and they poked you and instantly you awoke and played it perfectly, first take. Walter Becker and Donald Fagen once told me it was the second take and your playing was unbelievable.

Steve: I recall that it was another session where they'd recorded the song with different people. I'm sure the stuff was good, but it wasn't whatever they wanted. It can be hard to say what you want verbally. Talking about music and trying to explain how you want someone who plays another instrument to play it, it becomes tricky. The band was still the same, but they were trying the song with different drummers. The music was there; the band had played it. My reading was good, and I think we got through it and they just made me understand that they wanted it crazy at the end. Crazy fills. In those days people were trying to keep it simple and make it groove, and part of the song was like that. So to go from that to insane, I just went for it, and it was what they wanted. And it was just one of those things. I did something, and it gave them what they wanted for that music.

MD: Was "Aja" cut live with the band?

Steve: Yes, but Wayne Shorter overdubbed

his [sax] solo at the end.

MD: Do you remember the solo you played on Ben Sidran's version of "Seven Steps to Heaven" from *The Cat and the Hat*?

Steve: I don't remember what I played, but I remember doing that album. That was a fun session. We laughed a lot. I remember the solo. The only one who had done it before was Tony Williams, who was an idol of mine. How do you approach a song that only Tony Williams before you had soloed on? You have to come up with something completely different. Luckily I was able to do that.

MD: As far as drum solos, do you have favorites of yours?

Steve: I don't know them well enough. One doesn't come to mind. I'm still searching for the best solo and trying to play it.

Session Tools

MD: Your chart reading is legendary. What's key to being a great reader and interpreter?

Steve: The key to being a good reader is you have to read. It's like reading a book. If a kid doesn't read for a while, he may have to read a word at a time, but the more he gets into it, the more he's able to look at more words. It's the same way with reading music. The more you do, the more you're able to look at the whole chart and know how to section it off. And how to put letters A and B in, so you can mark the number of bars and phrases, things that you do to help you know where you are. The more you do it, the better it is. And I did it every day for years, and I felt really confident. But if I don't do it for a while it takes a minute. It comes back. But the way to keep it consistent is to keep doing it.

MD: How do you keep that fire in the belly?

Steve: It comes from letting the music bring it out of me. Instead of trying to make it music, just allow it to be music. Then you're becoming more a part of the whole thing and not egotistically trying to insert something.

MD: Once you recalled a session where the best thing to play for a certain track was nothing. Always purely about the music. The industry has changed so much since the '70s, with studios closing and machines all over the music. How have these huge shifts in the music business affected you?

Steve: I don't live in New York or L.A., so I'm not in a position strategically to be able to be in that recording thing where they call you the night before for the next day. Just not living in those scenes affects that. If I was living there, I'd have to keep my reading up, and I'm sure there would be some work, but there definitely isn't the work there used to be. And the kind of work there is could be a lot of overdubs, things where you go in and

play to a track. It would be different kinds of work.

MD: And you're probably not interested in that.

Steve: I would never say I'm not interested. I'm a freelance musician. I don't have the luxury to say I'm not interested. Staying interested in every kind of music is what allows you to keep working. Keeping an open mind is important.

On the Road Again

MD: You play more rock gigs now. Do you feel as challenged as you do with more jazz-oriented material?

Steve: The other gigs are challenging in other ways. Every gig has its own challenge.

MD: What's the challenge of Eric Clapton and James Taylor? I would think you could do those gigs without breathing very hard.

Steve: No. James Taylor's gig is total concentration every night, with a controlled amount of space. Eric's thing is high energy where you've got to be not only in shape with the instrument, but you have to be in shape physically. All of those things are important. Different things are important for different gigs. And it would be very hard to keep yourself musically on a level where you would just be able to jump into either of those gigs and play them perfectly the first time. But if you keep yourself at a certain level health-wise, and with the instrument, then the few days you have to do those gigs allows you to make the music the best it can be in a short period of time, and to keep it there.

MD: Do you listen to music on the road between gigs?

Steve: I listen to the next gig I have to do. When I was in New York I recorded with a keyboard player from Japan, Ai Kuwabara. She's really good. Will Lee and I did the album. When I wasn't doing that I was listening to *Three Quartets* and *The Leprechaun* for the gig with Chick at the Blue Note. I was trying to get a head start. I also listened to a lot of this album with Oscar Peterson, Stan Getz, Ray Brown, and Herb Ellis that has no drums [*Stan Getz and the Oscar Peterson Trio*]. This is smoking. The grooves are so good. There are no drums, so I get a pair of brushes and play along on a pizza box. It's so much fun. I have a ball. I just found that. I'd never heard it before, and the grooves make me smile. I'm playing that a lot.

MD: Do you keep up with drum magazines, the NAMM Show, and the drum industry in general?

Steve: My wife stays on top of that and points things out to me. I look at the pictures!

MD: Where does your interest in tattoos

come from?

Steve: I don't know. My wife and I have some of the same tattoos. That's one connection. I just got into it. I like the tribal stuff. I was drawn toward that for some reason.

Master to Master, Brother to Brother

MD: What's been the best thing about playing with so many musical masters?

Steve: They help you grow. They give so much of themselves, it helps you go to another level. I've had a great ride, and I've had the opportunity to make music and

be hired by great musicians. I've given a hundred percent, and when you go through life that way, you give to people and they give back, and you take some of that with you. You might not even know exactly what it is. It could be the way you handle yourself in the studio while trying to make a musical point. When you hear people that are inspiring, what they do stays with you. And that's what lives on. You know, we're all in this together. I'm just playing stuff that I heard other guys play before me. Keep sharing.



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Ziv Ravitz

The Urgency of Now

Story by Jeff Potter Photos by Bastien Burger

“It’s hard to define what jazz is these days,” Ziv Ravitz says. “In the end, it’s the spirit of everything being possible.” A drummer of fervent energy and inventive interplay, Ravitz freely blends elements of jazz, world music, avant-garde, and rock. His complex, fluid grooves and shifting textures conjure the sound of multi-percussionists wielding an endless sonic palette.

Growing up in Israel, Ravitz began playing professionally at age thirteen in his hometown of Be’er-Sheva and in Tel Aviv. “I saved up money since I was twelve to go to Berklee,” he recalls. After graduating from the school in 2004 with a degree in jazz composition, Ravitz relocated to

the epicenter of progressive jazz, Brooklyn. He soon toured the world and recorded with the Lee Konitz Quartet.

In addition to his ongoing six-year seat in pianist Shai Maestro’s trio, Ravitz has performed with Kurt Rosenwinkel, Mark Turner, Yaron Herman, Omer Avital, Omer

Klein, Joe Lovano, Joel Frahm, Mick Goodrick, Tomasz Stanko, Esperanza Spalding, Ben Monder, Ralph Alessi, trumpeter Avishai Cohen, TAQ, and Minsarah, among others. Here he talks about two current discs and reflects on the inner fire that fuels his passionate drumming.

MD: The Shai Maestro Trio is an ideal forum for your drumming style. You approach the kit organically, not necessarily structured by a hierarchy of layers—for instance, a “leading” ride cymbal or a “bottom” bass drum.

Ziv: While at Berklee, I met a drummer named Nat Mugavero, who was all about free playing. We had many talks and played duets together. He used to force me to go to a classroom with sticks to play the walls, the chairs. I realized how many sounds and elements you could generate from *anything*. The drums are a

vast instrument. Vast!

A lot of drummers see it as only a function—keeping the time or marking the form. But the drums are an ocean of beautiful sounds. The only thing I want to do is to capture and utilize what is already there. There are lots of opportunities in using the drumset—even a *slightly* different texture will move the music differently. You could use the rim of the high tom as a ride cymbal for a whole song, and it could generate a specific feeling for the other musicians and for yourself and the groove.



MD: You use two snare drums, including one tuned very low. Is that for sonic reasons or to have access to legato notes?

Ziv: It's a combination. I want to create a different feeling for saying the same thing. It's more than just the tuning; the snare responds differently when it's tuned lower. It's a bit more sluggish, and the decay is different. So it offers me two snare options.

Sometimes I retune the floor tom to a different pitch in the middle of the show. Or I might not use the bass drum at all—just use the floor tom, snare, and hi-hat, separating the drums into different elements, reconstructing the drumset. For example, if I use the low snare drum and use the floor tom as a bass drum, it gives a very specific color. And I'll put a little towel on the floor tom to create a muted sound and use a mallet, and that creates such a different feeling of the beat.

MD: You often make mid-song kit alterations. What determines those?

Ziv: It depends on what the music needs. I might hear a need for a change of texture. For instance, during a soft song, if a bass player decides to play a busier bass line or creates a groove repetition, I might want to make the sound of the drums "trashier" by taking out a cymbal from my bag and putting it on top of another cymbal—but slowly morphing the texture, so it's not like, "Okay, now we're in a different part of the song." Instead, you have to make everything come from within the music. The choices I make are not because I *want* to do them, but because it's what the music needs at that moment.

MD: You've released your fourth disc with Shai's trio, *The Stone Skipper*.

Tools of the Trade

"I think about the music the drums create beyond just the rhythms and the groove," Ziv Ravitz says. "There's a big place for harmonies and melodies—hearing the big picture of the music created by the drums. [So] I tune my drums to specific notes. I like having the variety of notes and using it as a harmonic instrument as well so you can really make it sing. The high tom is D, the floor tom is A, the snare is F, and the bass drum—depending on size or skin—is usually a D or E. My cymbals are G and F#."

Ravitz most often uses Canopus, Gretsch, or Yamaha Maple Custom drums, and his setups generally include two 14" snares that can vary in depth and material, an 8x12 tom, 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms, and a 14x18 or 14x20 bass drum, depending on the brand and the gig. His cymbals include 22" Bosphorus Masters and 22" Zildjian Constantinople Light rides, 14" Istanbul Agop 30th Anniversary hi-hats, 16" Jesse Simpson hi-hats, and a 20" Zildjian Dark ride modified by Jesse Simpson. His stick of choice is the Vater Sugar Maple Super Jazz 7A model, and his heads are Remo Coated Ambassadors.

Ziv: The new album is by far the best one we've done, and I'm extremely proud of it. We did something we'd never done before, which is go into the studio four or five days, sleeping there and working from morning until 1 A.M.—trying to find the right thing. There are no edits; it is what it is.

MD: While your previous disc with pianist Yaron Herman, *Everyday*, features surprising drum/keyboard duets, the new release, *Y*, takes a left turn.

Ziv: It's vastly different. This time it's a trio. The bass player, Bastien Burger, also plays guitar and keyboard. And we have guest singers coming from the pop world: Patrick Watson, Hugh Coltman, Dream Koala, and Matthieu Chedid, who's well known in France. We're trying to match the popular world and jazz world, but not in a way that's artificial.

We're taking it from the direction of the



pop artists and having the jazz mentality on top of that—but producing the album in a rock way. It's a very produced album, but it will be the same live; the produced

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Ziv Ravitz

part will still be there, but the elements can be moved around and improvised upon.

MD: Did that concept alter how you approached your drumming?

Ziv: I incorporated a lot of electronics to increase my palette of sounds. The electronic setup that I use is a set of triggers on the drums going through a Nord Drum system, which then goes through my computer for further manipulation. I use either effects through Ableton Live or a completely different instrument triggered from the drums. There are moments when I play drums and triggered bass lines in order to free up the bass player.

MD: You toured with Omer Avital, who incorporates numerous international grooves, especially from the Middle East.

Ziv: That’s a part of my sound. I come from Israel, and my grandmother is from Egypt. I heard a lot of music from that world growing up. Israel is extremely diverse musically. It’s a young country, so people come from everywhere. The evidence of the immigrant sound is there—*everyone* is an “immigrant.”

Omer asked me to play things I hadn’t played before, and it opened up a totally new page for me for understanding grooves in a different way. I had to play like the sound of four percussionists playing at the same time, but from a drumset. A lot of those sounds I developed, I use with Shai today.

I also toured for eight years and did four or five albums with [pianist] Omer Klein. We met playing with Omer Avital’s trio. They both played a lot of Arabic music, North African and West African music, music from Iraq and Yemen. This changed my vocabulary. And I embraced my roots.

MD: There has been an increasing influx of outstanding jazz musicians from Israel, including you and Shai.

Ziv: I didn’t go to music school in Israel. I grew up in the desert—*nothing!* I was not coming from the same world as some of the other jazz musicians. But what stands out with musicians from Israel is not the schooling—it’s the mentality. It’s a mentality of *urgency*. Before I left, my father gave me some advice that encapsulates what the energy of jazz musicians in Israel is. He said, “You go to a venue, put up your cymbals, you play the gig, take the cymbals off and put them on your back. You go back out on the street to go home and a truck comes by and kills you.” I said, “Okay...?”

He said, “Now go back. You’re just about to put the cymbals up on the stand. Put them on and imagine that this is the last gig of your life. Make every note count.” That advice has stayed with me and is the mantra for every gig I play. A lot of jazz musicians come over from Israel with that urgency—that this gig, this moment, this note is the most important I will ever play.

MD: Is that fostered from growing up in a landscape of conflict?

Ziv: When I was in the sixth grade, I didn’t go to school for half a year because of the Gulf War; we were in the shelter for six months. If you walked on the street, you went with a gas mask.

The urgency of life, the realization that life is fragile—you need to take the moment, because the most important time is now. When I look at what’s going on today—we need to be *real* in the moment, not selling bullshit. As humans, we can see if something is real or not; we can tell whether the feeling is real. As musicians, this is our job. This is my mission. When we play music, we are supposed to share this moment on stage together with an audience—this piece of time suspended from anything else—and get from one place to another place. And the vehicle is the music.

“My father gave me some advice. He said, ‘Imagine that this is the last gig of your life. Make every note count.’”



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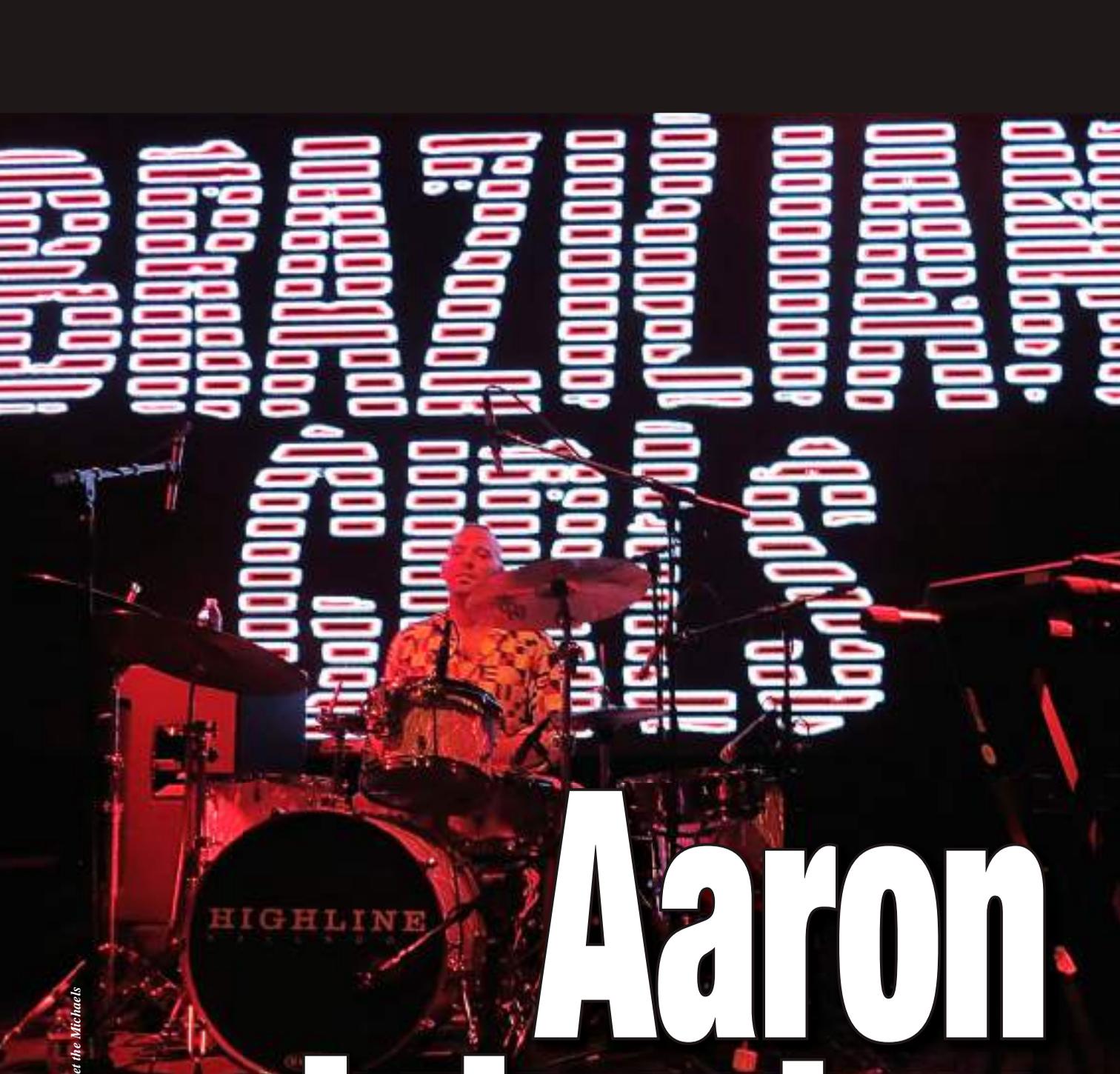
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Meet the Michaels

Aaron Johnston

With his rudimental training, skillful electronic programming, and vast international influences, this New York City–based multi-instrumentalist and producer represents the future of drumming as well as anyone who comes to mind.

Listen to Aaron Johnston's playing with the Brooklyn-based modern-world-pop band Brazilian Girls for even a short time, and you can immediately detect a world of rhythmic influences, from Africa to India to Cuba to Brazil to Indonesia to the Middle East. But Johnston isn't just a style-hopper. He intrinsically understands the nuances of songcraft and consistently plies his skills—including a flawless and playful use of multiple-bounce rudiments—to great effect, crafting engaging, dance-floor-ready beats that push forward the group's stylistic turns.

Growing up in Kansas, Johnston spent many hours listening to everything from George Jones, Merle Haggard, and Johnny Cash to Elvis Presley and the Beatles to Sly and the Family Stone, James Brown, and Earth, Wind and Fire, all blasting from a jukebox that his Southern-bred father restored. It was only the beginning of the development of the uniquely diverse musical palette that he draws from today, not only with Brazilian Girls—who are releasing their long-awaited new album this year—but with a wide range of other artists.

Following his music studies at Wichita State University, Johnston moved to the West Coast and worked with Desmond Child, the Pete Escovedo Orchestra, Darol Anger's Heritage project featuring Willie Nelson and Mary Chapin Carpenter, Andy Narell, and Omar Sosa. After moving to New York in 1998, the drummer landed gigs with Natalie Merchant, Harry Belafonte, Angelique Kidjo, Meshell Ndegeocello, and Thalia, among others. Today he divides his time between Brazilian Girls; side gigs with multi-instrumentalist Clark Gayton (Bruce Springsteen, Sting), Brian Mitchell (Levon Helm), Scott Sharrard (Gregg Allman Band), and Avi Bortnick (John Scofield); the electronic Afrobeat group Shitty Shitty Jam Band; the acoustic rock band California; and work as a DJ and producer.

We begin our conversation on the topic of Brazilian Girls' recently released single, "The Critic."

MD: "The Critic" features elements of your playing that can be heard as far back as the cut "Me Gustas Cuando Callas," from Brazilian Girls' self-titled 2005 debut album: the tough groove, the upbeat snare accents, the prominent use of double-stroke rolls, and the creative tom and cymbal work. How did that song come about?

Aaron: "The Critic" started with a loop, that midrange African/blues bass riff that you hear at the beginning of the song. I have great love for African rhythms, so I immediately was hearing an Afrobeat-meets-'50s-two-beat kind of vibe for that track.

MD: Do you have a general approach to

writing beats with Brazilian Girls?

Aaron: Brazilian Girls developed out of a club that had many great DJs. We were hearing dance music, and we wanted people to dance and have a good time. So with most of this music I'm thinking, *Get people to dance*. Quite often there are loops happening, something steady like a house beat, so I'm free to be melodic with that and to play like a percussionist and not just a drummer that has to be the timekeeper.

Beat-spirations

MD: What in your background inspires your worldly beats and rudiment-oriented fills?

Aaron: My mother had all her kids play

piano by age seven, and by the time I was eight or nine I took up the drum. I say *drum* because my first drum teacher, Jerry Reiman, had me learn the twenty-six standard rudiments up to a certain tempo before graduating to the drumkit.

In junior high I got into jazz. I was very fortunate to have some amazing teachers: Jerry Reiman, who also led the junior high band; then Gary Stroud, who led the high school jazz band; and then Todd Strait, who I took drum lessons from later. Todd introduced me to amazing jazz drummers like Roy Haynes, Philly Joe Jones, Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, and Art Blakey.

Then in my later years of high school and



by Henri Benard

Aaron Johnston

into college I became very interested in world music: music from Africa, India, Cuba, and Brazil, gamelan and Sufi music—all kinds of stuff—which led me to play more percussion, like congas and pandeiro. I've been fortunate to play with bands where I'm the only American in the band. African, Cuban, Brazilian music—that's the best schooling you can get. So between all that and being taught proper technique, I've been able to adapt to rhythms and styles from around the globe. Then I just close my eyes and let things come out in my own way.

For me, drums and percussion go hand in

hand. I love both, and they help one another. I was able to study in school and practice a lot, so that gave me the technique on a lot of hand percussion instruments. In fact, there was about a two-year span in college when I was gigging more on vibraphone and hand percussion than I was on a drumkit. My university professor, Dr. J.C. Combs, was a fantastic teacher and percussionist—not so much of a traps player, although he could play—so that threw me more into learning mallets and hand percussion, which I'm grateful for. Today I do studio work both on drums and on percussion. I'm

also programming, producing, singing, and playing keys at times.

“Woman in the Red”

MD: The new song “Woman in the Red” is another slamming track—you're driving the bus fast and wild all day. Is that a mix of programmed and acoustic drums?

Aaron: When I recorded that track we had a very basic loop at first—four on the floor with a backbeat—so there is doubling with the kick and snare of the loop plus my live take, heavy on the floor toms.

MD: How did you go about getting the huge drum tones?

Aaron: Because of the low, gritty bass synthesizer part, I decided to tune the drums about as low as I could where they still had tone.

MD: Were there any special recording techniques used to get that warm, deep, resonant sound of the snare?

Aaron: The snare was a 6.5" Ludwig Black Beauty with a Coated Ambassador batter, with a wallet on it. I do the wallet trick a lot. What's interesting about putting a wallet on the snare is that every time you hit the snare, the wallet jumps up a tiny bit, which gives a gated effect. At the same time it doesn't choke the sound of the snare, like putting gels or tape on it would. I generally have three basic snare sounds: one open, one with the wallet, and one with a thin handkerchief tied to the side so I can flip it on and off.

MD: When do you feel you understood what it means to truly be “in the pocket”? And can you comment on the importance of nailing the pocket as a pro?

Aaron: I think all music has a pocket, even if it's not dance music. There's a feel and a groove to everything. Number one, you want to be connected to the musicians with whom you're playing. As a drummer, you want it to feel good and make the other musicians on stage relaxed, so you'd better be relaxed. That doesn't always mean being a metronome, though. That's actually boring. By the time I got out of college I was way into jazz and free jazz, and it was all about having an internal clock but not really ever showing it. I loved playing around the beat. As I grew older, I learned that if you want to be a working drummer, paying your bills with music, you need to lay shit down for people and make it feel right. That's not as easy as we think, but it's important for being a working professional drummer. When you put the notes in the right place, it doesn't matter if you're playing on a shitty drumset, or on a bucket, or even on the ground with a tree branch—

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Right-Hand Technique

MD: Could you describe your signature right-hand hi-hat technique? It sounds like a single-handed 16th-note triplet.

Aaron: I remember as a kid seeing Buddy Rich do this crazy move on the hi-hat, and I wanted to do that. I never figured it out, but in the meantime I invented my own method. It's just a way to get double the notes with one hand. You can do it on the ride, hi-hat, or anything you can reach with

both ends of the stick. There's a certain technique that African drummers use; you can see it in the left hand of military drummers, which became traditional grip. But it's not traditional grip; it's more like a German grip, but the movement of the arm is different, where you're using more of the shoulder and not the wrist. It's hard to explain, but imagine you're turning the key to the ignition of a car, but with the stick in your hand. It's a certain muscle that has to be built, but once you get the power it's very effective for being able to play 16th notes in one hand and therefore keep the

other hand free to do as you please. [This technique] works well with jungle/drum 'n' bass music.

Geeking Out for Fun and Profit

MD: Besides the new Brazilian Girls music coming out this year, is there anything else special that you've been working on?

Aaron: I recently moved into a killer studio in Brooklyn, where I'll be continuing remote drum tracking and production. I've been doing this for many people over the past several years, from Paris, South America, and even Lebanon! I love the whole process of recording drums: finding the right sound and how it fits into the track, the right combination of microphones and preamps, mic placement—all that geeky stuff. And I love the challenge of someone sending me music and me sending back a fully produced drum track that fits perfectly in the mix sonically, and in terms of groove and arrangement.

Aaron Johnston is available for drum lessons via Skype or in person. He can be reached through aaronjohnstonmusic.com and via email at bgdrummer@gmail.com.

Tools of the Trade

Aaron Johnston has an ever-evolving setup, but his core kit is a custom-made Ludwig Classic Maple set featuring a 12" tom, 16" and 18" floor toms, and an 18x20 bass drum. His two main snares are a 6.5x14 Ludwig Acrolite and a 3.5x12 Tama Hammered Steel. "I asked Ludwig to send me their Classic Maple kit with nothing on it—no lugs, no finish, just bare shells," Johnston says. "Then I had my close friend Petar Timotic paint the drums and then finish them. They came out beautiful and original, and to my ears they sound even better, maybe because of the love put in."

Johnston's cymbals include 14" Bosphorus Master Vintage hi-hats and a coveted 24" Turkish K. "In my setup with Brazilian Girls I've always just used one crash/ride and a hi-hat—that's it," Aaron explains. "I do this because too many cymbals create too much wash and too many overtones. There are already many layers happening in this music, so I try for everything to find its place in the frequency spectrum. I also tend to use dark cymbals for a similar reason, especially during recording. Back in the day bright cymbals worked, because recording to tape chilled out the high end and smoothed it out nicely. In the digital world, I like to use dark cymbals and ribbon mics to get closer to the warmth that tape would give."

Johnston uses a Roland SPD-SX sample pad, Vic Firth Extreme 5A sticks, and Remo heads.



Aleks Girshevich

A twelve-year-old reaches into the “El Negro” clave bag, and more than holds his own on a disc featuring Eddie Gomez.

by Ilya Stemkovsky

Most twelve-year-olds are busy trying to beat that hot new combat video game, and even the more rhythmically inclined are trudging to weekly lessons, wondering why they need to learn that ratamacue. Not Aleks Girshevich. He was busy coming up with the involved “three handed” grooves that form the basis of the tunes on *Algorithmic Society*, a beautifully executed jazz trio recording featuring his father, Vlad, on piano and bass legend Eddie Gomez.

The cymbal touch and sophistication of the patterns and drum solos on the record are indeed a marvel, as are the gorgeous, flowing compositions. Girshevich was born in Uzbekistan but has been stateside since age four, and today he finds himself as certainly one of the youngest but more accomplished jazz drummers on the Denver music scene. “I started at the age of five,” Girshevich says, “and my dad would test me out to see if my ear was good. He would play me a rhythm, and I managed to follow it pretty easily. He is a heavy jazz player, and jazz is the route he chose for me. I don’t think I’d enjoy any other type of music as much as jazz.”

Girshevich ingested the diet of Al Jarreau, Oscar Peterson, and Keith Jarrett records that his father fed him early on, but the internet played an important part as well. “YouTube is a helpful tool,” Aleks says. “That’s where I check out a lot of super-good drummers. But I also checked out Jojo Mayer’s [instructional packages], where he explains everything about

Tools of the Trade

Girshevich plays **DW** drums, **Evans** heads, **Zildjian** cymbals, **Pearl** Horacio Hernandez cowbells, and **Vic Firth** sticks.



technique so in depth. And that really helped with my playing.”

Algorithmic Society will confound even the most seasoned of jazz listeners. It’s easy to throw out terms like “prodigy” or “mature beyond his years” when describing Girshevich’s playing, but the drumming throughout is simply brilliant for any age. Aleks would come up with parts inspired by Horacio “El Negro” Hernandez, and his father would write compositions based on those patterns. “With Horacio, he pretty much always has that left-foot-clave thing going on,” Girshevich says. “And he inspired me to do that. I learned how to solo with that at first. I thought it would be a useful tool to learn how to do that at an early age. The other thing I learned from him is how he would sound like two drummers playing. He would have one groove [going] and so many other cowbells in the background that you wouldn’t understand how they were there. So I created my grooves based upon that.”

It’s challenging enough to play jazz in a small-group setting and sound assured at a tender age, but left-foot clave and cowbell parts too? “The challenges were thinking about how all the different parts have to link together,” Girshevich explains. “And then playing the groove itself and adding the cowbell to that without having the groove fall apart. I have one cowbell with a pedal and then a few more on the drumset

itself—two attached to the kick, one on a tom, and another individually on a stand.”

So how does bassist Eddie Gomez, who’s no stranger to working in piano trios or playing with legendary drummers, get involved with a project like this? Father and son went to hear Gomez at the Denver club DazzleJazz and laid a demo disc on him. That usually *never* works, but one can imagine the high level of playing Gomez heard, and things moved into place to make a recording.

“At first it was a little frightening, considering who Eddie was and all the cats he’s played with,” Girshevich says. “But when I was in the studio, I tried to be as professional as I could be. I just tried to play music rather than worry about everything else that was going on. Eddie wanted the recording to be great. Every time he took a solo, he wanted it to be the best solo he could play. He would do a take and say he didn’t like it and keep going back until it sounded perfect. He enjoyed playing with us and put so much effort into his solos and playing well in general.”

So is Denver the last stop for this drumming phenom? Or is the plan for brighter lights? “After I graduate high school, I’ll definitely consider the New School,” Girshevich says. “There are really great players in the Denver scene, but I also need to play with other musicians in different states.”





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Interview and photos by Sayre Berman

David Gilmour's Steve DiStanislao

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- A. 6.5x14 Craviotto solid-cherry snare
- B. 9x10 tom
- C. 10x12 tom
- D. 12x14 floor tom
- E. 16x18 floor tom
- F. Remo Rototoms (8", 8", 10", and 12")
- G. 16x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Paiste

- 1. 14" Twenty Series hi-hats
- 2. 18" Signature Fast crash
- 3. 20" Sound Formula ride
- 4. 18" Signature Full crash
- 5. 20" Traditional ride with rivets
- 6. 20" Alpha flat ride
- 7. 22" 602 Modern Essential China

Heads: Aquarian Texture Coated snare and tom batters, Classic Clear bottoms, clear Force 1 bass drum batter, and Modern Vintage front

Hardware: DW 6000 series boom stand and 9000 series hi-hat, snare, boom, and double tom stands, Axis A21 bass drum pedal

Sticks: Vic Firth 5B wood-tip and Peter Erskine sticks, Split brushes, and T1 General mallets

Electronics: Aviom sixteen-channel mixer, Sensaphonics dual-driver in-ear monitors, and Porter and Davies BC Gigster tactile monitor drum throne

Miscellaneous: cast bell and Stick Hammock stick tray

Steve DiStanislao is the drummer of choice for legendary artists such as Crosby, Stills and Nash, Kenny Loggins, Don Felder, and his current employer, David Gilmour. "I tour with many different artists, and I play varying genres," says Steve. "I have all of these tools in my toolbox. The choices depend on what the artist and the engineer want. If it's a little darker sound, I'll put coated heads on the toms and muffle them down a bit. But if they want a live sound, I leave the drums wide open.

"The first thing I think about is the music, in both stylistic and dynamic terms," DiStanislao says. "David Gilmour's music runs the gamut; it can be very soft and then very loud. That requires a palette that can accommodate a very wide dynamic range. I went with coated heads for a little less attack and warmer sounds. And I added some toms.

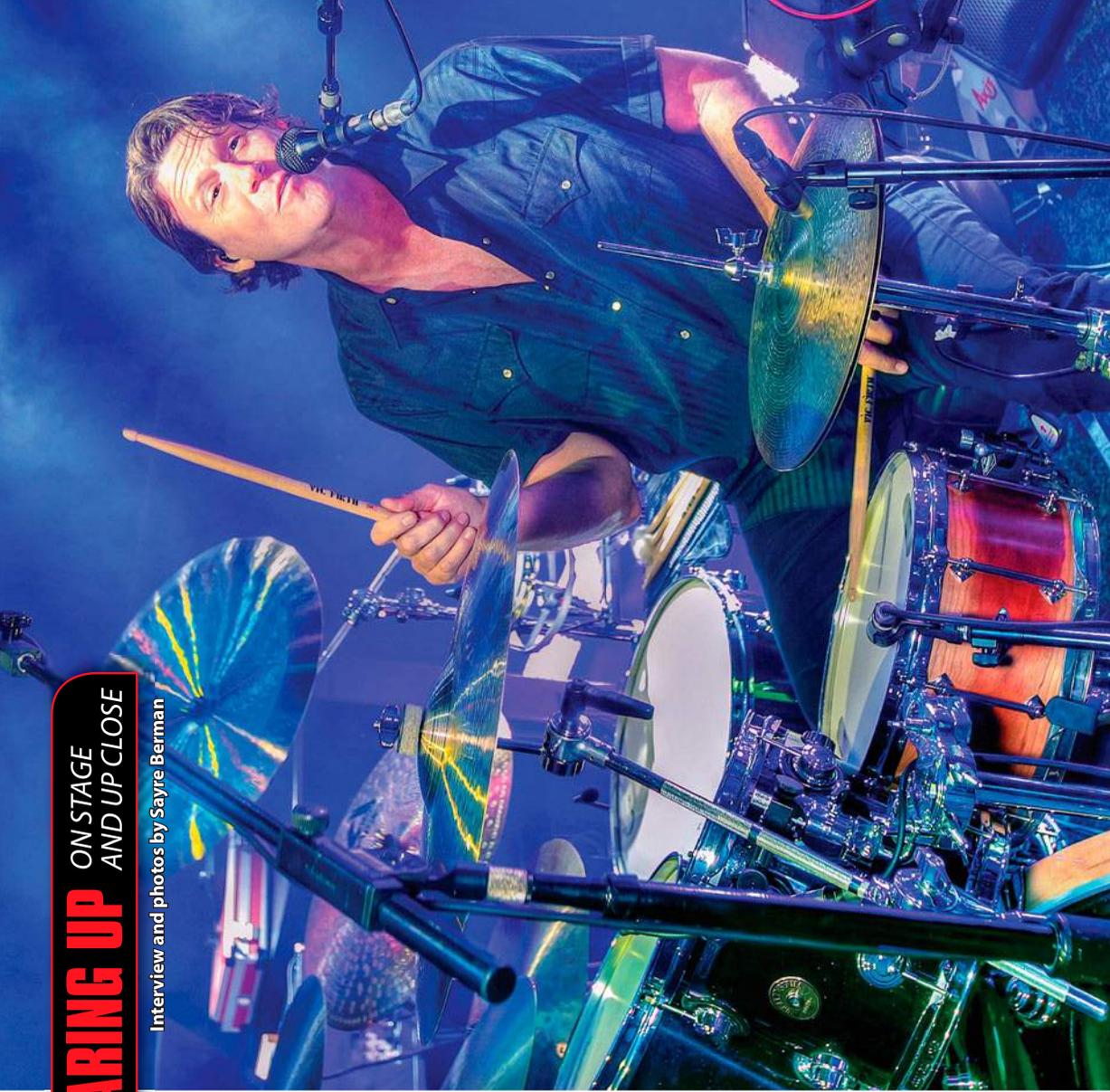
"Snare is the centerpiece of the drumset," DiStanislao continues. "With David Gilmour, I use a solid-cherry 6.5x14, which gives me the dynamic range that I require. For his music I like to have a big, open, warm sound with a crack that cuts through. This drum speaks at all dynamic levels.

"The dynamic range of the music dictates the cymbal choices as well. David and Pink Floyd's music is very ride cymbal-oriented, and I only use the '80s Paiste Sound Creation 20" ride on his gig. My crash choices are pretty much the same for all gigs; they cover the entire dynamic range."

Regarding bass drum pedals, Steve says, "I use Axis models all the time. They feel comfortable, and they're very consistent. Depending on the gig, I'll use a felt beater or a hard-plastic beater. With

Gilmour, I'll sometimes add a bit of moleskin to soften the attack a little."

Also specific to Steve's setup with Gilmour is a quartet of Rototoms and a big church-type bell. "The Rototoms are tuned for the Pink Floyd song 'Time.' And on 'High Hopes' and 'Fat Old Son,' I hit the bell, which is pitched to C, with a specially crafted mallet."





2

1

B

A

C

D

G

E

3

4

5

6

7

F





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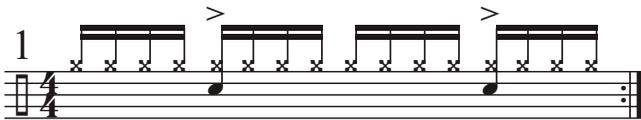


Rockin' at a Snail's Pace

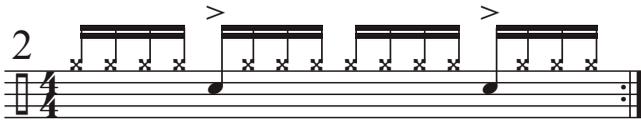
Variations for Slower Tempos

by Joel Rothman

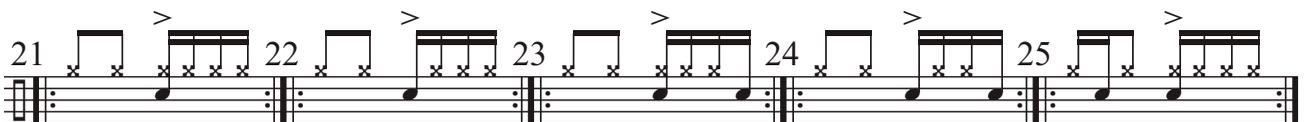
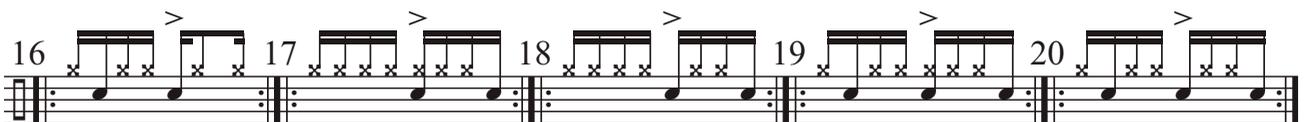
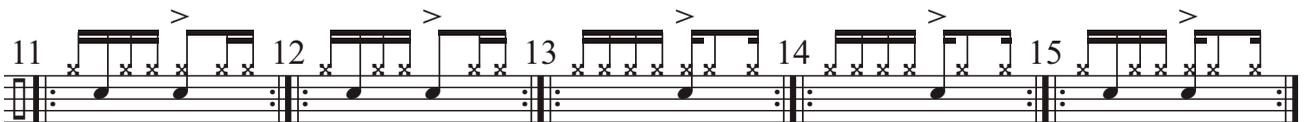
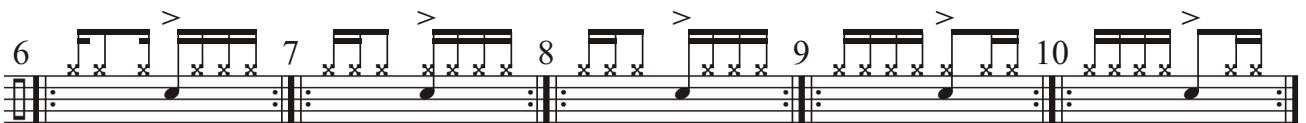
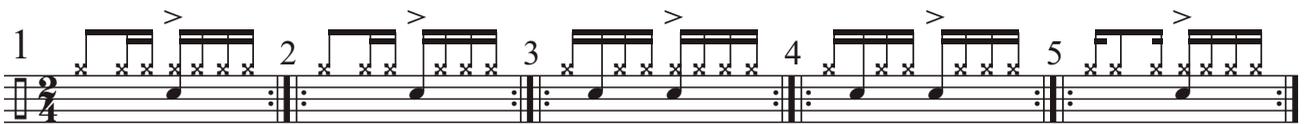
Playing slow tempos can be one of the most difficult things to master. As the distance from one beat to the next increases, the ability to accurately feel the time can decrease. When playing slower rock grooves, it often helps to use a 16th-note subdivision. The 16ths can be outlined with one hand on the hi-hat or ride.



Sometimes the tempo may not be slow enough to allow for continual 16th notes to be played comfortably with one hand. In such cases, a common variation is to simply drop the cymbal from beats 2 and 4, which allows the ride hand time to rest for a 16th note on each of those two beats. The accented backbeats on counts 2 and 4 camouflage the fact that the cymbal is missing.



The following exercises demonstrate some other possibilities that allow the riding hand to rest at various positions within the patterns while maintaining a continual 16th-note feel. In order to keep the focus on the ride hand, the bass drum is omitted. Experiment with whichever bass drum pattern you feel is appropriate for each pattern. The exercises are notated in 2/4, but you can repeat each measure to create a bar of 4/4. All unaccented snare notes should be played as light ghost notes. Once these patterns are mastered, try combining two different figures to create extra 4/4 variations.



Joel Rothman is the author of nearly 100 drum and percussion books, which sell worldwide through his company, JR Publications. For more info, visit joelrothman.com.



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Part 3: Incorporating Flams

by Libor Hadrava



Last month we applied a set of written rhythms to the drumset by accenting the figures within continual 16th notes and experimenting with different stickings. This month we'll stick to the snare and work with flams. Here's the rhythm.

1

Let's start by focusing on each right- and left-hand flam individually in order to develop precise execution before using both of them in an exercise. Play constant 16th notes with your left hand while playing right-hand flams on each corresponding note from the rhythm in Exercise 1.

In order for the sound quality and execution of each flam to be identical regardless of where it occurs in the measure, I suggest playing the low left-hand strokes soft to moderately loud and the right-handed flams loud to very loud. Practice the following exercise with a right- and left-hand lead.



2

I R L L I R L I R L L L L L L L I R L I R L L L L I R I R L L L L L L L L L L L I R
r L R R r L R r L R R R R R R R R r L R r L R R R R r L r L R R R R R R R R R R R r L

I R I R I R I R L L L L L I R L L L L L I R L L L L I R L I R L L I R L L L L L L L L L
r L r L r L r L R R R R R r L R R R R r L R R R R r L R r L R R r L R R R R R R R R R R

We often alternate flams in an actual musical context. Let's practice alternating the lead hand each measure to focus on the change in stick heights.

3

r L R R r L R r L R R R R R R r L R r L R L L L I R I R L L L L L L L L L L I R

r L r L r L r L R R R R R r L R R R R r L R L L L I R L I R L L I R L L L L L L L L

Now try switching between a right- and left-hand lead on every beat.

4

r L R R r L L I R L L R R R R I R L I R L R R R r L I R L L L R R R R L L L I R

r L r L r L r L L L L L R r L R R L L I R L R R R r L L I R L L r L R R R L L L L

Groove Construction

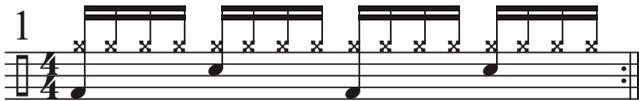
Part 12: 16th-Note Metronome Training

by Jost Nickel



In this lesson we'll work on perceiving a metronome on various 16th-note partials. These exercises will improve your ability to hear different rhythms before you start playing them, and they'll certainly improve your timing.

I recommend using any 8th- or 16th-note groove throughout this lesson to lock in with the metronome's shifted position. Here's an example of a suggested groove.



Now turn on a quarter-note click at 60 bpm, and get used to the tempo by playing the groove along with the metronome.



Now play the same groove while trying to hear the click as offbeat 8th notes. If you're having trouble perceiving the click in this position, play a few bars of Exercise 2 until you've gotten used to the tempo. Stop the click, but keep playing. Then start the click on an 8th-note offbeat while still playing.



Next, try hearing the click on every fourth 16th-note partial, or the "ah" of each beat.



Now we'll try to hear the click on the "e" of each beat, or the second 16th-note partial.



Spend time practicing Exercises 2–5 individually, and then try to play them all in a row. With your metronome set at 60 bpm, play Exercise 2 until it's comfortable. Then stop playing while leaving the click on, and proceed to Exercise 3. Before you start playing the groove, shift your perception of the click to 8th-note offbeats. Then move on to Exercises 4 and 5 using the same method. Once all four interpretations of the click are comfortable, raise the tempo. This concept gets more difficult at faster tempos.

In the accompanying video for this lesson, which you can watch at moderndrummer.com, I play the previous exercises in a single demonstration. Before each example, I take time to

shift my perception of the click.

Next we'll try to hear the click in groups of three 16th notes. Make sure you're comfortable with three-note, 16th-based groupings in 4/4 before continuing. I suggest setting the metronome to 70 bpm when working through the following exercise.



For a more advanced exercise, try hearing the click on every fifth 16th-note partial. Again, make sure you're comfortable with playing in groups of five 16th notes first. I suggest setting the metronome to 50 bpm, but use any tempo that helps you perceive the click in groups of five 16th-note partials.



Take your time with these exercises, as they can take weeks or months to master. By working on one exercise at a time, you'll eventually learn to hear the click in different 16th-note positions. Each time you practice, try to take a few minutes to work on one of these examples—this ear-training routine will definitely improve your timing. For more practice 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.



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Beyond the Noteheads

Part 3: Varying Your Transcriptions

by Steve Fidyk



This month we'll apply variations to some of the transcribed phrases from Part 2 of this series (March 2017). This process truly has no limits. I find that being opened-minded to practicing transcriptions with this method helps energize my practice sessions as I delve deeper into the music.

I have some university students who might spend hours transcribing only to play a transcription once in a final jury performance. I prefer to extract phrases that grab my attention from complete transcriptions and develop them creatively so that I have options at a variety of tempos and styles when improvising.

Let's start with Harvey Mason's classic funk groove from the Herbie Hancock tune "Chameleon."

♩ = 99

1

Once you have control of the pattern, try playing the groove in retrograde (backwards).

2

Also try starting the original groove on beat 3.

3

Let's apply a swing ride pattern to the original transcription while converting each written 16th note to a swung 8th note and each 8th note to a quarter note.

4

Now try applying a displaced dotted-quarter-note hemiola pattern on the bass drum, and orchestrate the snare and bass drum rhythms around the kit using a swing feel.

5

Fusing Ideas and Styles

Next let's look at the phrase Jimmy Cobb played with Miles Davis on "Softly, As in a Morning Sunrise," from the album *In Person: Saturday Night at the Blackhawk*. Use the first two bars, invert them, and play this new figure as a fill with the original "Chameleon" groove.

♩ = 99

6

Another fun practice idea is to reorder the measures in a phrase at random. Let's start Jimmy Cobb's phrase on measure 8 before playing bars 1, 5, 2, 7, 3, 6, and 4, in that order.

♩ = 188

For coordination, try repeating the pickup rhythm from the classic Roy Haynes solo in "Snap Crackle" (from his album *Out of the Afternoon*) with the hi-hat foot while playing swing time on the ride, and then read the solo transcription over the hi-hat ostinato.

♩ = 170

Now try the solo in retrograde, utilizing the same coordination application.

♩ = 140

These are but a few creative variations. Using this method allows me to practice transcriptions in a more thorough and exhaustive way. I encourage you to try this approach with other transcriptions to come up with your own variations. Have fun!

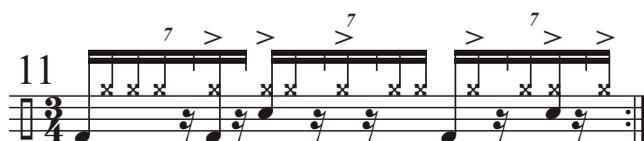
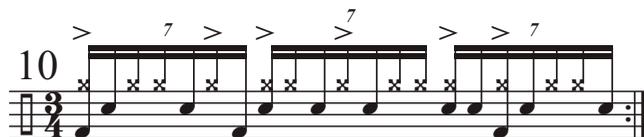
Steve Fidyk has performed with Terell Stafford, Tim Warfield, Dick Oatts, Doc Severinsen, Wayne Bergeron, Phil Wilson, and Maureen McGovern, and he's a member of the jazz studies faculty at Temple University in Philadelphia. For more info, including how to sign up for lessons via Skype, visit stevefidyk.com.



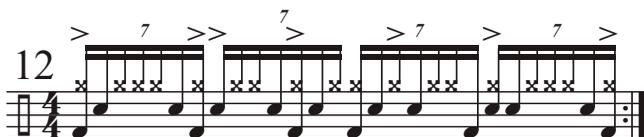
Next we'll try a different section of Exercise 2 by isolating beats 2, 3, and 4. Exercise 9 demonstrates this section of the phrase with a quarter-note bass drum pattern.



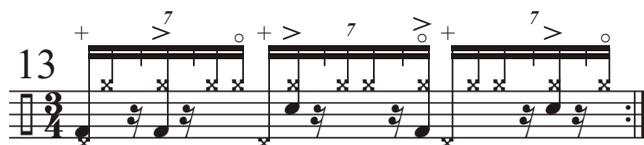
The following examples create beats using permutations of this new right-hand pattern. Focus on the syncopated kick and hi-hat accents instead of strictly accenting the quarter notes.



In Exercise 12 we'll loop another permutation of the previous pattern and place it into a bar of 4/4. Now the right-hand pattern on beat 1 occurs again on beat 4 before the whole phrase repeats.



The last example places the rhythm from Exercise 9 onto the hi-hats while replacing the right-hand hi-hat note on beat 1 with the hi-hat foot. The left foot will also play quarter notes on beats 2 and 3, which naturally opens up the hi-hats on the last partial of each septuplet.



Practicing these permutations will make the original seven-over-five polyrhythm easier to play. I also find that displacing patterns across odd rhythms almost always yields variations that I enjoy more than the original phrases. It's inspiring to know that there are new rhythms hidden within almost everything you play, if you look deep enough.



Aaron Edgar plays with the Canadian prog-metal band Third Ion and is a session drummer, clinician, and author. He teaches weekly live lessons on Drumeo.com. You can find

his book, *Boom!!*, as well as information on how to sign up for private lessons, at aaronedgardrum.com.



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Do I Need an Attorney?

Part 2: Navigating Contract Negotiations

by Russ Miller



In last month's column, we discussed whether or not you should hire a lawyer for your business dealings. This time we dive a bit deeper into a few specific topics that you may have to deal with at some point in your career. I asked my attorney, Paul Quin, for his input once again. Let's dig in!

What do I do about bad deals made without using an attorney?

This is the familiar story of the artist getting taken advantage of by a big business. I was once naive and bought

contracts. He told me, "We negotiate the players' deals with two things in mind. First, we want them to be an incredible asset to the organization. That means on the field but also as a business investment. So if they become superstars, the team profits from it in every way. Second, we want them to focus on playing. We don't want them to have any money or personal issues that could affect their performance."

To operate on such a high level consistently, these players have to stay ultra-focused. The team doesn't want them worried about their electric bills. Of course,

get involved before you sign an agreement than it is to help you get out of one."

What are some basic recommendations for someone starting out in the music business?

Paul has great advice on this topic:

"Younger players need to learn how to protect themselves from liability. That can be done though forming a business entity. In most cases an LLC works best, but that can change depending on the situation. If you're playing in a band, you should always have a band agreement, which is a contract between the members that will set forth how profits and losses are shared. The contract should also include whether or not money will be pooled for common purposes, how voting on band issues will be determined (unanimous or majority), and who can use the band's name if you break up. The purpose of the agreement is to anticipate problems and develop solutions in advance. This will save money if acrimony leads to lawsuits. Also, every artist needs to understand how publishing works, and how he or she can collect through ASCAP, BMI, SESAC, and other organizations. Protecting your creation will impact your longevity in the business."

With that said, I want to make sure to point out that it's very important to know *when* to bring in an attorney. You can potentially tarnish your reputation and put off people if you say, "Talk to my lawyer." Sometimes I know the people involved in a deal really well, so I don't want to alienate them by putting an attorney between us. In those situations, I might do the entire negotiation myself, taking Paul's advice on the side and then letting him review the contracts once they're drafted. Or sometimes I'll have Paul look at a contract first. The bottom line is that it's not easy to make a living in the music business. You have to be on top of your game, knowledgeable, and prepared, while also remembering to keep the focus on doing what you wanted to be doing in the first place—playing music!

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

"The best way to predict your future is to create it."

—Abraham Lincoln

into the whole "we're all family" argument in regard to some business dealings I had with companies when I was younger. Unfortunately I overlooked the fact that they were big corporations with full legal departments that didn't necessarily share my sentiment. I unknowingly signed papers that removed me from royalties, patents, and other serious income possibilities. The products became successful, so if I had the knowledge I do now, I might be napping on a yacht in the Caribbean today. It was a lesson learned the hard way, for sure.

I asked Paul Quin about when to get an attorney involved in contract negotiations. "Do it as early as possible," he says, "and definitely once something has been committed to in writing. But you can be contractually tied with just a memo, an oral agreement, or even an email, so get your lawyer involved as early as you can. Pending your relationship with the business or person you're dealing with, it's sometimes beneficial to have your lawyer work behind the scenes by advising and drafting contracts for you. Sometimes having the formal involvement of a lawyer can escalate the stakes too high too soon. But you should always discuss a potential deal with your attorney first."

To continue to grow, focus on what you do at a high level.

My wife's uncle is a great NFL coach. I've asked him many questions over the years about NFL dealings. One of his answers that stuck out was in regard to the players'

the average NFL player's contract involves more money than the average drummer's contract, but the principle is the same. We need to put extra emphasis on our artistry. So if we need to hire somebody to alleviate the time, effort, and worry involved in legalities, then it makes sense to do so. Paul has represented me in several legal dealings over the years, and here's his input on this topic: "Our dealings haven't been atypical. I spend some time chasing down money owed, but most of the time I'm dealing with contract negotiations and revisions, whether that's with management, agents, record labels, or publishers. Many independent labels have good intentions but struggle when it comes to meeting obligations concerning royalty statements. I spend some time keeping them honest. Publishing, licensing, and royalty agreements can be complicated as well. And negotiations for sync licenses have become an increasingly important part of my practice. Because sync licenses are unfixed (rather than statutory, like mechanical licenses), negotiations can be time-intensive and can require a lot of strategy to make sure you receive fair payment.

"There's also an educational component to my practice when working with younger artists," Paul continues. "Although overflowing with talent, they often enter the industry with little knowledge of how it works. Making sure that they're protected from the outset takes a lot of time. Oftentimes it's cheaper to have an attorney





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The slim Sliver Essentials stick bag fits four pairs of drumsticks. Both bags are made from weatherproof ballistic nylon and synthetic leather. The Transport Deluxe stick bag lists for \$62.99, and the Sliver Essentials lists for \$32.99.

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RETAILER PROFILE

Fred Pierce's Studio Drum Shop

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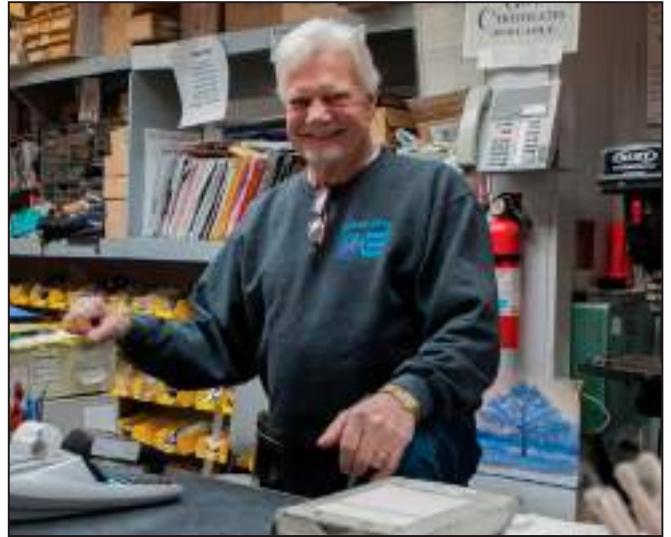
For forty-five years, Fred Pierce has been serving drummers of the St. Louis area in a cozy space he bought outright back in 1972 after moving from Nashville.

In Music City, Pierce was a working musician during the '60s, serving as a staff drummer for the Glaser Brothers publishing company while playing with everyone from George Jones to Kinky Friedman. In St. Louis, he's established one of the longest-operating dedicated drum shops in the country, one that's outlasted the local drums-only competition (Drum Headquarters, which closed after thirty years in 2011) while holding its own against several nearby Guitar Centers.

Pierce shares with *MD* his observations on nearly half a century in business, beginning with the story of one particular young customer who'd go on to drumming superstardom....

Dave Weckl grew up in this store. His dad started bringing him here when he was thirteen. And I've stayed friends with him over the years. He's just a very cool guy. He was very dedicated—I mean, to the max. You could tell right away: This guy was going to go somewhere. He was a little different. He didn't take lessons in the store, but he'd go down in the basement and work on stuff. And look where he is now. Who's a better player? I don't know.

Your hand-percussion market here is not like in L.A. or New York. You have to know these things. You don't want to have fifteen or twenty cajons sitting on the floor, or some high-end Gon Bops that list for \$1,000 apiece—that's not gonna happen here. A professional set of congas here in St. Louis is an LP Aspire. It's a funny thing, but that's just the way it is. You've got to have eye candy, sure. But you've got to have a



store full of stuff that people can afford. I've got a four-piece Pearl Masterworks kit, Artisan series—just four drums—and it lists for \$8,100. Beautiful drums, but okay, who buys that? It's not the local working or part-time musician. You don't have to spend a ton of money to get a good-sounding drumset nowadays. And let's face it, if you're only making \$75 or \$100 a night playing, and the price of sticks just went up again, how's a working musician [supposed to] afford to do all this?

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Not only does Fred Pierce sell Pearl drums, he's endorsed them. Pinned to a wall in his shop, among signed pictures of drum legends like Ed Shaughnessy, Bernard Purdie, and Roy Burns, is a page from Pearl's 1973 catalog featuring the pro drummer turned shop owner. Pierce was making a living on stage and in the studio until back problems forced him off the road soon after this shot was taken. "I moved back to St. Louis, and a friend of mine who was the drum guy here was going to California to work for Drum Workshop," Fred recalls. "He handed me a list and said, 'Okay, you're the drum guy in St. Louis now.' So I started the shop. I might be the oldest guy in America right now still running his own drum shop."

nobody had ever heard of them. So I took a chance with them.

One of the hardest things I had to learn was that you can't be everything to everybody. It's just not going to happen. There's always going to be someone that comes in who you just can't please. Some people come in, and, just because they've read about some cymbal or drum online, now they think they know everything there is to know about everything. And they start telling you what works and what doesn't work. And you've got to be careful what you say there. It's sticky business.

Fifty years is my goal. Why not? I can work here and I don't have to draw a salary. I

own the building—that's key. The magic word to me is *fun*. If I ever get to the point where I'm not having fun running the store, I'll quit. I'm seventy-eight and it's still fun. I like the interaction with people. I love not seeing a guy for twenty years, and he says, "I'm just getting back into it," and I can help him do that. I'm still out playing three times a week, and I think that helps business. I'm still out on the scene. I know what's working, what isn't working. I'm meeting other musicians. I feel part of something. I'm not the kind of guy that can just sit down and watch TV all day. It's a good goal, fifty years.

*Interview by Patrick Berkery
Photos by Madison Thorn*



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RECORDINGS

Ty Segall *Ty Segall*

A leader of the current generation of amped-up guitar/bass/drums auteurs delivers yet another raging slab of wax, this time backed by a totally in-tune drumming accomplice.

In “Break a Guitar,” the roaring opening salvo of neo-garage-rock icon Ty Segall’s new, self-titled album, Segall sings the line, “Oh, baby, take a guitar, I want you to be a big star.” But if the rhyme and rhythm had worked out, Segall could easily have chosen the word *drumset* instead. There’s an ecstatic, optimistic bounce to nearly everything the multi-instrumentalist has put down during his super-prolific ten-year recording career (he’s been a major contributor to more than forty solo and band releases thus far), and this new batch of songs is no exception. It’s simply impossible to listen to the man’s music and not want to immediately drop whatever it is you’re doing and go whale on your favorite axe.

Though Segall has played drums on his own and other artists’ albums, this one finds his regular collaborator **CHARLES MOOTHART** laying it down.

Another gifted multi-instrumentalist, Moothart is totally simpatico with Segall, and takes the perfect approach to each of the leader’s mood turns, whether it’s the tumbling, cathartic, full-kit slamming demanded by “Break a Guitar” and “The Only One,” the hyper broken-up snare/tom/hats pattern of “Freedom,” the loosey-goosey space jamming of the ten-plus-minute “Warm Hands (Freedom Returned),” or the laid-back country-honk grooves of “Talkin’” and “Orange Color Queen.” If real, visceral rock ‘n’ roll is to survive in the current ever-mechanized environment, Segall and Moothart could wind up being the artists we most look to for guidance. (Drag City) **Adam Budofsky**



Dave Douglas/Frank Woeste *Dada People*

CLARENCE PENN lends his cerebral approach to new sounds inspired by the past.

Essentially a post-bop collaboration between trumpeter Dave Douglas and pianist Frank Woeste, *Dada People* finds improvisational inspiration through the freedom of visual artists like Man Ray, and the results are at once striking and subtle. Douglas and drummer Clarence Penn have a history, so listening skills are on full display, as on the intricate give and take between both players on opener “Oedipe.” Penn’s assured dynamic sense and cymbal touch propel the crooked waltz of “Mains Libres,” and the drummer flirts between triple and duple feels but remains in absolute control. Dig the sloshy hats and odd times at the top of “Noire et Blanche,” before Penn solos briefly over a vamp with a flurry of snare singles and ride syncopations. Woeste adds a Fender Rhodes flavor in addition to his acoustic piano work, and Penn’s accompaniment seems to change along with that, so the music doesn’t ever feel stagnant. In these able hands, what’s old is new again. (Greenleaf Music) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Dolan died in 2012 never knowing the fate of these songs, a tragic situation serving to underscore the poignancy of the performances.

On the first four tracks (what would have been the original LP’s first side), drummer **PRAIRIE PRINCE** (Tubes, Todd Rundgren, XTC) is nimble and busy, conversing with percussionist **SPENCER DRYDEN** (Jefferson Airplane, New Riders of the Purple Sage) and shadowing Hopkins’ polished flourishes and the lyrical flow of Dolan’s soaring and heartbreaking vocals. “Side two” features the crisp and steady hi-hat and snare work of Copperhead drummer **DAVID WEBER**, charging a musical atmosphere buzzing with intelligently designed guitar solos by Neal Schon (Journey, Santana). Worth the wait? Yes, but it’s mystifying that in the era of country rock and the singer-songwriter, the record label failed to recognize the intrinsic value of this material in the first place. (High Noon/Warner Bros.) **Will Romano**

Mark Dresser *Seven Sedimental You*

A wild but razor-sharp example of structured freedom from JIM BLACK.

If you’re looking for some finger-snappin’, spang-a-lang jazz, you ain’t gonna find it here. This exciting collection of improvisers assembled by bassist Mark Dresser is, rather, tasked to execute complex, ambitious, “on the edge of out” compositions *and* solo with abandon.

But there’s nothing loose about Jim Black’s voice on the drumkit, with his use of extended techniques and ability to provide brilliant support. Trombone, clarinet, flute, violin, and piano round out the front line, so the tonal possibilities are vast. Black’s brushes and bass drum hits float underneath Marty Ehrlich’s clarinet pass in “I Can Smell You Listening” before the drums get busier and increasingly conversational alongside a more free solo turn from pianist Joshua White. Also check out the staccato punctuations and backbeats from Black on “Newtown Char.” From pianissimo sensitivity to chaotic bombast in the blink of an eye, Black is a master of the unexpected. (Clean Feed) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Terry Dolan *Terry Dolan*

Some forty years after it was recorded, the debut album of this cult country/folk/blues rocker has finally surfaced.

Warner Bros. Records inexplicably shelved this once-hidden gem in 1973, despite a stellar cast of musicians and the oversight of two producer/arrangers, multi-instrumentalist Pete Sears and piano man Nicky Hopkins (Rolling Stones, the Who, John Lennon). Jilted, Dolan eventually acquiesced, and in the ensuing decades built a strong following as the leader of the Bay Area phenomenon Terry and the Pirates.



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TAKING THE REINS

Jerome Jennings *The Beast*

The Cleveland native swings and shuffles with the effortless dexterity of his childhood hero, Art Blakey, on his bandleader debut.

Boasting more than a decade's worth of experience on the New York jazz scene, Jerome Jennings displays a knack for exploring variations on traditional jazz patterns within this collection of compositions. As a result, the nine tracks that comprise his first solo record manage to sound modern while maintaining the warmth and presence of the classic Impulse! label recordings that have enjoyed reissues in recent years. Some tunes on *The Beast*, like the New Edition tribute "Cool It Now," feel like spiritual heirs of '90s R&B, demonstrating the oft-overlooked common ground between jazz, second-line, and pop drumming. Others, such as the rearranged dessert-truck jingle "Ice Cream Dreams," work as innovative re-imaginings of mid-century jazz. Overall, *The Beast* serves as a potential turning point in an already successful career, adding "dynamic bandleader" to Jennings' impressive résumé. (Iola) **Keaton Lamle**



Benny Greb's Moving Parts *Live*

Elastic patterns and live fireworks of the subtle kind.

This impeccably recorded live document from Greb's 2014 guitar/keys/drums trio tour highlights everything that's great about the German drummer's highly advanced conception of rhythm. While he might not show concern for an audience's skeletal health—if you attempt to dance to this stuff, your ankles will break—Greb obviously loves to work our brain cells, diving into lots of sophisticated metric modulation executed with breathtaking control. The material is essentially groove-based electric fusion, but Greb pulls and stretches everything apart with insane fills anchored by an immovable internal clock. Check out the colorful use of multiple hi-hats and snares on "Next Question" and a show-stopping extended solo on "Nodding Hill," on which the drummer toys with the time as the audience claps along. Known for his progressive books and instructional videos, Greb applies it all to a real-world live stage with masterful results. (Herzog) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Afro Bop Alliance Big Band *Revelation*

Supersizing is a winning approach for this group's brand of high-energy Afro-Caribbean jazz.

On its sixth outing, the ABA once again expands to a big band, and to be sure, this lineup is sonically colossal, it's aggressive, and it *drives*. Drummer/leader **JOE MCCARTHY** is a grooving, precise player who lubricates his power flow with finesse and dramatic dynamics. His command informs the attitude and sound of the whole band, especially the crisp and nimble brass section.



Revelation is one of the group's most adventurous discs, largely due to three complex ten-and-a-half-minute compositions by Roland Vazquez, who also conducts the numbers. On those excursions, the outfit expertly straddles a big band and orchestral mindset. McCarthy's teamwork with conguero **Samuel Torres** is especially effective on the Vazquez number "Family of Four," where they deftly guide the band between intricate, shifting grooves and textures. Another forward stride for this D.C.-based unit. (OAA2 Records) **Jeff Potter**

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A Farewell to Kings

Rush *Time Stand Still*

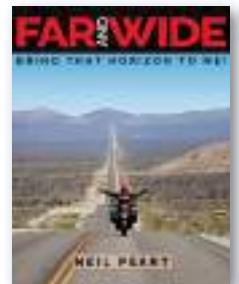
Neil Peart *Far and Wide: Bring That Horizon to Me!*

Sometime in 2015, during Rush's R40 run commemorating its fortieth anniversary as a band, Neil Peart kinda, sorta announced he was retiring from touring. Well, the mystery can be put to rest, as these two releases confirm the end of an era.

As a documentary, *Time Stand Still* avoids a detailed career retrospective, instead focusing on inter-band relationships and the looming and bittersweet finality of the last shows. Sprinkled throughout are R40 performance clips, crew interviews, and fan musings on what the band has meant to them. Most illuminating to diehards will be descriptions of Neil Peart's history of ailments, from elbow tendinitis to fungal infections. In that light, it's a miracle the last tour happened at all. Peart's "Drum Also Waltzes" backstage warm-up routine and an hour-long snippet of live footage from the *Presto* tour are welcome bonuses. (Rounder, \$16.49 Blu-ray/13.99 DVD)



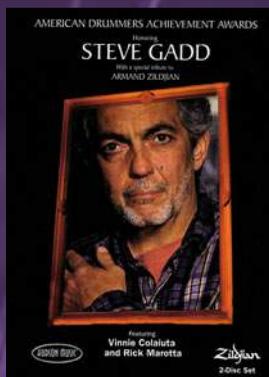
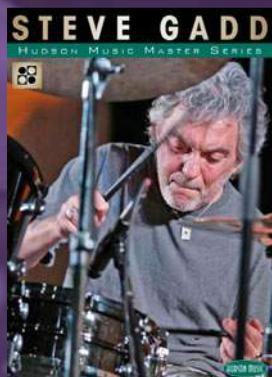
The book *Far and Wide* continues Peart's erudite and personal writing style, bringing the reader along on his motorcycle adventures. Neil looks back on the R40 tour and five decades of drumming with humor and humility, but ultimately with the satisfaction of having achieved something with those "two lumps of wood," and he leaves at the top of his game, one he helped invent and refine over time. (ECW Press, \$32.95)



These two titles are a must for fans of Rush and its legendary drummer. Let's hope at least the studio beckons in Peart's future. **Ilya Stemkovsky**



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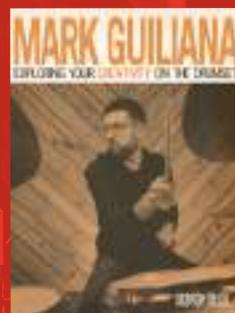
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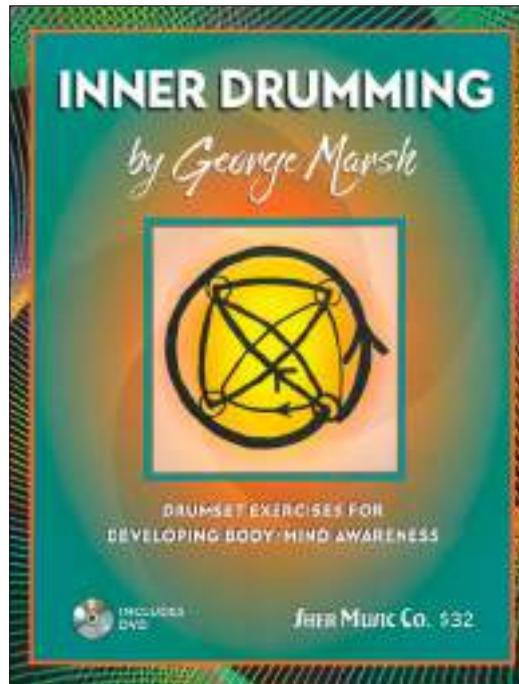
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George Marsh's *Inner Drumming*

by Elizabeth Walsh

You're not going to work on any of the standard drum rudiments in this book. The notation is unfamiliar, and awareness of the energy flow within your body is a key component of the method. But *Inner Drumming* is a remarkable book that can help you improve your overall technique while expanding your horizons as a musician. Instead of remaining focused on the physical actions that create music, *Inner Drumming* is designed to free you to take your art to an entirely new dimension, or return to your current practice routine with fresh ears.

Author George Marsh, a veteran *Modern Drummer* Advisory Board member, brings a wealth of experience to his work. Marsh began playing professionally when he was fifteen, and he's worked within the worlds of jazz, rock, classical, and the avant-garde, recording and/or touring with Joe



Henderson, Mose Allison, Jerry Garcia, the Kronos Quartet, Pauline Oliveros, and David Grisman, among many others. As a player he's never been afraid to explore new concepts. This attitude also applies to his teaching practice. While he agrees that it's essential to master stick control, Marsh also draws from nonmusical sources like the *I Ching*, a Chinese divination text also used to generate random selections. In the new, expanded edition of *Inner Drumming* (the book was originally released independently in 1983 and is now being put out by Sher Music), George draws on another Chinese discipline, t'ai chi ch'uan, to bring the action of practicing inward.

T'ai chi was originally a martial art whose name means "supreme ultimate fist." It's since developed into a series of very slow exercises designed to create relaxation of both body



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and mind. The flow of energy throughout the body is a significant component of the discipline, and it's an important influence on *Inner Drumming*. Marsh is a longtime student of t'ai chi, and his teacher, Robert Amacker, appears on the DVD that comes with the book to discuss the concepts behind *Inner Drumming*. The two even play a duet, Marsh on kit and Amacker on frame drum.

"I learned the power that you can have if you focus on energy movement within your body and feel not only what's happening externally, but what's happening internally," Marsh tells *MD*. "When I looked at it very closely, I realized that you need to work with one limb at a time. Then you need to work with two limbs at a time, then three, and then all four. Not only that—especially after dealing with one limb, you need to work with the internal movement from one limb to the other limb so that you can deeply feel what's going on."

Marsh's approach to drumming—and, it should be said, to listening—may be challenging at first, but it *can* be mastered with practice. A concept integral to *Inner Drumming* is "listening with the limbs." In this context, listening is not simply the mind's reaction to a sound created on the drums. It includes much more: the action of the arm or leg, the internal visualization of the energy flow, and a conscious relaxation before and after each stroke.

Marsh insists that students of any level can learn from *Inner Drumming*. There are hundreds of exercises in the book, based on the

many different possible combinations of limbs involved in playing the drums. The goal is to practice different "flows" until the actions and direction of energy become second nature. Each exercise should be worked on as slowly as possible, while maintaining not only awareness of each movement but also the flow of energy between limbs. Eventually the coordination and balance needed to move between the limbs will be something that you no longer think about consciously.

As stated above, you won't be coming up against traditional music notation in this book. While alternative notation methods have a reputation for being confusing, Marsh has created diagrams that are both informative and easy to understand. Rather than simply representing note values played on specific drums, Marsh's system traces out the energy flow between limbs. The diagrams give specific instructions about which drum to strike with which limb, and in what order. The DVD is a very useful supplement to the book, especially when it comes to getting started and understanding the notation.

Marsh says that after spending time with his own method, he found that "the eventual result is that you're not thinking about the exercises. They become energy flows coming out of all four limbs, which create a heightened awareness of what goes on when you're playing."

Study Suggestions

At first, Marsh explains, it may seem difficult to experience the feeling of energy moving throughout your body, but you shouldn't be discouraged. "All of this internal stuff starts from what I would call your center in your body—the lower belly. As you envision this

movement of energy, you may see colors or feel warmth. Or it may start as kind of an intellectual thing. But it actually works. There's no one way to do it. Just get started and see what happens.

"After you've gotten into the concepts of the book by watching the DVD,"

Marsh says, "you can start at the very beginning. Anyone can do it. Just make sure you start by working with each individual limb very slowly—not being in a hurry. This is the opposite of what most drummers would do, including me! We want to play *fast*."



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The 2016 Hollywood Custom and Vintage Drum Show



This past October 8, the 2016 Hollywood Custom and Vintage Drum Show packed the Glendale Civic Auditorium in Glendale, California, with gear, drumming enthusiasts, and great performances and clinics. Vendor booths were filled with the latest drums from Acoustin, BoneYard, Craviotto, DW, Dunnett, George Way, Gretsch, INDe, Jenkins-Martin, Ludwig, Mayer Bros., PDP, Pork Pie, RBH, Sleishman, and Yamaha, as well as cymbals from 37 Cymbals, Istanbul Mehmet, Paiste, Sabian, and Zildjian. Drumhead vendors included Aquarian, Evans, and Remo, and Promark and Vic Firth presented their latest drumsticks and accessories. Music retailers Guitar Center and Professional Drum Shop offered tempting deals throughout the day. And for collectors, a tantalizing array of vintage drums was on display, including a beautiful early-'60s Rogers Starlite drumset in a Mardi Gras Pearl finish.



Drummer Matt Johnson, who's played with St. Vincent, Rufus Wainwright, and Jeff Buckley, opened the show's clinic roster. Johnson played along to an ethereal, sitar-driven track and demonstrated an amazing sense of musicality and space, as well as an ability to weave effortlessly through various implied time signatures. Next, Gordon Goodwin's Bernie Dresel played with his masterful jazz group, the BBB. Dresel's extraordinary playing drove the band with great energy, dexterity, and fluidity.

Stevie Wonder's Stanley Randolph discussed how performing in church and marching band early on allowed him to develop his feel and technical ability. Both of those qualities were evident in his clinic, which was a lesson in tasty grooves, cool licks, funky feels, and syncopation. California Transit Authority drummer and former Chicago member Danny Seraphine closed out the clinics and received a warm welcome from the audience. Seraphine played the classic Chicago tune "25 or 6 to 4" and several great CTA songs. Afterward, Seraphine signed copies of his autobiography, *Street Player: My Chicago Story*.

Kerry Crutchfield, the show's producer, sponsor, and emcee, shared some thoughts about the event. "We had a really great vibe at the show this year," he told *MD*. "Bernie Dresel and his sixteen-piece big band were absolutely killer. Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee Danny Seraphine shared some history and played his butt off. I'm already looking forward to next year!"

Story and photos by Bob Campbell



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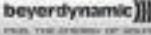
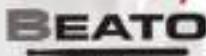
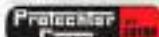
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This light, tight, and customized setup comes from Steve Fruda, from Norwalk, Connecticut, who decided to downsize after a few seasons of nonstop wedding gigs with his New York City-based band, the Elements. The early-2000s Premier Artist Heritage Club kit includes a 5.5x13 snare, a 6x10 rack tom, an 11x13 floor tom, and an 8x20 bass drum, and the entire setup fits into three compact bags.

“Long gone are the days of lugging around an 18x22 bass drum with deep toms and heavy double-braced cymbal stands,” Fruda says. “My idea for this kit started about eight years ago. I loved the sizes of the set but wasn’t sure about the quality of sound that these would produce. So I took a leap of faith, and it proved to be the right move. The drums sound massive. And this kit has proven to be very portable, lightweight, and reliable, wedding after wedding.”

Among Fruda’s ideas was to build a setup that didn’t rely heavily on cymbal stands. “I knew I would still need my staples—hi-hat stand, snare stand, and throne—but I just didn’t see the need for any other stands,” he explains. “Almost every drum and stand serves a dual or triple purpose. My hi-hat also supports my 16” crash and my electronics.”

The compact rig not only makes Fruda’s gig commutes easier, it also saves time and stage space. “Our musical director is impressed with the kit’s footprint,” the drummer says. “With a smaller bass drum, I fit nicely in the corner without imposing on anyone’s space. And our keyboardist can’t believe how quickly my teardown is on every gig. One trip in, and one trip out. And that’s the way I like it.”

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