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NOVEMBER 2007

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**MD'S GUIDE TO SETTING UP**

# 100s

**OF WAYS TO MAKE YOUR KIT WORK BETTER FOR YOU!**

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JAZZ LESSONS FROM A MASTER



**SMASHING PUMPKINS'**  
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**ON MAKING THE BEST DRUM RECORD OF HIS CAREER**

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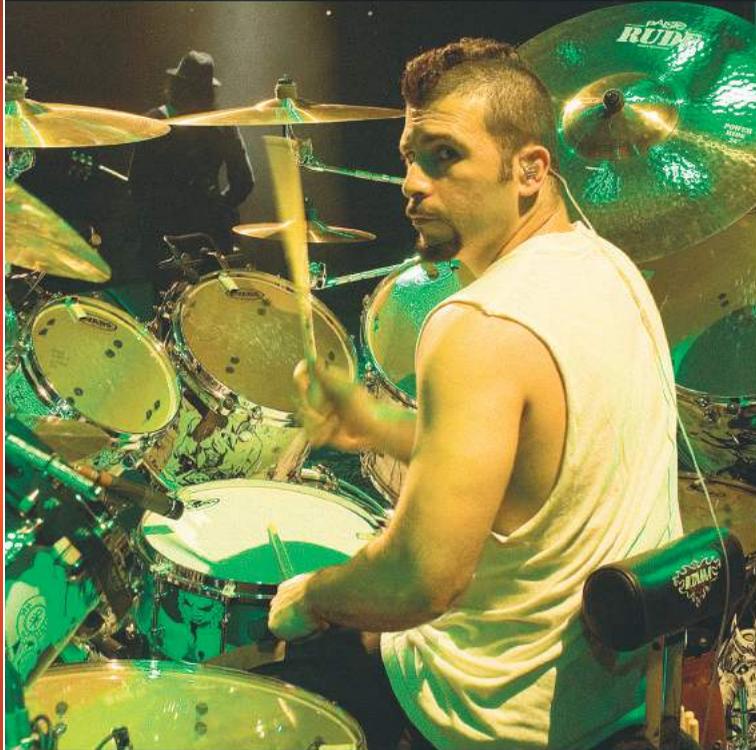
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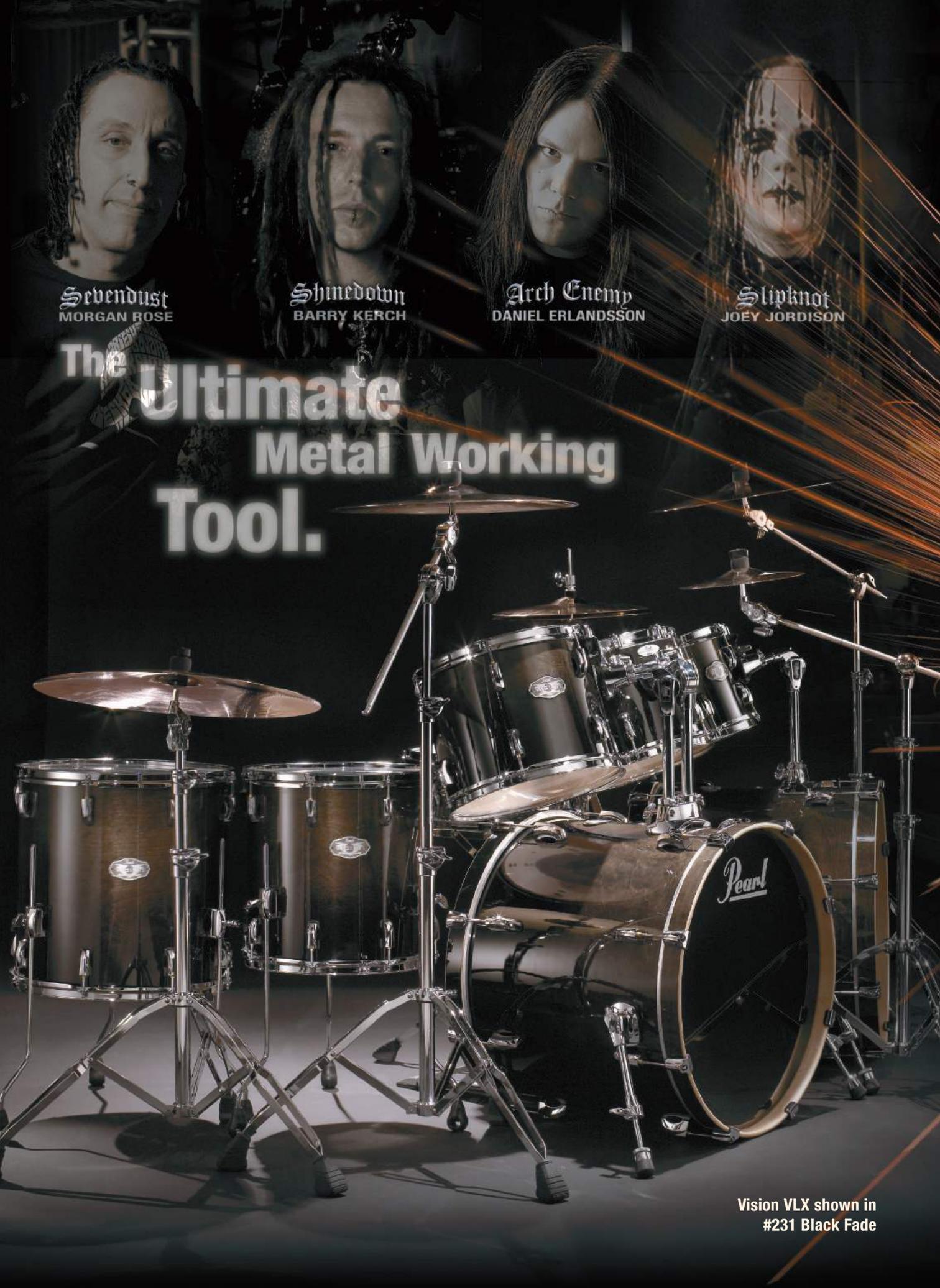
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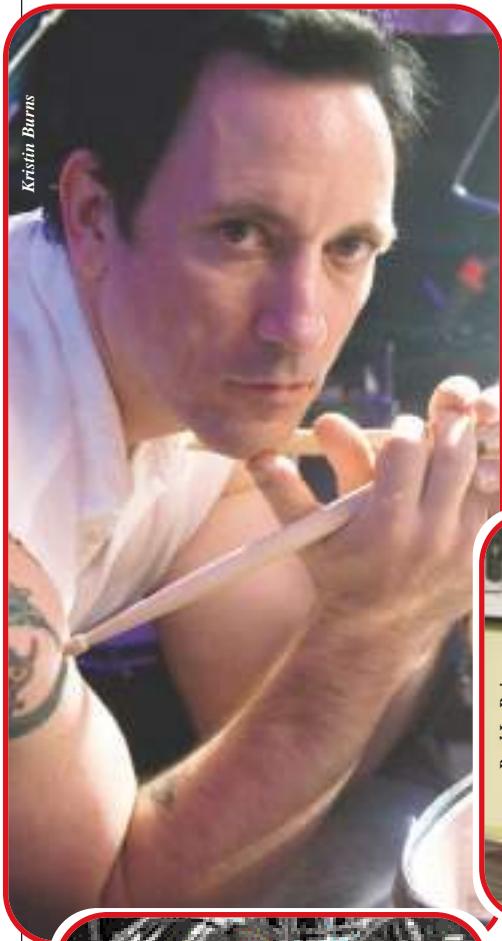


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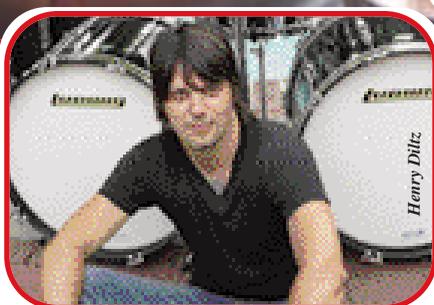
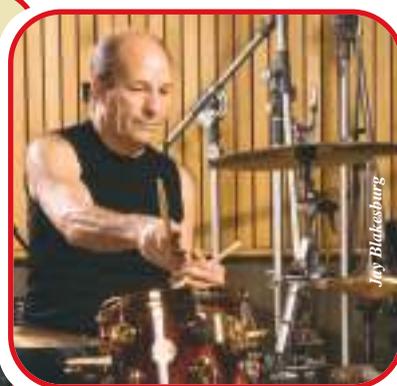
In this exclusive MD interview, Smashing Pumpkins' drummer is revved up and raring to go, schooling all those Pro Tool-assisted drummers on what it really means to rock.

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After twenty-five years of notable shows and albums with the likes of Freddie Hubbard, Jackie McLean, and Terence Blanchard, Carl Allen has absolutely earned the title "jazz master."

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## MD's Guide To Setting Up

Been thinking lately about tweaking your setup for optimal power and efficiency? Before you touch a wing nut, check out what we've got in store for you in this month's special theme issue on the whys and hows of drumset arrangement.

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# WIN

One of three Ddrum acoustic kits with Zildjian cymbals. Total value:

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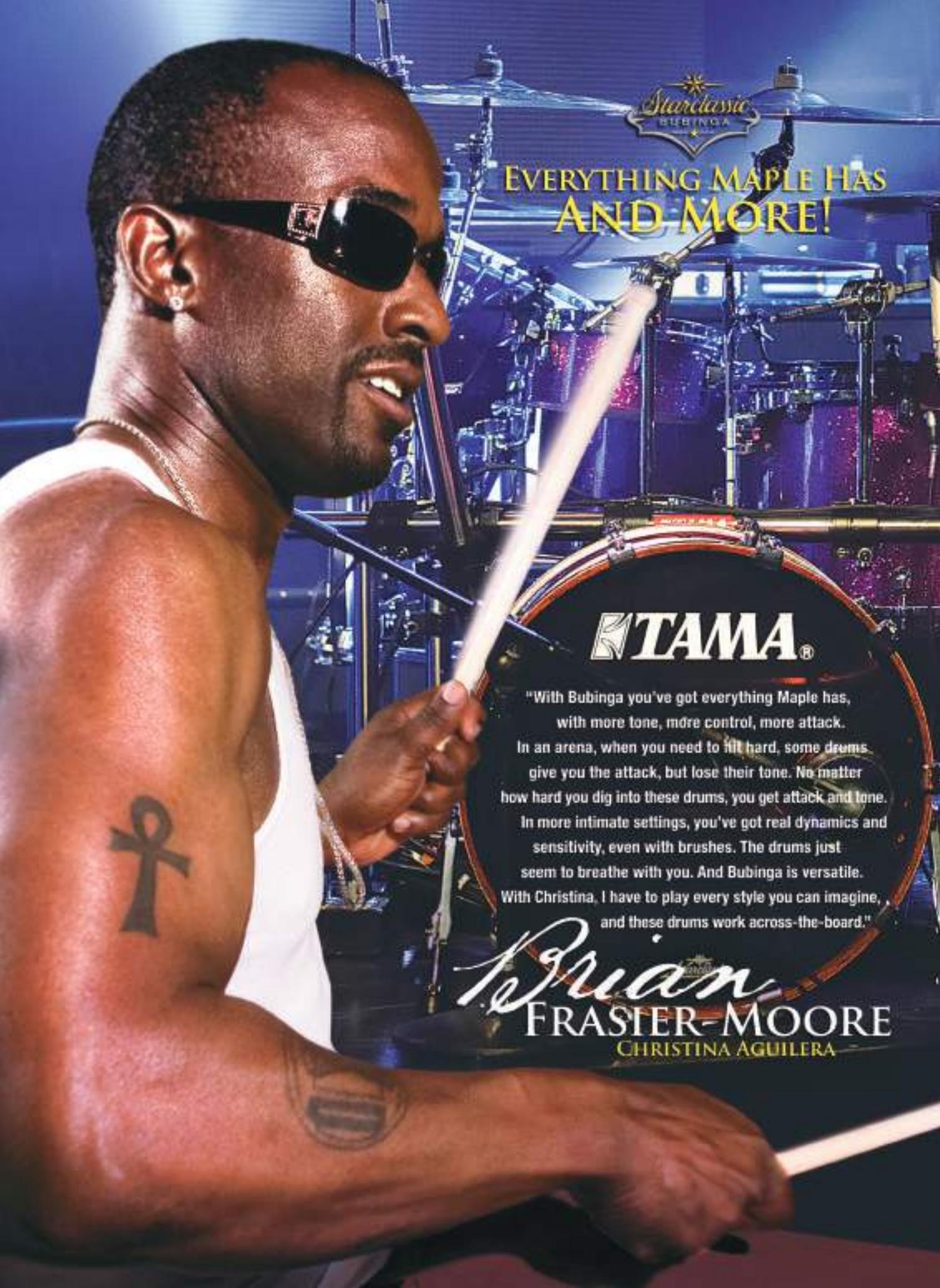
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Celebrating Remo's Fiftieth Anniversary: Half A Century Of Heads...And More by Rick Van Horn



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## Get Ready...Get Set...

I teach a drum class each fall at the University Of The Arts in Philadelphia. I also teach at the KoSA International Percussion Workshop each summer. And I do a fair amount of clinics. And in each of these situations, the very first thing I address isn't how to play the drums, but rather how to set up the drums for optimal comfort and efficiency. Let's face it: You can have all the technique in the world, but if your drumkit isn't configured in such a way as to support that technique, you simply cannot perform at your best.

The simple fact is, the drumkit is the most personal of all instruments, because it's the only one in the pantheon of music that must literally be built around the person playing it. A guitarist can pick up virtually any guitar and make music on it, but it's entirely possible for one drummer to sit at another drummer's kit and be totally incapable of playing it. (I once had the opportunity to play on the great Larrie Londin's kit. But he kept his bass drum pedal springs so tight that when I stepped on the footboard, it didn't go down...I went up.)

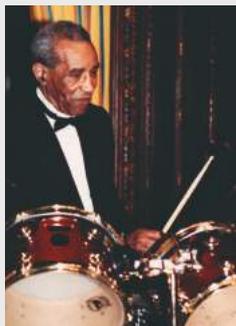
There's no right or wrong way to set up a kit. There's only what works well and what doesn't. And that's the focus of this issue. We begin by talking with top artists about how and why they created their setups. We'll also offer some advice on how to go about setting up and breaking down your kit in the most efficient manner possible. And we'll point you toward some handy hardware items that can help you customize your setup while economizing on weight and space. We think you'll find it all valuable.

Of course, the whole issue isn't about setups. Cover artist Jimmy Chamberlin (no slouch in the interesting setup department himself) is back on the scene, lending his unique style to the recently released Smashing Pumpkins album and firing up the group's shows. Jazz stylist Carl Allen has his own new album to talk about, and funk veteran Greg Errico relates his experiences drumming for the irrepressible Sly Stone.

...Go!

### Max Roach

January 10, 1924–August 16, 2007



As we went to press for this issue, we were saddened to learn of the passing of Max Roach. The legendary jazz drummer died this past August 16 at the age of eighty-three.

Max was a founder of modern jazz, with a combined virtuosity and creativity that broke musical barriers and defied listeners' expectations. His influence on musicians in general and drummers in particular is represented in the playing of dozens of top performers. Watch for complete coverage of Max's life and contributions to drumming in a future issue of *Modern Drummer*.

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# Glenn Kotche

Leave it to Modern Drummer to cover an eclectic percussion explorer like Glenn Kotche in the same issue that presents the rock-solid grooves that made the Stax hits what they were. Talk about covering the bases! (And having great licks by Jim Keltner just added to the mix.)

Glenn Kotche has to be one of the most articulate and creative drummers around. It's heartening to know that this "thinking man's drummer" is enjoying success in a hugely popular band. Maybe there's hope for the rest of us.

Tom Franline

## Neil On Snakes And Arrows

If ever anyone wanted to get inside the creative process of Neil Peart and his colleagues in Rush, all they have to do is read Neil's detailed track-by-track account of the making of Snakes And Arrows in your August issue. Rush is getting lots of press around this album, but only Modern Drummer offers Neil's insights in his own words. Quite the coup, and much appreciated.

Adam Amundson

## Getting The Deal

Kudos to my old friend Rich Mangicaro for his "Getting The Deal" article in the August 2007 MD. Although the title (initially) had me running for cover, I thought Rich's article was highly informative and on the money with regard to artist endorsements in the percussion industry. John Wittmann's "9 Tips For Success As An Endorsing Artist" was also very informative. Thanks to MD for sharing this valuable information with the drumming community.  
**John DeChristopher**  
**Avedis Zildjian Company**

My compliments on Rich Mangicaro's excellent article. It's important that today's drummers be aware of what constitutes an endorsement relationship and what it takes to get one. It's especially important for up-and-comers to know that blazing chops don't always equal free gear. Our phones ring off the hook with calls from drummers who claim to be the "next big thing," but very few have the goods to back it up. The proof is in the press package, the number of gigs you are playing, and the people that will see you playing the kit.

To Mr. Mangicaro's words of wisdom I'd like to add this: Don't clog the email server of your favorite drum company with press kits and links to your MySpace page asking for an endorsement, and never send bulk emails to multiple drum companies in search of one that will give you something for nothing. Few things will turn an artist relations manager's attention away from you more than that.  
**Kevin D. Packard**  
**Ddrum Percussion**

## More Readers Poll Thanks

I want to let MD's readers know how much I humbly appreciate their support. To be recognized by the drumming community is, in my mind, the highest honor possible, and an absolute highlight of my career. Modern Drummer magazine always intimidated me as a self-taught player, since it represents the highest levels of ability, style, and knowledge. These are the things I continually push myself for, but never thought were possible to attain. To now be recognized by the community that I have so much respect for is overwhelming.

People tend to set goals for themselves to achieve in their playing and in their lives. With every goal achieved, new ones are set as we continue to grow. I have done this repeatedly in my career playing drums and working with my band—always pushing forward, never being satisfied. This award—because I could have never expected it—has allowed me to pause and feel a great deal of satisfaction for the blood and sweat I have put into my drumming. I can never thank you enough.

Chris Adler

It's a huge honor for me to receive the Readers Poll award for the best educational DVD. I want to thank Modern Drummer and all its readers for the wonderful surprise. Although I've won a number of awards over the years, the MD award is actually the first real plaque I've received. That makes it very special for me, and I am proudly displaying it in my home studio.

Thomas Lang

## Thanks And A Tip From Pete

I appreciate the supportive review of my Jazz Drums DVD in the July MD. As a footnote: DVD-size books can be rather small, and the information therein can be important to some chapters featured on the DVD. I took this into consideration when mapping out what I wanted to say and the techniques I felt needed to be included.

Fortunately, almost all the exercises and drum charts included in the DVD are found in my full-size book Learn To Play The Drumset Volume II, published by Hal Leonard. I do mention this fact at the end of the DVD, but I probably should have mentioned it at the beginning as well.

Peter Magadini

## DROPPED BEATS

The byline for the sidebar on Endorsement Tips in the August '07 Taking Care Of Business column erroneously read: "by John Wittman," instead of the correct spelling of "Wittmann."

The "strong double bass chops" on Stone Sour's "30/30-150" mentioned in the August '07 Off The Record article on Roy Mayorga actually belong to Godsmack's Shannon Larkin, who guested on that track during the recording of Come What(ever) May.

The drummer credited in the review of Dungen's Tio Bitar album in the August '07 Critique was listed incorrectly. The drummer is bandleader Gustav Ejstes.

HOW TO REACH US  
 rvh@moderndrummer.com





Thomas Lang

Sheila E.

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Omar Hakim

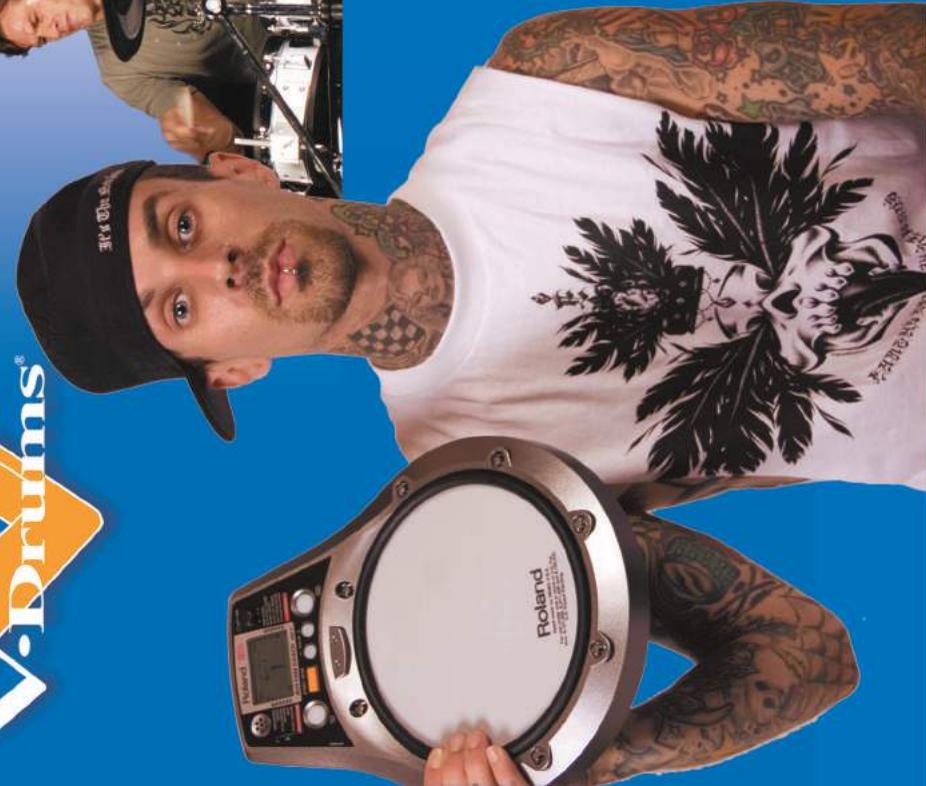
Peter Erskine



Luis Conte

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-Travis Barker**

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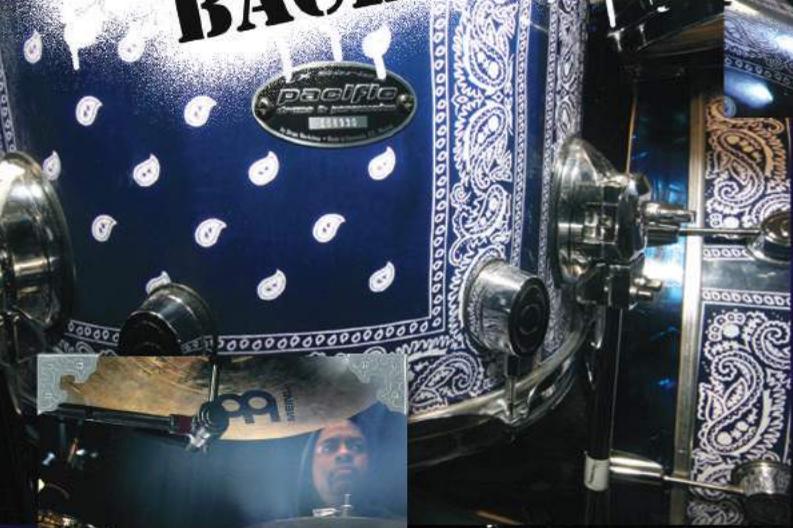
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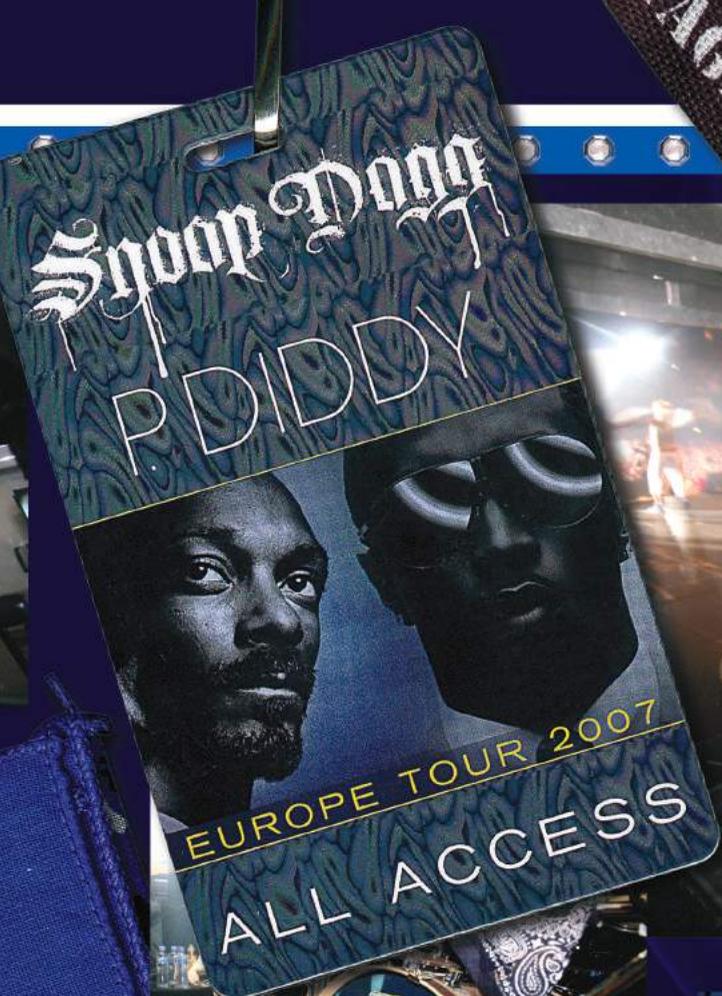
Neil Peart



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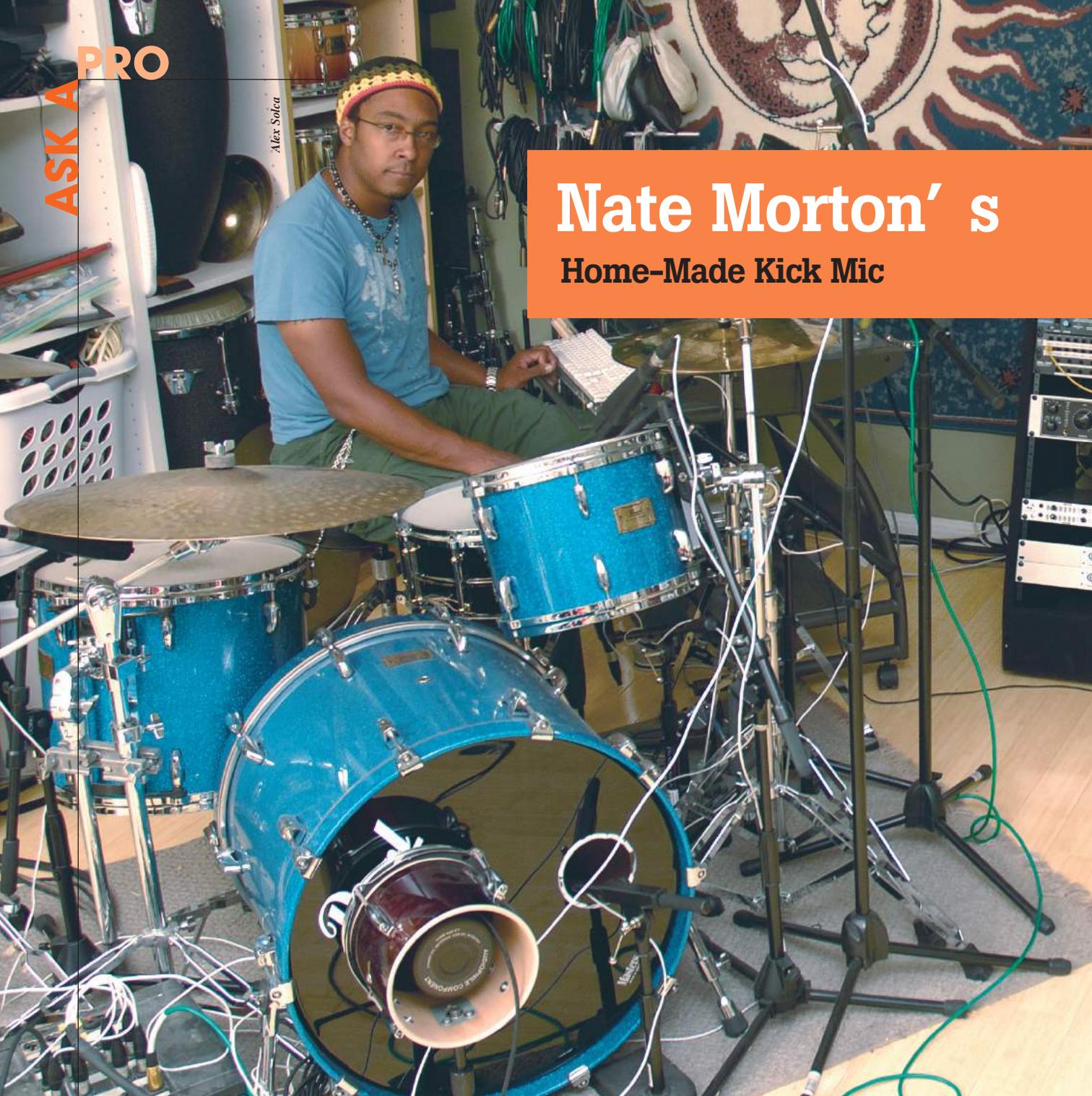
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# Nate Morton's

## Home-Made Kick Mic



**I noticed in your March '07 Woodshed article that you have what looks like a home-made speaker microphone in front of your bass drum. Did you make that yourself, and if so, how? I'm putting together a home studio of my own, and I'm looking for any tips I can find to make my drums sound great.**

**Keith Allen**

I wish I could give you detailed specs for what I used, along with concrete reasons why. But truth be told, I didn't really know what I was doing, and the parts I used were simply items of convenience. The speaker is an 8" woofer from an M-Audio BX8 monitor. It was just lying around my studio doing nothing, so I mounted it in the shell of an 8" tom, like a drumhead. I took

off the rim, put the woofer in, and remounted the rim. Once I tightened the lugs, the rim held the woofer in place.

The cable is just a standard speaker cable with 1/4" plugs. I cut it in half and connected the two exposed wires randomly to the leads on the woofer. The 1/4" plug at the other end is plugged into a run-of-the-mill direct-input (DI) box, which is patched into one of my Chameleon Labs preamps. If you create a similar device, remember that you'll need to flip the phase because you're using a speaker "backwards" for a mic.

The whole contraption is mounted on a short mic stand using the mount that was already on the tom. It was a pretty simple and random construction, but the low end it adds to the kick drum sound is awesome.

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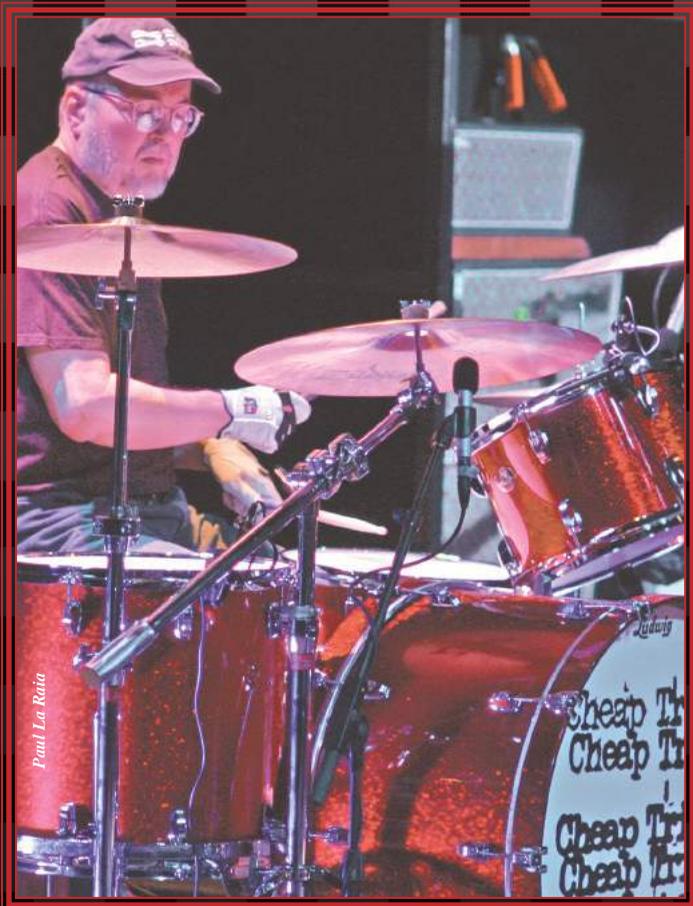
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## Cheap Trick's **Bun E. Carlos** On Monitors And Tuning

I've been a Cheap Trick fan since the '70s, and you've been a big influence on my drumming for as long as I can remember. I've seen you play live on numerous occasions, and I just got the Silver DVD. I think your drum sound today is better than ever.

I'd like to know about your monitor setup. Do you have any drums in it? Also, what's your drum tuning preference, and do you muffle the bass drum? Thanks, and keep rocking!

J. del Valle

Thanks for staying with us all these years.

My left monitor (by the hi-hat) has Robin's vocal. My right monitor (behind the floor tom) has Rick's guitar. I have a seat thumper—a transducer that attaches to the drum throne—for my bass drum. I don't monitor myself or the bass guitar. There's really no need.

I tune my bottom heads first, to each drum's most resonant note. Then I put on the top heads and do the same. So the drums basically tune themselves. In the '90s I used a felt strip on the beater side of my bass drum. These days, the Ludwig Power Collar head suffices. I use coated medium heads on all my other drums.

See ya on the road!

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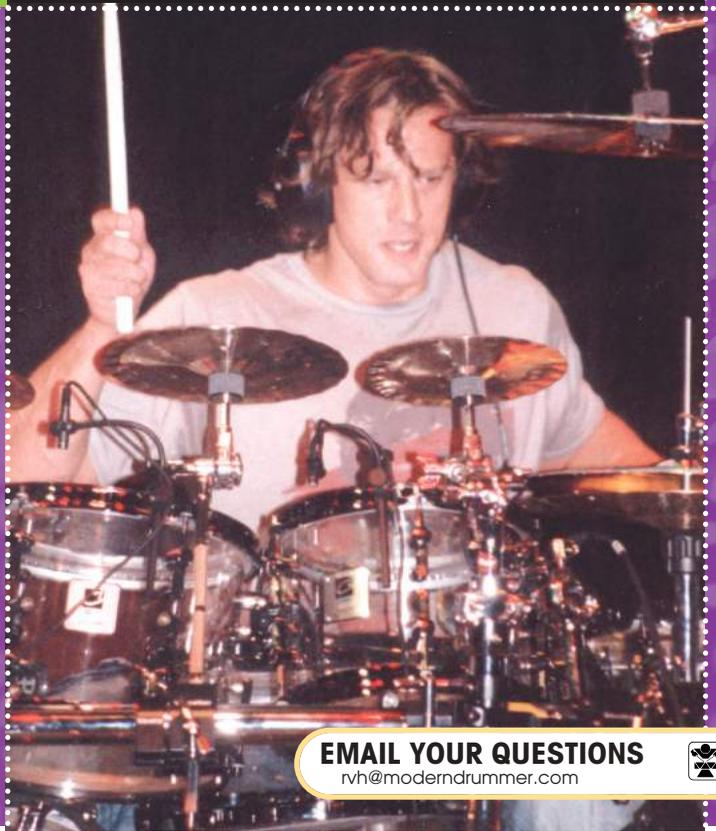
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# QUICK BEATS

text and photo by Joe Perry

**Place of birth:** Vienna, Austria  
**Influences:** Anybody and everybody  
**Hobbies/interests:** Home improvement, hiking, art, climbing, film, physics  
**How I relax:** Playing with my kids on the couch  
**Favorite food:** Meat  
**Favorite fast food:** Taco Bell  
**Favorite junk food:** Gummie Bears  
**Favorite drink:** coffee  
**Favorite TV shows:** *Myth Busters*  
**Favorite movies:** *Blade Runner*, *The Terminator*  
**Favorite album:** Pink Floyd's *Dark Side Of The Moon*  
**Vehicle I drive:** BMW SUV  
**Other instruments I play:** Bass, keyboards, guitar, trumpet  
**If I wasn't a drummer, I'd be:** A haberdasher  
**Place I'd like to visit:** Donald Trump's NYC apartment  
**I wish I'd played drums on:** "Back In Black" by AC/DC  
**Musician I'd like to work with:** Sting  
**Next up & coming drummer:** Benny Greb  
**Most prized possession:** Two Andy Warhol paintings  
**Person I would like to talk to:** Physicist Steven Hawking  
**Person I admire:** Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan  
**Most memorable performance:** With Falco, live at the Donauinsel Festival, in 1993 or '94. Lightning hit the stage.  
**Most embarrassing moment on stage:** At the Jakarta Jazz Festival, in 1993. No rehearsal...a disaster from the first song.  
**Most unusual venue played:** Main Piazza in Siena, Italy. No one had ever played there before.  
**Biggest venue played:** Wiesen Festival, in Austria, for 600,000 people

# Thomas Lang



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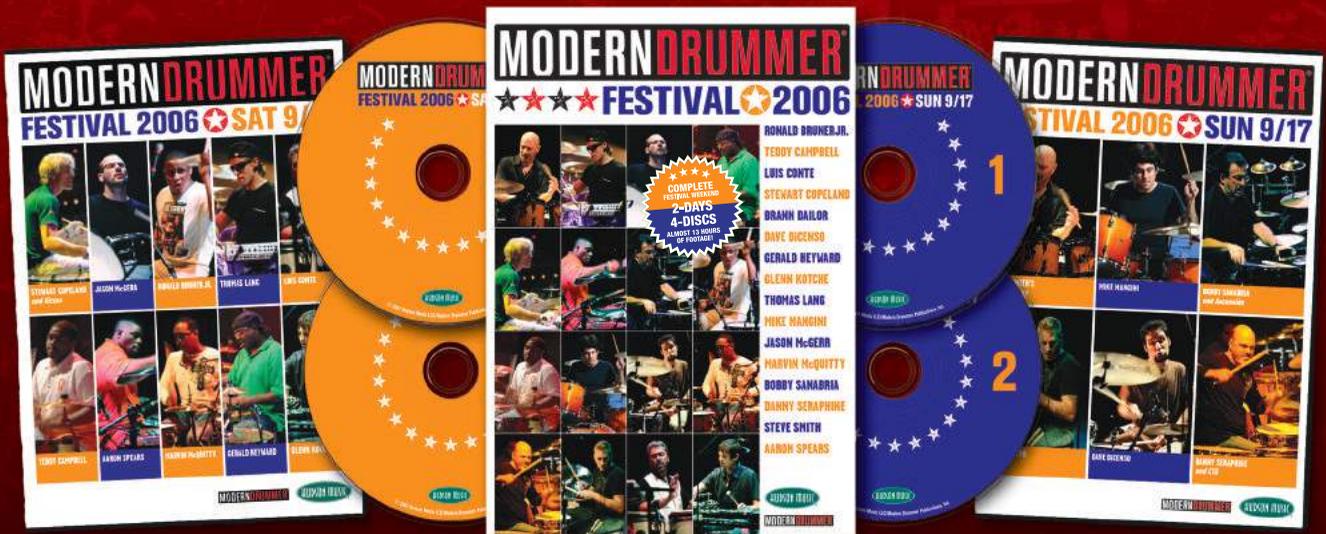


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## Jason SUTTER

Bringing His  
"Slinkier Swing"  
To Chris Cornell

Smash Mouth drummer Jason Sutter wasn't looking to jump ship when he was asked to sit in on a third-call audition for vocalist Chris Cornell. Cornell, who left Audioslave earlier this year, needed a band to tour with in support of his new album, *Carry On*, but he had already decided on a drummer. He changed his mind, however, once he heard Sutter play.

When Cornell's management offered Jason the gig, they basically refused to take no for an answer. "I was told that what set me apart from the other drummers who auditioned was that I had a slinkier swing of a backbeat," Jason recalls. "That's a great compliment, because it's something that you either have or you don't. Chris has played with incredible drummers like Matt Cameron and Brad Wilk, and they have that quality as well."

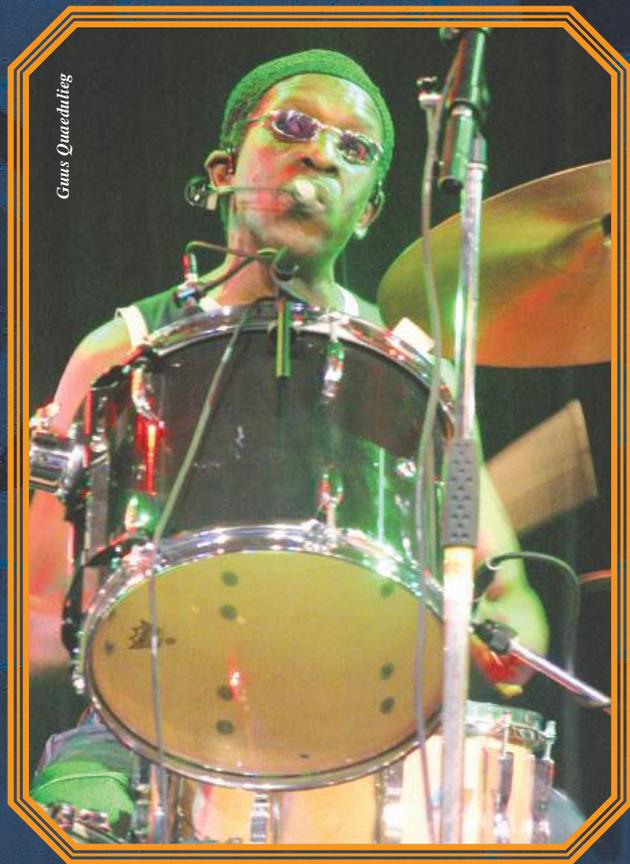
Jason, who is primarily known for his tenure in pop bands like American Hi-Fi and Jack Drag, admits that playing the heavier music of Cornell's former bands presented him with a formidable challenge. "For the audition I had to learn 'Black Hole Sun' and 'Spoonman,' which are not easy songs," he offers. "They have these weird intangibles, including odd bars and odd meters. Anyone can count it out *eventually*, but I only had a few hours to learn this stuff. The guys in Soundgarden never counted anything, they just *felt* it."

"When learning songs with odd measures," Jason continues, "rather than worry about counting, you have to learn to feel it and learn it that way. Besides having to swing at all times, it's also very important to make five, seven, nine, or combinations of all beats feel as simple as walking down the street. I've learned to think of this music as something that's *alive*."

Besides the odd meters and heavy playing, which Sutter shines on, the Cornell gig also features "sensitive" material. "Unlike a lot of pop gigs, where you can just muscle your way through," Jason says, "there are sections in our set where you can hear a pin drop. I might go from pounding as hard as I can to playing the most delicate song, where every ghost note and tiny little tap is important. Ever second I'm on stage counts, and that's the kind of challenge I've been looking for. I *love* it."

Gail Worley

Henry Diltz



## Tony ALLEN Afrobeat Overdrive

As the most important drummer in African music, Tony Allen provided the Afrobeat pulse for Fela Kuti's Africa '70s band and recorded a clutch of solo albums (*Jealousy*, *Progress*, *Lagos No Shaking*). Currently Allen works for UK supergroup The Good, The Bad, And The Queen, which features Blur's Damon Albarn and The Clash's Paul Simonon. Born in Lagos, Nigeria, Allen is highly revered the world over, and can count Cream's Ginger Baker among his biggest fans. Creating an almost supernatural groove, Allen's drumming is equal parts Yoruban religious ceremony, funk, and African pop rhythms.

"That's what transpires in my mind," Allen says, "this collective rhythm. I'm kind of complicated, and I sometimes complicate issues for myself. But I love to challenge myself too. This drumming business is not limited. It's something that can never be finished. A drummer cannot finish exploring."

Though self taught, Allen cites Max Roach and Art Blakey as major influences. But that doesn't explain his ability to obtain maximum groove with minimum energy. "I can play very loud and very strong," he admits. "But dynamics are everything. I cannot afford to play like a machine from beginning to end. There's time for everything to go up and come down. When I decide to go up, you will hear me. But I can't do that all the time. It doesn't make sense."

A longtime advocate of Pearl drums and Zildjian cymbals, Allen can play every style of music, but his heart remains in Africa. "Afrobeat is special," he insists. "You choose if you want to be a part of it. There is high life, Juju music, Fuji music—many other types of music going on in Africa. Afrobeat is just one of them. But I'm still playing Afrobeat."

Ken Micallef

Aaron Gillespie had things he wanted to say. As drummer and lead vocalist for the screamo outfit Underoath, he was one sixth of the equation. With the recent release of his debut solo opus (*As The Almost*), *Southern Weather*, Gillespie grabs his guitar, locks a groove on drums, and shows why he had to go solo. *Southern Weather* is a mishmash of substance, style, and flavor, featuring enough drum genres to fill a room. "Aaron Mlasko, who used to be Pearl Jam's drum tech, came in with an incredibly cool kit he'd made," Gillespie recalls of the tracking sessions. "It was only 5-ply and it sounded great. We used a lot of different snares on the album as well. It was just an effort to get as many different tones and feels as possible."

Throughout the disc Gillespie drops cool drum moments everywhere, dynamically shifting sounds and genres along the way. "Say This Sooner" is evidence of a cut hitting both spectrums. "It has the whole Johnny Cash/snare/country groove on the verse," Gillespie says. "What's cool is that there's also a metallic, open 4/4, hi-hat/kick/snare, which is probably the disc's heaviest moment."

At times the drumming on *Southern Weather* feels lush, while at others the "less is more" philosophy rules. "On 'Dirty And Left Out' we recorded into one microphone," Aaron recalls. "I used brushes and had a tambourine taped to the front of the bass drum. I like to serve the song no matter what it calls for."

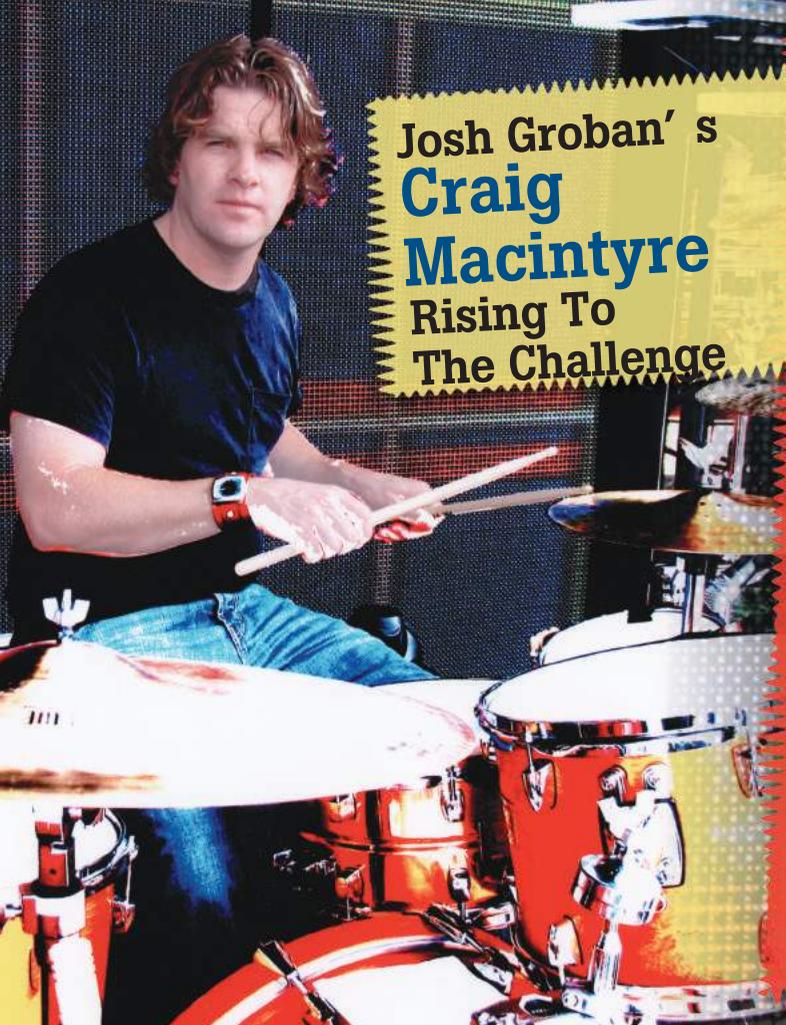
For the band's live dates, where Gillespie would have to be upfront and off the drums, his drummer requirements were simple: "I was looking for someone who could hit really, really hard—a sweaty, long-haired dude," he laughs. Enter eighteen-year-old Kenny Bozich, who Gillespie's wife discovered at church, of all places. "He's rock solid," says Gillespie. "He plays to a click and has a really cool style that's similar to mine."

Despite being a frontman and having the freedom of leading his own band, Gillespie isn't bashful about his loyalties and responsibilities as the drummer for Underoath. "I love Underoath and I love playing the drums," he says. "Underoath is the band I've played in for ten years. It's my heart."

Steven Douglas Losey

## Underoath / The Almost's Aaron GILLESPIE Expanding His Pocket





## Josh Groban's Craig Macintyre Rising To The Challenge

**D**rummer Craig Macintyre is in the middle of a two-year tour with Josh Groban, promoting the star vocalist's latest album, *Awake*. According to the drummer, there are many challenges to the gig. "A lot of people assume Josh's music is really mellow," Macintyre suggests, "but he really needs someone with a wide pocket to fill in the gaps. Some of the music is very slow, but it doesn't have to necessarily be mellow, just big and wide."

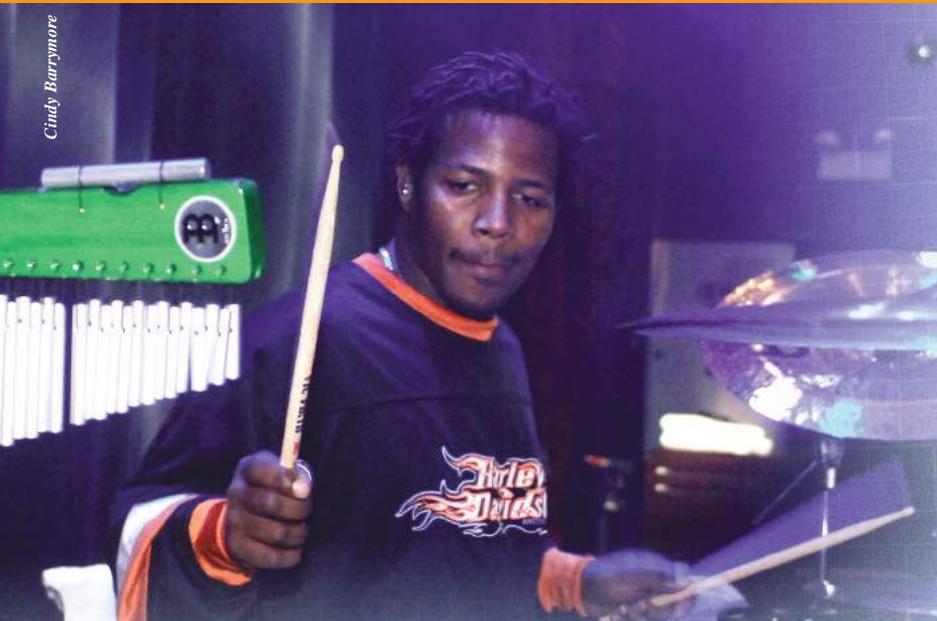
Macintyre is required to use a click track for a portion of the material, which sometimes speeds up or slows down to match the emotion of the music. The drummer also has to deal with a twenty-piece orchestra with a conductor, not to mention a six-piece rock band. Clearly he's got his work cut out for him. "Working with an orchestra and a conductor was a very foreign thing to me," Macintyre admits. "It was really challenging at first to watch a conductor waving a step ahead of the beat. It's like reading, where you have to look at what's coming up and not just what you're playing at the moment. It's a world I never imagined I'd be in. But I'm a much better musician as a result of it."

While Macintyre doesn't play on *Awake* (Matt Chamberlain and Vinnie Colaiuta are on the disc), he can be heard and seen on the *Josh Groban Live At The Greek* CD/DVD. "The drum parts are a thrill and a challenge to copy every night," he says. "But Josh also likes me to put my own thing to it. He plays drums too, so he's always looking for interesting things for me to play."

In 2005, Macintyre toured with Vertical Horizon while Groban was working on his record. "That was totally different—a straight-up rock gig with no orchestras to worry about," laughs the drummer, who enjoys playing a gamut of styles. "You have to keep yourself open to everything. I never imagined doing anything like the Josh Groban gig, but it's great to push yourself beyond the one style of music you've mastered."

**Robyn Flans**

Cindy Barrymore



## Felix Pollard On A Roll With Da' Soul Patrol

**F**elix Pollard's drums weren't the only thing pounding after he got a last-minute call to play for Lionel Richie's 2004 performance on *Oprah*. The thought of performing for two legends in his hometown of Chicago with no rehearsal gave the drummer the worst headache of his life. But did Pollard let the stars see him sweat at the taping? "I counted off and we were in the moment," Pollard recalls. Richie was so impressed he invited the drummer to play a month-long tour.

At thirty-five, Pollard has been playing professionally for more than twenty-five years, including appearances on Leno and Letterman, and a performance for First Lady Hillary Clinton. The drummer says he would easily still reside in Chicago had Sheila E—and better opportunities—not lured him to LA in 1999. Playing "everything from serious classical to serious funk," his vast repertoire is evident in his work with such artists as Jessica Simpson, Destiny's Child, George Duke, and *American Idol* stars Clay Aiken and Taylor Hicks. The Jukebox Tour with Aiken alone ran the gamut from Elvis to Motown.

For the Hicks gig, Pollard has scaled back his usual drum setup while still achieving his signature warm sound. He notes that whereas ballads from artists like Richie and Aiken dictate his using more toms for a larger voicing range, Hicks' brand of blues/funk-influenced rock requires "a beefier sound, so I'm using larger cymbals by Meinl."

Eventually Pollard wants to front his own band, as well as clock more studio time doing music for television and film. "I still love touring," he insists. "I enjoy traveling. And I want to share this gift as long as I can."

**Cindy Barrymore**

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

**Idris Muhammad** (R&B legend): 11/13/39

**Roy Burns** (jazz great): 11/30/35

**Pete Best** (early Beatles/solo): 11/21/41

**Floyd Sneed** (Three Dog Night): 11/22/43

**Les DeMerle** (Transfusion): 11/4/46

**David Garibaldi** (Tower Of Power): 11/4/46

**Alphonse Mouzon** (funk/fusion great): 11/21/48

**Wally Gator Watson** (Lionel Hampton): 11/9/51

**Clem Burke** (Blondie): 11/24/55

**Adam Nussbaum** (jazz master): 11/29/55

**Matt Sorum** (Velvet Revolver): 11/19/60

**Pat Petrillo** (Gloria Gaynor): 11/2/61

**Charlie Benante** (Anthrax): 11/27/62

**Mike Bordin** (Ozzy Osbourne): 11/27/62

**Matt Cameron** (Pearl Jam): 11/28/62

**Rick Allen** (Def Leppard): 11/1/63

**Russ Miller** (sessions): 11/16/69

**Antonio Sanchez** (Latin great): 11/1/71

**Felix Pollard** (Taylor Hicks): 11/19/71

**Keith Carlock** (Steely Dan): 11/29/71

**Travis Barker** (Blink-182/+44): 11/14/75



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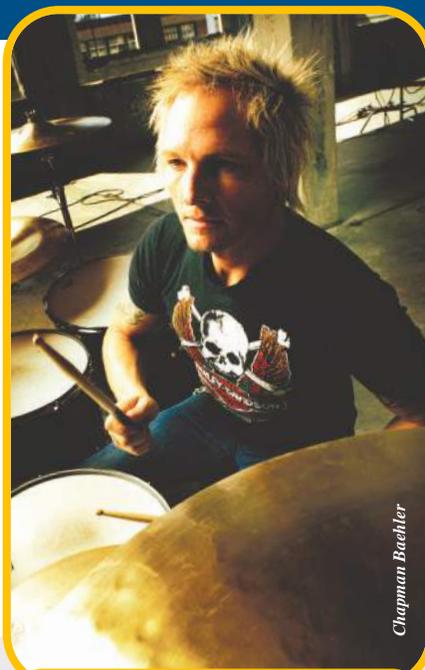
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**Matt Sorum** is on Velvet Revolver's *Libertad*.



**Ben Gillies** is on tour, supporting Silverchair's fifth album, *Young Modern*. (Read Ben's first-hand details on the new album and tour on the blog page at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).)

## DRUM DATES

This month's important events in drumming history

Booker T. & The MG's' **Al Jackson Jr.** was born on 11/27/34, **Yogi Horton** on 11/25/59. **Eric Carr** passed away on 11/24/91. **Tony Thompson** was born on 11/15/54 and passed away on 11/12/03. **R.J. Vealey**, who joined The Atlanta Rhythm Section in 1995, passed away on 11/13/99.

**11/9/38:** Back when music was listened to on brittle wax discs called 78s, Count Basie records *How Long Blues* with his All American Rhythm Section, featuring guitarist Freddie Green, bassist Walter Page, and drummer **Jo Jones**—later known as "Papa Jo."

**11/3/67:** Pink Floyd, with **Nick Mason** on drums (the only member to have remained in the group for its entire existence), makes their American debut at the Winterland Ballroom in San Francisco, California.

**11/15/80:** Blondie (with **Clem Burke**) hits number-1 on the UK charts with their third hit of that year, their version of reggae tune "The Tide Is High."

**Herman Matthews** can be heard on his debut CD, *Home At Last*. For more info, check out [www.hermanmatthews.com](http://www.hermanmatthews.com).

*Last Of The International Playboys* is the new album by Stroke 9, with **Eric Stock** on drums.

**Scott Rockenfield** is on Queensrÿche's latest, *Mindcrime At The Moore*.

**Jim Donovan** (Rusted Root) has launched a drumming Web site, [www.RhythmResource.com](http://www.RhythmResource.com). It features hundreds of hand-picked video lessons, rare performances, and educational articles about drumming from all over the globe.

**Randy Lane** has been touring with Pat Travers and will soon be recording a new disc with the guitarist.

**Rich Smalley** and **Danny Schuler** (Biohazard) are on the new solo disc by ex-Flaw singer Chris Volz, *Redemption*.

**Anton Fig**, **Keith Carlock**, and **Vinnie Colaiuta** are on guitarist Oz Noy's latest CD, *Fuzzy*. For more info, visit [www.myspace.com/oznoy](http://www.myspace.com/oznoy).

**Darryl White** is on Tab Benoit's *Jazzfest Live '07* CD, as well as the live DVD *Voice Of The Wetlands*. Darryl is also on Chris Thomas King's live CD, *Jammin' On Beale Street*.

**Craig Pilo** (Frankie Valli, Edgar Winter) has a new solo CD out, *Just Play*. It features Mitchel Forman and Tom Kennedy, among others. For more info, visit [www.craigpilo.com](http://www.craigpilo.com).

**Sammy K.** is on the road with Amy Cook, who is filming a documentary with Emmy Award-winning director Todd Robinson. For more on Sammy, visit [www.slamminnsammyk.com](http://www.slamminnsammyk.com).



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## Replacing Triggers In Roland V-Drum Pads

I own a Roland V-Drum TD-10 kit that's about six years old. I've recently noticed that the triggers in the pads aren't responding as they once did, especially on the snare (since it's the drum that gets played the most). Can I replace the triggers? If so, what would be the cost? And is it an easy enough job to do myself?

Dave Wilson

Roland percussion products manager Steve Fisher replies, "The trigger parts are, indeed, most likely what's causing the sensitivity problem, and they can be replaced. You can order parts and get pricing direct from our customer service department. Unfortunately, we really don't offer any technical service advice regarding repairing the V-Drums. So if you're thinking of repairing the pads yourself, you might want to order the service manual for the PD-120/100 pads, which contains exploded views and parts listings as well as diagnostic procedures. This can be a big help, since repairs can be a bit involved.

"If you'd rather have us service the pads, the folks in customer service can also provide you with instructions on how to send them in. You can reach them Monday through Friday, from 8:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. (Pacific Time), at (323) 890-3700, extension 2289. I hope this info helps."

## Sanding Cymbals

I have a few jazz rides that are a bit too dry or heavy for my taste. I've heard of drummers sanding down their cymbals with sandpaper to thin them out and get them to open up a bit. Any thoughts on how this actually affects the sound?

Josh Giunta

We've heard of drummers having their cymbals lathed by skilled technicians to reduce the cymbals' weight, but we've honestly not heard of anyone taking a "do-it-yourself" approach with sandpaper. It would take a lot of sanding to remove enough of the bronze material to make a difference, and it's likely that such sanding would have to be done with the aid of power tools. Since these are generally rotational or "orbital" devices (that is: they sand in a circular pattern), the sanding would go "against the grain" of the cymbal's lathing grooves. This doesn't strike us as a good approach.

Your best bet might be to see if you could find thinner, more lively ride cymbals that suit your taste, and then work some sort of credit or swap for your current cymbals with the dealer or another drummer who has those cymbals.

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JOSE ANTONIO PASILLAS II  
AND THIS IS MY CUSTOM DW KIT."**



**Jose Pasillas II [Incubus]**



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# Practicing With Headphones And Speakers

When I practice along with CDs, I listen to them with padded hi-fi stereo headphones plugged into my CD player. They block the outside sound so much that it's hard to hear the relative sound levels of my drums/cymbals. I tend to want to remove one earphone to hear my drums more clearly. (Not a good idea, I know.)

Would the Peltor Tactical 6-S electronic headphones that Mark Parsons mentioned in his recent "Save Your Ears" article work in this situation? That is, could I hear the CD via regular speakers without the headphones cutting out the music? If not, what would Mark suggest for playing to CDs?

Bill Dye

We'll let Mark Parsons speak for himself.

"Using the Peltor Tactical 6-S (or any other active, level-dependant phone) along with stereo speakers for practice sounds valid, so I tested the idea. I placed stereo speakers next to my drumset (one on each side, head-high, aimed towards me) and played CDs through them while I played along, wearing the Peltors. I could hear both the music and my drums, but it wasn't entirely satisfactory because the music would tend to "pump" as the headphones compressed the level of the drums when I played a loud note. This effect isn't that pronounced when practicing with a band, because the SPLs of the music are generally so high that the phones lock everything down to 80 dB or so and keep it there. Similarly, there would likely be less of this 'pumping' effect if you cranked the daylight out of your stereo speakers. But that's not really a practical solution.

"More practical would be to simply find a pair of phones that isolate enough to protect your hearing, but not so much that they prevent you from hearing what you're playing. I'd look in the 12 to 20 dB range. Search online and read the manufacturer's info.

"Another solution involves the use of a small mixer and a pair of mics. Run a kick mic and an overhead into the mixer, along with your CD player or iPod. Then you can easily adjust the level of drums versus music in your headphones to suit your taste, and away you go. I've done this with positive results."

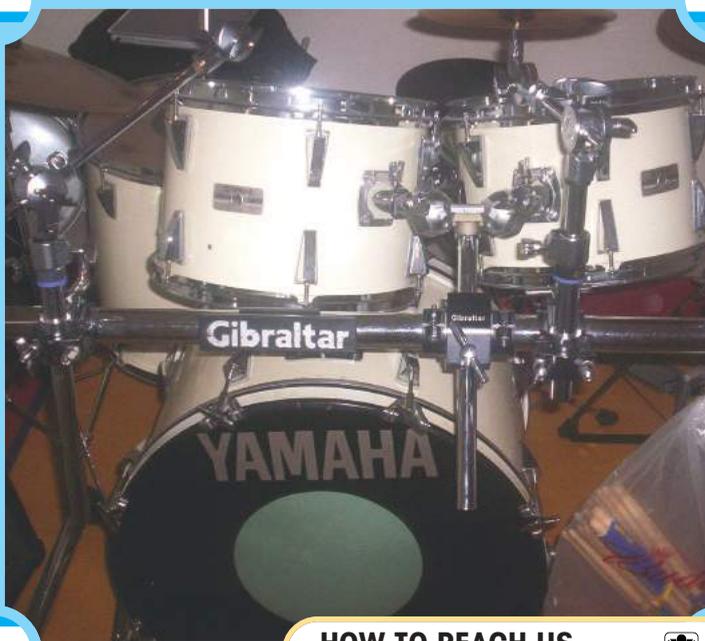


## Mystery Yamaha Kit

I've been playing on the drums shown here for six years. I bought them used, and now I want to sell them. But I have no idea of the model, year, or original value. Can you provide any information?

Marcos Tawil

Yamaha drum product specialist Jim Haler replies, "This is a Stage series kit from around 1984 or '85. A five-piece kit had a list price of \$1,000 to \$1,200, depending on the hardware setup. The shells are Philippine mahogany, and the white wrapped finish is one of four that were offered. The tom holder is a TH-51W model, which was last offered in 1986."



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Compact size and a wide tuning range highlight this Oriental beauty.

# Canopus Mahogany Kit

>> **A Japanese Take On That Classic Jazz Sound**

Review by Michael Dawson • Photos by Jim Esposito

## KEY NOTES

- Gorgeous high-end look
- Toms can handle high tunings without sounding choked
- Bass drum is surprisingly versatile

**F**or many jazz aficionados, there's nothing like laying down an Art Blakey shuffle on a set of vintage drums from the heyday of hard bop. But those drums aren't easy to find, especially in good enough condition to be carted from gig to gig. Thankfully, many manufacturers are filling that void with their own versions of the beloved bebop sound. The Mahogany line, from Japanese drum maker Canopus, seeks to do just that. Let's see how they swing.

### First Impression: Eye Candy

Our review kit—like all Canopus shell packs—consists only of a bass drum and toms. The 14x18 bass drum, 13x14 floor tom, and 8x12 rack tom each feature 6-ply mahogany and poplar shells with 10-ply maple reinforcement rings, and come in natural lacquer finish with low-mass brass lugs. The toms have Remo coated Ambassador heads on top and bottom, and the bass drum has a coated Powerstroke 3 batter and a single-ply coated logo head on the front.

At first glance, it's easy to tell that these are very classy drums. The high-gloss lacquer finish makes the kit look like fine furniture, while the small brass lugs accentuate the grain of the mahogany shells without being distracting. The bass drum hoops also feature a matching finish on the outside, with a clear gloss finish on the inside.

For our review, Canopus also included a similarly constructed 5x14 Mahogany snare in Brown Sun Burst lacquer finish. This drum came with a coated Ambassador head on top and a clear Ambassador snare-side. It also features the company's original Vintage snare wires, which are patterned after the snappy snares first produced by Ludwig and Slingerland in the '60s. This drum perfectly complements the entire look of the kit, since the center band of the burst matches up with the finish of the toms and kick.

### Set Up...

The only external hardware included with the Mahogany kit is a single L-arm tom mount and three floor tom legs. So we had to grab a couple cymbal stands, a hi-hat stand, a snare stand, and a bass drum pedal from our collection at the MD office in order

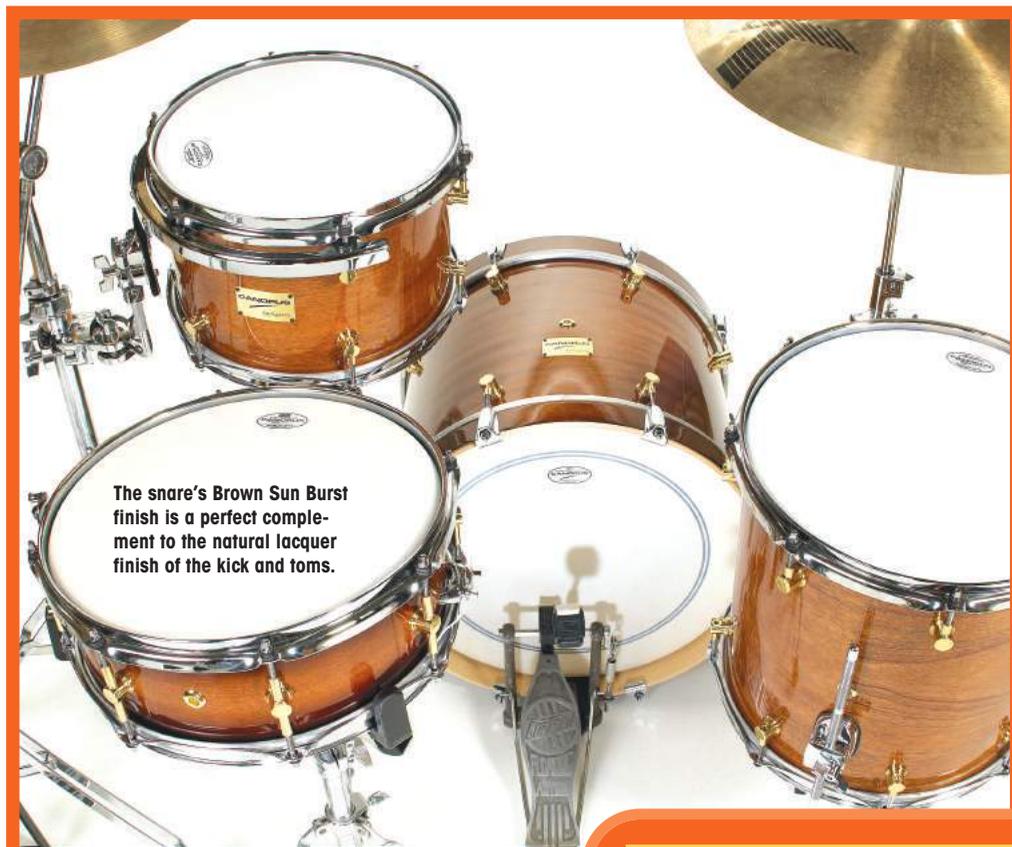
to get these beauties into playing position. The included tom mount is a simple design that secures the drum to the L-arm with a memory lock, while a ball & socket joint is used for angle adjustments. The mount attaches to the lower section of a cymbal stand tripod.

The rack tom mounts via a suspension system that connects to three of the drum's tension rods. I'm not typically a fan of these types of suspension mounts or ball & socket tom arms. But once I found a comfortable position for the drum, it felt very stable, with minimal "bounce." And after several hours of use, it showed no signs of slipping.

Aside from the tuning claws, the only hardware on the Mahogany bass drum are the spurs. Those spurs' large rubber feet can be turned clockwise to reveal sharp metal spikes. While the oversized spurs initially seemed a bit excessive for an 18" drum, they worked great. Even when kicked full-force, the drum didn't creep forward at all.

### ...And Play

Once the kit was put together, I couldn't resist the urge to grab a pair of sticks and give it a test run. Out of the box, the toms and kick were tuned pretty loose, somewhere around medium-low. Even at this slack tuning, the drums sounded great. The toms had a pure and balanced tone, with a



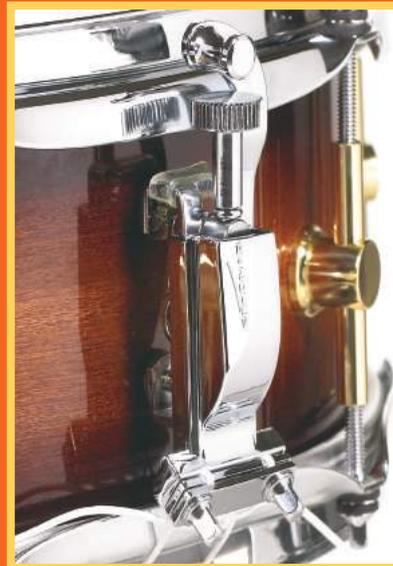
The snare's Brown Sun Burst finish is a perfect complement to the natural lacquer finish of the kick and toms.

round attack and lots of resonance. I'd have no problem leaving these toms just as they were, especially for a pop/rock studio session. But these are "jazz" drums, so naturally I had to grab my tuning key and start cranking.

To test the drums' entire tuning range, I took each lug up a quarter turn at a time and listened to the results. Throughout this process, I was impressed with how well the drums remained in balance with one another. There are a lot of tuning regions in both toms. At the midway point, their sound reminded me of New Orleans funkster Stanton Moore's drums—a round attack with a full, warm tone.

As I continued to increase the tension, the drums gradually shifted into bebop territory. But unlike some other toms that I've tried to make sound like those of my favorite jazz drummers (Art Blakey, Tony Williams, and Elvin Jones), these drums never sounded thin or brittle. Instead, they retained the same pure and balanced tone as before, only higher in pitch. As a result, after each tuning I ended up spending five or so minutes playing the drums. They just sounded too good not to hit!

With its initial tuning at about medium-low, the kick drum had a round attack, focused pitch, and boomy resonance. But it also had enough punch to give it clarity.



The snare throw-off works fine, but it's a little uncomfortable to adjust.

Again, this particular tuning reminded me of Stanton's bass drum sound. When I tossed some muffling inside the drum, the boom disappeared, leaving behind a tight, funky feel, à la groove master Bernard Purdie.

While the Powerstroke 3 batter head did wonders to keep the bass drum's overtones in check, I felt like it was a little too controlled when I took it up to a conventional "jazz" tuning. Some of you might like that, and its tone did remain warm and pure. But I like to have some high-frequency overtones



All Canopus drums feature Bolt Tight tension rods, which help hold tension and prevent metal-to-metal contact.

exactly what I was looking for. (Imagine Tony Williams' bass drum on Miles Davis' s album Seven Steps To Heaven.)

The 5x14 Mahogany snare falls right in line with the rest of the kit. With the snares off, its tone was a perfect match with the toms—round and warm with a focused pitch and controlled overtones. As a result, there was no need for muffling. With the throw-off engaged, the snare sounded very crisp and sensitive, all the way out to the edge. And rimshots cracked without being piercing.

The only thing about the snare that I'd change is the throw-off mechanism. It's a fairly standard design that you can find on many other drums. And the on/off motion works fine. However, the tension-adjustment knob is uncomfortable to turn, mainly because of the large and prominent ridges on the thumbscrew. This may seem like

in my jazz bass drum sound; they help balance out a bit of the "boom." To see if I could achieve that, I swapped out the PS3 for a coated Ambassador. The resulting sound was

nit-picking, but my hands and fingers take enough of a beating on the gig. So I don't want to have to deal with potential blisters from adjusting my snare tension too.

### The End Result

The Canopus Mahogany kit is a success on many levels. It looks great, sets up easy, and—most importantly—is very inspiring to play. Whether you're looking to recreate the drum tones of your favorite Blue Note records, or you're in the market for a versatile high-end kit that's compact enough to fit into the backseat of a sedan, give this one some thought. It shouldn't disappoint.

### THE NUMBERS

#### Mahogany Series

- 14x18 bass drum... . \$2,431
  - 13x14 floor tom... . \$1,525
  - 8x12 rack tom... . \$1,175
  - (all in natural lacquer finish)
  - 5x14 snare... . \$1,100
  - (in Brown Sun Burst finish)
- [www.canopususa.com](http://www.canopususa.com)

# SNARE DRUM OF THE MONTH

by Michael Dawson



## GRETSCH

### 5x14 Solid Aluminum

#### HOW'S IT SOUND?

Gretsch's Solid Aluminum snare is a bit of an enigma. On one hand, it has some of the warmth of a wood drum. But it also lets out high-end overtones like steel, only not as bright and cutting. When compared to a brass-shelled drum—which is often the gatekeeper between metal and wood timbres—the aluminum stands out even further. Brass snares are relished for their balance of high-end crack and mid-range punch. And the overtones are often prominent, but controlled and focused.

The Solid Aluminum is a little gnarlier. The overtones are complex, touching on a wide range of frequencies at once. This quality is brought out further when the snares are off, where rimshots are reminiscent of the over-driven backbeat of Can's Jaki Liebezeit. With the forty-two-strand snares engaged, however, the drum is ultra-sensitive with a lot of white-noise spread. (Think "splat," rather than "pop" or "crack.")

Throughout our testing, we found the optimal tuning to be somewhere in the medium to medium-tight range. Anything extreme put the drum out of balance. Low tunings brought out too many complex overtones. And super-tight settings choked off the cushy characteristic of the aluminum shell.

All in all, the Gretsch Solid Aluminum snare is a professional and unique-sounding instrument that could add an interesting element to your snare collection. Just start saving now, because it ain't cheap!



Die Cast hoops add pop to rimshots and rimlicks.



Lightning throw-off allows for very quick on/off movements.

To hear this drum, log on to the Multi-Media page at [www.moderndrummer.com](http://www.moderndrummer.com).

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are

you

in?

# Bosphorus Gold Series Power Pack

>> Hand-Made...And Hip

by Russ Barbone



The Gold Series Power Pack features cymbals that straddle the line between rock and jazz. It also includes some cool extras.

**KEY NOTES**

- Hand-made quality
- Visually beautiful
- Sonically matched cymbals within the set
- Uneven weight distribution in the ride cymbal

The Bosphorus Cymbal Company has been producing cymbals in the time-honored Turkish tradition since 1996. Every cymbal is made completely by hand, beginning with castings fired in traditional wood-burning ovens, and proceeding through tempering, hammering, lathing, and polishing. Master cymbalmakers Hasan Seker, Hasan Ozdemir, and Ibrahim Yakici—who oversee every step of the process—apprenticed as teenagers in the original Istanbul and Zilcan factories. They spent almost twenty years apiece earning their “master” status.

### Going For The Gold

Turkish-made cymbals enjoy a certain reputation for dark, mysterious sounds, making them popular with jazz players. But this is a double-edge sword, since it tends to prevent rock or mainstream players from even considering any Turkish-made models. With the Gold series, Bosphorus is out to change that. The cymbal package we were sent for review is called the Gold Series Power Pack. And even

though the cymbals are consciously designed to appeal to non-jazz players, they're still completely hand-made, with each one signed on the underside of the bell by its maker. The individual cymbals in every Power Pack are carefully selected at the factory for sonic timbres that complement each other. Each pack includes a 20" ride, a 16" Power crash, 14" hi-hats, and a free 8" splash, all of which feature a highly polished reflective finish. There's also a high-quality carrying bag and four pairs of 5A sticks.

### Grand Opening

Since the cymbals are in the cymbal bag when you open the box, let's start with the bag. I was impressed with its design and its quality. It features more padding than is found in most cymbal bags, and there's an additional removable heavy felt internal sleeve with three individual pockets to prevent the cymbals from touching each other. One side of the bag has a zippered pocket for the hi-hats, which also features an extra layer of padding. On the other side are a small zippered compartment for tools, a larger half-moon storage area, and four sewn-in loops to hold drumsticks. The bottom of the bag features yet more padding, as well as three diamond-plate rubber pieces that contact the floor to protect the bag's valuable cargo. A standard carrying handle and shoulder strap are included, and all zipper pulls are large and ergonomic. Nice!

The four pairs of 5A sticks that came in our review package were nicely balanced, with acorn-shaped wood tips. They were slightly smaller in diameter than most 5A sticks, offering a good compromise for rock and jazz applications.

### The Main Attraction

When you first lay eyes on the Bosphorus Gold cymbals, you get an immediate sense of quality. From the size of the bell, the lathing, the hammering, and the polishing, you can almost sense a spiritual connection to the makers. The cymbals are said to be hand-hammered on both sides up to 5,000 times, which imparts a warm fundamental tone with a deep pitch and a very controlled wash of overtones. The extra polishing gives the cymbals a shining appearance. As for their sound, they straddle a fine line between rock power and a more focused jazz sound.

The 14" hi-hats are beautifully matched, with a slightly heavier bottom cymbal. The height and contour of the bells helped the hats to produce a very defined "chick" sound when closed. When played with sticks the hats combined cutting power and projection with subtle warmth underneath. No matter how open or closed I played them, they delivered in spades.

The 16" Power crash is just that. Its initial explosion projects powerfully, with a high, tight, and focused pitch that decays rapidly into a warm wash of overtones. Substantial bell height provides an added option in the spectrum of sound offered by this cymbal.

The 8" splash is a blast! It's light, quick, and delicate, with a hint of "spice" in its assault. I kept coming back to this cymbal (using it more than I normally would use a splash) because of the very sweet sound it emitted.

I've purposely saved the 20" ride for last. This cymbal has a slightly heavier weight with a lower, less pronounced bell than those of the other Gold models. This tends to impart a dry, focused sound. You get an initial bright, crisp, clear ping that never sounds harsh or brittle. I could really lean into this ride and get a lot of sustained wash and over-



**Our 20" review ride looked and sounded great. But it did have a bit of a weight-distribution problem.**

tones, reminding me of cymbals used by big band players. When hit softly it had a comforting sense of focus. When hit hard it reacted a little slowly, but when brought up to speed it had plenty of drive for louder situations. There was one minor annoyance with the 20" ride: an uneven distribution of weight. When placed on a slightly tilted stand (as most drummers place their rides), the heavier part of the cymbal always rotated toward the bottom. When this happens with a ride, you wind up constantly playing on the same area. Some players might not mind this, and others may consider it par for the course in a hand-made cymbal. But I tend to wonder how hitting a cymbal repeatedly in the same area will affect its life over the long haul.

### Wrap-Up

Gold series cymbals are a definite departure from the more esoteric lines that Bosphorus is known for. They're brighter and more powerful, without losing all of the depth and darkness that we've come to expect from Turkish-made cymbals. They definitely carry the heritage and the hand-made quality.

The Gold Series Power Pack is a great-sounding set of cymbals that could serve well in a multitude of situations. The list pricing looks daunting, but street prices should bring that figure down substantially. "Package" cymbal sets tend to be bargains in general, and the inclusion of a really nice cymbal bag and four pairs of pro-quality sticks adds even more sweetness to the deal.

### THE NUMBERS

Gold Series Power Pack . . . . . \$1,080  
[www.bosphoruscymbals.com](http://www.bosphoruscymbals.com)

# LP Montalvo And Garcia Signature Congas And Bongos

## >>Percussion With Personality

by Norman Arnold

### KEY NOTES

- Great sound
- Excellent construction quality
- Unique appearance

**T**hey say beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Well then, behold these new drums from LP. The Eddie Montalvo and Richie "Gajate" Garcia signature congas and bongos are based on the LP Classic Accents wood congas and Generation II bongos. Each is offered with custom graphics created by and for two of LP's leading percussion artists.

### Drum Basics 101

The congas are built using the LP standard sizes of 11" quinto, 11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" conga, and 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" tumba, each of which stands 30" tall. The stave-construction shells are made from 3-ply Siam oak, and the drums are fitted with natural rawhide skins and LP's Comfort Curve II Rims. The rims and side plates have chrome plating that adds to the character and professional appearance of the drums.

Since the Garcia and Montalvo drums are made from the same materials, they have the same classic LP wood conga sound. The quinto produces a crisp slap, with a punchy middle register. When it's cranked really high, it has a distinct "pop" that's slightly woody and very natural-sounding. The congas and tumbas have a warm middle register, and they can be tuned to a wide harmonic range. The tumba can be tuned low for a deep, throaty rumble.

These drums really sing—especially when they're played on wood floors. The matching bongos for both sets of congas are based on LP's Generation II design, with shells made of kiln-dried Siam oak. The macho drum has a diameter of 7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"; the hembra's diameter is 8<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>". Rawhide heads are mounted with Comfort Curve hardware, and the construction quality on both models is exceptional. These are solid bongos with a crisp and biting sound.

### Ahhh...The Finishes

I've been seeing a bit of a trend lately with finishes on Afro/Latin drums. I think the last batch I reviewed had some type of leopard finish with a velvet painting of Elvis on them. They were either congas or planters for a Vegas casino. I never did figure out which. But I digress....

With the Eddie Montalvo and Richie Garcia signature finishes, LP got it right. As soon as you pull the drums out of the box, you can see that the quality of the workmanship is really high. The drums are finished in high-gloss lacquer that really brings out each design. LP's Integrated Shell Protectors (a fancy name for rubber bumpers) are certainly valuable on drums with finishes like these.

The Montalvo design is a unique burnt-orange sunburst with a random linear pattern that's usually seen only on museum pieces or very expensive custom guitars. The signature plates are also well done, providing a classy touch. The Garcia models feature artwork by Hector Garcia that depicts a tropical jam session under swaying palm trees. There is also, among other things, an octopus. This is a nod to Richie's nick-



Eddie Montalvo signature drums feature a distinctive sunburst pattern.

Richie Garcia's design includes a tropical scene, complete with an octopus.



name, "El Pulpo" (The Octopus), which he earned for his "limbs a-flailin'" drumset technique. Or so I've heard. The Garcia signature plate also incorporates the octopus design.

The artwork for each conga design is replicated on the accompanying bongos. In total, the Eddie Montalvo and Richie Garcia signature drums are great-looking and, more importantly, great-sounding instruments that well represent their namesake artists.

To hear recorded examples of Richie's drums, go to [www.lpmusic.com/Product\\_Showcase/Whats\\_New/garcia\\_drums.html](http://www.lpmusic.com/Product_Showcase/Whats_New/garcia_drums.html). To hear Eddie's drums, go to [www.lpmusic.com/Product\\_Showcase/Whats\\_New/montalvo\\_drums.html](http://www.lpmusic.com/Product_Showcase/Whats_New/montalvo_drums.html).

#### THE NUMBERS

11" Quinto .....	\$679
11 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> " Conga .....	\$699
12 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> " Tumba .....	\$729
Bongos .....	\$429

Prices are identical for Montalvo and Garcia signature models.  
[www.lpmusic.com](http://www.lpmusic.com)

## Quick Looks

### NEW VIC FIRTH SIGNATURE STICKS

by Chap Ostrander

From top: Tomas Haake, Abe Laboriel Jr., and Mike Terrana signature sticks



Vic Firth has introduced new signature sticks spotlighting three of their artists. The sticks are all made of American hickory, but otherwise they're as different as the players they're named for.

Abe Laboriel Jr.'s sticks are black, 17" long, and .630" in diameter. At first glance I thought they'd be heavy, given their length and girth, but not so. They feature a large tip, so the cymbal and drum sound is correspondingly large, but the overall playing feel is that of a lighter stick. This is due to the long, gradual taper leading to the tip. The reduced amount of wood at the tip end gives the long stick great balance. If the variety of gigs that Abe plays is any indication, his signature sticks should work well in many situations.

Tomas Haake's stick is a beefy model measuring 16<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>" long and .645" in diameter. It's almost as long as Abe's stick, but it's bigger around, with a shorter taper leading to a more compact tip. It isn't front-heavy, but it certainly produces lots of power (with the

stick doing the work, which was the intent of the design). The olive tip gave me fine drum and cymbal sounds that were clear and loud.

Mike Terrana's stick is white, 16<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" long, and .560" in diameter, putting it in the 5A range. I normally favor 5A-size sticks, and these felt great. The barrel tip gave me concise and clear cymbal and drum sounds, and the long taper provided lightning response. The sticks moved easily from cymbals to drums and just felt quick in my hands.

Each of these models is truly connected to its artist/designer. Abe and Mike both contributed line drawings of themselves, while Tomas created his own graphic. The sticks obviously work for their namesakes; check them out and see if they work for you. List price for each model is \$14.

[www.vicfirth.com](http://www.vicfirth.com)

# Hammerax Hybrid Instruments

>>Funny Names...Unique Sounds

by Rick Van Horn

Hammerax pieces are as much sculpture as they are musical instruments.

## KEY NOTES

- Totally original looks and sounds
- Each instrument is hand-made and unique
- High-quality components maximize durability
- Dustbowl tends to slide on top of cymbals

On rare occasions, a new percussion instrument comes along that's just too cool for words. For an entire line of instruments to fit that description is rarer still.

And when we say "too cool for words," we mean it literally, because the standard vocabulary that drummers use to describe cymbal and other metallic percussion sounds just doesn't lend itself to the unique sounds created by Hammerax's "hand-hammered stick-playable hybrid instruments."

Suffice it to say, when the Hammerax instruments sent to MD for review arrived, they caused a sensation.

Even the non-drumming staff members found them visually and aurally fascinating. That's high praise indeed, considering that these same people are often driven crazy by the testing of other products that goes on in our office.

Hammerax instruments are made of bronze alloys that are cast, rolled, and hammered by hand. Each one is the work of an individual artist, and although there are "models" within the Hammerax line, no two of these models are exactly alike. Most come mounted on a polished wood bar, suspended by what Hammerax calls Spectra cord. They claim that it's ten times stronger than piano wire, yet has a low mass that allows the high frequencies of the various instruments to shimmer.

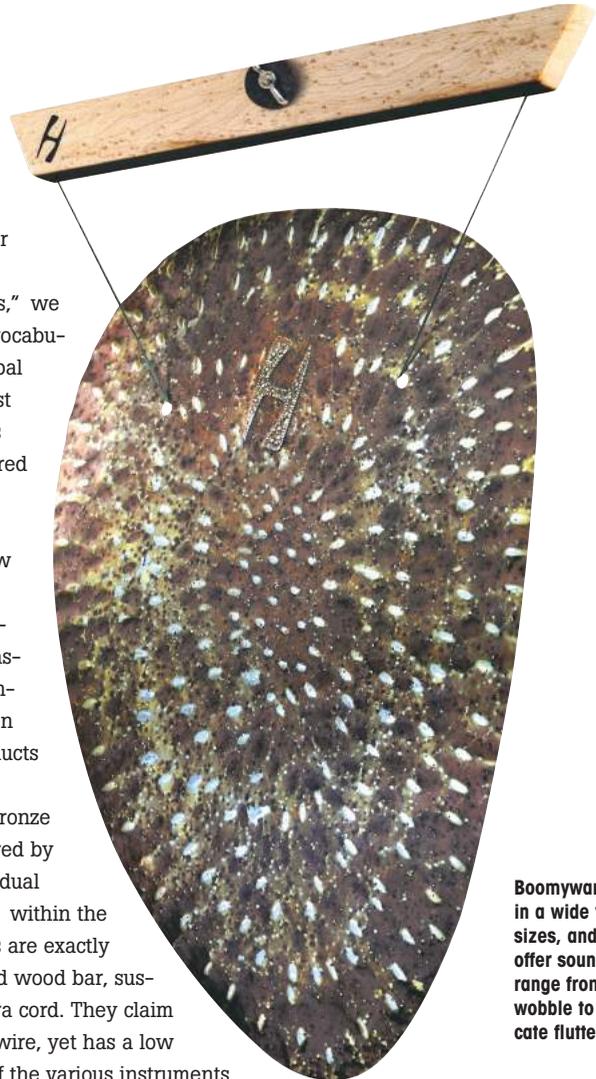
We weren't sent the entire Hammerax line. You'll need to go to the manufacturer's Web site to explore the full range of offerings. What we were sent was a large selection of Boomywangs, as well as one Culebra and one Dustbowl. Okay, the names read like Dr. Seuss meets Star Wars. But the sounds...

## Boomywangs

Frankly speaking, the Boomywangs knocked us out. They have a sort of inverted-teardrop/leaf shape, with a natural curve built in. We were sent a selection of Boomywangs that included a wide range of sizes and a couple of variations on the basic theme.

The sound of a Boomywang alters radically depending on how big it is, where you hit it, and what you hit it with. When the larger models were hit in the middle with a fist (or with a large, soft mallet), the whole piece vibrated, producing a deep, sonorous rumble reminiscent of symphonic "thunder sheets"—but with a pronounced and appealing "wobble." When we hit the same piece with a drumstick more toward the edge, the result was a satisfying crash sound that had less vibrato. It also had more wash and a lighter overall sound than that of a traditional crash cymbal. And there were lots of other sonic possibilities in between these two.

The largest Boomywang that we were sent (24" long) had a circular pattern of holes cut out of its center. These reduced the overall mass, interfered with the linear nature of the sound waves, and generally light-



Boomywangs come in a wide variety of sizes, and they offer sounds that range from a deep wobble to a delicate flutter.



The volume and projection of the Culebra rivals that of most Chinas—with its own distinct character.

ened and quickened the response.

On the other side of the coin, a 20" Boomywang came with a TurboCup welded on toward the bottom. The TurboCup is, in essence, a little cup-shaped bell. The tonalities of the TurboCup and the Boomywang worked together to add an unusual vibrato to the bell sound. And, when the wobbly sound of the Boomywang body faded out, the bell kept ringing. In fact, a very cool effect could be achieved by whacking the Boomywang to set it crashing, and then grabbing it quickly to mute its sound, allowing the bell to sustain on its own (which it did for quite a while).

As the Boomywangs got smaller and lighter, their vibrations got faster and their pitches got higher. The 10" and 12" models produced less of a "wobble" and more of a rapid "flutter." In fact, they sounded best not when hit with a stick, but when poked in their middles with a single finger. (But they still handled stick impact just fine, thank you.)

We venture to say that there are few drumset players who couldn't find a use for one or more Boomywangs on their kits. And we can see multi-percussionists using several, in a small-to-large range that would offer literally hundreds of available sounds.

### Culebra

A Culebra is a 30"-long, tapering strip that's formed into a compound curve. It can be struck in different places to focus on higher or lower frequencies, but its overall response is to produce vibratos from either end that create a loud, almost "gurgling" sound as they crash into each other.

Hammerax says that Culebras are among their loudest instruments, and they suggest them as alternatives to Chinas or other effects cymbals. The one we played certainly had an explosive sound with lots of projection. Its length made it a little tricky to mount, since it needs to be far enough away from whatever stand it's on that it doesn't bump into that stand when hit. Mounting the Culebra on the end of a long counterweighted cymbal boom arm worked best for us.

### Dustbowl

The Dustbowl is the simplest-looking of all Hammerax instruments. Basically, it's a 12" circle, with a bowed contour similar to that of a cymbal. But instead of having a bell at its center, it has a 5" hole.

The Dustbowl's shape lets it do multiple duties. When suspended by its cord, it produces two distinctly different sounds. Hit it directly on the edge of the inside circle, and it sounds like a light bell or pure-toned gong. Hit it on the top surface toward the outside edge, and it responds more like a tam-tam or a China crash cymbal.

The Dustbowl can also be dropped directly atop another cymbal to create an aggressive crasher sound. According to Hammerax, the large hole in the center allows the cymbal bell below to come through for playing short bell sounds, while the body of your main cymbal will also ring with a complex sizzle. They especially recommend the Dustbowl for use on hi-hats, suggesting that the design of the instrument could let it be switched from a hanging position to a crasher quickly and easily enough to be done in mid-song.

Our experiments using the Dustbowl as a crasher produced mixed results. It sounded great, and it could certainly be "installed" quick-



The Dustbowl can be played suspended for gongy sounds, or placed atop a cymbal or drumhead for a white-noise effect.

ly. However, the 5" hole was too big to keep the Dustbowl centered on the bell of any cymbal we put it on—especially a tilted ride or crash. Even on a flat hi-hat the Dustbowl quickly slipped off to one side as we played. So the ability to use the Dustbowl as a crasher would depend largely on where it ultimately wound up atop the cymbal it was placed on. As long as it didn't impede your playing, it'd provide a very cool effect.

Hammerax also suggests putting a Dustbowl onto a tom or snare, to create an almost electronic sound. In this situation, we found that the large hole proved to be an advantage. When we played a snare drum with the Dustbowl in place, we could easily move between hitting the drumhead itself through the hole (getting a more or less "normal" drum sound) and hitting the Dustbowl for the crashy sound. Instantaneous sonic variation!

### Conclusion

Like we said at the beginning, the Hammerax instruments we tested proved to be too cool for words. They're attractive, they're unique, and they provide tonal colors that simply haven't existed before. They're also hand-made, so they're not cheap. But their prices compare favorably with those of professional cymbals, and they offer a unique acoustic palette.

We predict that Hammerax instruments will be the next "gotta have" items showing up on everybody's kits. You might want to get on the bandwagon early.

### THE NUMBERS

#### Boomywangs

10" Paper-Thin	\$.74
12" Extra-Thin	\$.112
15" Extra-Thin	\$.150
18" Extra-Thin	\$.178
20" Thin	\$.298
20" Thin with TurboCup	\$.370
24" Thin with center holes	\$.410
Culebra, 30" Medium	\$.298
Dustbowl, 12" Medium	\$.144

Price list shown is for reviewed items only, and does not reflect the entire Hammerax model range.

[www.hammerax.com](http://www.hammerax.com)

# ProLogix All-N-1 Russ Miller Signature Practice Pad

>>Way Beyond "Tap, Tap,"  
by Chap Ostrander

## KEY NOTES

- Great playing response
- Well conceived to offer multiple practice options
- Pricy for a single pad

Everyone needs to practice. The question is, how, where, and when? Some practice pads make so much noise that they can be as annoying to others as live drums. And if you're a teacher using such pads in a lesson situation, you often have to shout to be heard above them. ProLogix has an answer. Let's see if it's your answer.

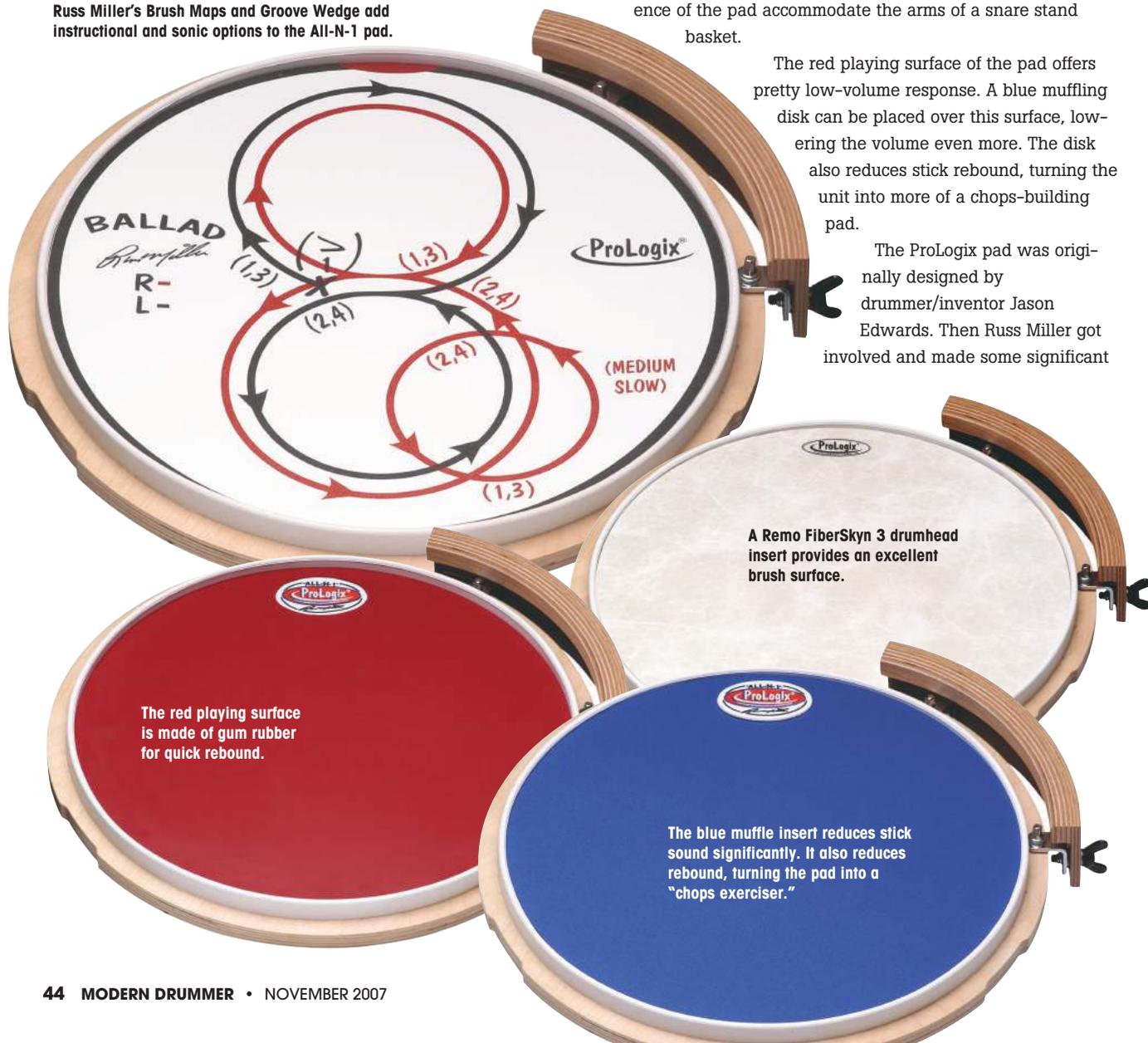
## More Than Meets The Eye

The All-N-1 Russ Miller Signature Practice Pad is a 13"-diameter red gum-rubber pad atop a 3/4"-thick Baltic birch base. A raised rim around the pad is made from the same rubber as the pad surface. A non-slip disk on the underside of the base keeps the pad in place on a tabletop or your lap. The pad's 13" diameter lets it sit comfortably on a 13" drum, while a thoughtfully placed Hoop Groove around the bottom of the base allows it to sit on top of the rim of a 14" drum. Three cutouts around the circumference of the pad accommodate the arms of a snare stand basket.

Russ Miller's Brush Maps and Groove Wedge add instructional and sonic options to the All-N-1 pad.

The red playing surface of the pad offers pretty low-volume response. A blue muffling disk can be placed over this surface, lowering the volume even more. The disk also reduces stick rebound, turning the unit into more of a chops-building pad.

The ProLogix pad was originally designed by drummer/inventor Jason Edwards. Then Russ Miller got involved and made some significant

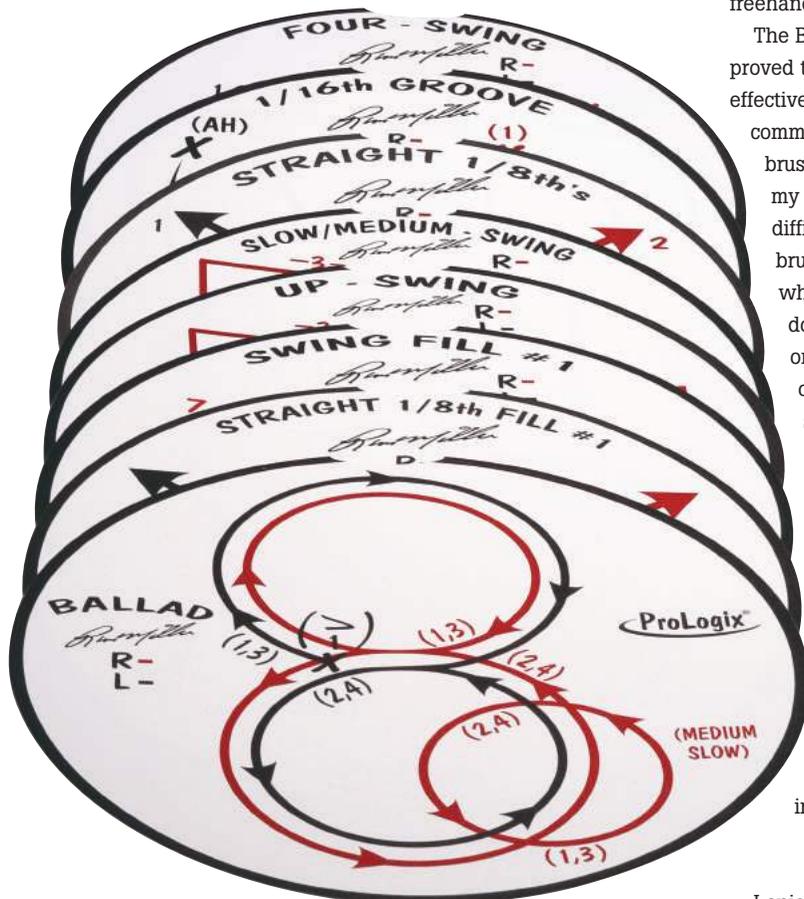


A Remo FiberSkyn 3 drumhead insert provides an excellent brush surface.

The red playing surface is made of gum rubber for quick rebound.

The blue muffle insert reduces stick sound significantly. It also reduces rebound, turning the pad into a "chops exerciser."

contributions. These include a Remo Fiberskyn 3 " drumhead" insert that makes a great surface for brush practice. The sound of the brushes is very apparent, making the practice effective. Russ also worked on Brush Maps, which are solid inserts (sold separately) that fit over the primary pad. The Maps contain working diagrams that show the placement and direction of eight different brush patterns. Color coding identifies the right and left hands, and arrows indicate the direction for playing the pattern. The Maps cover a range of musical styles and feels,



Eight Brush Maps are available as a separate set.

and they provide practical instruction to the novice brush player. A video produced by Russ for the ProLogix Web site demonstrates all the Brush Map patterns.

Russ' s involvement in the All-N-1 pad' s design also called for two drumkey screws that attach his Yamaha Groove Wedge (sold separately). If you want to practice clave, cascara, or cross-sticking, this is your accessory. The cool thing is that once you' ve mastered the patterns on the pad, you can then take the Wedge off and add it to your drumset.

### It Ain' t Just Tapping

My favorite aspect of the ProLogix pad system was the sound of the pad itself. I loved the resonance of the wood base, especially when the pad was suspended on a snare stand. When the pad was placed on a snare drum, the Hoop Groove made a great connection, and I could moderate the snare tension on the drum to achieve the desired sound.

The red surface provided a great practice tool. Of equal value was the rim. I love being able to practice stick patterns involving rimshots with-

out having my ears pierced by the sound of a plastic rim (as found on some practice pads). The rubber rim on the All-N-1 pad stands up solidly and invites all manner of rim work, including the Johnny Rabb freehand technique.

The Brush Maps proved to be an effective means of communicating brush patterns to my students. It' s difficult to teach brush work when students

don' t have some kind of example they can watch and emulate on their own. The Brush Maps put the brush strokes right in front of them and guide them through the patterns. The ProLogix Web site indicates that more artists are getting involved with the pad, which could mean more Brush Maps in the future.

### Bagging It

In addition to the All-N-1 pad, ProLogix also offers the D-Lux 16" Traveling Practice Pad Bag. It' s roomy enough to take the pad and several lesson books, with foam-lined pockets for storing the Brush Maps and the blue and brush inserts. A stick pocket on the outside easily holds several pairs of sticks and brushes. A deeper square pocket can take keys, cell phones, metronomes, and other items. The carrying handle is padded for comfort, and there' s a shoulder strap as well. A plastic insert protects the bottom of the bag.

### Wrap-Up

I enjoyed working with the All-N-1 pad. It was big enough to place between my student and me so that we could both play on it. And the sound level was such that I could speak and be heard while we were playing. The sound created by the wooden base was satisfying to work with, and the response of the pad and the rim made that work easy. The blue insert was great for working finger exercises and for muscle building, and the Brush Maps were very helpful for instructing students in brush basics.

The All-N-1' s price may seem a little steep for a single pad. But the pad is really a complete system, with quite a bit of versatility to offer. As such, it' s almost a must for teachers or players with a dedicated practice regimen. Get one and you' ll get some serious practicing done.



The D-Lux carrying bag can contain the pad and all inserts for easy portability. It can also accommodate sticks and accessories.

### THE NUMBERS

All-N-1 Russ Miller Signature Practice Pad . . . . .	\$149.99
Includes Fiberskyn and blue muffle inserts	
Eight signature Russ Miller Brush Maps . . . . .	\$35
D-Lux 16" Traveling Practice Pad Bag . . . . .	\$170
Yamaha Groove Wedge . . . . .	\$65
www.prologixpercussion.com	





**>>TAMA STARCLASSIC PERFORMER BUBINGA/BIRCH KIT**

Tama cites their new Starclassic Performer Bubinga/Birch kit as "the perfect union of premium-tone woods. The enhanced low-end and warmth of bubinga combines with the focus and punch of birch, creating a synergistic combination." Toms feature 6-mm shells with three inner plies of bubinga and four outer plies of birch. Snare drums feature the same ply configuration, but are 7 mm thick. Bass drums are 8 mm thick, with three inner plies of bubinga and five outer plies of birch.

Drums are available in lacquer finishes that include new Dark Mocha Fade and Dark Stardust Fade (pictured), as well as in six covered finishes that include new Lava Glass Glitter and Stardust Champagne. Sets are available as four-piece shell packs without snare or stands (\$2,499.99) or as complete five-piece kits with matching snare and stands (\$3,399.99). Add-on drums are also available.

[www.tama.com](http://www.tama.com)



**>>LUDWIG BLACK BEAUTY, SUPRAPHONIC, AND MAPLE CLASSIC SNARE DRUMS**

Ludwig's iconic Black Beauty, Supraphonic 400, and Maple Classic models are currently available at special prices at participating Ludwig dealers. The 5x14 Black Beauty was developed in the mid 1920s, with a heavier and better-sounding solid-brass shell than was previously available. Today's Black Beauties feature a host of upgrades and a choice of polished, hammered, and engraved black-nickel finishes. The Supraphonic 400 Series was the "go-to" snare drum throughout much of the late-1950s jazz and early-'60s rock eras. The 5x14 and 6 1/2 x 14 chrome-over-brass models are noted for their balance of power, sensitivity, and depth. Maple Classic snares helped established the fat backbeat and deep grooves of pop and R&B music in the 1970s and '80s. Their 7-ply, all-maple shells combine clarity and warmth with projection and musicality.

[www.ludwig-drums.com](http://www.ludwig-drums.com)

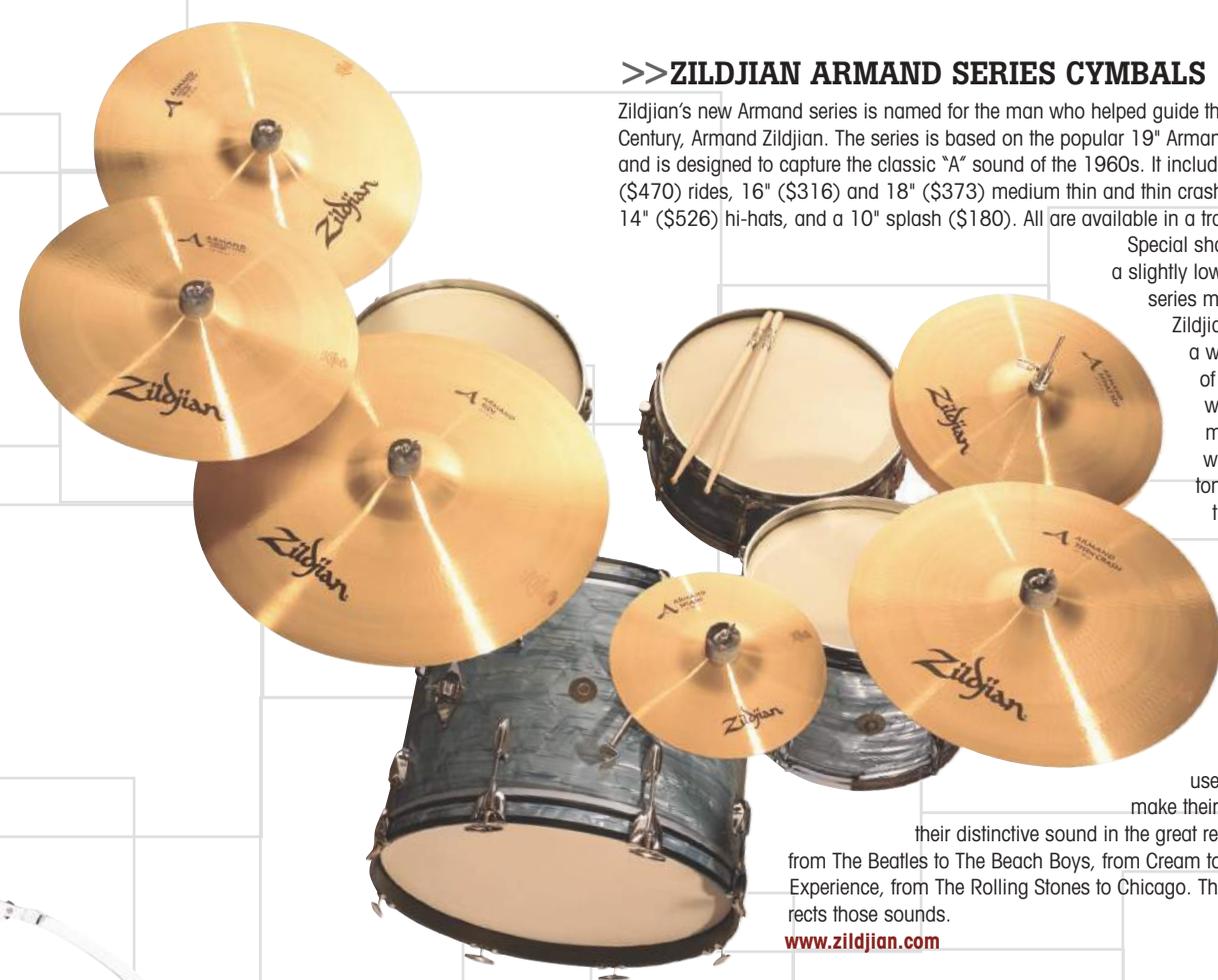
## >>ZILDJIAN ARMAND SERIES CYMBALS

Zildjian's new Armand series is named for the man who helped guide the company into the 21st Century, Armand Zildjian. The series is based on the popular 19" Armand "Beautiful Baby" ride, and is designed to capture the classic "A" sound of the 1960s. It includes 20" (\$428) and 21" (\$470) rides, 16" (\$316) and 18" (\$373) medium thin and thin crashes, 13" (\$470) and 14" (\$526) hi-hats, and a 10" splash (\$180). All are available in a traditional finish.

Special shaping techniques create a slightly lower profile on Armand series models than on current A Zildjians, helping to produce a warm and smooth blend of overtones. Lighter weight specifications promote a faster response with lower pitched overtones but no loss of projection potential. A tighter lathe pattern on the top of each model results in a unique feel.

During the explosion of rock and pop music in the 1960s, the drummers of many groundbreaking bands used A Zildjian cymbals to make their mark. You can hear their distinctive sound in the great recordings of that era, from The Beatles to The Beach Boys, from Cream to The Jimi Hendrix Experience, from The Rolling Stones to Chicago. The Armand series resurrects those sounds.

[www.zildjian.com](http://www.zildjian.com)



## >>ALESIS TRIGGER I/O USB/MIDI PAD TRIGGER INTERFACE

The Alesis Trigger I/O converts signals from drum triggers or electronic drum pads into MIDI note messages to let users play sounds on synthesizers, drum modules, and computers. Dual-zone inputs select two different surface areas of the percussion instrument. These inputs are fully compatible with acoustic and pad triggers from many popular manufacturers. A hi-hat input lets users switch between on/off and continuous control modes, while an up/down footswitch input selects kits remotely.

The Trigger I/O has twenty programmable presets to store and recall sound combinations. The unit comes bundled with BFD Lite software, featuring a full range of professional-quality drum libraries. It also has mounting holes for an optional drum stand for easy on-stage use. List price is \$299.

[www.alesis.com](http://www.alesis.com)



## >>YAMAHA PHOENIX SNARE DRUM

Yamaha continues to celebrate their 40th anniversary by offering limited-edition Phoenix snare drums. Each drum comes hand-engraved with part of the same Phoenix logo that adorned the reed organs made by Nippon Gakki (the predecessor to Yamaha Corporation) in the late 1800s.

The 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 13 drum's brass shell—chosen for its clear, well-balanced tone—features aluminum die-cast hoops and one-piece lugs. The engraving is applied by hand to the shell's black lacquered finish. Only twenty drums will be sold in the US. List price is \$1,799.99.

[www.yamahadrums.com](http://www.yamahadrums.com)

## >>PEACE MARAUDER DRUMSET

The Peace Marauder drumset bridges the gap between an entry-level kit relegated to the practice room and an intermediate kit that sees action beyond the woodshed—at a price designed to fit within the budget of a student or aspiring musician.

The complete five-piece rock outfit includes double-braced stands (including a basket-style snare stand), a bass drum pedal, a throne, cymbals, and sticks. Drumshells are constructed of preferred mahogany, with available Wine Red, Black, Classic White, Mirror Chrome, and Pink wrapped finishes. Appointments more typically found on semi-pro or intermediate kits include a 16-lug snare drum and a 16x22 bass drum with eight lugs per head.

[www.peacedrum.com](http://www.peacedrum.com)



## >>SONOR REISSUED PHONIC SNARE DRUMS

Sonor Phonic series snare drums, which were popular in the 1980s for their distinctive sound, are once again available. The new drums feature beechwood shells with a choice of mahogany or rosewood veneers. The new models are designed to be true to the originals, but with updated features including an improved throw-off and die-cast rims. Drums are offered in 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" and 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" depths, at a list price of \$1,995.

[www.sonor.com](http://www.sonor.com)

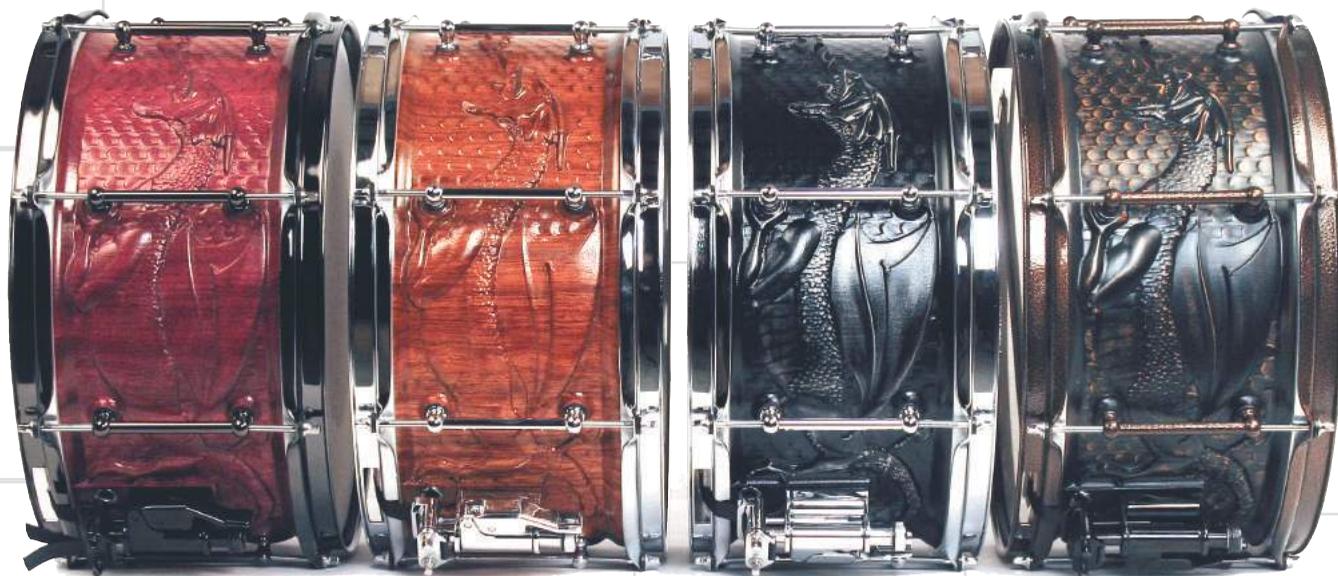


## >>FUTURE SONICS ATRIO SERIES MONITOR EARPHONES

Future Sonics Atrio (AY-free-oh) Series earphones offer the manufacturer's professional-level TrueTimbre technology in a universal-fit product. Unlike two-way, three-way, or "hybrid" armature-based earphones, there are no electronic or comb filtering artifacts, no phase issues, and no crossover dropouts in Atrio series earphones. All the listener hears is perfectly balanced, natural, and realistic sound with a sense of "feel." The earphones are built to optimize the sound output of any concert stage, recording studio, or broadcast production, yet they can also be used with portable music and DVD players, laptop PCs, and gaming systems.

Included with the earphones are three sizes of EarFills dual-flange silicon sleeves that allow the earpiece to fit snugly in any size ear canal. Also included are two sizes of ComfortFit foam sleeves, which provide a more complete seal of the ear canal. Earphones are available in black and cobalt blue, at a list price of \$199 per pair.

[www.futuresonics.com](http://www.futuresonics.com)



## >>PHATTIE SOUNDS LIKE ART SNARE DRUMS

Phattie Drums Sounds Like Art Series 2 Version 2.1 custom snare drums are available with maple, mahogany, birch, oak, ash, jarrah, walnut, cherry, purple heart, padauk, bubinga, and rosewood shells. Overall shell thickness is 1" at the bearing edges, with a nominal thickness of 1/2" throughout the carving area for power and projection. Each wood can be complemented with a range of finish options from clear lacquer to dyes, or with Phattie's exclusive Scorched Maple paint jobs. The carvings on the shells feature three highly detailed dragons.

Solid brass tube lugs and Dunnett R2 strainers in a variety of finishes are standard equipment. List price for most wood, finish, and hardware configurations is \$2,090; street prices start around \$1,249.

[www.phattiedrums.com](http://www.phattiedrums.com)



## >>PSYCHO CITY CUSTOM DRUMS

Psycho City hand-crafted custom drums are available in maple or birch. All shells are inspected and categorized for maximum wood grain presence in order to be matched to each other. All measuring and drilling is done by hand, as is the installation of PCD's offset double 45° bearing edge. The company believes that this edge provides the best head-to-shell contact for maximum projection, punch, and warmth. Finishes include satin dye stains, lacquered stains, solid drum wraps, textured wraps, glitter/glass wraps, automotive finishes, custom airbrushing, and custom graphics. Drum hardware is offered in chrome, brass, or black.

Each drum features a serial number as well as the signature of the artist that created the drum. The serial number contains all the necessary information to reproduce the drum for later duplication or add-ons. Drums are fitted with Aquarian heads and are professionally tuned prior to shipping.

[www.psychocitydrums.com](http://www.psychocitydrums.com)



## >>MAPEX BLACK PANTHER KUNG FU SNARE DRUM

Mapex's new Black Panther etched stainless steel snare drum is inspired by an ancient Chinese martial art. The 5 1/2x14 drum has a 1-mm black chrome-plated shell etched with graphics that represent the arsenal of Kung Fu weaponry: spear, hammer, wand, knife, fist, sword, and bow.

The drum's batter head is emblazoned with the symbols of Kung Fu, as well as the Chinese symbol for Black Panther in red. The Black Panther Kung Fu snare lists for \$629.99, including a semi-rigid, padded Black Panther carrying case (a retail value of \$129.99).

[www.mapexdrums.com](http://www.mapexdrums.com)



## >>NEW GRETSCH USA CUSTOM FINISH AND RENOWN SHELL PACK

Gretsch has revived the Caribbean Blue gloss and satin lacquer finish option (first popularized in the 1980s) for USA Custom Drums. This dynamic color is a deep blend of blue and green hues, modeled after the crystal clear aqua colors found in the waters of the Caribbean. The USA Custom series is Gretsch's flagship line, hand-crafted in Ridgeland, South Carolina.

Also new from Gretsch is a Renown Maple "Mod" four-piece drumset in a contemporary Vintage Glass Black Stripe finish. This special limited-edition shell pack features a deep-shell 20x22 bass drum, a 9x12 mounted tom, a 16x16 floor tom, and a 6 1/2x14 snare drum. Renown series drums feature Gretsch-formula 6-ply USA rock maple shells modeled after the company's USA Custom shells. They include 30° bearing edges, die-cast hoops, and Silver Sealer shell interiors for excellent attack, punch, and volume. The glass glitter finish is created by infusing tiny bits of actual glass into the wrap. The Black Stripe pattern is transparent, allowing the glass sparkle to shine from underneath.

Additional features include low-mass GTS suspension system, telescoping bass drum spurs, a GS-9025 tom bracket, and 100% maple hoops with natural interior finish and Vintage Glass inlay. List price is \$2,899.

[www.gretschdrums.com](http://www.gretschdrums.com)



## AND WHAT'S MORE



If you're looking for **SABIAN's** Sonically Matched cymbal sets, you'll now find them in totally new packages. Those packages feature a vibrant red design and a new labeling system that includes detailed images of the cymbals for Hand Hammered, HHX, AAX, and AA series, and player performance shots for Xs20, B8 Pro, and B8 series. In keeping with company philosophy, Sonically Matched cymbal cartons and labeling are fully recyclable.

[www.sabian.com](http://www.sabian.com)

According to **AQUARIAN**, they've re-invented the single-ply coated head through the creation of their new Z-100 coating. Two years of development led to what the company calls "the most durable coating ever developed." The new coating is applied to Aquarian heads via an equally new "Smooth Application Process." Free 14" coated demo heads are being sent to dealers so drummers can try them out.

[www.aquariandrumheads.com](http://www.aquariandrumheads.com)



The next time you surf to your favorite drumming Web site, let your computer get into the fun. **SPOTSWOOD CUSTOM COMPUTERS** offers a 20"-diameter drum-shaped computer case that has enough room to house an ATX form factor motherboard, a power supply, four internal 3 1/2" hard drives, and either one external slimline/notebook CD/DVD drive or two 5 1/4" external CD/DVD drives. A 3 1/2" I/O panel on the front of the case contains four USB 2.0 ports, one FireWire port, and one headphone and one

microphone connection. Each individually crafted case is cooled by a rear 120-mm exhaust fan, a 120-mm blowhole fan, and a side 140-mm intake LED fan.

[www.spotswoodcustomcomputers.com](http://www.spotswoodcustomcomputers.com)

**AMERITAGE CASES** offers a signature snare drum case designed by ex-James Brown drummer Frankie "Kash" Waddy. The case features a lightweight inner shell, a foam suspension system for maximum protection, and plush fabric lining to protect the drum's finish, all in a compact design that fits in an airline overhead compartment. It has straps for backpack-style transport, as well as wheels and a retractable handle to easily trail through airports. The exterior is covered in 1000 denier Cordura Plus fabric with machine stitched trim. Standard color is tan with black trim and interior; other colors are available. A separate attachable stick bag is included.

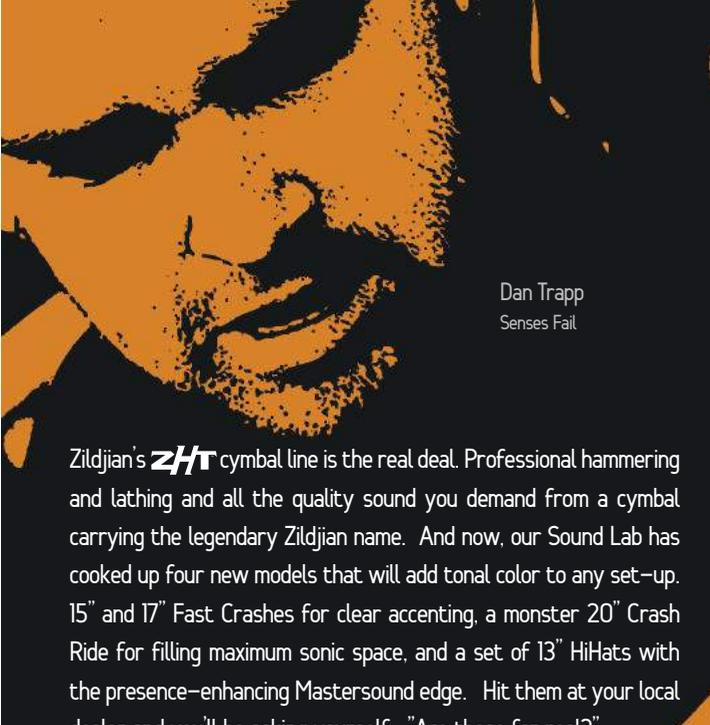
[www.ameritagecases.com](http://www.ameritagecases.com)



All Holmes Artist's Choice timpani mallets from **GROVER PRO PERCUSSION** now come standard with aluminum (light) and brass (heavy) weighted washers. By interchanging the weights, timpanists can change arc stroke velocity, which in turn affects the balance and sound produced by the mallets.

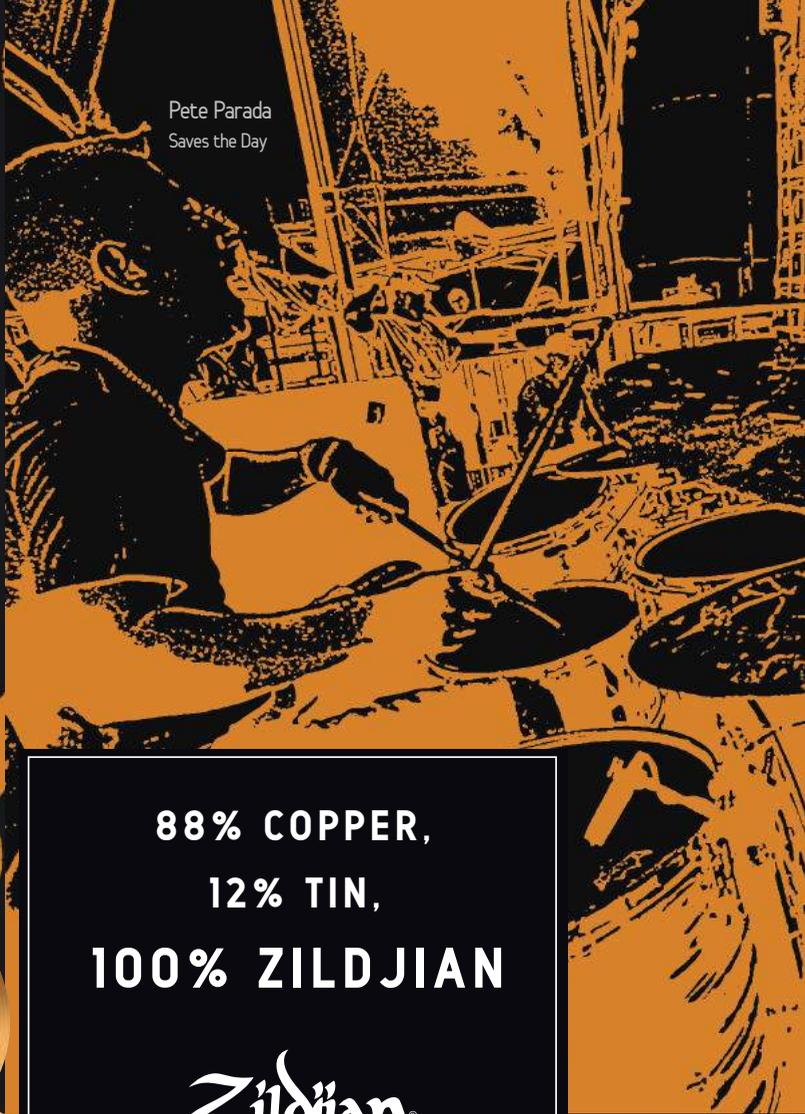
[www.groverpro.com](http://www.groverpro.com)





Dan Trapp  
Senses Fail

Zildjian's **ZHT** cymbal line is the real deal. Professional hammering and lathing and all the quality sound you demand from a cymbal carrying the legendary Zildjian name. And now, our Sound Lab has cooked up four new models that will add tonal color to any set-up. 15" and 17" Fast Crashes for clear accenting, a monster 20" Crash Ride for filling maximum sonic space, and a set of 13" HiHats with the presence-enhancing Mastersound edge. Hit them at your local dealer and you'll be asking yourself..."Are these for real?" 100% affordable, 100% Zildjian, and most of all, 100% you.



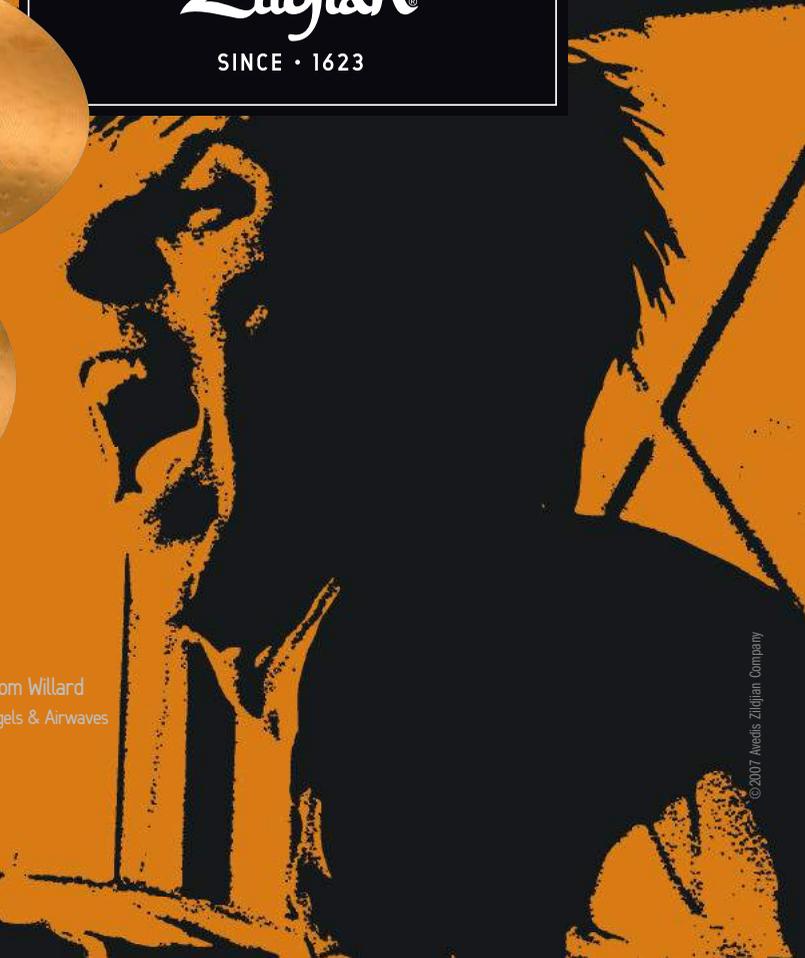
Pete Parada  
Saves the Day

**88% COPPER,  
12% TIN,  
100% ZILDJIAN**

**Zildjian®**

SINCE • 1623

Atom Willard  
Angels & Airwaves



Story by Ken Micallef • Photos by Kristin Burns

# THE EVOLUTION OF JIMMY CHAMBERLIN STILL SMASHING!

As a self confessed "elder statesman of music," and one of the most influential drummers of the past fifteen years, Jimmy Chamberlin has a thing or two to say about the state of the instrument. He doesn't believe in Pro Tools, for instance, or click tracks, or giving over control of his drum sound to engineers or producers. Chamberlin plays for the music, not the corporate recording label, not the radio, not the manufacturers.

Jimmy Chamberlin is honest to a fault, and his drumming remains as bold, bad, and beautiful as ever. Ask Chamberlin a question, and you will get an answer:

**MD:** Do you muffle your drums in the studio?  
**Jimmy:** I don't muffle anything. I am not into muffling drums. The '70s are over, man!

**MD:** How do engineers feel about that?  
**Jimmy:** I don't care. [laughs] I don't ask anybody how they feel about my drums. I just don't. It isn't my job to mike the things, ya know?

If Chamberlin's boldness leads you to believe that he plays only for himself, you're wrong. When called upon to reunite with Smashing Pumpkins head honcho Billy Corgan, Chamberlin laid all his cards on the table. The results show in every second of the hard-hitting and controversial songs on *Zeitgeist*, the band's first album of new material in seven years.



**T**he mindset of the record was to put our best foot forward and not to get too artsy," Chamberlin explains. "We wanted to try to create a body of work that was concentrated enough to bring back a fan base and invigorate a new fan base. We kept it pretty close to the chest, and we didn't branch out too deep into art zone while we were writing the record."

Beginning with 1992's *Gish*, Smashing Pumpkins became one of the most successful bands of the alt-rock era. As apt to play psychedelic soft rock like "Mayonaise" (from *Siamese Dream*) or "Bullet With Butterfly Wings" (*Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness*) as create an alternative conflagration of epic proportions, the band, along with Nirvana, was a trademark brand of the 1990s scene. Fast forward to 2007, and the reunited Pumpkins (including Jeff Schroeder [guitar], Ginger Reyes [bass], and Lisa Harriton [keyboards]) return not as a nostalgia act, but as a vengeful, neo metal band blazing the heaviest, hardest songs of their career.

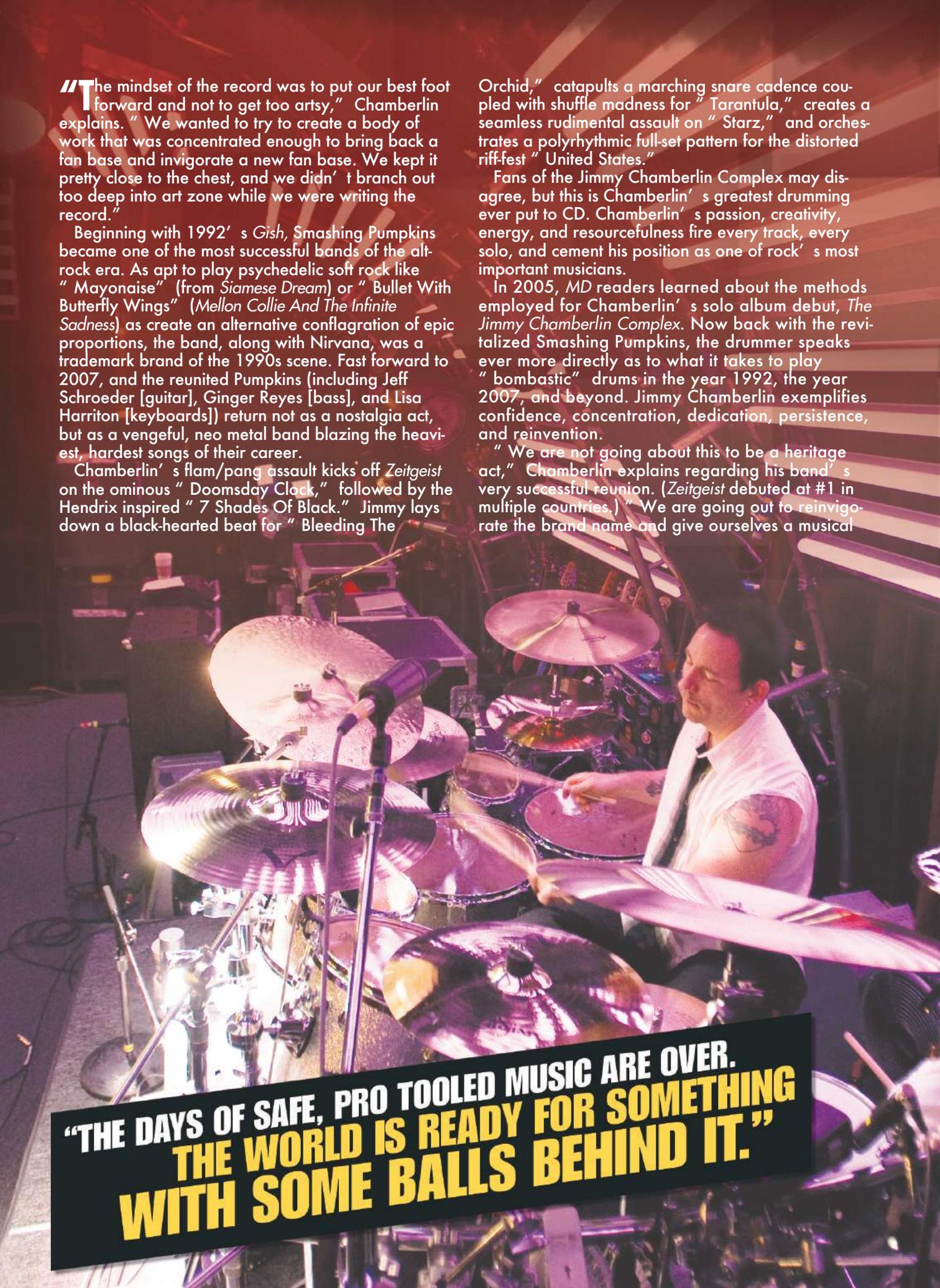
Chamberlin's flam/pang assault kicks off *Zeitgeist* on the ominous "Doomsday Clock," followed by the Hendrix inspired "7 Shades Of Black." Jimmy lays down a black-hearted beat for "Bleeding The

Orchid," catapults a marching snare cadence coupled with shuffle madness for "Tarantula," creates a seamless rudimental assault on "Starz," and orchestrates a polyrhythmic full-set pattern for the distorted riff-fest "United States."

Fans of the Jimmy Chamberlin Complex may disagree, but this is Chamberlin's greatest drumming ever put to CD. Chamberlin's passion, creativity, energy, and resourcefulness fire every track, every solo, and cement his position as one of rock's most important musicians.

In 2005, MD readers learned about the methods employed for Chamberlin's solo album debut, *The Jimmy Chamberlin Complex*. Now back with the revitalized Smashing Pumpkins, the drummer speaks ever more directly as to what it takes to play "bombastic" drums in the year 1992, the year 2007, and beyond. Jimmy Chamberlin exemplifies confidence, concentration, dedication, persistence, and reinvention.

"We are not going about this to be a heritage act," Chamberlin explains regarding his band's very successful reunion. (*Zeitgeist* debuted at #1 in multiple countries.) "We are going out to reinvigorate the brand name and give ourselves a musical



**"THE DAYS OF SAFE, PRO TOOLED MUSIC ARE OVER.  
THE WORLD IS READY FOR SOMETHING  
WITH SOME BALLS BEHIND IT."**

**MD:** When you and Billy sat down to discuss Zeitgeist, what did you talk about?

**Jimmy:** Because of the journey Billy took doing his solo record [The Future Embrace] and my journey with my solo record, as both writers and producers we brought that impact back to the new record. You can hear a lot of the Complex influence on the new Pumpkins record, and Billy's solo influence as well. What we both brought back to the table was the experience of being bandleaders. When you combine that you get something very powerful.

**MD:** How is your input on The Smashing

Pumpkins different now from the way it was during your pre-bandleader days?

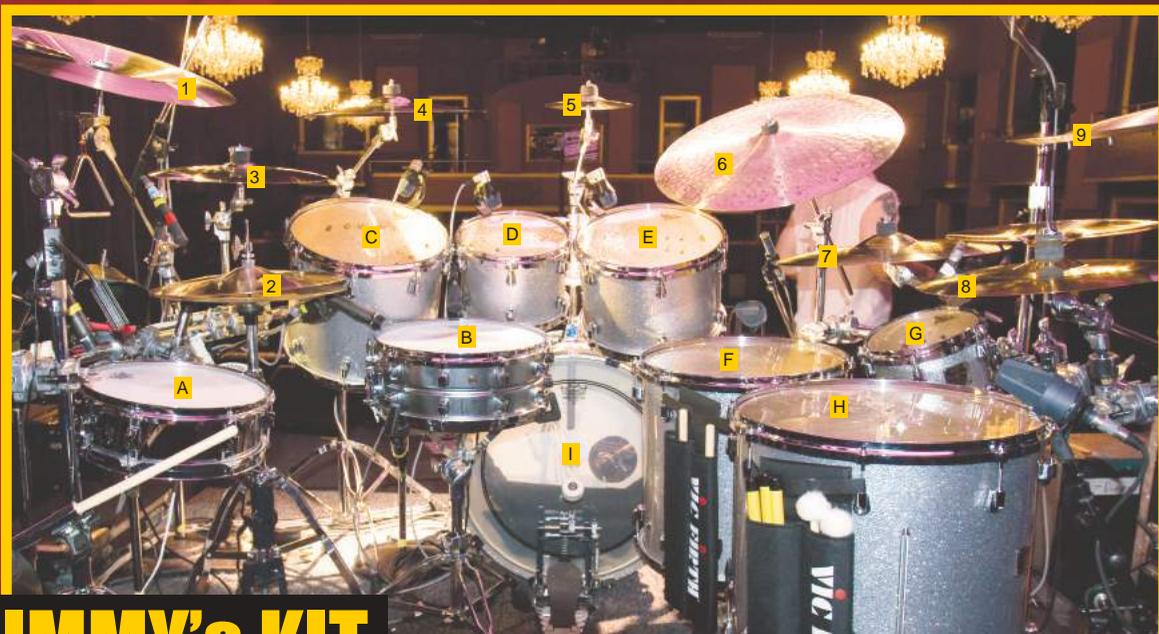
**Jimmy:** I have a better fundamental understanding of what the end product would be, and that helped ease the strain on Billy and [producer] Roy Thomas Baker. It's easier to do a record with three people who can produce than just one. And moving forward through the recording process, it's different from just being a musician.

In the past I did all the drum parts and then I would leave. With co-producing, your job is never done. As soon as the drums are done, you start working on guitars, bass sounds,

vocal takes, etc. Billy and I were both there for every take. Everybody's opinion was considered.

**MD:** How did the production role change your approach to the drums?

**Jimmy:** You have to play with the big picture in mind when you're co-producing. You can't hand in the drum part and say "good luck." Everything you do begets something else: A drum fill begets a guitar feel, every phrase moves a song in a different direction. It was really important to know the lyric content and the chord changes in order to formulate an effective drum part.



## JIMMY'S KIT

**Drums:** Yamaha Maple Custom Absolute (toms have 60° bearing edges, instead of usual 45°)

- A. 5x12 snare
- B. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 Jimmy Chamberlin Signature snare
- C. 12x14 tom
- D. 8x10 tom
- E. 9x13 tom
- F. 16x16 floor tom
- G. 8x8 snare
- H. 16x18 floor tom
- I. 16x22 bass drum

**Cymbals:** Zildjian

- 1. 20" China High
- 2. 15" New Beat hi-hats
- 3. 15" A thin crash
- 4. 18" A Custom crash
- 5. 6" A splash
- 6. 22" K Constantinople ride
- 7. 19" A Custom crash
- 8. 15" A Custom crash
- 9. 22" Swish Knocker with rivets

**Hardware:** Yamaha

**Heads:** Remo coated Ambassador on snare batter with Ambassador snare-side, clear Emperors on tops of toms with clear Ambassadors underneath, Powerstroke 3 on bass drum batter

**Sticks:** Vic Firth 5B



# RIMSHOTS FOR DAYS

## JIMMY ON TUNING AND HIS SOUND

**MD:** How did you tune the snare in the studio?

**Jimmy:** It's wide open. I don't do anything to it. I usually use a coated head on top even if I'm not playing brushes. I tweak it about medium high and let it ring. I just try to find a good rimshot note and leave it.

**MD:** And how do you tune the toms?

**Jimmy:** I tune the toms a little low, lower than most. I tend to tune the bottom head a half step higher than the top. Then I just try to go for the note that is as sympathetic to the shell as I can get. There's no sense in trying to make a 13" tom sound like a 16". I try to tune the head to the proper pitch of the drum. I hear a lot of guys who tune their drums real high or real low, but my whole take on that is you should use a drum that suits the tone you want.

**MD:** Generally, are you playing a lot of rimshots in the studio?

**Jimmy:** Oh, yeah, I play rimshots all over the kit. I'm not into anything that's conventional. Like the jazz guys I grew up listening to, they always hit the rims. Listen to Gene Krupa's tom solo on "Sing, Sing, Sing." It's got so many great rimshots. That's what you want. I don't want to hear the drumstick hit the drumhead perfectly in the middle, like Haskell Harr.

**MD:** Back in the '70s and '80s, there weren't a lot of rimshots played in the studio. Everything was more controlled.

**Jimmy:** I think within the context of a song you can cover a lot more ground by accentuating words with rimshots, ghost notes, and everything else. There are thousands of notes within a snare drum. Why play only one?

**MD:** Billy Corgan has an image in the press as a control freak, but this was more of a co-op?

**Jimmy:** Billy and I began working on this in November of '05. We rented a house in Scottsdale and holed up for four months and did nothing but play and write. The songwriter always has an opinion regarding the outcome of the song.

I like guys who can hear drums in their head. As a drummer, you tend to get very "drum-sided." Sometimes it's great if a guitar player hears a drum part and it ends up being something totally unconventional. That will change the way I hear something. Our relationship is such that when Billy comes in with a song, he's automatically writing to my drum part and to what he knows I'm going to play, and vice versa. We listened to the same music all day long.

**MD:** What did you listen to together?

**Jimmy:** We listened to tons of [Nigerian Afrobeat legend] Fela Kuti and watched his

documentaries. We wanted to get that sense of power that we were never able to capture in the older Pumpkins. We wanted to harness that revolutionary thing in our own way. We dug into that.

We would sit down and play a groove for an hour until it started resonating in the room. Then we would identify exactly what that energy was and take that into the songwriting. Take a song like "United States," where we get that trancey vibe going. It starts off with this complex polyrhythm, and then it goes for so long that it becomes this creamy stream of nothing, where you can build over the top of it.

**MD:** What else?

**Jimmy:** I was also listening to Captain Beyond with Bobby Caldwell on drums. I first got into that band when I was ten years old. A lot of drummers really overlook Bobby Caldwell for what a great drummer he was. Certainly a lot of my snare drum work was taken from the first Captain Beyond record,

especially a song like "Dancing Madly Backwards." That stuff was always so good. I was also listening to the original Dirty Harry soundtrack that just came out. And Weather Report, of course, and the early Return To Forever, just for kicks. I love that compressed Lenny White drum sound.

**MD:** By the way, how come The Pumpkins' original members, James Iha and D'arcy Wretzky, weren't involved with the new record?

**Jimmy:** They didn't want to be a part of this. We had asked James early on if he was interested, and he said no. I was mystified at first, but it's clear now.

### Less Is More?

**MD:** As some drummers get older, they tend to adopt a less-is-more attitude, as though that's a more mature way to approach the groove. But this is some of your most aggressive drumming ever; it has that youthful excitement.

**Jimmy:** That's the point. The thing that scared me most about going into this record was exactly that, that complacency that comes with being an elder statesman, if you will, of music. I never got that. I'm a huge fan of Elvin Jones, Buddy Rich, and Tony Williams. I was listening to Elvin's Jazz Machine just the other day, recorded when he was sixty-nine, and he's just killing on it. That's where I want to go.

I was never a Charlie Watts-type drummer. I love him, but that's not my thing. For me, in order to mature and break new ground, I just need to keep going in the direction I always have. It's kind of bombastic, but that's what makes me an individual.

**MD:** Is this some of your most aggressive Pumpkins drumming ever?

**Jimmy:** I think the aggressiveness comes from the note choices and also the confidence. Aggression needs confidence behind it, and as a young drummer there's a lot of unknown out there. Going into this record, I really knew what I was going to get from that type of over-playing. I really enjoy pushing the boundaries.

**MD:** You also retain a similar drum sound to The Jimmy Chamberlin Complex record: the open snare and toms. It's not a safe, tidy, or typical rock drum sound.

**Jimmy:** What is the point in doing that? The world is ready for something with some balls behind it. The days of safe, Pro Tooled music are over. I just can't get emotionally connected to something that was recorded to a click track in a computer. I'm too much of a jazz fan and a fan of music in general to get behind anything like that. It just bugs me.

Seeing people respond to this record has been really interesting. We recorded everything live to tape—and we didn't use click tracks, and we didn't use Pro Tools. We didn't do any digital editing at all either, so the drum takes you hear are just me going for it. People really respond to that. They want to hear human beings making music, not a Macintosh G5.

Having lived in LA for the last three years, I know a lot of drummers out here who are fantastic, but when their record is done it's been Pro Tooled to death and it doesn't even sound like them. I also hear drummers taking chances on records who would never do so if they didn't feel their butts were covered by Pro Tools.

**MD:** Will the Complex record again anytime soon?

**Jimmy:** No. The Pumpkins will be going straight in to record another record at the end

of our current tour. There is a break in touring next summer, and we may record a new Complex record then. [Bassist/songwriter] Billy Mohler is writing already, and I've met some people that I want involved, like [pianist] Brad Mehldau and producer Jon Brion, to go for that super dry, '70s sound. I also want to get [keyboardist] Alan Pasqua involved. I love his work with The Tony Williams Lifetime. Alan Holdsworth is an option as well. I would love to play with that guy. Whatever those guys touch has that sound.

### It's Not About Vinnie

**MD:** Where did you record the drums for Zeitgeist?

**Jimmy:** We did the drums at three different studios. The majority of the "rock drums" were done at Sagen Sound, a real small new studio with an old Neve board and a nice concrete drum room. That's where we did the big rock drums on "United States," "Doomsday Clock," "Tarantula," "Neverlost," "7 Shades Of Black," and "Bleeding The Orchid." For the pop stuff, we recorded at Henson Recording Studios, which used to be A&M Studios. There we recorded "That's The Way," "(Come On) Let's Go," and one other song. Then the stuff that Roy Thomas Baker produced—"Bring The Light" and "Starz"—was done at The Village Recorder.

**MD:** Did you use the same drumset as on the Complex record?

**Jimmy:** No. I had Yamaha do something interesting. I had heard through the grapevine that Steve Jordan was using some different bearing edges on his drums. So I had Yamaha make me a Maple Custom Absolute kit with 60° bearing edges, instead of 45°. That edge gives you a little more shell sound. The 45s have a little more attack, and the sound seems to come out of the center of the drum. With the 60° edges, the sound comes from all around the drum. It's a rounder, warmer sound. I can always get attack in the studio, but I'm always looking for a little more depth and warmth.

**MD:** Are you using the same kit live as in the studio with The Pumpkins?

**Jimmy:** Same exact kit, but a different color. I did use my Jimmy Chamberlin Signature snare. In fact, I used it on every track of the record. I don't mean to toot my own horn, but the snare really nailed it.

**MD:** Do you use any electronics to modify your sound?

**Jimmy:** No electronics. No way, man. I am not into wires.

**MD:** You have a real sound, like Steve Jordan



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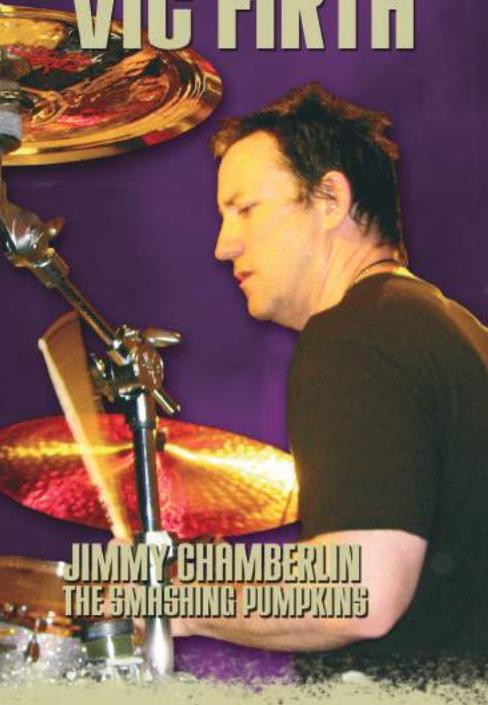
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| Smashing Pumpkins        | Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness |
| Smashing Pumpkins        | The Aeroplane Flies High               |
| Smashing Pumpkins        | Machina                                |
| Smashing Pumpkins        | Machina II                             |
| Smashing Pumpkins        | Pisces Iscariot                        |
| Zwan                     | Mary Star Of The Sea                   |

**INSPIRATIONAL LISTENING**

- |                        |                       |   |
|------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Tony Williams Lifetime | Believe It            | Tony Williams                                   |
| McCoy Tyner            | The Real McCoy        | Elvin Jones                                     |
| Jeff Beck              | Blow By Blow          | Richard Bailey                                  |
| Jeff Beck              | Wired                 | Narada Michael Walden,<br>Ed Greene, Jan Hammer |
| Captain Beyond         | Captain Beyond        | Bobby Caldwell                                  |
| Brand X                | Unorthodox Behavior   | Phil Collins                                    |
| Return To Forever      | Light As A Feather    | Airto Moreira                                   |
| Deep Purple            | Fireball              | Ian Paice                                       |
| Deep Purple            | Machine Head          | Ian Paice                                       |
| Deep Purple            | Burn                  | Ian Paice                                       |
| Benny Goodman          | This Is Benny Goodman | Gene Krupa                                      |

Also anything by John Bonham with Led Zepplin, Sonny Greer with Duke Ellington, and Buddy Rich.

has a sound and Anton Fig has a sound.

**Jimmy:** I did a bunch of clinics since my last MD interview, and the one thing that I stressed to kids is that it's not about playing like Vinnie Colaiuta. Everyone wants to play like Vinnie, but nobody can, unfortunately. It's about being able to tell who you are and bringing identity to the table—especially if you're going to be a studio player. You want to be able to have some identity to carry with you. And I don't think that sounding like everybody else is the way to go about it.

Look at all the great drummers you can name off the top of your head. You can tell who all of them are by the way they play and sound. Whether it's Elvin Jones, Roy Haynes, Buddy Rich, Ian Paice, or John Bonham, as soon as they start playing, you know it's them. They have an identity.

### Splitting Pumpkins

**MD:** In the bio for Zeitgeist, you say, "As far as playing the old material, we re-languaged some of it." So how did you reinvent your approach to the older material?

**Jimmy:** I don't pretend to play the way I did in the old band anymore. There's a lot of good things in that era, but I was still growing up and I've found out a lot of things about drumming since 1992. Certainly tempo is one thing I learned a lot about.

There's a lot of charm in that music. There are good things to be had and good things to leave behind from a drumming standpoint. I take the best of what was, and make it my own again.

It's like talking to your son after not seeing him for ten years. You find out that you have more in common than not in common. That's the same thing with the older Pumpkins songs. When I went back and played that stuff, some of it felt completely alien. But seventy-five percent of it felt completely natural. It was just a matter of bringing those parts to 2007 and making them sound honest. What about the drum part is still resonating in my heart and what isn't? And what am I gonna do about it? That's how I approach every song.

**MD:** Did you go back and overhaul any parts?

**Jimmy:** We've rearranged a lot of songs. Some of the parts still resonate with me as an adult. Some don't. And as an artist, I'm not going out there and pretend that they do. As an artist, it's about evolving. I never saw Tony Williams play the same thing twice. I'm not into doing a dog & pony show. I've seen drummers try to play the same way they did when they were twenty, but now they're fat

and losing their hair. It doesn't have the same weight behind it. There's no conviction behind it.

**MD:** You sound better than ever.

**Jimmy:** I certainly practice more. I take my instrument very seriously. When I got married and had a kid, that was it for me. I stopped drinking, I stopped smoking. I totally threw myself into what I do, which is being a father and musician, and that's pretty much all I do these days. I'm not interested in going out there and selling it. I'm only interested in evolving as a musician.

My heroes never took a day off. I don't think I can either. I practice. I'm making the journey

again. I want to see where I can take this drumming thing. Between the Pumpkins and the Complex, I'm really blessed with two huge opportunities to evolve as a musician and not just re-slog the same old crap.

**MD:** You retain a youthful outlook.

**Jimmy:** I'm still very much a student.

**MD:** So what were you practicing this morning?

**Jimmy:** I was going through some rudiments and the like. If I'm about to do a TV show [Smashing Pumpkins played *Latenight With David Letterman* following this interview], I'll figure out the song's tempo and then just vamp out on that tempo for an hour or so. I also like to stay loose. And I like to perfect my

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# JIMMY CHAMBERLIN

snare drumming as much as I can. I'm always working in Stick Control. Today I'm playing the new Vic Firth pad using my signature 5Bs.

## Black Sabbath Meets Tony Williams Lifetime

**MD:** On "Tarantula," off Zeigeist, you play with so much freedom: great cymbal smashes, burning single-stroke rolls, lots of illustration within the song. What were you going for?

**Jimmy:** When Billy first started playing the guitar part to that, I thought of The Scorpions. We named it "Tarantula" as a nod to them.

For that drum part I was thinking, What's the best shuffle groove to wrap my head around? The closest thing I could point to was "Pictures Of Home," off of Deep Purple's Machine Head, that type of smooth Ian Paice groove. I always loved his shuffle feel, that rock feel incorporating the single-stroke rolls. That's the best rock shuffle out there. It has that swishy hi-hat sound with the powerful single-stroke rolls. That was the model for that track.

**MD:** In "Starz," a good part of the song is a marching snare cadence. What inspired that?



**Jimmy:** That just came off the top of my head. I try to play intuitively and give respect to the first thing that comes out of me. I love that kind of bass drum/snare drum sound in the midst of a groove. The cymbal part in the

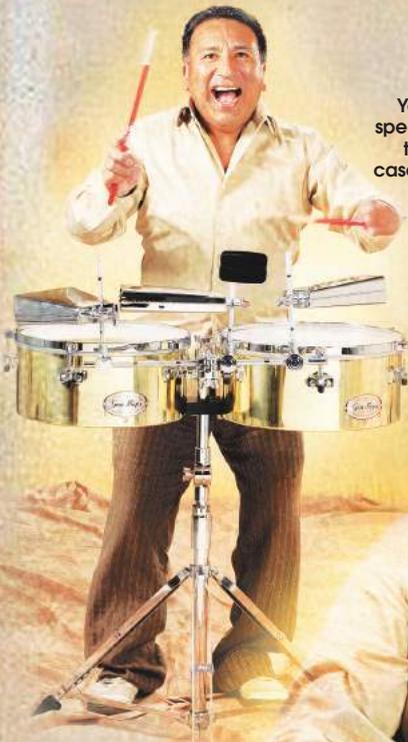
chorus is cool. Any time you can just hit crash cymbals and not have to hit a snare drum in the chorus, you gotta just go for it. It's all a part of that re-linguaging thing.

What can I do to make this part different? I

An advertisement for Protection Racket drum cases. It features a photograph of Jimmy Chamberlin sitting in the driver's seat of an orange SUV. The SUV has "Jimmy Chamberlin Smashing Pumpkins" and "On the road with Protection Racket drum cases in 2007" written on the side. In the foreground, there are several black drum cases with the Protection Racket logo. The logo is a stylized skull wearing sunglasses and a goatee. At the bottom, there is text: "Proud to be distributed in the USA by Big Bang Distribution", "www.bigbangdist.com", "myspace.com/protectionracketdrumcases", and "www.protectionracket.com". On the right side, there is vertical text: "Big Bang Distribution (800) 547-6401".

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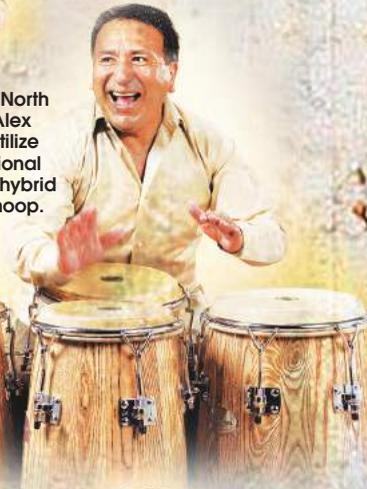


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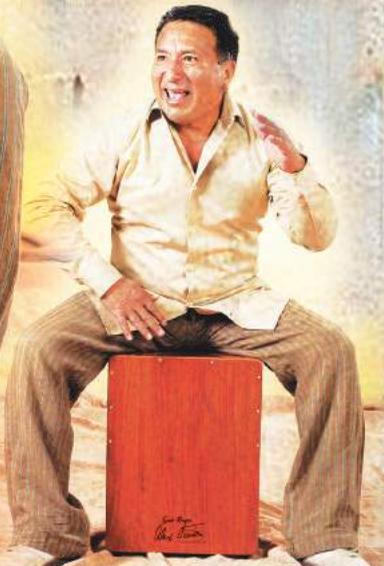


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# JIMMY CHAMBERLIN

could play a 2-and-4 groove through the chorus and it would sound like a chorus, but what would make it sound different? Maybe just remove the snare and bash the cymbal on all four beats.

**MD:** You also do a mini solo with very choppy rhythms in "Starz."

**Jimmy:** That was Billy's idea. He wanted to have a drum solo in the middle. Frankly, I'm not a big fan of drum solos. I think they're pretty boring no matter who is doing them. Unless it's completely musical, I'm not into it. That's why I thought it would be cool to do something novel with "Starz." Maybe start out on the rims, do something in bursts, fragment the song in half, and then create a restart point for the song. I worked on that solo all afternoon one day until I got it to the point where it sounded cool.

**MD:** When you were in the process of creating the solo, did you and the band play it live for every take, or did you record over the band's prerecorded part?

**Jimmy:** Oh no, I made those guys play it live every time. We're not lazy. I want the vibe; I don't want to be playing to some hackneyed guitar part. We work. We get there at noon and we don't leave till 2:00 in the morning. We work every day. With the Pumpkins, even in our most dysfunctional period, we were musicians. That's what we would do.

**MD:** What's your opinion of bands where each musician, the drummer included, records his part separately to a prerecorded scratch guitar or keyboard, and then afterwards the entire band has to learn how to play the song as a band?

**Jimmy:** That is nonsense. And it sounds like

nonsense. C' mon. How hard is it? If you're sixteen and you're thinking, "Man, I really want to be a musician," and you get there and ninety percent of it is just nonsense? That's not my idea of fun. If you have an opportunity to be a musician, you've got to be a musician. You can't go in and play your drum part and expect some engineer to fix it. How are you going to be happy with that? Eventually that takes a toll psychologically.

When I wake up in the morning, I've got work to do. I enjoy my work. And I feel that the work I've done is important. It isn't like I'm going to fake my way through another day. I have to play Letterman today, so I'm up in the morning practicing.

**MD:** Getting back to the music, what's the genesis of the polyrhythmic pattern in "United States"?

**Jimmy:** That's basically just a double paradiddle with the kick drum on all fours. The double paradiddle is between the 16" and 14" tom with some triplet accents throughout the groove.

That groove had a funny evolution. It all came out of that Fela mindset with the Tony Allen-type of hypnotic drumming. We wanted to do a song based on revolution, but it was only after we started playing together for six weeks that we could really dig deep into that stuff.

That song was a hard one to track because it's nine minutes long. I did eight takes, but I didn't get what I wanted. We gave it one more shot, and on the last take we nailed it. Billy thought it was incredible. It's a journey to play nine minutes. It was like our "A Love Supreme."

**MD:** I love the end, with those huge, killer flams

and Black Sabbath vibe.

**Jimmy:** Sabbath meets Tony Williams Lifetime!

**MD:** The middle section sounds improvised.

**Jimmy:** Yes, it's all improvised, and the guitar solo was live as well. The drum take had to beget something that Billy could solo over. We had to be of one mind and find a slow ramp up to the crescendo in the end. We played the song at Giants Stadium recently and it was great. Everyone else was phoning in their hit song, and we were improvising.

**MD:** Do you warm up on tour?

**Jimmy:** Oh, yeah, I have to. I start warming up two hours before a show. I go through the first three pages of Stick Control between 98 and 125 on the metronome. I've been playing those three pages for so long that I have them memorized. Whatever magic formula George Lawrence Stone created, those are the best exercises for warming up. They're arranged so that the left hand does a lot of the work. You really warm up in a balanced way. I also stretch.

## Same As It Ever Was...

**MD:** Ultimately, is Zeitgeist a political album or a comeback album?

**Jimmy:** It may sound like a political album to some, and a love story to others. But I don't think it's a comeback album. It's a "never went away" record.



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# Carl Allen

## Embracing The Journey

Soon after moving to the New York area in the early '80s, Carl Allen landed a dream gig with post bop trumpeter Freddie Hubbard. That gig established the then twenty-one-year-old drummer as a leading light among a select group of eager young musicians who were looking to breath new life into the art of hard-swinging acoustic jazz.

Since then, Allen has worked regularly as a sideman for jazz legends, like saxophonists Jackie McLean and Dewey Redman, and trumpeters Art Farmer and Woody Shaw. He's also put out several records of his own, and he's appeared on numerous discs with contemporary artists like saxophonist Donald Harrison, trumpeter Terence Blanchard, and pianist Benny Green. He's also racked up considerable repute as an independent jazz producer.

In addition to being a high-profile performer/producer, Allen is one of the foremost educators in jazz, continuing to share his unique musical philosophies in dozens of clinics and masterclasses each year. Carl has also served on the faculty at the esteemed Juilliard Institute For Jazz Studies in New York City since its inception in 2001, and he was named artistic director in 2007. Given this dedication to passing jazz wisdom on to new generations of drummers, we took advantage of our time with Carl by digging into the concepts that this modern jazz master explores with his private students.





Story by Michael Dawson • Photos by Paul La Raia

A one-on-one lesson with Carl Allen goes much deeper than polyrhythms and paradiddles. In fact, over the course of our two-hour masterclass at his Brooklyn apartment (in front of some beautiful new DW drums), not once did he talk about the drums in strictly technical terms. Instead, each question either inspired the drummer to hop behind his kit to demonstrate some creative ways to address particular concepts, or it evoked some priceless words of wisdom that he'd learned while sitting alongside some of the greatest jazz drummers of all time. You see, for Carl—like it was for Art Blakey, Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, Billy Higgins, and many others before him—everything he does on the instrument has one purpose: to serve the *music*.

In preparation for our "lesson," we spent some time studying Allen's newest record, *Get Ready*, which he co-led with longtime friend, bassist Rodney Whitaker. And while there's a ton of great drumming throughout this disc, like the perfectly constructed two-chorus solo on "Summer (The Sweet Goodby)" and the loose polyrhythmic explorations in "Preference Of Conviction," we couldn't help but notice that every track has an overriding vibe that simply *feels* good. So we'll begin our virtual masterclass there. . . .



**MD:** Every track on the new record has a strong sense of groove, even when you're stretching. How can a young drummer develop their feel?

**Carl:** Young players have to understand the importance of being able to make the audience want to dance, which comes from having a strong sense of foundation. It's cool if you can play the hippest Elvin lick. But the majority of your audience isn't made up of musicians. They don't sit there and think, Oh, that lick's from that record. But they will recognize if it felt good, or if it didn't.

**MD:** How can a drummer develop that?

**Carl:** You have to understand how to build your sound. For me, that starts with the ride cymbal. I often ask students, "Where is your focal point? What are you building your sound around?" Many of them have never thought about it. But when

you listen to great drummers like Bernard Purdie, Elvin Jones, Jimmy Cobb, Steve Gadd, or whomever, you can hear where their focal point is, be it the ride cymbal, the hi-hat, or whatever the case might be.

So once you have a strong ride cymbal, you work on developing the relationships between the limbs. Check out how your hi-hat foot is communicating with the right foot, or how the left hand balances with what's happening in the right hand.

Balance is a big issue for me. If the focal point is the ride cymbal, then you have to look at how the other limbs are balanced with that. That's one thing that helps you build your sound, which helps to establish a feel, which helps give you a signature, which makes you identifiable.

**MD:** What's a way to practice building sound from the ride up?

**Carl:** You need to be able to play the ride cymbal while singing a melody. Start by making the basic jazz ride pattern feel comfortable. Then add the hi-hat on 2 and 4. While you're

Carl Allen onstage at the Village Vanguard in New York City



doing that, listen to the dynamic as well as the rhythmic balance between the limbs. Then add the bass drum softly on all four beats, so that it's felt more than heard.

Once those three things are comfortable, sing a melody. The second time around, add

some complement with the left hand while you sing. By doing this, you become conscious of how everything relates to the melody. As a result, you'll find yourself playing less with the left hand.

I often use my left hand to dress up what's happening with the ride. Even when I'm playing looser and more across the barline, my focus remains on the ride cymbal. And I'm making sure that the other limbs are working with the ride.

One of the problems that a lot of drummers have is that they get in the way. There's so much stuff going on all the time. Don't get me wrong, I'm down for breaking up the time. But you have to find a way to make it relevant to what's going on. Your job is either to play the melody or to support the melody. If you're not doing one of those two things, you're getting in the way.

**MD:** Do you always hear the song's melody as you play?

**Carl:** There's always some type of melody playing in my head. It may not be a tune, per

## Carl's Number-1 Practice Tip

Always practice things at a wide range of tempos and dynamics. We often groom ourselves to play certain grooves at one specific tempo. Then when someone asks us to play that same groove slightly faster or slower, we have problems. To keep that from happening, work on *everything* at a lot of tempos and dynamics.



## CARL ALLEN



## Recommended Listening

### 25 Jazz Must-Haves

#### Artist

Art Blakey And The Jazz Messengers  
 John Coltrane  
 Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra  
 Ahmad Jamal  
 Ben Webster and Harry "Sweets" Edison  
 Max Roach  
 Chick Corea  
 Dexter Gordon  
 Miles Davis  
 Oscar Peterson  
 Wayne Shorter  
 Milt Jackson  
 Thelonious Monk  
 Red Garland  
 Shelly Manne  
 Milt Jackson and Wes Montgomery  
 Jo Jones and Milt Hinton  
 Duke Pearson  
 Duke Ellington  
 Kenny Clarke  
 Freddie Hubbard  
 Marvin Sapp  
 Old And New Dreams  
 Chick Corea  
 Joe Henderson with the Wynton Kelly Trio

#### Album

Buhaina's Delight  
 Ballads  
 Presenting Joe Williams  
 At the Pershing  
 Ben & Sweets  
 Drums Unlimited  
 Now He Sings, Now He Sobs  
 Go  
 Four & More  
 West Side Story  
 Speak No Evil  
 Bag's Opus  
 The Complete Riverside Recordings  
 Live At The Prelude Volume 1  
 2-3-4  
 Bags Meets Wes  
 Percussion & Bass  
 Sweet Honey Bee  
 Ellington At Newport  
 Meets The Detroit Jazzmen  
 First Light  
 Be Exhausted  
 self-titled  
 Three Quartets  
 Four!

#### Drummer

Art Blakey  
 Elvin Jones  
 Mel Lewis  
 Vernel Fournier  
 Clarence Johnson  
 Max Roach  
 Roy Haynes  
 Billy Higgins  
 Tony Williams  
 Ed Thigpen  
 Elvin Jones  
 Connie Kay  
 Frankie Dunlop  
 Specs Wright  
 Shelly Manne  
 Philly Joe Jones  
 Jo Jones  
 Mickey Roker  
 Sam Woodyard  
 Kenny Clarke  
 Jack DeJohnette  
 Calvin Rogers  
 Ed Blackwell  
 Steve Gadd  
 Jimmy Cobb

### Carl's Choice Cuts

Carl Allen and Rodney Whitaker  
 Terence Blanchard  
 Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw  
 Jackie McLean  
 Benny Green  
 Benny Golson  
 Harrison/Blanchard

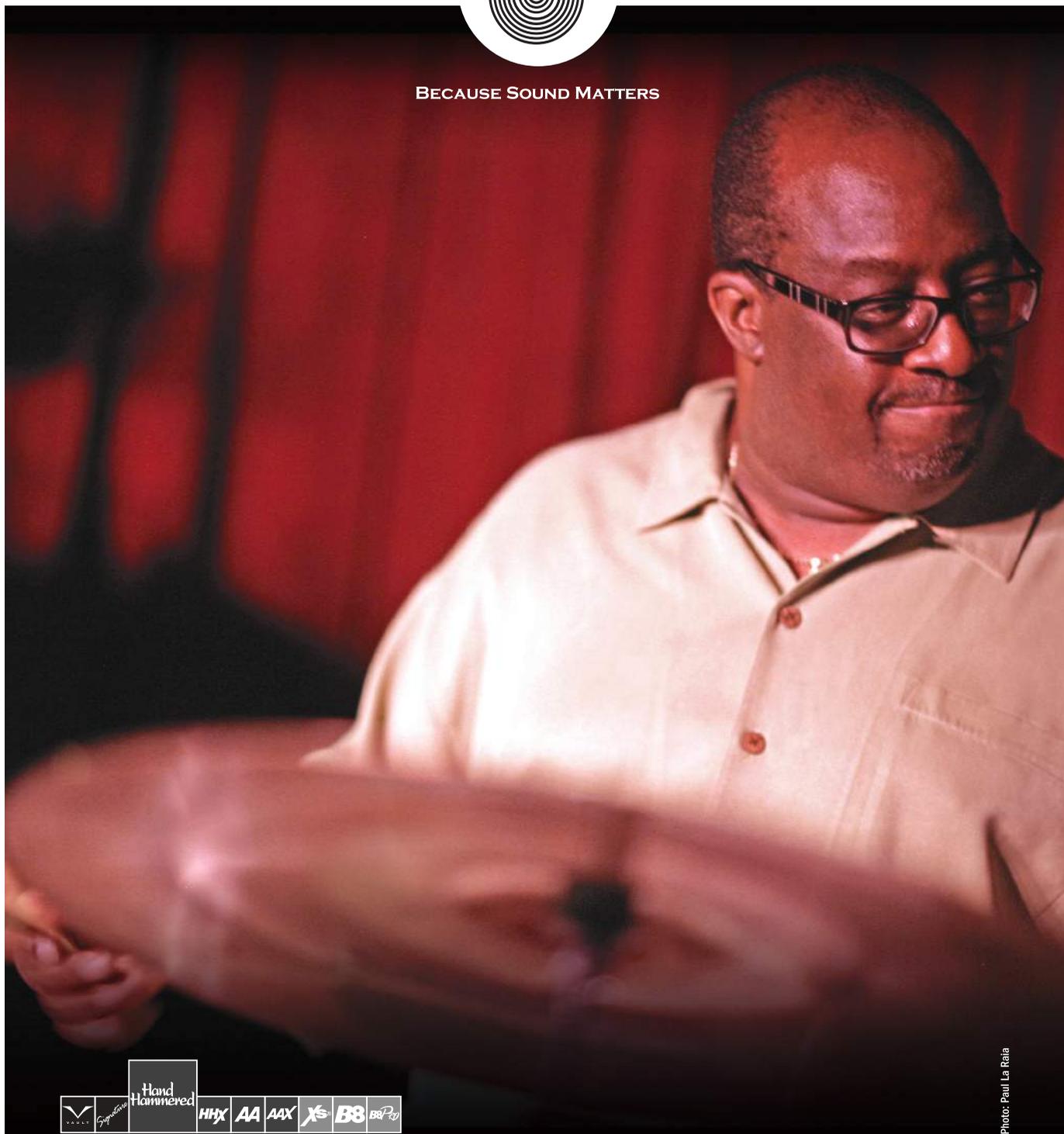
Get Ready  
 Jazz In Film  
 Double Take, Eternal Triangle  
 The J-Mac Attack, Dynasty  
 That's Right, Testifying  
 Terminal 1  
 Black Pearl, Crystal Stair

continued on page 70

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Photo: Paul La Raia

## CARL ALLEN

se. It could be something random. But it's all connected with trying to help the music breathe. Drummers are not usually taught about breathing, because it's not necessary for the nature of our instrument, like it is for a horn player. But I physically breathe with the music. It allows me to stay centered and focused.

Playing music is a psychosomatic process of the mind and body. With some guys, you can tell that what their hands and feet are doing doesn't line up with what they're hearing. It's like watching an old karate movie where the actors' mouths aren't matching the dialog. Breathing helps prevent that disconnect.

**MD:** What are you thinking about when you're improvising with others?

**Carl:** I always have that reference point going on in my head, whether it's a melody, a bass line, or something else. But the whole issue of playing with other people is about conversa-

tion. Some people mistake conversation for talking. But sometimes the best contribution to a great conversation is to just listen to what the other person has to say.

So I'm always listening to hear where the other players are coming from conceptually, because I want to be able to meet them where they are. Then if I hear someone play something that sounds like Thelonious Monk, I know what to do to contribute to that. That creates a level of cohesiveness that makes it feel like a band.

**MD:** As you were coming up, you got a chance to hang out with many of the masters of jazz. What were some of the things you learned from them?

**Carl:** Every time I talk to young musicians I realize I've got Elvin, Tony, Max, and all the masters sitting on my shoulder, saying, "Tell them the truth." When I would sit with Max, Art, Billy Higgins, and others, they wouldn't

hold anything back. And as harsh as some of those lessons were, I appreciate them so much because they made me understand the work ethic that you have to have in order to develop as a professional musician.

Some guys say they practice an hour and ten minutes every other week, and they think that's something. But think about it: Your mother and father get up every day and work eight hours. So you should put in eight hours a day, too, whether it's practicing the drums, playing the piano, writing, listening, or transcribing.

**MD:** Is there a specific lesson from one of these guys that stuck with you?

**Carl:** Years ago I played in Paris, and Billy Higgins and Art Blakey were on the same gig. The drums were horrible. The bass drum was a 24", and there were no heads on the bottom of the drums. But we all had to play them. When Higgins played, it was great. When Art

continued on page 73

## Carl's Kit

**Drums:** DW Jazz Series in Rainbow Twist

- A. 16x18 kick
- B. 6x10 snare
- C. 5x14 snare
- D. 8x12 rack tom
- E. 12x14 floor tom
- F. 12x16 Ballard snare

**Cymbals:** Sabian

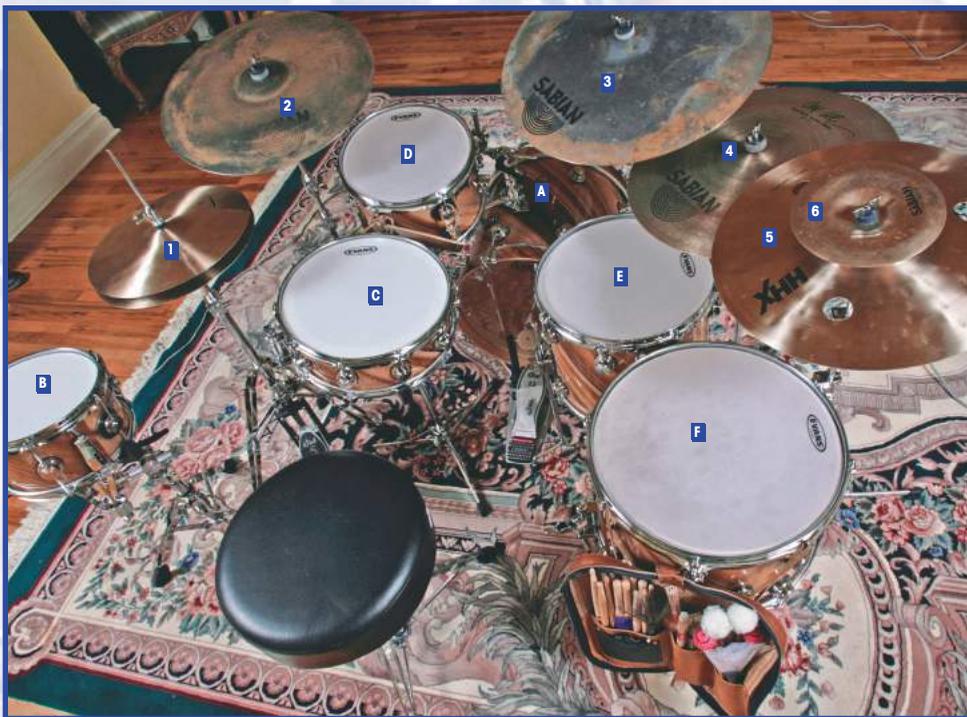
- 1. 14" Legacy hi-hats
- 2. 20" prototype ride (with four rivets)
- 3. 22" prototype ride (with four rivets)
- 4. 20" Carl Allen Signature ride (with three rivets)
- 5. 18" HHXtreme crash (customized with three holes)
- 6. 8" HH China Kang (inverted on top of HHXtreme crash)

**Hardware:** Drum Workshop, including a 9000 series bass drum pedal and a 5000 series hi-hat stand

**Sticks:** Pro-Mark Carl Allen signature sticks, brushes, felt and yarn mallets, Hot Rods, Webs, and Brooms

**Heads:** Evans J1 on top and bottom of toms, Genera on snare batters, clear G1 on kick batter (no muffling on any of the drums)

**Electronics:** Shure microphones, Roland Rhythm Coach, M-Audio and Roland synths, Sibelius notation software



**THE RIDE CYMBAL...**  
...is the most personal part of the kit.

I like to have a level of intimacy with my ride so that I can use it on a lot of different gigs. It makes me feel connected. Even if I'm playing with people I don't know, or I'm playing unfamiliar music, or I'm in a venue I've never played before, the ride is there to remind me of home.

**MY TUNING APPROACH...**  
...depends on the style of music.

For jazz, I want the sound coming up to me. So the bottom head is tighter than the top. But if I'm playing R&B, pop, or gospel, the tuning is reversed, because I feel that the sound is being pushed out.



**I LIKE TO CHECK OUT...**  
...what's in guy's stick bags.

The average drummer will have a pair of sticks, brushes, and mallets. I also carry things like Brooms and Hot Rods because I like being able to change colors to affect the feel. If you play a pattern with sticks and then change over to brushes, the whole character of the groove changes. My tune "Alternative Thoughts" was originally conceived as a ballad. But I wanted to try it faster and in 5/4. And I used Hot Rods, which gave it a Pat Metheny vibe.

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| <b>Bentley's Drum Shop</b><br>Fresno, California                | <b>Fork's Drum Closet</b><br>Nashville, Tennessee              |
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## CARL ALLEN

played, it was magical. And then when I played, it was awful

After the gig, I was kicking chairs and throwing boxes backstage. Then Art came over, put his arm around me, and asked, "What's wrong?" I said, "Art, the drum rider said an 18" bass drum." He said, "Let me ask you a question: Do you play the drums, or do the drums play you? If you could really play, it wouldn't matter." He walked away laughing, and I felt about two inches tall.

That taught me a lesson about developing your touch. Sure, we would all love to have our dream setup at every gig. But the music can't

suffer when you don't have exactly what you want. The physical instrument is just the vehicle that allows you to express yourself.

**MD:** How do you develop touch?

**Carl:** Touch comes through spending time with the instrument. When I was a kid, I spent hours with the ride cymbal, playing different tempos and dynamics. This concept has become well known, so I'll ask drummers, "Have you practiced your ride cymbal?" If they say yes, then I come back with, "Have you done the same thing with your hi-hat? Or your bass drum? Or how about forty minutes of left-hand comping with nothing else?" If you

## "Summer (The Sweet Goodbye)"

On this hard-swinging Rodney Whitaker composition, which appears on Carl Allen's new album, *Get Ready*, the drummer plays a brilliant solo over the song's thirty-two-bar form. Check out how he develops his phrases around several short motifs in the first chorus.

$\text{♩} = 240$



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## CARL ALLEN

develop a relationship with the different parts of the kit like that, you'll be able to get your sound on any instrument.

**MD:** I noticed that your ride cymbal grip is really loose, without a lot of wrist snap.

**Carl:** The snap comes from the two small fingers. By doing that, I don't have to play with my wrist so much. When I first came to New York, I noticed that even explosive players like Elvin Jones kept their hands really low to the instrument, which I later found out was a great way to keep from exerting yourself too much. When you're playing with crazy trumpet players at crazy tempos, you have to develop these "survival techniques" in order to keep up.

**MD:** What do you do when you feel yourself breaking down when you're playing fast tempos?

**Carl:** One of the things I've learned from playing from the wrist and fingers is that I have a reserve of energy in the upper part of my arm. So when I get tired, I can lean in and use my arm and shoulder for a few measures to give

## Embracing Mistakes

The greatest thing that comes from the process of discovery is when you do something you didn't intend to do.

When I was on a tour opposite Tony Williams in 1991, I would watch Tony every night through the curtain. At a show in Philadelphia, he played something that he didn't intend to do. But you could see a spark in his eye, like "Hmm...that's not so bad." Within a week, he had taken that mistake and put his signature on it.

Art Blakey used to say that a mistake is only a mistake if you don't know what to do with what you've done. So if you do something that you don't like, figure out a way to dress it up. That's called creativity.



my hands a little break.

**MD:** You've produced several records with Al Foster on drums. What did you gain out of that experience?

**Carl:** One of the things that amazes me about Al Foster is his creativity. He's always going to do something hip and different. In the studio, he'll do three takes of a tune and every one of them will have a completely different conceptual approach. He'll invert patterns, he'll put the ride cymbal pattern on the bass drum, or he'll take what's typically played on the hi-

hat and put it on the snare. All of that changes the shape of his rhythm. But you can hear a lot of tradition in him, too.

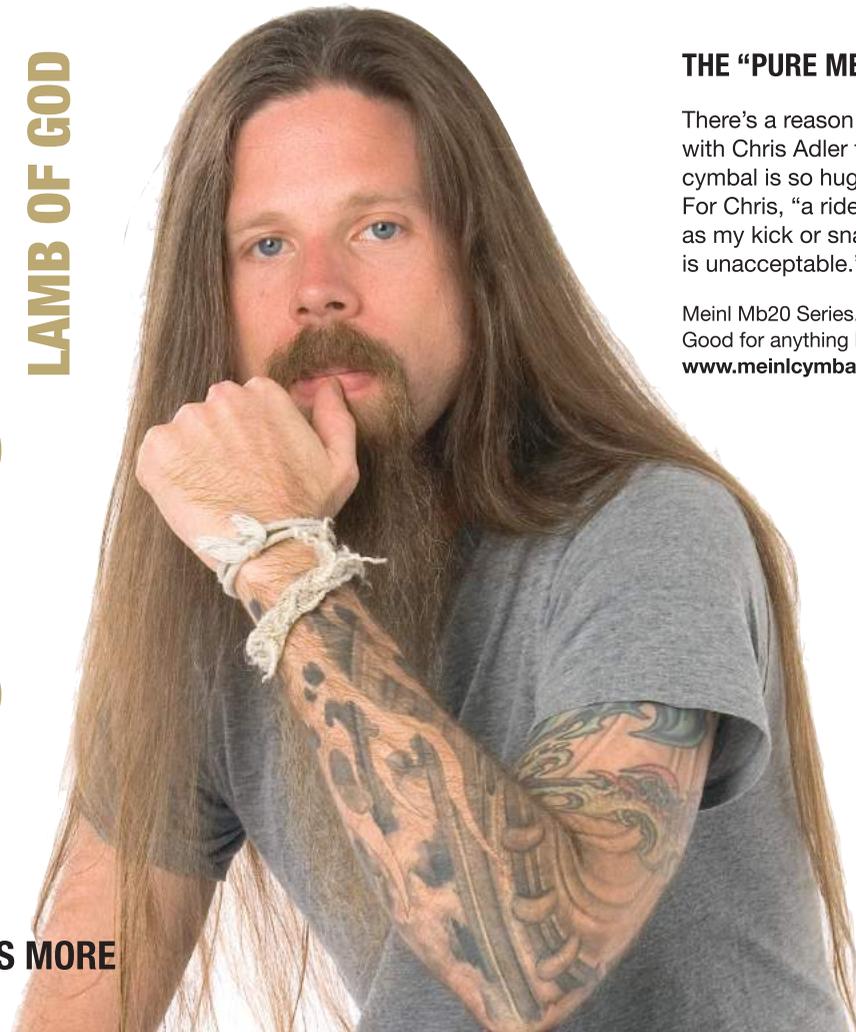
**MD:** You also spent a lot of time with Billy Higgins.

**Carl:** Everybody has what I call a "Fab Five," which are the five drummers that you identify the most with on a conceptual level. My Fab Five are Art Blakey, Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, Roy Haynes, and Billy Higgins.

Higgins was such a spiritual player. He had an innate ability to take the music to a higher level, instantly. I was playing at Bradley's once and I heard someone over my shoulder saying, "Yeah, baby, I hear ya." I didn't know who it was. Then before I knew it, there was a stick on my cymbal. When I looked around, I saw that it was Higgins. So I graciously gave up my seat. And within eight measures, he took the music up to another place. He didn't solo, and he didn't play loud. But his spirit and the love he had for the music just came out. I was overtaken by that.

When you see things like that, it makes you rethink your conceptual approach. That night

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made me realize that I don't have to do all of this fancy stuff. Let me just swing and serve the music. It was deep, man.

**MD:** What did you learn from Tony Williams?

**Carl:** Bassist Ron Carter talked to me about Tony while we were having lunch a few years ago. He said that all the drummers he'd played with had spent a lot of time in the library—they knew about Big Sid Catlett, Papa Jo Jones, and Zutty Singleton, and they knew the history of the instrument. Tony knew about all of that, too. But he also spent time in the laboratory. He took all of that history and created something of his own. That's what made him such a mature player at a very young age; he had a vision for how he wanted to sound.

Since Ron told me that, I'll often ask guys, "How do you hear yourself represented on the instrument?" When you think like that, your playing becomes really personal. It becomes about finding a way to be true to how you want to be represented that's not based on anybody else. Then the challenge becomes finding a musical environment that will allow you to express that vision. Of course, sometimes you aren't afforded that luxury because you have to play whatever the gig calls for. And that's part of developing as a musician.

But the goal is to get to a point where you can play something that's honest and will allow your vision to come forth.

**MD:** When did your vision solidify?

**Carl:** Many of us already have a vision, but we don't have the courage to follow it. I've never really heard the drums as drums. Even when I was playing along to James Brown records, I would try to emulate what the horn players were doing.

Then in high school, my band director would bring in jazz records for me to check out. He would say, "Check out what this guy does. Check out his left hand." But while I was checking out these drummers, I was also hearing Thelonious Monk, Bird, Freddie Hubbard, Clifford Brown, and all these melodic players. It was like two different worlds. I had an appreciation for what the drummers were doing. But I also really liked how the horn players would bend notes, phrase melodies, and create shapes. So I started to do some of those things on the drums. For instance, a lot of times I push the stick into the head to bend the pitch.

But after I had been playing with Freddie Hubbard for about six months, I started second-guessing my path. I said to him, "I don't think I'm hearing the drums the way I'm

supposed to. Do I need to change something? What do I need to do?" He just started laughing and said, "When I first came to town people always wanted to know which trumpet players I was listening to. But I didn't get my ideas from other trumpet players; I got them from saxophone players. So, Carl, keep exploring."

That gave me the confidence to stay true to my vision. It told me that it's okay to consider yourself a jazz drummer without having to play exactly like someone else. Yes, you have to study the masters. And there will be a certain point in your development where your influences should come through. But shortly after that, your voice will start to develop naturally.

**MD:** What if you don't know what your vision is? Can you find your voice as you're checking out others?

**Carl:** During the process of searching and studying, you'll discover what's available and where you want to go. Dizzy Gillespie told me something that's become my mantra. He said, "All great art is created with a foot in the past and a foot in the future." What that means to me is that you can't just say, "I'm going to do my own thing." You have to check out what's been done and then go from there.



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## CARL ALLEN

Thinking like that also helps on the gig. A lot of times on a record date the leader will say, "Carl, I don't have any drum music, but this is what I'm hearing: I want Philly Joe's left hand with DeJohnette's ride cymbal." And I can do that because I've spent time exploring how these guys approach the instrument.

**MD:** That sounds like a great practice challenge.

**Carl:** Yeah. I like to play "what if" games. Sometimes I ask myself, What if I put Philly Joe's ride cymbal over Billy Higgins' left hand? If you've studied these guys, you'll understand the differences in the shape of their ride patterns and how they phrase their comping. For instance, Philly Joe plays off the triplet, while someone like Higgins is more angular. So you can experiment by putting the two together to see what happens. It's this process of discovery that helps to clarify your vision.

**MD:** In order to be able to mix up drummers' concepts like that, you have to spend a lot of time studying their playing.

**Carl:** But the beauty of it is that it forces you to discover things for yourself. And if you focus on the guys that you feel a personal connection to, it'll take you places that you never imagined.

There was a period early on with Freddie where he would tell me, "Carl, you've got to learn to play with more intensity." So I played louder. But he said, "I didn't ask you to play loud, I said play with more intensity." When you're young, you think that intensity is about playing loud, making faces, and getting sweaty. That has nothing to do with it.

So Freddie had me listen to three different drummers at a time in order for me to figure out what he was looking for. Then a couple months later he said, "Okay, it's getting close. Now check out these guys." This went on for about eight months before I finally said, "Freddie, just tell me what I need to do and I'll just do it." He snapped back, "If I have to tell you how to do it, I'll find another drummer."

At first, I took that personally. But that was one of the best things that could have happened to me, because it sent me on a journey. A lot of people just want the final answer. But, if you're told exactly how to do something, you won't

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## CARL ALLEN

be able to apply it in other situations. Freddie wanted me to discover for myself what worked and what didn't.

From that moment on, I've come to embrace the journey. It's not just about trying to get to the other side. I know where I need to go, but it's also important to pay attention to the things that I'm learning along the way.

**MD:** Is it important to transcribe as you're searching for your voice?

**Carl:** Transcribing is important, but only if you understand how to apply it. All of my students have to transcribe. But I use it as a way to

understand a drummer's vocabulary so that you can develop your own sound. That way you can say, "Well, I know that Higgins plays across the barline, and he tends to use the toms as part of his comping. Now, what can I do with that same concept?" That's how you develop your own language.

**MD:** What are you practicing now?

**Carl:** It changes from day to day. I have certain warm-up exercises that I do. But a lot of what I work on on a daily basis goes back to strengthening my foundation, listening to what guys have done, and figuring out ways to execute

what I hear in my head. One of the things I've taken from younger players like Greg Hutchinson is the way they phrase the ride. Their ride patterns are tighter than most of the older guys'. And there's more interaction and conversation among the limbs. So I've been incorporating some of that into what I do.

I also like to bring in things from outside jazz. A lot of Gospel drummers hit the rim of the tom on the way down for a rimclick. So I took that idea and brought it into my world. Those are the types of things that keep me excited.

**MD:** How much of your practice time should consist of this process of discovery?

**Carl:** It needs to be a part of your daily practice. A lot of times when I sit down to practice, I don't know what I'm going to come up with that day.

**MD:** So you don't have a regimen?

**Carl:** I have regimen, but it changes. Because I'm playing most nights, part of my daily practice is dedicated to fixing something that I didn't like the night before. A lot of times, I'll come home after a gig and I'll practice till two or three in the morning, working on stuff that didn't feel right.

But you have to balance your practice time. You need to establish a sense of direction in which you're aiming for measurable progress in a reasonable amount of time. Ask yourself, What do I want to accomplish today? If the ride cymbal didn't feel right during a slow tune, practice that.

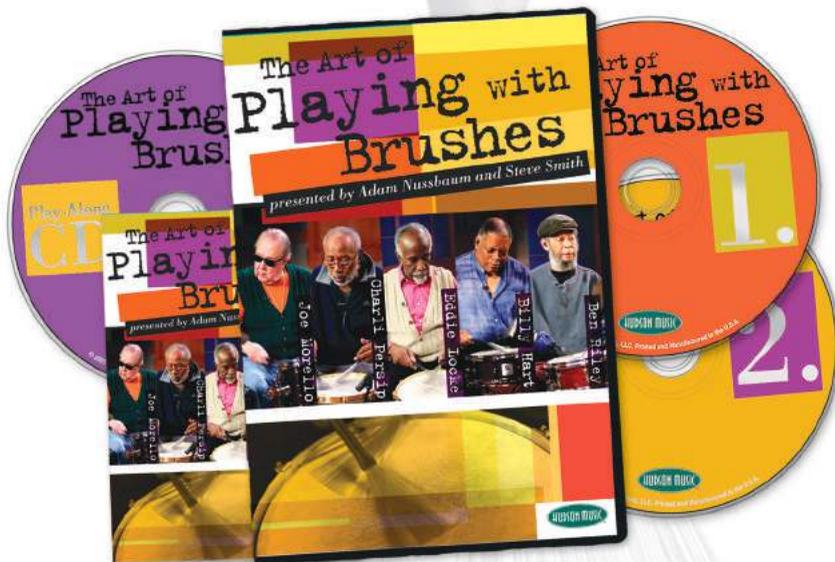
Another important part of practice is to just play. Sometimes I'll play to records. But usually I work on developing an idea that might have been inspired by a Philly Joe lick, or something I heard in a movie, or even something like a piece of art.

**MD:** It sounds like most of your practice is geared towards working on your creativity rather than technique.

**Carl:** Right now it is. I spent a lot of years working on technical studies, but my thing has always been to find a way to make music out of it. A lot of guys talk about how Philly Joe studied Wilcoxon's rudimental books. And you can hear those things in his playing. But the most important thing is to find a way to make whatever technique you're practicing facilitate your voice and vision on the instrument.

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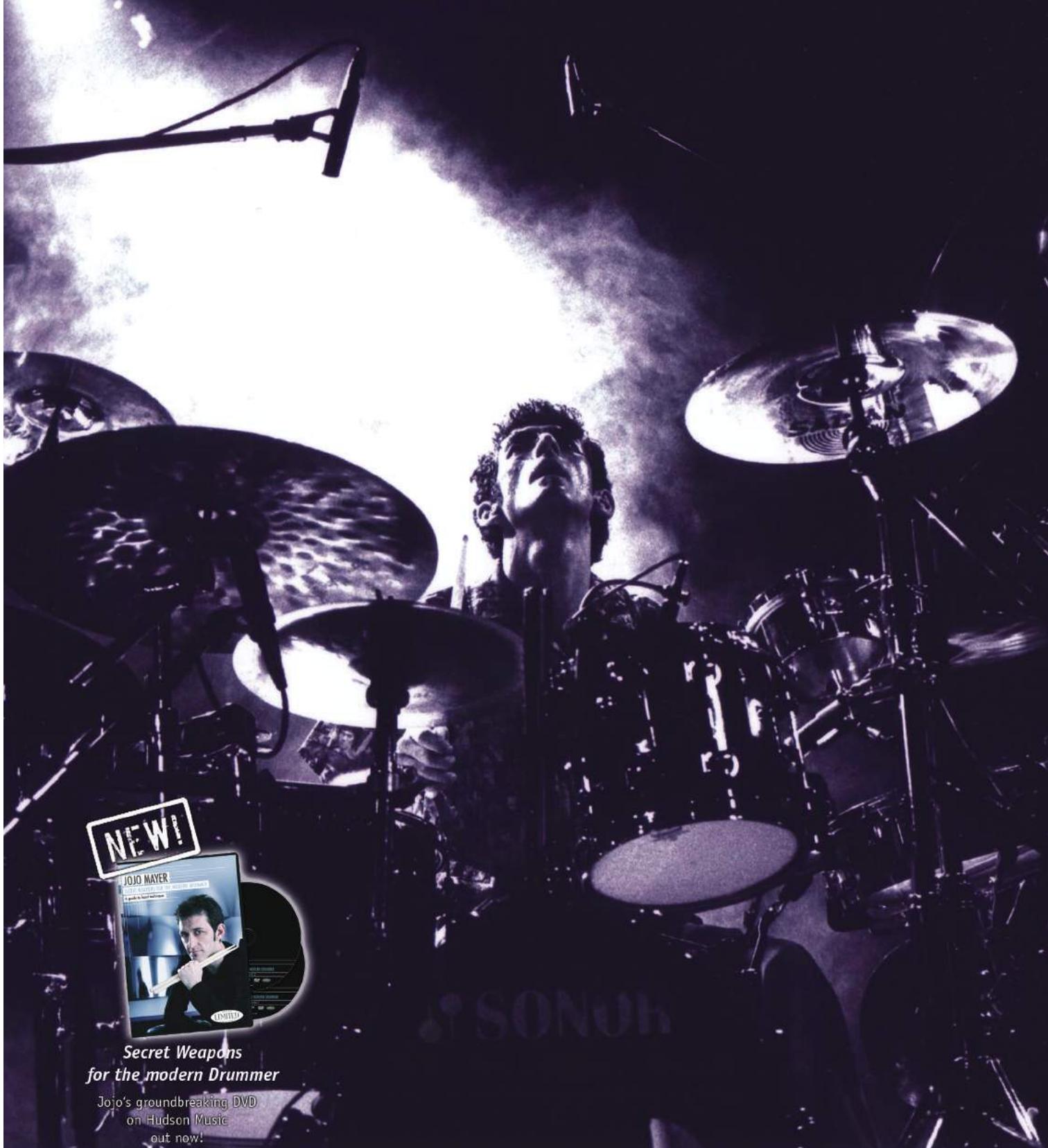


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And even though an upright piano looks very different from a grand piano (and they both look very different from a synthesizer), to the player the ergonomics and layout are the same. (Ever run across a keyboard player who says, "Yeah, I like to put my B-flat key to the left of the A—gives me some variety"?)

On the other hand, how often do you hear a contractor or producer state, "For this gig, we've got to have a seven-piece drumset"? Nope, it's accepted that a drummer's setup is very personal, with endless possibilities in terms of size and arrangement. So how do you decide what's right for you?

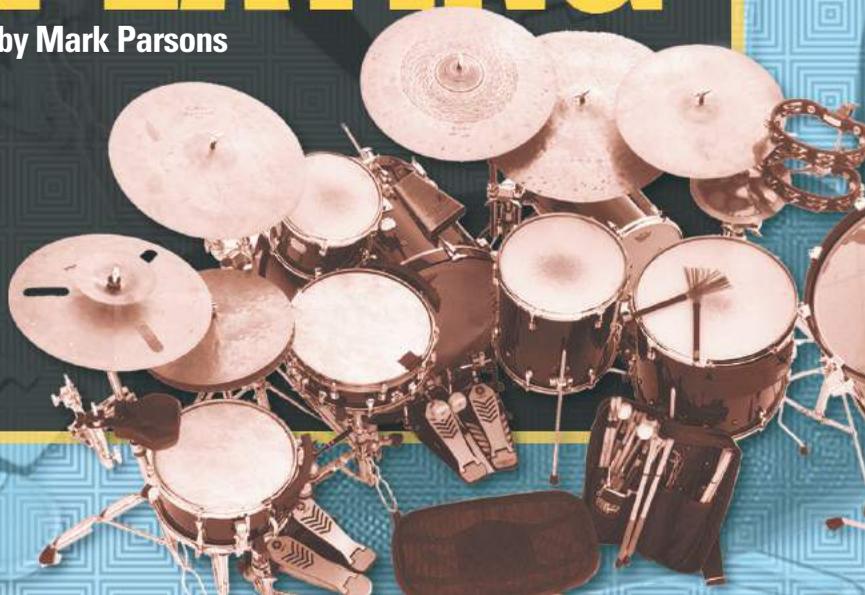
Well, practicalities like available space (in the car and onstage) and budget might determine the overall size of your kit. But beyond that, there are still a myriad of choices about how you arrange everything. And these choices *matter*. They affect your comfort as you move around the kit, your economy of motion, the physiology of your playing, and even the musical properties of the instrument itself.

We're going to examine the setup of the drumset itself, as well as the physiological relation of the player to the instrument. To help us do this, we're going to hear from some well-known drummers about how they configure their drumset, and why. We've chosen these folks with a purpose in mind: They're all individualists who don't necessarily follow the pack when it comes to their music *or* how they choose to arrange their instrument.

# THE SETUP

## HOW THE PHYSICALITY OF YOUR INSTRUMENT AFFECTS THE MUSICALITY OF YOUR PLAYING

by Mark Parsons



## Please Be Seated

Before we talk to the pros, though, let's quickly look at some of the major factors involved in the configuration of a drumset. Before we even talk about kit size or location of components within the kit, let's consider something more fundamental—seat height. The height of your throne significantly affects your comfort at the drumset, your ability to reach pieces of the kit, and how efficiently you can hit those pieces. It can even impact your health.

Variation in seat height causes the angle of your leg, from hip to knee, to slope up, be flat, or slope down. Some drummers, like Tommy Lee, Little Feat's Richie Hayward, and Living Colour's Will Calhoun (whom we interviewed for this article), are low riders. Some sit tall in the saddle. Think Vital Information's Steve Smith, The Stones' Charlie Watts, Galactic's Stanton Moore, and Lenny Kravitz's Cindy Blackman.

The critical thing with determining seat height is that you should select it based on your ergonomics and comfort behind the drums. Some of you might have started out sitting a certain way because a drummer you admired early in your development sat that way—even if that drummer had a different body type. Or perhaps the kit you first learned on was set up a certain way, and you simply got used to that arrangement. You probably never gave the subject much thought after that, even though that particular height might not be optimal for you. So don't be afraid to experiment here.

Take your throne and raise (or lower) it an inch or two, and play that way for a while. Take note of the overall effect on your comfort and playing fluidity. Pay specific attention to how your lower back feels, since your back does the most to stabilize your torso when playing. Also note the feel in your hip flexors, which are located where your upper thigh joins your torso. These are used to raise your legs when seated. Play for a while at various heights, and see what the changes do for your comfort. (For a more in-depth look at the science behind stress-reduction behind the set, see Bob Gatzen's sidebar "Drumset Ergonomics," on page 98.)

One of the things we asked our panel to do was brandish their tape measures and provide some objective data for us to mull over. Among other things, they measured the distance (while standing) from the floor to the crease at the back of their knee, as well as their seat height. (See the sidebar "Breaking Down..The Numbers," for a tabulation of ergonomic results and drumset configurations.)

For those looking for a starting place, this type of data is better than just seat height alone, as it takes into account some of the physiology of the individual. Interestingly, all of the drummers we spoke with except one had their seats above (by an average of about 2") their back-of-knee height. The exception was Will Calhoun, who sits 1 1/2" below knee height.

# BREAKING DOWN..THE NUMBERS

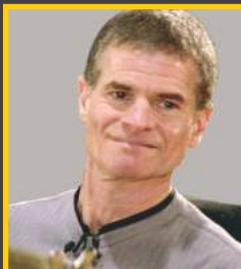
**W**e've tabulated some of the metrics received from our panel of expert drummers into the following table, to provide a snapshot of how various players, of differing body types, who work in divergent musical styles, set up their drums. The main point with this data is not that you need to duplicate these numbers. You shouldn't be thinking, "Hey, I really dig the way Stanton Moore plays, so I'm going to set my seat and snare at the same height he does." Rather, use their setups as examples of repositioning ideas, and apply their reasoning to your choices appropriately.

You may be built more like Bill Bruford or Cindy Blackman than Stanton Moore. And two people of the same size can still have different physiologies—and vice versa. I'm closer in stature to Will Calhoun than I am to Bob Gatzen, for example, yet my seat height and snare height are much closer to Bob's than to Will's. (Which also means I actually "sit" a little lower than Bob—in terms of hip/thigh and thigh/knee angles—since my legs are longer.)

So while you can't just take the measurements from another drummer and directly apply them to yourself in any meaningful way, the overall relationships between these values can provide some useful starting points. In other words, don't get hung up on the specifics—look at the big picture.

This information can also be useful in that it gives you a more complete picture of how various drummers position themselves and their drumsets to arrive at a configuration that works for them and their particular music.

## BOB GATZEN



<b>Kit size &amp; configuration</b>	six-piece, with double pedal
<b>Seat height</b>	20"
<b>Back-of-knee height + leg angle</b>	18" some slope
<b>Seat above/below back-of-knee crease</b>	seat = knee crease +2"
<b>Snare height</b>	25"
<b>Snare angle</b>	tilt slightly towards (4° or 5°)
<b>Tom angle</b>	slightly angled 5-6" higher than snare
<b>Cymbal angle</b>	low, with angle

## WILL CALHOUN



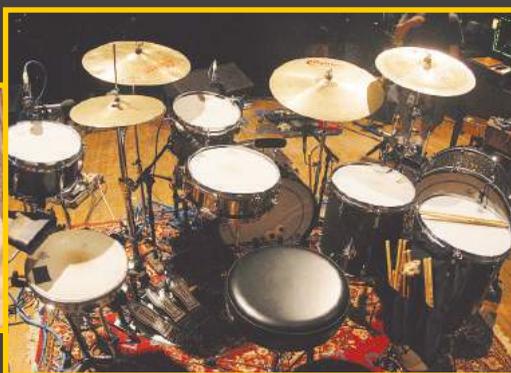
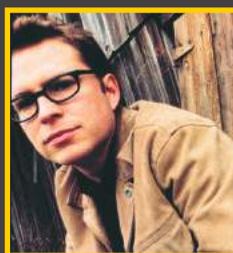
<b>Kit size &amp; configuration</b>	six-piece, plus 18" aux kick to left side
<b>Seat height</b>	18 1/2"
<b>Back-of-knee height + leg angle</b>	20" parallel
<b>Seat above/below back-of-knee crease</b>	seat = knee crease - 1 1/2"
<b>Snare height</b>	21 1/2"
<b>Snare angle</b>	slight tilt towards - sometimes flat in studio
<b>Tom angle</b>	angled
<b>Cymbal angle</b>	rides at small angle, crashes/discs are flat

# CINDY BLACKMAN



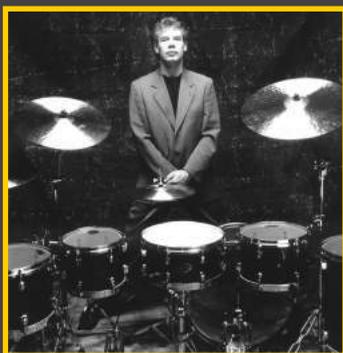
<b>Kit size &amp; configuration</b>	four-piece core, up to seven-piece as required
<b>Seat height</b>	"sits high"
<b>Back-of-knee height + leg angle</b>	some slope
<b>Snare angle</b>	slight tilt towards
<b>Tom angle</b>	small toms angled, floor toms flat
<b>Cymbal angle</b>	angled similar to small toms

# STANTON MOORE



<b>Kit size &amp; configuration</b>	four-piece +, with 26" aux kick to right side
<b>Seat height</b>	21 1/2"
<b>Back-of-knee height + leg angle</b>	18" some slope
<b>Seat above/below back-of-knee crease</b>	seat = knee crease + 3"
<b>Snare height</b>	25 1/2"
<b>Snare angle</b>	almost flat, slight angle towards floor tom
<b>Tom angle</b>	low, with slight angle
<b>Cymbal angle</b>	low, with slight angle

# BILL BRUFORD



<b>Kit size &amp; configuration</b>	six-piece (in symmetrical layout, pitched out of order)
<b>Seat height</b>	22 1/4"
<b>Back-of-knee height + leg angle</b>	21" sloping a little
<b>Seat above/below back-of-knee crease</b>	seat = knee crease + 1 1/4"
<b>Snare height</b>	26 3/4"
<b>Snare angle</b>	flat
<b>Tom angle</b>	flat, and all at same height
<b>Cymbal angle</b>	slight tilt

## Backbeat Basics

Snare height and angle are other important factors. Typically the snare is the most-played drum. Your snare contributes much to the signature sound of your kit, and it requires the most precision in sticking. Certainly the type of grip you predominantly use (matched or traditional) can affect the snare angle, yet several of our respondents manage to use both grips with one snare positioning.

The important part here is to position the drum where both sticks fall naturally while allowing you to use the stroke you prefer. (For instance, you shouldn't have to make a special motion to play a rimshot.) There should be no strain on the wrists, elbows, or shoulders as you play.

One surprising result of our pro poll was that there was a remarkable consistency in our panel members' snare height and angle. This was the case even though they play in widely divergent styles, and have different body types. Basically each player places the snare so that the distance from the ground to the top of the drum, measured from where the drum is closest to the player, is six or seven inches greater than their standing knee height. (This equals four to five inches above seat height, except in the case of Will Calhoun, whose snare is eight inches above his seat due to his lower seating height.) And all our pros position their snare drums either with a slight angle towards them or flat. (Stanton Moore's snare is almost flat, with a very slight angle down towards the right.)

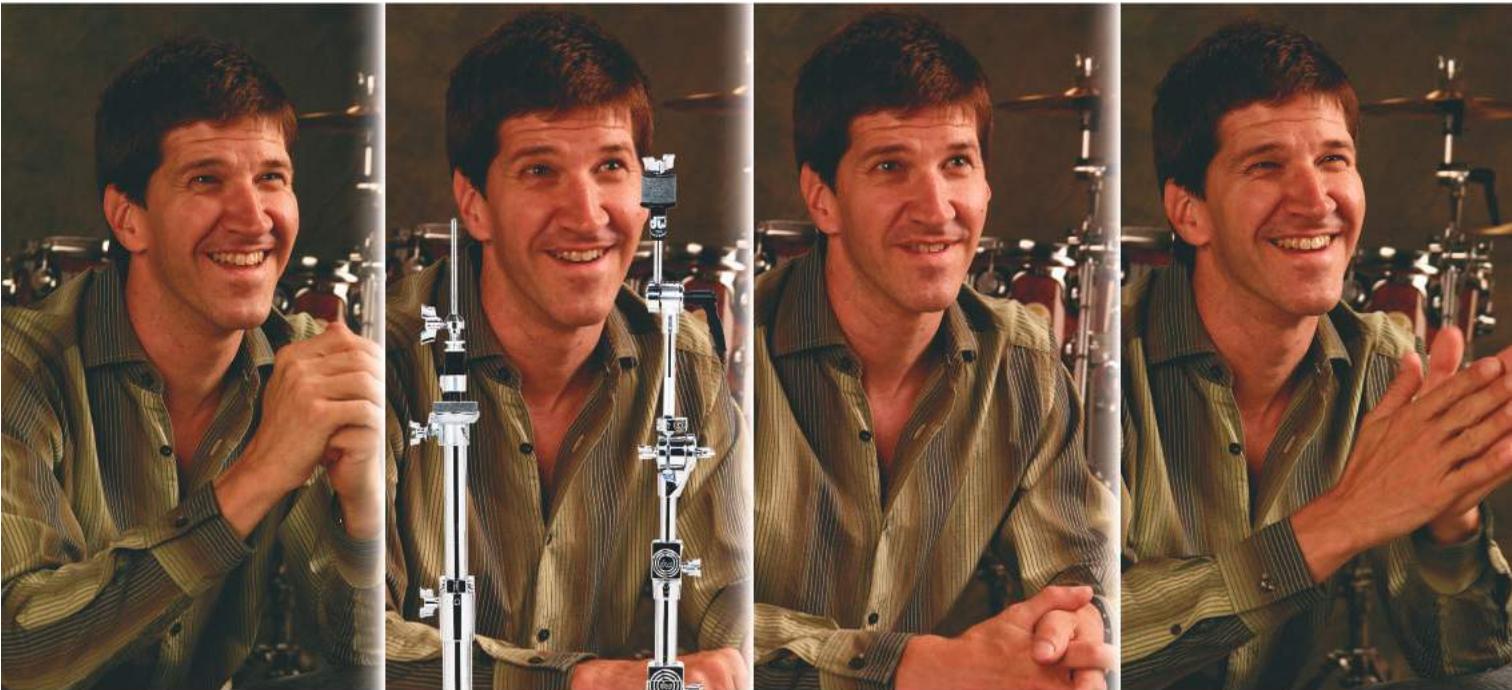
## The Big Picture

You'll note that although their kits look quite different from each other, most of the folks on our expert panel use a "basic" drumset configuration as the core of their instrument, and then add pieces from there as the music requires. The end results can be unique. Calhoun and Moore, for example, each use an auxiliary bass drum off to one side, although Calhoun's is an 18" off to the left and Moore's is a 26" set to the right of his kit. And Bill Bruford—always an innovator—uses a symmetrical setup, which suits him ergonomically and creatively. Tellingly, in each instance the drumset is designed to fit the individual artist, not the other way around.

When it comes to placement of toms and cymbals, there is some commonality here as well. Whether angled or flat, you'll see that the toms and cymbals in any given kit aren't at such different angles from each other that it takes extra motion to go from one to the other.

It sounds simplistic, but the big message here is, Put your stuff where you can reach it. From there, it's a matter of prioritizing your components so that you can reach the most important items the easiest, with the least stress and strain on your body. (Again, Bob Gatzen's piece gets into this specific concept in some detail.)

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## SETUP GUIDE

Perhaps the most important thing we can take away from what our panel had to say is this: When asked about the overall goal behind the way they set up their instrument, they responded with terms like "ease of movement," "comfort," "ergonomics," "availability," "musicality," and "economy of motion."

In other words, it's all about setting up your gear in such a way that it doesn't come between you and the music. Now, let's meet our panel...

### Who We Got

Regular readers of MD are likely familiar with these folks, so we'll just hit some highlights before jumping into the discussion.

**Cindy Blackman:** Although her highest-profile gig is with Lenny Kravitz, Cindy is equally at home with jazz, rock, and funk. She's played with a number of well-known jazz musicians (Jackie McLean, Joe Henderson, Don Pullen, Hugh Masekela, Pharoah Sanders, Cassandra Wilson, Bill Laswell) and has several solo releases as a leader and an instructional video to her credit.

**Bill Bruford:** From Yes to King Crimson to his own Earthworks, Bill has been an innovator in jazz, rock, and all points in between for almost forty years. Additionally, he was one of

the early pioneers in the field of electronic percussion, making great strides in their use in rhythmic and melodic scenarios.

**Will Calhoun:** Primarily known for his incendiary drumming with Living Colour, Will has worked with artists as diverse as Mick Jagger, Dr. John, Lou Reed, Wayne Shorter, and Mos Def, among many others. He was voted "Best New Drummer" in the 1988 MD Readers Poll, as well as the #1 Progressive Drummer in 1989, 1991, and 1992. Will has released several solo albums, including the recent Native Lands, a CD/DVD world jazz release.

**Bob Gatzten:** Bob seems to do it all—he's a drummer, clinician, audio and video producer, and engineer. As an inventor, he's responsible for drum innovations from Evans, DW, Kaman, Noble & Cooley, and others. He's also the founder of START With The Arts, Inc., an organization dedicated to fostering creativity in young children. And as the creator of the DrumFrame, you can bet he's done just a bit of thinking about the ergonomics of the drumset.

**Stanton Moore:** Busting out of the Big Easy in the early '90s with groovemeisters Galactic (and still going strong with them), Stanton brings his unique take on the various musical traditions of New Orleans to everything he does. Besides Galactic, he's recorded with

Garage A Trois, Robert Walter, Irma Thomas, The New Orleans Klezmer Allstars, and many others. He's also released three solo CDs (including the recent III) and the educational book/CD/DVD package Take It To The Street.

### What is the overall goal with the way you set up your drumset?

**Cindy:** My overall goal with my drum setup is musicality. I don't want to have a bunch of drums, cymbals, and other things set up to just hit and make noise with. I always want to make music.

**Bill:** Ergonomics, availability of instruments, and ease of movement certainly, but also that I should be presented with a configuration of instruments that gets my mind going—something that's full of possibilities. Hopefully it should enable me to sound a little different from the other guy.

**Will:** To approach and serve any style of music with total relaxation, discipline, musicality, and improvisation.

**Bob:** Economy in motion.

**Stanton:** I play lots of different types of gigs, with lots of different people. That said, I like to always feel comfortable in whatever situation comes my way.

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## SETUP GUIDE

**What size/configuration do you generally prefer? (Number of pieces, number of cymbals, etc.)**

**Cindy:** I like pretty simple setups that range from a four-piece to a seven-piece kit. The four-piece includes a snare, one mounted tom, one floor tom, a bass drum, one ride, one crash, and a set of sock cymbals. There have been many drum innovations and lots of music made on a small kit like this, by all kinds of drummers in various musical styles. Some of these great, innovative drummers include Kenny Clarke, Art Blakey, Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones, Elvin

Jones, Roy Haynes, and Tony Williams. I expand from there whenever I want to hear more notes, with the largest set usually having a snare, two mounted toms, three floor toms, a bass drum, a ride, a crash ride, a crash, and a set of sock cymbals.

**Bruford:** Four toms, four cymbals, kick, snare, hat.

**Calhoun:** Generally I use 10" and 12" rack toms, 14" and 16" floor toms with legs, a 20" main bass drum, an 18" bass drum on the left side of the hi-hat, and a 5" or 6½" wooden snare. I prefer the toms mounted on my bass drum.

For cymbals I use Calhoun series Sabians: hi-hats, an overhead crash (a 19" prototype thin crash with an almost flat bell), a ride cymbal for Living Colour that's a 21" Calhoun cymbal called the Lunar Ride, an 18" Vault crash off to my right, and below this cymbal, X-hats, which are actually large versions of my Alien Disc cymbal—a 10" on top and 12" on the bottom.

For strictly jazz/world music playing or with my Native Lands band, I use three ride cymbals, including a soon-to-be-released model called the Desert Ride, which is a flat thin 19" cymbal that is powerful, dark, and calm.

**Bob:** My basic setup is as follows: The bass drum is 20", with a depth of either 16" or 18". I play it with a double pedal. I typically use four toms, with the sizes varying depending upon my mood. My preference is in smaller sizes—8", 10", 14", and an auxiliary tom off to the left side of the snare. I also prefer smaller-diameter snare drums—12" or 13", of varying depths.

I use many cymbal prototypes I've fabricated through Zildjian. I prefer small cymbals, and the number of cymbals in my set varies from four to nine. Hi-hats are 10", 11", or 12". Currently my faves are the 10" and 11" combinations. For rides I'll use 16" or 18" cymbals. My crashes are usually 8" to 12", with splashy and trashy sounds.

**Stanton:** I set up my kit so that the heart of it is predominately a four-piece kit with two or three cymbals, then I expand upon it as needed. With my "extended" setup, I still like to think of it as a four-piece kit with extras. I will sometimes play a 12"/14"/18" plus snare setup with Garage A Trois, The Stanton Moore Trio, and most other gigs around town in New Orleans. With Galactic I play a 12" rack, 14" and 16" floors, 20" and 26" basses, a 14" snare, and a 12" pandeiro to the left of the hi-hat. I have cowbells to the left of the hi-hat (above the pandeiro), on my main bass drum, and just over my first floor tom. I have agogo bells above that floor tom cowbell as well.

I have a double pedal on the 20"—not so much for common double bass patterns, but to get pitched bass drum patterns happening between the 20" and 26". I play the 26" as a remote with the left side of a double pedal. I also have a left-foot cowbell so I can play left-foot clave or other figures.

I play Bosphorus Stanton Moore Series cymbals—14" Fat hats, a 20" Trash Crash (to my left), a 22" Wide Ride, and a 20" Pang Thang (to the right of my ride).

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## SETUP GUIDE

**Is there anything unusual or different about the way you set up your kit? If so, what is it, and why do you do it?**

**Cindy:** There's nothing really that unusual in my setup, except that I like my floor toms to be straight and even like tables, not slanted at all.

**Bill:** Recently I've been laying the drums out flat, in a gentle curve. That's based on the five-timpani layout of a classical musician; I just find it easier to swivel a little to the left to open up the left side of the kit, rather than reach forward to the toms positioned in front of the snare, as in the traditional setup. Additionally, you lose that right-hand-over-left hi-hat thing, which always seemed a bit awkward. The drawback is you need a remote cable-hat, to be positioned directly in front of the central snare drum.

The set is symmetrical in the sense that there are two toms and two cymbals to the right of the central snare and hi-hat, and a similar setup, although different pitches, to the left. This makes for some nice combinations—or would if I were ambidextrous. (I'd give my right arm to be ambidextrous!) Plus, the less sophisticated listener tends to listen with his eyes first; with my set you can clearly and easily see which stick is hitting which drum. Finally, the

drums are out of pitch order, so that makes for some interesting phrasing.

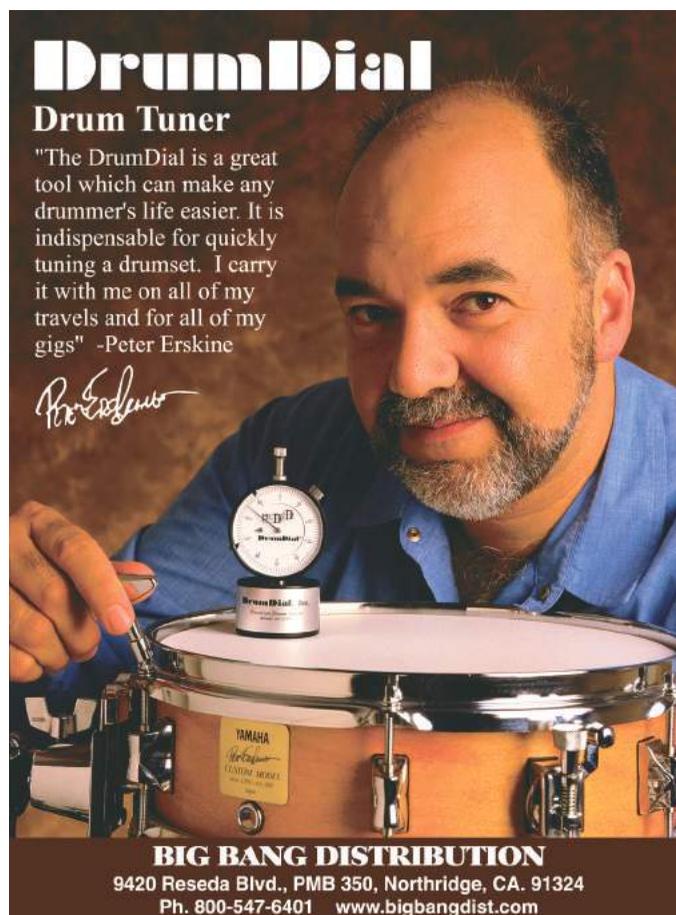
**Will:** My 18" bass drum is unusual to most. I place it on the left side of my hi-hat. It's tuned with an indigenous/jazz tuning, very tight and high. It's double-headed for the special ringing overtones. I prefer a hi-hat stand without legs. My bass drum pedals are custom-built, and they allow me to play with proper aerodynamic precision. The beaters are centered, and the footboards are off to the left and right. If you sit on any chair or stool your feet will normally fall into the position of your arms, left and right. My snare drum now is placed in the center of the kit between my first two rack toms.

As for the "why I do it," I've spent the last ten years or more researching drumming, music, and rhythm of many different cultures. I spent most of my time in designated parts of Africa and in Central and South America, and one long stint in the outback of Australia. (Check out my DVD for a detailed look into my research.) During my research I listened, played, and studied with proper drum masters and tribal leaders. Most of the cultures I lived with never play music for entertainment. The drumming sounds are very open, and the materials used are animal skins and braided rope. I made many field

recordings to learn how to play the rhythms, but when I returned to the States and began practicing these rhythms I realized I didn't have the proper sound/tone. The Western drum that sounded closest to what I played abroad is a jazz bass drum sound with a bit of tweaking. I didn't want to change my original setup, so I added the extra bass drum on the left side of my hi-hat so I can sonically include the indigenous rhythms with my Western training.

**Bob:** I don't believe my physical setup is unusual. I aim for comfort and economy in motion. My philosophy is: Only reach for the things you hit the least.

**Stanton:** I would consider my remote 26" bass drum, pandeiro, and 4½" Gretsch prototype signature titanium snare to be unusual elements of my kit. Originally the 26" I was using was a 12x26 made in 1941 by a man named Helm, who had supposedly worked for Leedy. It's worn and appealing and sounds incredible. I've had Gretsch make me three 26" drums to match kits I have. My pandeiro is an LP 12" model that I put a Remo coated Emperor 2-ply head on. I mike it from underneath, and it sounds like a floor tom with jingles. My 4½x14 titanium snare is a prototype with a shell made by Ronn Dunnett. It will eventually be released



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## SETUP GUIDE

as my signature snare. My Trash Crash and Pang Thang from my signature Bosphorus line of cymbals are also different. And I use a Boomerang for sampling live on the fly.

### What has changed over the years regarding your setup, and why?

**Bill:** My kit is in a state of perpetual change, reflecting both the music and the role of the drummer, both also in perpetual change. Isn't everybody's? I've had probably twenty-odd configurations over forty years. See the equipment page at [www.billbruford.com](http://www.billbruford.com) for details.

The prime driver here seems to be the music, as it exists or as it is imagined it will exist, and

[the challenge is to find] which percussion instruments will give it life. In a European classical sense, I prefer to approach the music without any instruments at all, wait to see what it requires, then provide it. This has blurred in recent years as I have settled more into a jazz role, but the original thinking is still there.

**Will:** My set has changed primarily with the addition of some of the unusual cymbals I mentioned, plus the 18" bass drum to the left side of my hi-hat.

**Bob:** Like many drummers, I used to sit as low as possible. When I began R&D for the DrumFrame, I intuitively began sitting slightly higher to establish proper angles in the legs

and hips. Today I find this position more comfortable, with or without the Frame.

**Stanton:** I added the Boomerang in '99, and I added the 26" bass drum and the pandeiro a few years ago. I'll add or subtract a second floor tom and various percussive aspects, but the heart of my kit has been a four-piece since about 1990.

### What is your seat height?

**Cindy:** I sit on the high side. I do this because I have long legs and I want a certain amount of extension, and because it's better for the lower back.

**Bill:** 22½".

**Will:** 18½".

**Bob:** For my "floor" kit, from the floor to the top of the seat is 20". On my DrumFrame kit it's 23", keeping in mind that the drums are raised off the floor, which correlates to the 3" increase in height.

**Stanton:** My seat is a DW 9000. I set it at about 21½", although I vary it from time to time.

### So we get an idea as to how this translates into ergonomic terms, what is the height of the crease at the back of your knee, measured while standing?

**Bill:** 21".

**Will:** Roughly 20".

**Bob:** 18".

**Stanton:** 18".

### When seated comfortably at your drums, are the tops of your thighs parallel to the floor, sloping down from hip to knee, or slanted up from hip to knee?

**Bill:** Parallel or sloping down a little from hip to knee.

**Will:** My thighs are parallel to the floor.

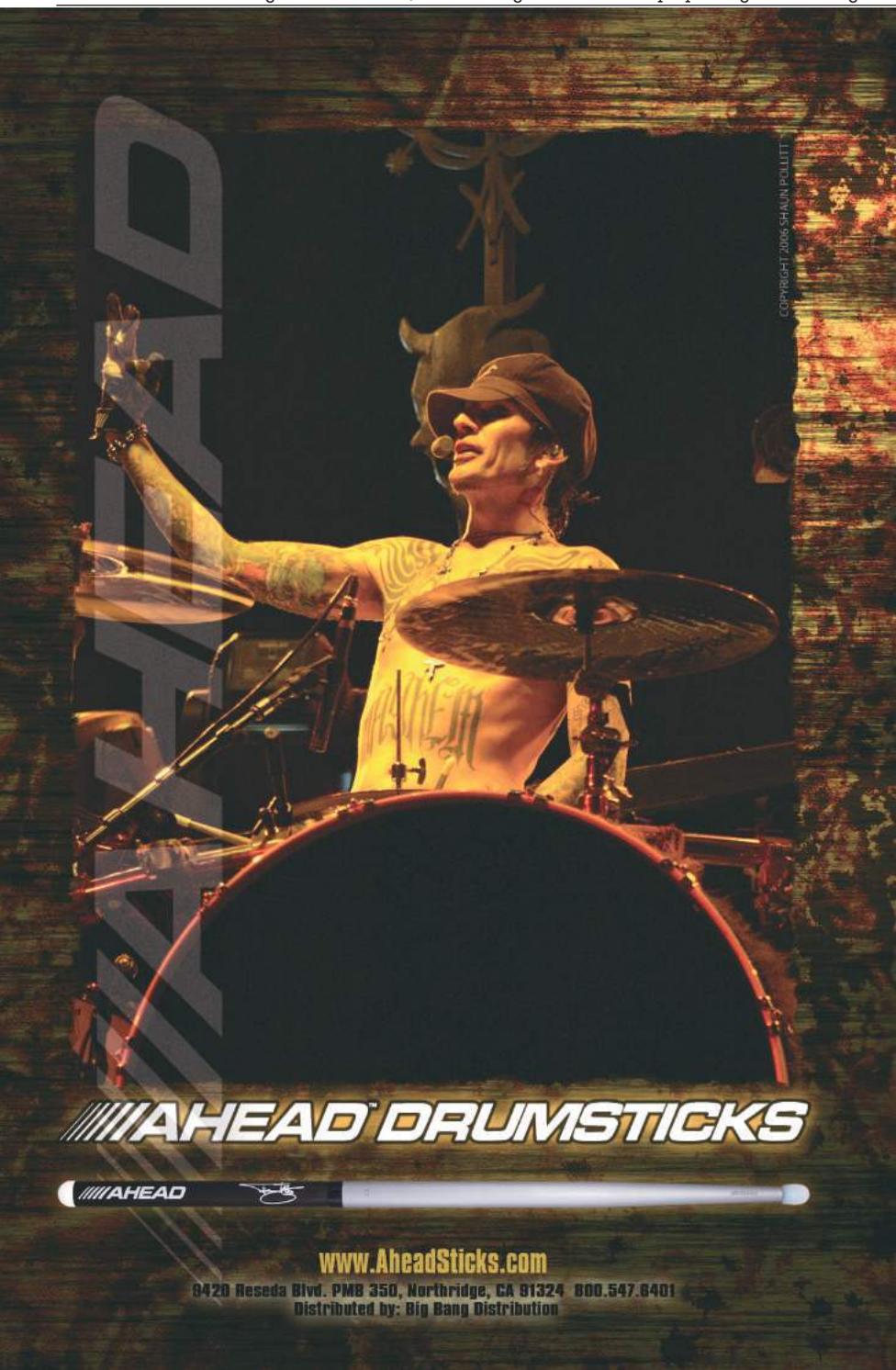
**Bob:** On the floor kit and on the DrumFrame, my upper legs are at a very slight downward angle from the hip to the knee.

**Stanton:** Sloping down slightly from hip to knee.

### How did you arrive at your particular seat height, and what process did you have to go through to get there?

**Bill:** It took about five seconds—seems obvious and logical to me.

**Will:** Simply, my older brother played drums before me, and I would occasionally play on his kit. His seat was very low, and when I began playing on my own kit he told me to keep the seat low for more relaxed results. Although I



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## SETUP GUIDE

have tried assorted seat heights, the parallel-thigh height works best for me.

**Bob:** I aim for proper weight distribution, which is largely controlled by the angle of the upper torso area relative to the hips/legs. It's simply a physics game. For instance, leaning forward makes it more difficult to get your feet "off" the pedals. Many of us, intuitively, lean forward when playing more aggressively, which is a detriment in regards to freedom and economy in motion, especially in the lower extremities.

**Stanton:** I used to sit a little higher—that came from checking out some jazz guys. I like to be just a little bit above the drums and let gravity do some of the work. I try to not work against gravity by holding my arms and hands up in the air too high.

**Is your snare tilted toward you, flat, or tilted away from you?**

**Bill:** Flat.

**Will:** My snare is tilted slightly toward me.

Occasionally I will play it totally flat on recording dates.

**Bob:** Tilted towards me very slightly, 4° or 5° off 90°.

**Stanton:** Almost flat, but with the slightest tilt toward the floor tom.

**Do you primarily play traditional or matched grip, and how has this affected your snare positioning?**

**Bill:** Matched grip. I need easy access to rimshots.

**Will:** I play with both grips, and my snare setup works for both grips.

**Bob:** I use both, matched 90% of the time.

**Stanton:** I usually play matched for backbeats and traditional for jazz, second-line, buzz rolls, and any real finesse stuff. My snare positioning allows me to play both easily.

**Time to break out the tape measures again!**

**What is your snare height, as measured from the floor to the top of your snare hoop (on the side of the drum closest to the throne)?**

**Bill:** 26½".

**Will:** 26½".

**Bob:** Floor kit: 25". DrumFrame: 28".

**Stanton:** About 25½", but I vary this as well.

**How did you arrive at your particular snare angle and height?**

**Bill:** It's just a comfortable playing position.

**Will:** It's comfortable, and it's the perfect height for me to play with brushes, sticks, and mallets. Also, it seems to be the best height for

dynamics and different genres of music.

**Bob:** It's kind of a dumb thing, but I never broke the habit of feeling my left hand palm just touching the top of my thigh. I used to wear my jeans out in that area!

**Stanton:** I used to tilt it away from me—which came from checking out jazz guys—but I eventually relaxed the severity of the angle.

**How would you describe your tom positioning: low or high, flat or angled...**

**Bill:** All my toms are flat, and at the same height.

**Will:** My toms are angled.

**Bob:** Slightly angled, 5" or 6" higher than the snare (measured from the inside edge of the hoop).

**Stanton:** I'd describe them as low, with a slight angle toward me.

**And the specific reason behind this?**

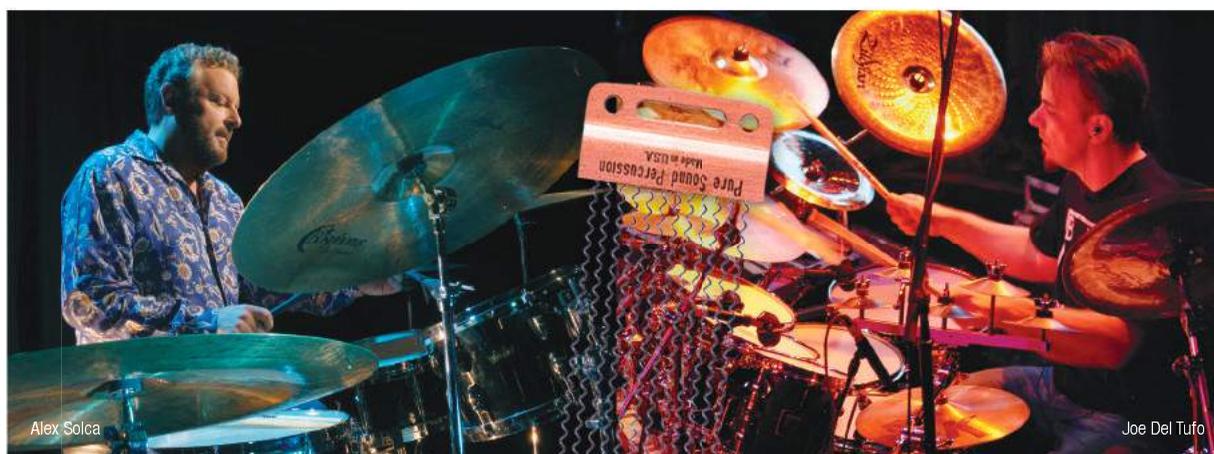
**Bill:** It goes back to what I said earlier about my drum setup—ergonomics and availability.

**Will:** Just to have total access to the cymbals and snare at any time, with the least amount of effort.

**Bob:** Comfort in the type of patterns I use.

**Stanton:** It makes them easy to reach.

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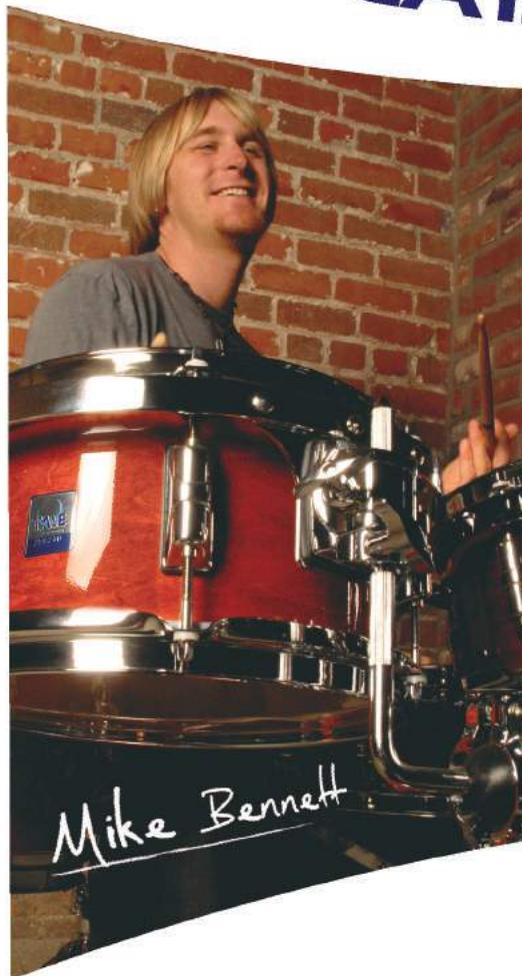
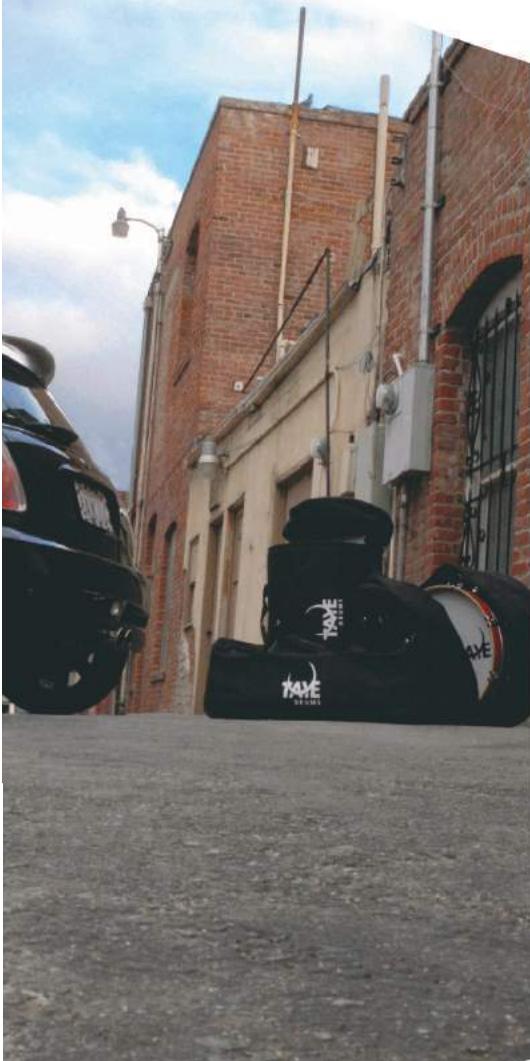
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**How would you describe your cymbal positioning?**

**Bill:** They have a slight tilt towards me.

**Will:** My ride cymbals are usually slightly angled. My crashes and Alien Discs are flat.

**Bob:** I keep my cymbals in a fairly low position, angled in a way that suits my particular technique for execution. Again, this follows the principle of minimizing effort by reaching. Also I like hi-hat sounds on the left and right sides of my drumset, which you can see in the photo of my kit.

**Stanton:** Like my toms, low with a slight angle toward me.

**Any particular reason you arrived at this positioning?**

**Bill:** Also availability and ergonomics. I need a quick movement from tom to cymbal.

**Will:** Accessibility with the least amount of effort. Also being able to get various sounds out of each individual cymbal.

**Bob:** I utilize melodic patterns that seem to support the upside-down "T" or mushroom-shaped design in the placement of the drums—and to a degree, the cymbals.

**Stanton:** Again, it makes them easy to reach.

**Finally, is there anything else you'd like to add about reasons you've arrived at your specific drumset arrangement?**

**Bill:** Touring costs play no small part in this. With King Crimson on occasion we staged three percussion areas involving hybrid electronic and acoustic kits of one sort and another, clearly impracticable if you are playing a support slot at a jazz festival, for example. The shipping and provision of instruments is expensive, and most jazz drummers are confined to a rental set and some small "toys," cymbals, and maybe a snare drum that they carry with them, excess baggage costs willing. Generally I'm looking for transportable, rentable, or "providable" gear that can be configured to open up possibilities. If it looks different, chances are it'll sound different!

**Will:** Time, growth, and technology (such as adding electronic pads, triggers, and gadgets to my setup) to sonically combine today's sounds with yesterday's.

**Bob:** Economy and freedom of motion along with a particular geographical design that suits my musical ideas.

**Stanton:** I like my kit to have a classic or vintage vibe but to also incorporate some modern elements that I feel comfortable incorporating.

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### It's A Wrap

Once again, we're left with the overriding impression that these drummers arrange their instruments in service to the particular music they create, not because it looks cool or because some other drummer does it that way. So how can we benefit from this philosophy? Simply by approaching your setup with an open mind, a willingness to experiment, and a clear idea of the sounds and rhythms your music requires.

When you have a few spare moments, sit at your kit, but don't play. Instead, slowly reach for each piece with stick in hand, and analyze your body position when at full extension. Ask yourself, How could I relocate this drum or cymbal so that I can reach and play it with the minimum amount of strain and effort? Then relocate the piece and try it again. Go through the same process with your seat height and pedal locations.

You'll know when you've arrived at the proper ergonomics for your drumset and your body type when you come off a long gig and you don't feel as tired and stressed as usual, and your back, hips, and shoulders aren't as sore as usual. And most important of all, you'll feel that you can express yourself musically and that your drumset is simply an extension of your arms, legs, heart, and mind.



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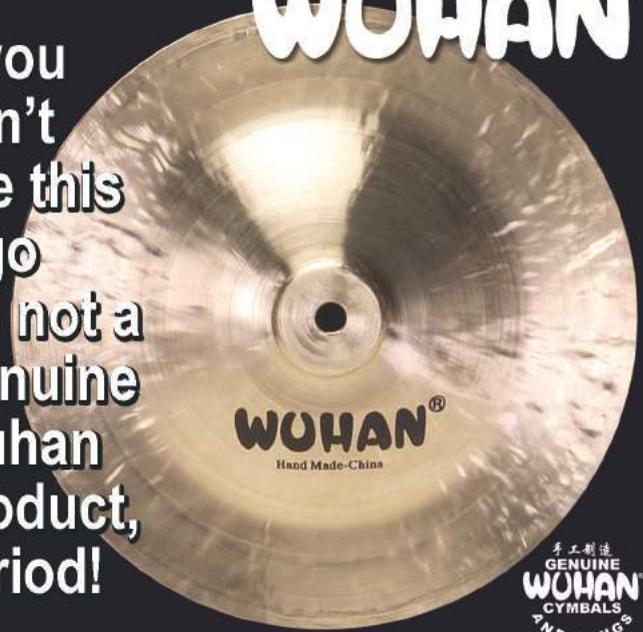
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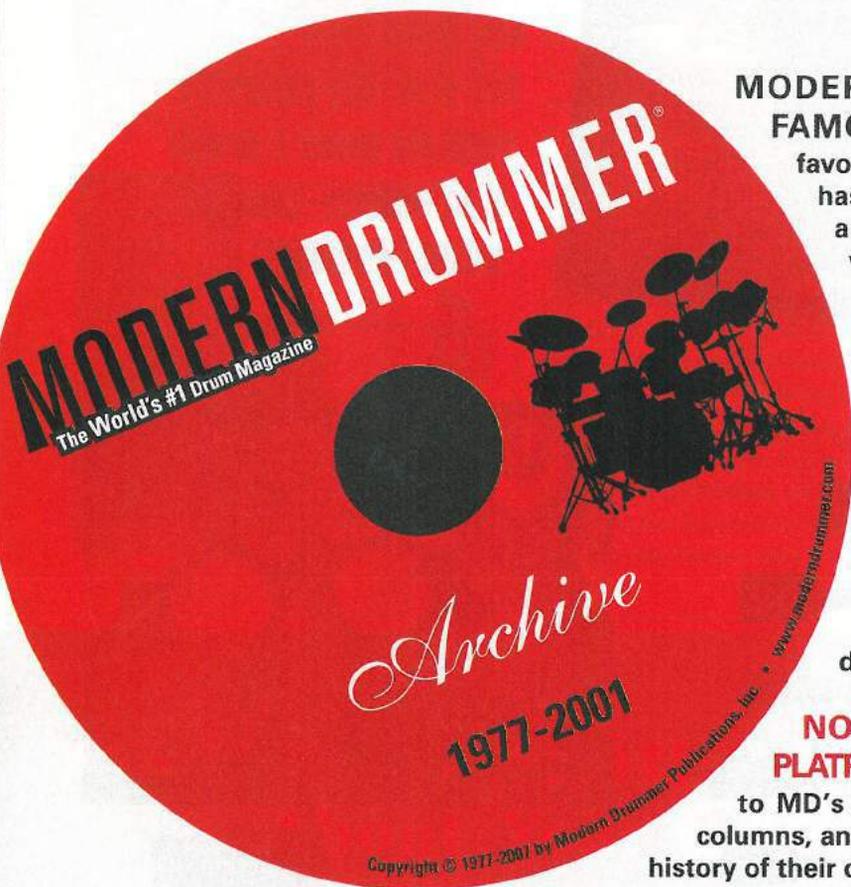
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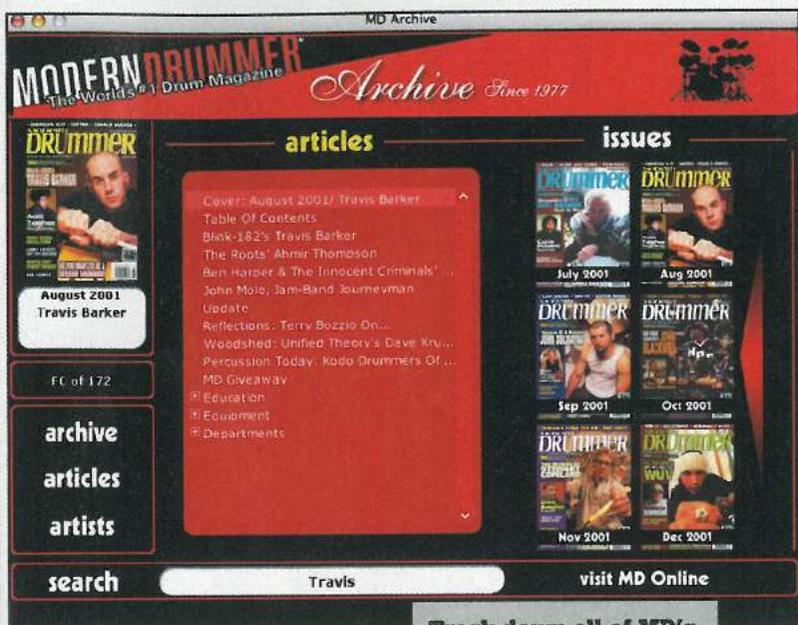
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# DRUMSET ERGONOMICS

## MAKING YOUR SETUP WORK FOR YOU

One thing should be apparent to anyone who has ever sat behind a drumset and picked up the sticks: It is a *very* physical art. Think about it: besides drummers, how many people viciously flail all four limbs simultaneously while in a sitting position? (Okay, replace “viciously flail” with “move

their limbs in a synchronized and independent fashion.”) So consequently, I’ve invested quite a bit of thought, time, energy, and research into understanding ergonomics and how to reduce stresses on the body as a result from playing the drums.

by Bob Gatzen

### Habit Forming

When I first began playing, I sat as low as possible, leaning slightly forward into the drums. For a long time this felt natural to me, until I realized it was simply a habit that I was unwilling to change. Sound familiar? I raised my drum stool slightly and discovered an inch is a mile! I felt more relaxed and I had greater fluidity. Also, my practice sessions weren’t as tiring, and I had less muscle soreness. My drum world changed!

### Body Mechanics

Everyone’s body mechanics are different, making it impossible to establish steadfast rules that govern the way we play drums. It’s a lot like running. (In a way, we do “run” at the drums.) There are general rules that should be observed, yet each and every runner creates a personal style that best suits their body mechanics.

That said, let’s discuss two basic principles that I believe apply to all drummers, regardless of style.

#### 1) Path Of Least Resistance

Four-limb motion from a sitting position is unnatural, working against laws of physics. This thought led me to two basic concepts: following the path of least resistance, and economy of motion.

Position drum components that you hit the most within arm’s length. For example, in relationship to the snare drum, position the ride cymbal and hi-hat in a way that allows you to keep your elbows as close to your side as possible. (See photo.)

Next, position the toms minimizing upper-body movement. This will vary depending on the size of your kit, but it’s easy to figure out. Simply focus on the components you use the most. Finally, even



though you want to be seen behind the drums, it's wise to position your cymbals as close to the toms as possible. It's just a matter of priorities. Which is more important, to be visual or comfortable playing at your best?

Also, pay close attention to the surface angles of drums and cymbals. This will vary depending on your technique, whether it's matched or traditional stick grip, wrist and arm motion style, etc. In general, the rule is to position drums and cymbals at about the same angle. This minimizes quick adjustments in the arms, wrists, and fingers. Keep reminding yourself, economy of motion.

## 2) Resistance To Movement

Taking things further, my research included detailed viewing of drum videos featuring world-class drummers, drawing comparisons between drum setups and body types. I enlisted an expert, a brilliant physical therapist named Peter Benke. Peter uncovered a very important study from an esteemed medical college library that states, "Muscle tension generated in the upper torso area creates resistance to movement in the extremities (arms and legs)." Sounded like a drum thing to me!

We decided to conduct our own research study at the University Of Connecticut medical department. We chose several drummers with different playing styles. Electrode sensors were placed at key body areas measuring muscle activity. To draw comparisons, drumkits were set up in specific formats with the drummers playing pre-programmed patterns. The resistance to movement theory held true.

### Sitting Position

So here's the general rule, regardless of your style and kit setup: There's a natural tendency to lean forward into the drums, creating an intimate relationship with the instrument. From an ergonomic standpoint, this should be resisted. The angle of your back relative to your legs (thighs) should not go under 90°. (See photo.) Leaning forward, breaking the "right angle" position, creates resistance to movement in the arms and legs—not a good drum thing!

Additionally, with today's advanced (aggressive) style of bass drum and hi-hat pedal technique, it becomes increasingly difficult to lift your legs upwards, "floating" your feet on pedal surfaces. Consequently, the straight back, right-angle position, or slightly backwards (over 90°) is most beneficial.

### Leg Position

The 90° principle holds true for leg positioning as well. A 90° angle—or slightly over at the knee, between the thigh and shin—is more efficient than under. (See photo.)

Need convincing? Try this test. Sit upright on a drum stool; lift both feet off the ground, paying attention to the amount of effort it takes. Next, lean forward, breaking the 90° angle at the hip. Now try lifting both feet off the ground. It's almost impossible to do without exerting tremendous effort and muscle activity in the lower back to stabilize and balance yourself. You tell me, which is the better way to play?



### Examples

Need more convincing? Pick up a few drum videos and watch the playing styles of Buddy Rich, Tony Williams, Billy Cobham, Dennis Chambers, Carter Beauford, Vinnie Colaiuta, Dave Weckl, John Riley, Will Kennedy—the list goes on and on.

Happy and healthy drumming.

**Bob Gatzen** is an award-winning drummer, producer, educator, writer, and inventor. For more on Bob, go to his Web site, [www.startarts.com](http://www.startarts.com). Or visit his YouTube channel, [www.youtube.com/bobgatzen](http://www.youtube.com/bobgatzen).



# TIPS FROM THE PROS

by Billy Amendola

## DRUM TECHS ON SETTING UP

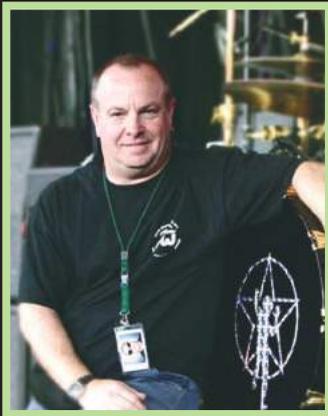


**L**ike anyone working behind the scenes, drum techs are unsung heroes. Ask any drummer how important his or her tech is, and you'll get a quick answer: "I couldn't do it without 'em" or "My tech is the best!" *MD* spoke to a few of "the best" in the biz about sharing their tips on setting up and what makes their lives run a bit smoother.

### LOARNE WHEATON

(Rush's Neil Peart, Steely Dan's Keith Carlock)

First I'd like to say, I'm pretty lucky to be connected with the clients I have. Neil and Keith have totally different styles, but both are fans of each other and both are really great to work with. As far as tips, I would recommend that you take careful notice of the setup—now that we're in the digital age, take pictures for placement. Take note of all the measurements of drums, stands, etc. First and foremost, learn to tune the drums.



### STEPHANE HAMEL

(Cirque du Soleil Delirium tour with Phil Fish, John Blackwell/Prince)



Because no two drummers set up their kit the same way, one of the best tips for a drum tech or a drummer is to mark everything by color code or number—you always want to use the same stand for the same cymbal or the same stand for the same drum. Once your drumkit is set up on a carpet, mark that carpet with all the stand and pedal positions, bass drum pedal and hi-hat included.

For example, let's say the first cymbal stand after your hi-hat is an 18" crash. Mark the same color on the stand as on the cymbal to match. Then mark the height of the stand. Do the same for every cymbal and drum stand. And then mark the stands on the carpet.

Also, one other tip that will make your set-up very easy and fast is to get a road case big enough to *not* have to make all the hardware collapsible and in little pieces. This way you're sure to always keep the pieces of each stand together and not lose any of them.

And lastly, when packing the drums in their cases, always put the drum upside-down to clear up the stick dust—it makes your life easier for the next load-in and for a faster clean-up.

### MATT YOUNG, AKA "TOAST"

(ZZ Top's Frank Beard, Billy Idol's Brian Tichy, Velvet Revolver's Matt Sorum)

Always start with the kick drum. Make sure that sucker isn't going to move when you put your foot into it. Also, I like to get my hardware in place and the drums up as soon as possible so that the soundman can start miking the kit.

Always watch your gear. I've had in-ears stolen before, and that's not cool. Keep your valuables hidden or put away. Cymbals can always go on last. Check for cracks from the night before. Keep them shining, if that's what you like.

Properly mark everything. Most new hardware comes with memory-locks—use them. From the cymbal stands to the tom legs to the kick pedal, the more you mark, the less you have to think about. I try not to use a Sharpie on the carpet. Most drummers will change something on the road, and if you have a Sharpie mark it won't go away. Gaffer's tape is your best friend.

As far as tuning a drum, if you don't know how by now, I suggest you learn fast. When you're doing a line check for your sound, try to be precise—let the toms ring out until you hit it again—don't sit there and beat the bajesus out of it. The less that you irritate your sound guys, the



better.

Make sure you have all your stage goodies before you hit the stage—water, towels, tape, set list—whatever you need to be as comfortable as possible. Keep your routines the same.

Be confident, and don't panic if something breaks. Always have a backup of everything within reach. Never put your backups on the truck, keep them close by. Just when you think it's not going to break, it will. *Always* be prepared.

## JOHN "MAGEE" MCGARRY

(Aerosmith's Joey Kramer, Dream Theater's Mike Portnoy, RHCP's Chad Smith)

When it comes to setting up my drummer's kit, I try to get into his mindset.

Obviously the more you work with a drummer, the better you are at knowing his setup and his feel for the kit. I try to think like he would. You almost have to become a mind reader—and *definitely* a lip reader. I've been working with Joey for over four years now, and I would say I have a good feel for his kit.

When first working with a drummer, it's best to have him sit down at the kit and set it up with you, or come in after you've made an attempt and re-position it. And if you can do it on a carpet or your touring riser, it's even better. Once it's set, a tech's best bet is spiking the legs of the stands and drums with gaffer's tape. I like to use black tape, since our riser is currently a black carpet and it blends in better.

I have the advantage of using something I call "Super Shoes," which are little plastic horseshoe-shaped pieces that I screw right into the riser around all the stand legs and drum legs. They're a result of a collaboration between me and two carpenters on our tour. Not only do they act as a template, but they hold the drums and stands in place.

As far as stands go, an old trick is taking a Sharpie marker and just drawing little lines on the cymbal stands and booms so you know the angles and heights of everything. I personally measure all the stands



and drums and have them written down. For instance, off the top of my head, I know Joey's snare drum is 26½" from the floor once it's in the basket.

Drums are sensitive to their environment—hot, cold, indoor, outdoor—and that all comes into play with the sound of a kit. It's also good to have a monitor mixer who knows the sounds you're looking for. When it comes time to getting drum sounds, an advantage I have is using a mixer so I can control levels of what Joey hears during the show. I sit off to his left behind Joe Perry's amps. It makes Joey more comfortable to know I'm there watching him if anything goes wrong. I know what levels to boost during which songs, and by giving him a good mix it actually makes him feel more inspired to play. (Those are Joey's words, not mine!)

Other than that, I just keep up on kit maintenance by cleaning the cymbals daily, knowing when to change heads, and always having drinks and towels ready.

## MIKE COLON

(Maroon 5's Matt Flynn, Prince's Cora Coleman, Bad Religion's Brooks Wackerman)



Matt is a really hard hitter with a unique style that differs from any drummer I've worked with before. He sits high, and the kit is very blown out. There's almost no slack remaining on his cymbal stand extensions, so I have to use weights or sand bags at the base of the legs. Not one stand is a boom, and they all remain straight up so they pivot easily. The left side of his kit is relatively tight, but it tends to loosen as it circles around, so Matt has to completely throw his right arm up and out to hit the far right cymbal.

Matt likes to feel the bellow and action of the drum, so where I'd normally match up the top and bottom heads, for him I raise the bottom tuning and drop the top. During live performances I switch his Click Station BPMs toward the end of every song, so the transitions are easily triggered into the next track, set up for him to go. There are selective times during the live set that I'll start it on the down beat of the previous song's end, so he goes right into the next song smoothly.

I always have sticks in front of me, ready to go, since he breaks so many. Or if he doesn't like the feel of one, he'll just throw it. At that time, I'll place a stick in whichever empty hand he reaches back. It's all anticipation and trust. Matt requires a lot of attention, so my eyes are fixed on him. And learning to read his lips during a show is essential.

Matt also likes his snare to crack, and every venue is different, so I keep anything from Moon Gel to toilet paper and gaffer's tape accessible when perfecting his drum sounds. It all varies—acoustic, full live, or studio. Sometimes a wallet or a pack of cigarettes on the snare will complete the sound I'm looking for.

See Magee's sidebar "Staying Healthy On The Road" on page 104

## STEVE "STEEVO" MORRISON

(Tommy Lee, Ginger Fish)

A few things that have helped me out with setting up include memory locks, integrated mic stands, and Lug Locks. I'm currently working with Ginger Fish, and his kit needs to be exactly the same every night, within an eighth of an inch. I'm able to set it up quickly and efficiently with memory locks at every position (rack system, cymbal arms, etc.). In addition, incorporating the mic stands into the rack hardware makes it that much easier for our audio engineer.

Lastly, the use of Lug Locks on toms and snares is invaluable when dealing with a heavy hitter like Tommy or Ginger. The worst thing that can happen is a tom or snare falling out of tune in the middle of a gig! Having Lug Locks prevents this from happening.



## DRUM TECHS

### ARTIE SMITH

(Bruce Springsteen's Max Weinberg, Steve Jordan, Jim Keltner)



The best advice I can offer is to have a photographic memory of your client's setup and know it like it's your own. Nowadays all the high-tech guys have their laptops and digital cameras. I've been doing it for so long, I still like to use my fuzzy memory.

With Jordan, his setup is small, and I have him ready in less than ten minutes. I use an old Ampeg SVT 8x10 cabinet case and leave all the stands—even the throne—intact, so that saves a tremendous amount of time as far as hardware. Yamaha didn't have memory locks, so I would mark and color-code the hardware: left crash = LC, right crash = RC. You can also use white tape with a colored Sharpie. And if it's a really big setup, you can use the number system.

For Max I use DW memory locks, and then I just tweak maybe  $\frac{1}{2}$ " if the kit is going to be on a plush carpet. For my own rentals, I don't like to mark up the kit because so many different guys are using it.

Back in the day, like with Steve Ferrone, one of the best inventions was the original Pearl Porcaro/Jamison rack. That would *always* simplify the setup. I would just set up the four legs: Match the number with the color and it was done.

The key is to have the drums set up so that they can be played without ever having to look at them—especially studio dates that require reading charts. Like I said, *know* the setup.

### JIMMY ROBINSON

(Ricky Martin's Waldo Madera, Kenny Aronoff, Dave Weckl, Steve Gadd, Vinnie Colaiuta, Ringo Starr, managed Drum Paradise for nine years)



I think the main thing I've learned about touring setups over the years is organization. Prepare the kit and cases before leaving rehearsals. Label the kit, hardware, riser, and cases. Make sure you have backups and spares for any possible situation. You can't get that snare head in Moscow or Madrid. I carry everything from Band-Aids to screws, heads, cymbals, spare hardware, felts, and wire.

As far as the gig, you have to be ready for the controlled chaos at the end of the show. They can't bring down the lighting trusses until backline is off the stage. Everyone wants to get his or her job done after a long day, and that means speed. But without a system, things get lost and broken. Being organized means you're in control of the kit and the stagehands you use. I never let anyone have a go at the kit or the cases without my supervision.

The more it's labeled, the less you have to think, which gives you the speed. Even if I've been on the road with a kit for a year, I maintain the labels.

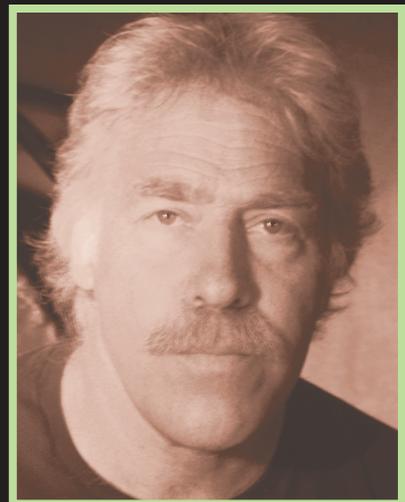
### JEFF OCHELTREE

(Vital Information's Steve Smith, Billy Cobham, Tool's Danny Carey, John Bonham)

I have a great workbox that has many drawers and compartments. When I'm on the road or studio, I can open up the drawer that has, for example, Steve Smith hardware parts or the heads he uses. Another drawer will have Khari Parker's Yamaha parts, heads, etc. I have divider packets for parts from almost every drum company. I'm covered as far as repairs, because I have a complete tool chest. I'm able to meet any needs in the studio or on the road. Of course this workbox weighs 350 pounds, so getting it around can present a problem when not on tour. So I have a miniature setup in a bag that makes it easier for one-offs on the plane or around town.

My workbox is filled with all the necessary various Shure mics and Sennheiser 421s. This way I can mike up any kit at any time in any venue and meet the needs of any drummer's sounds. I don't have my focus on only one drummer or musical style, but rather *all* drummers and styles.

I also have a heat gun ready to take a dent out of a head that still sounds good. And I'm ready for multiple bass drum setups with a variety of my Old School heads, so that an 18" bass drum is as dynamic as a 22", 24", or the occasional 26".



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## STAYING HEALTHY ON THE ROAD A STAR DRUMTECH CHANGES HIS LIFE

by John "Magee" McGarry

**T**wo years ago I was tipping the scale at 350 pounds. I was basically a walking time bomb. I knew I needed to do something about my weight, but I never did. Then one night during a show, Joey Kramer broke a beater on his kick pedal, and I was so big that I couldn't get in there to fix it. Not only was it embarrassing, it was one of the many wakeup calls I needed to try to get healthy.

I started working out on tour at hotel gyms. I lost some weight, but I still wasn't eating correctly. When the leg of that tour ended, I went home and joined a gym (ClubEx Fitness), and they put me on a program called Nutritionalysis. The program involves eating five to six times a day, every three to four hours, but smaller portions of carbs, proteins, and fats—the body needs these things, but in the right amounts. And I can't emphasize enough the importance of drinking plenty of water.

So with that and hitting the gym six days a week—weights five days and cardio six—I started seeing results after the twelve-week program. I've since adapted to that lifestyle.

Now, I won't lie, it's hard to eat healthy on the road. But I've set goals for myself, and I have a strong determination to maintain a healthy weight. I gave up soda a year and half ago. (Caffeine is a roadie's best friend, and that was the hardest thing I had to quit.) And I basically cut all alcohol out of my life.

My basic day on the road consists of waking up early (sometimes 5:00 A.M.), eating fruit or a protein bar, and then working out. Breakfast is the most important meal, so never skip it. Most hotels have some type of gym; if not I'll run the streets of the city we're in (typically for forty minutes). On those days I do situps and pushups as well. You can do them anywhere, and there should be no excuse *not* to.

Here's a typical gym/workout day on the road: Wake up early

**"I WAS SO BIG IT WAS EMBARRASSING. IT WAS ONE OF THE MANY WAKEUP CALLS I NEEDED TO TRY TO GET HEALTHY."**

before my call time for work, and eat breakfast. Take my multi-vitamins and then head to the gym or the streets. Stretch and do abs and pushups (usually 150 ab crunches and fifty to seventy five pushups). Then I hit the weights and, depending on the body part, I do about twelve sets for each. I typically do two body parts a day, like back and biceps or chest and triceps.

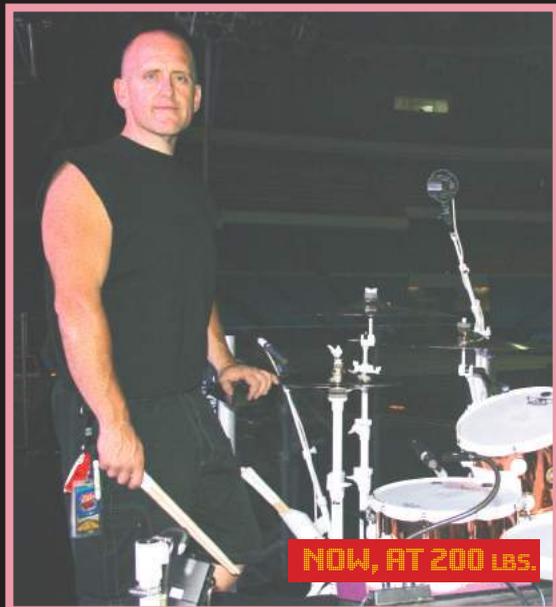
After the weights, it's time for cardio (everyone's favorite). If it's a good gym, I try to switch it up from day to day to prevent boredom. I'll do the treadmill for a minimum of forty minutes—I'll walk, run, incline walk, and do interval sprinting—or I'll do an elliptical trainer, which is a great change from the pounding of running. Then when I'm done, I stretch and it's shower time.

By then it's time for work and time to eat again. (Protein or whey shakes are a great mid-morning snack.) As far as eating goes, we all know what's good for us and what's not. It's making the right decisions on the road that helps you out. You can *never* go wrong with fruits and vegetables, salads, or grilled chicken or fish. I try to stay away from fried and fatty foods. It's been a year and half now, and I have gone from 350 to 200 pounds.

So the bottom line is, eat healthy (every three to four hours) and work out hard. Don't just go through the motions, make each one count, and be patient. You should see results you're happy with.



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# Handy Helpers

## Gadgets And Gear That Can Make Your Life Easier

**T**here's no getting around it: We drummers are mechanics almost as much as we are musicians. We constantly have to load in, set up, break down, and load out a ton of gear—hopefully with a little time devoted to actually *playing* that gear somewhere in the middle. So we're always on the lookout for anything that can make the non-playing part easier—which of course makes the playing part more fun.

With that in mind, we here at *MD* thought that our special focus on setting up would present the perfect excuse to take a look at products that can help you streamline, accelerate, lighten up, or otherwise improve your set-up/breakdown situation. So check 'em out, and take it easier.

## Rock N Roller Multi Cart

When it comes to loading drums into a gig, getting there is definitely *not* half the fun. In fact, the hardest part of any drumkit set-up is usually schlepping the gear out of your vehicle and into the venue. For that job, a drummer's best friend might be the Rock N Roller. It's a highly versatile cart that can be used as a four-wheel furniture or high-stacker dolly, or as a two-wheel hand-truck. It can extend to hold lots of gear, yet it can be collapsed small enough to be checked as airline luggage. It features large folding "handles" that can be used as sides to help contain tall loads (in dolly mode) or as the extended bottom of the hand-truck configuration. When used in the latter manner, the long handle can easily support a stack of drums with the bass drum on the bottom. Try *that* on a regular hand truck with a 10"-deep support ledge. [www.danabgoods.com](http://www.danabgoods.com)



One or more Rock N Roller carts can get your gear into and out of a gig quickly, with a minimum of back strain on your part.



## Drum Rugs

A great way to speed set-ups is to have the position of every stand leg and bass drum spur clearly marked. It's also nice if these items don't slide during playing. To this end, every drummer should have his or her own drum rug. This can be a piece of scrap carpet or a commercial product designed specifically for drummers. LT Lug Lock ([www.luglock.com](http://www.luglock.com)) and Cannon Percussion ([www.universalpercussion.com](http://www.universalpercussion.com)) both offer lightweight and durable drum rugs with built-in bass drum barriers.

Drum rugs like this one from L.T. Lug Lock keep gear from sliding, and also give you a surface on which to mark the position of that gear.

## Lightweight Stands

One of the best ways to make set-ups and breakdowns easier is to lighten the load when it comes to drum hardware. Lightweight stands can often do everything that's required for standard gigging purposes. You can get lightweight but still high-tech cymbal, snare, and hi-hat stands from Drum Workshop ([www.dwdrums.com](http://www.dwdrums.com)), Gibraltar ([www.gibraltarhardware.com](http://www.gibraltarhardware.com)), Ludwig ([www.ludwig-drums.com](http://www.ludwig-drums.com)), and several other manufacturers.

Lightweight stands like DW's 6000 series are easy to carry, and they offer professional features.



Standfirm leather straps (left) and Set-Fast plastic and steel anchors can each mark and secure the positions of your gear.



## Drum Anchoring Devices

It's easy to mark the position of legs and spurs on your rug with a marker or with small pieces of tape. But you might want to employ some new devices that not only mark those positions, but also prevent the gear from moving out of them.

StandFirm Straps ([www.standfirm.info](http://www.standfirm.info)) combine leather straps with hook-and-loop fastener strips to grip your rug on one side and wrap around your stand feet and bass drum spurs on the other. Set-Fast Drumset Anchors ([www.set-fast.com](http://www.set-fast.com)) consist of a steel disk (for bass drum spurs) and a three-walled plastic backstop (for stand feet), which are also backed with hook-and-loop fastener strips to secure them to your rug. Both of these products can remain attached to the rug for transport.

## Multi-Purpose Stands

If you do choose to employ heavy-duty stands, put that heaviness to work doing *multiple* duty. Many manufacturers now offer combination stands that can hold more than one cymbal, or a drum and a cymbal, or cymbals and percussion, or...well, you get the idea.



Pearl's B2000 cymbal boom is capable of supporting a variety of cymbals and percussion items through the use of add-on mounts.



## Cymbal Stackers

Why use two cymbal stands when you can put two cymbals on one stand? Several of the major hardware manufacturers offer cymbal stackers, most of which work only with their own cymbal stands. But a simple and easy-to-use model that will fit virtually *any* stand is the Duplicate X Cymbal Adapter ([www.duplicatex.com](http://www.duplicatex.com)). It screws directly onto the threads of the tilter below, with no additional components required. Single, double, and even triple-tilting models are available to permit positioning flexibility. The Adapters are machined in the USA from aircraft aluminum and steel for durability and precision.



The Duplicate X Cymbal Adapter conveniently "stacks" a second cymbal on virtually any modern cymbal stand.

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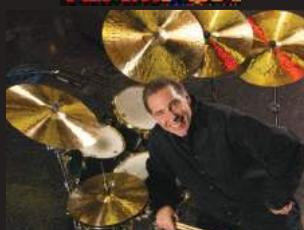
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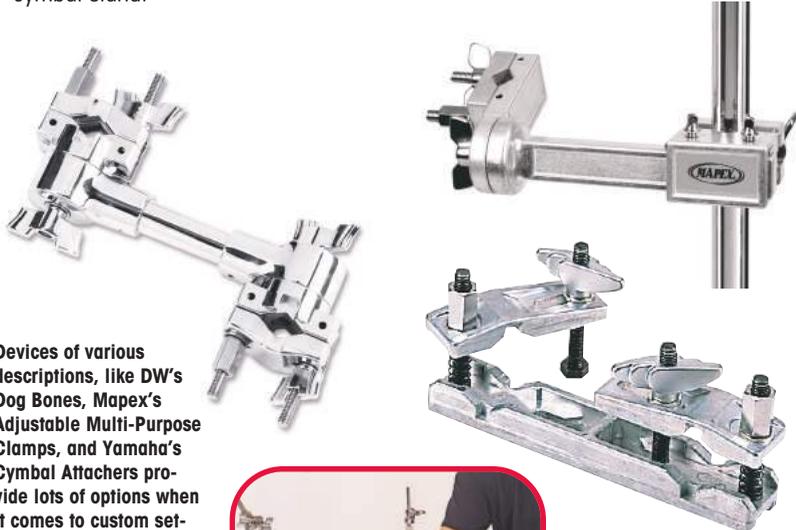
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# Multi-Clamps And Connectors

Where would the modern drumming world be without multi-clamps? These nifty devices were introduced in the 1980s, and they've multiplied and evolved over the years to offer just about every variation imaginable. Multi-clamps let you build your own multi-purpose constructions, attaching drums, cymbals, and percussion items to cymbal and drum stands. ([www.mapexdrums.com](http://www.mapexdrums.com), [www.yamahadrums.com](http://www.yamahadrums.com))

Taking the concept even further, Gibraltar's Ultra-Adjust Arm lets you secure heavier items to each other, like connecting a legless hi-hat or a legless snare stand to a nearby cymbal stand.



Devices of various descriptions, like DW's Dog Bones, Mapex's Adjustable Multi-Purpose Clamps, and Yamaha's Cymbal Attachments provide lots of options when it comes to custom set-ups.



Gibraltar's Ultra-Adjust extension arm can connect legless hi-hats and other stands to provide extra support.

# Drum Racks

Another way to lighten the load—particularly with larger kits—is to use a drum rack instead of multiple drum and cymbal stands with their heavy double-braced tripods. Pearl ([www.pearldrums.com](http://www.pearldrums.com)) created the modern-day drum rack with help from studio legend Jeff Porcaro, and their square-tubed model is still very popular. Gibraltar offers an extensive line of racks and rack components based on a tubular steel design. Pacific ([www.pacificdrums.com](http://www.pacificdrums.com)), Peace ([www.peacedrum.com](http://www.peacedrum.com)), and Tama ([www.tama.com](http://www.tama.com)) also offer rack systems.



Pearl's square-tubed rack and Gibraltar's cylindrical-tubed version are variations on the same theme: Do away with tripod bases!

"It's all about the music. For me, that's truly what I live for. Just music constantly. Always listening to, writing, or playing music. That's definitely me."

**TOMMY LEE**  
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## Carbon-Fiber Drum Racks And Components



Carbon-fiber drum racks, such as this SpaceRack from Monolith Composites, use high-tech to create low weight.

Taking the rack concept a major step further towards weight reduction, carbon-fiber drum racks from Monolith Composite ([www.monolithdrums.com](http://www.monolithdrums.com)) and Carbonlite ([www.carbonlite.com](http://www.carbonlite.com)) feature ultra-light legs and horizontal tubes designed to work in conjunction with Gibraltar and other generic rack clamps. The tubes are about  $\frac{1}{3}$  more expensive than steel, but they're about five times lighter. You do the math.

Carbonlite also makes cymbal boom arms that feature  $\frac{1}{2}$ "-diameter, gloss-black carbon-fiber rods tipped with die-cast metal ratchet-style cymbal filters. The arms can be used as part of a complete boom assembly, or can replace existing  $\frac{1}{2}$ "-diameter steel boom arms from other manufacturers. Either way, they're significantly lighter than comparable steel arms. Carbonlite boom arms are available in 11"- and 17"-long versions, with or without a  $\frac{3}{4}$ "-diameter steel base tube (to complete the boom arm assembly).



If you use lots of cymbal booms, replacing their steel arms with carbon-fiber models from Carbonlite can dramatically reduce their weight.

## The WingKey

No matter what sort of hardware you employ, setting it up is bound to involve tightening and loosening lots of wing nuts, and probably a few hex nuts as well. To make this job *much* easier, get a WingKey ([www.wingkey.net](http://www.wingkey.net)). This machined-steel tool combines a standard drumkey, a  $\frac{1}{2}$ " hex wrench (for conga lugs, multi-clamp nuts, and drum-throne backrest brackets), and two sizes of wingnut grippers. Those grippers are super for really securing the wingnuts on percussion mounts, hi-hat clutches, drum hardware, and the various devices that attach everything to everything else on kits these days. No more cowbells slipping off their rods, or cymbal stand sections collapsing during playing. (And no more broken thumbnails or scraped knuckles during set-ups, either.)



The WingKey is a do-it-all tool that can contribute to faster and more efficient set-ups.



Barry Kerch of Shinedown

Photo by Neil Zlozower



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# The Hard Knocks Of Hardware

## Organizing For Smooth Set-Ups And Breakdowns

by Brian Robey

**H**ave you ever left a gig and realized that you forgot a drum or cymbal stand? Have you ever lost a wingnut or a cymbal felt and had no replacements? Have you ever forgotten your drum throne and had to use a folding chair?

If you have, you need to reconsider your set-up and breakdown routine. With a little forethought you'll find that it's possible to stay organized even amidst the most frantic shows with a dozen bands' worth of equipment scattered backstage. This article offers some tips to help you get and stay organized, accelerate your set-ups and breakdowns, and be taken seriously from the moment you arrive at a gig.

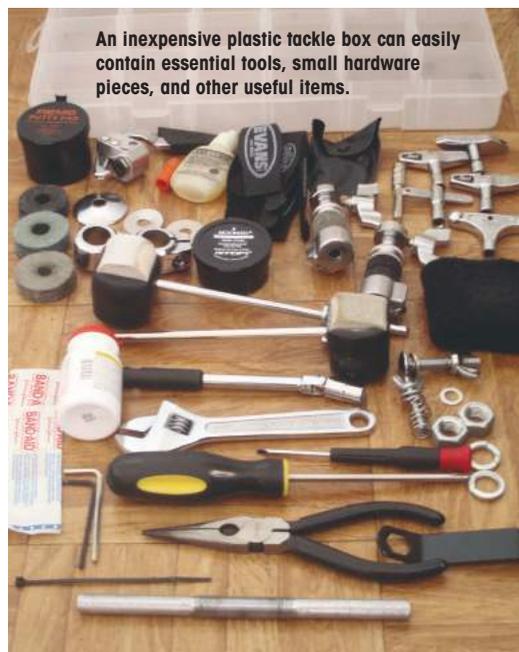
### A Place For Everything

First, a word about drum cases: Every gigging drummer should have them to protect and transport his or her drums. They're the best investment you can make to help protect your precious percussive cargo. And those cases should be clearly marked with plenty of I.D. information. Stickers and labels won't always stick to polyethylene plastic or vulcanized fiber cases; you may need to use spray paint and stencils, or get creative with a Magic Marker. Also, since black bags and cases can easily get mixed up on multi-band shows, consider buying colored cases that will stand out and help you locate them in a crowd.

Having a cymbal case or bag is the best way to keep all your cymbals together and protected. When you're buying a cymbal bag, purchase one with individual pockets for the cymbals. These keep cymbals from rubbing together and getting scratched.

If you have a lot of hardware to manage, you must find a way to containerize it. Throwing loose hardware into the back of a van, and then shuttling it into and out of a gig is tedious and time-consuming. There are all sorts of hardware bags and cases on the market, many of which feature wheels for easy portability. If you're short on cash, large Rubbermaid Roughneck bins have more storage capacity than many hardware cases, cost between \$35 and \$50, and are available at most discount home-improvement stores. A Roughneck container I've been using for years has held up just as well as my top-of-the-line drum and cymbal cases, yet it cost much less.

The easiest way to keep small hardware items organized is to get a small plastic tackle box, which is available from any discount or sporting goods store for around \$5. My tackle box contains a hi-hat clutch, a bass drum beater, four extra cymbal felts, two cymbal stand washers, a wing nut, extra tension rods, small replacement bolts for bass drum pedals and memory

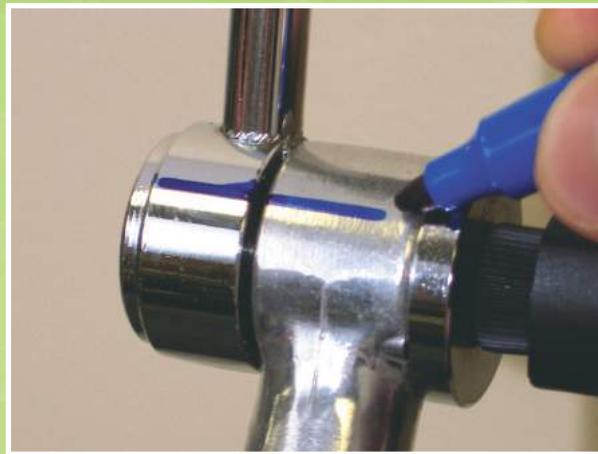


An inexpensive plastic tackle box can easily contain essential tools, small hardware pieces, and other useful items.

locks, various muffling devices, a wrench, a pair of pliers, vice grips, a screwdriver, five drumkeys, spare memory locks, lug grease, Allen wrenches, extra springs, band-aids, and even a Remo Putty Pad. Together these items weigh seven pounds. Since I've been carrying my tackle box I haven't misplaced

### SEVEN TIPS FOR EASY SET-UPS AND BREAKDOWNS

1. Have everything cased or bagged.
2. Have enough cases or bags to make each one easy to handle.
3. Store small but essential items in a tackle box for quick access.
4. Mark all stands for height and angle adjustments.
5. Spike your drum rug for stand positions.
6. Set up and break down systematically, using the same routine every time.
7. Know exactly how to load your vehicle, and have a diagram as a reminder.



A line drawn across the filter section of a boom will mark the boom's angle position. Ditto for a cymbal filter.

any tools or small hardware items. I've also been able to help other drummers who have misplaced some of those tiny but essential items.

### Space...The Final Frontier

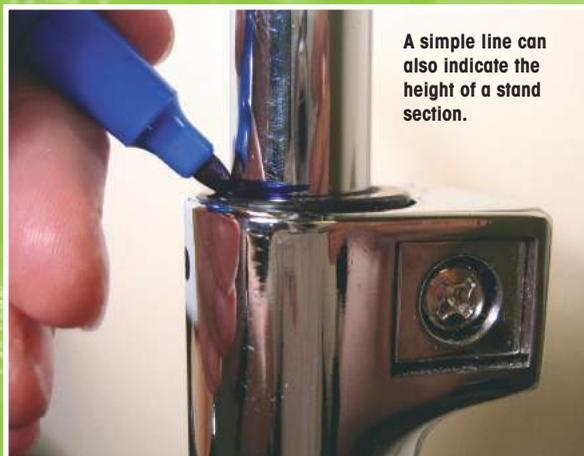
Setting up and breaking down according to a set routine will help you to never overlook a stand or cymbal—but only if you keep your gear in the same general area while you work with it. Unfortunately, in some situations you can't set up or break down right where you'll be playing; you have to do it offstage. And many club venues have little or no wing space or "staging area." In these situations, you need to find an area that you can take all your equipment to with enough space to set up and break down in. In some cases, the only option is to do it outside. Utilize members of your band to help keep track of equipment as you move it in and out. If you break down outside, make sure two people are watching your equipment. If there's no room within the venue to store your cases while you're performing, keep them locked in your vehicle.

Even if you have lots of space in which to set up, don't start spreading your gear all across the venue. Not only do you risk losing your equipment or having it get damaged, you risk having it create a poor image of you as a musician. When you're on a gig, people are watching you from the moment you enter the venue. This includes during set-up and breakdown. Working in an organized manner tells everyone that you're a professional. Scattering your equipment around like dirty laundry tells everyone that you're an amateur—no matter how good your playing might be.

### Gentle Reminders

The easiest way to set up in a hurry is not to have to remember how things go together in order to create the perfect arrangement. The way to ensure that is to mark your hardware. Memory locks are great, but if you like to collapse your stands for pack-up, memory locks get in the way. As an alternative, use a permanent marker to mark the height of each stand section. For angles, mark a line across the tilting section of the stand. On boom stands, mark a line showing both the angle of the boom and how far it is extended. Permanent marker comes off with rubbing alcohol should you decide to change any of these settings.

If you're willing to take things a step further, a drum rack is a great way to increase the speed and ease of your set-up routine, reduce weight, and keep your setup consistent. Racks are designed



Using stick-on letters and numbers can speed the set-up of rack systems and the components they hold.

to hold the essential parts of your stands while eliminating their double-braced tripod bases. This can reduce the overall weight of your hardware from hundreds of pounds down to just forty or fifty.

A good organizational system is to label each piece of your rack using a Dymo label-maker (the kind that you squeeze to put letters and numbers into a strip of plastic tape) or the small vinyl letters and numbers available at any hardware store. Place a number on each clamp and corresponding stand, and use letters to label the segments of the rack. Putting the rack and hardware together

is then just a matter of matching up the numbers and letters.

It's also a good idea to mark the position of where every pedal, stand foot, and drum leg or spur goes on the floor. This can be done easily by marking your drum rug, in a technique known as "spiking." Permanent marks can be made with a Magic Marker; temporary positions can be indicated with strips of tape.

#### When The Music's Over

When you're breaking down your kit, do it systematically, by category. Follow the

same routine each time you pack up, right down to whether you move from right to left or from left to right. This will keep you from skipping a piece of gear and leaving it behind.

Since cymbals are almost always in the way if you begin packing up your drums first, start your breakdown at the top. And as you remove each cymbal, make sure you return the felt and refasten the wingnut immediately. This prevents the loss of those small items.

Remove the cymbals from the kit in order, from the largest to the smallest. Put the ride cymbal into the bag or case first, with the bell facing down, then stack each successive cymbal inside the ride. (The size and thickness of the ride will let it withstand the weight of your thinner, smaller cymbals.) If you have a China cymbal, it should be the last crash you put in your bag. This will help prevent it from cracking due to the weight of heavier cymbals on top of it. Finish the bagging-up with the hi-hat cymbals and any splash cymbals. Putting a thin cymbal felt in between each cymbal will prevent scratching and cracking of the cymbals.

Here's an important note: Don't overload a cymbal bag or case. If you have a lot of cymbals, or if you have particularly large and heavy cymbals, split the load into two or more bags. This will avoid damage to cymbals, to the bags themselves, and to your carrying arm.

#### To The Drums

After all the cymbals have been removed from their stands, remove your snare drum and mounted toms from theirs. Put each in its case as soon as it comes off. Remove any hardware attached to the bass drum (like a tom mount) and place it on the floor, then pack up the bass drum.

In some situations you won't be able to bring your bags or cases right to the breakdown point. Under these circumstances, stack the drums for carrying to wherever the cases can be loaded. But get the drums into those cases as soon as possible.

#### Taking A Stand (Or Two)

After your cymbals and drums are packed up, move on to the hardware. Start with your tom/multi-use stands and hi-hat stand. These stands are usually the heaviest and should go on the bottom of your hardware-

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## SHOP TALK

bag or container in order to prevent any other hardware from being damaged. Remove the rod from your hi-hat stand and pack it securely to prevent bending. (Having a back-up hi-hat rod is a really good idea.) Next, pack up any single cymbal stands and snare drum stands, followed by your drum throne, floor tom legs, and bass drum spurs (if they come off the drum).

Once all the big stands are in, put in your bass drum pedal, your tackle box, and any miscellaneous gear that you carry with you. If you're using electronic triggers and mod-

ules in your setup, it's a good idea to put them in their own case to prevent damage.

As with cymbals, you want to avoid overloading your hardware container. If you have a lot of heavy hardware, split it up into more than one container. We've all seen bags and cases with handles broken off, wheels missing, and holes in the sides. Nine times out of ten this damage isn't the result of a faulty container, but is rather the result of the container being asked to hold much more than its reasonable weight. And besides, your back doesn't need the strain either.

### The Grand Load-Up

Having a routine for how you situate your equipment in a truck or car can save time and energy. It can also prevent the loss of drums or cymbals. Loading your gear the same way before and after every show allows you to instantly know if something is missing.

My loading routine starts with the main section of my rack, followed by my hardware case. After that, I load my bass drum, my toms and snare, the smaller section of my rack, and my cymbal case. This equipment usually fits snugly into my truck, so if there is empty space I know what to look for.

Your memory isn't always at its sharpest at 3:00 A.M. after a strenuous show, so it's a good idea to have a diagram of the proper load-up for reference. Keep the diagram in a safe spot within your vehicle.

### Final Tips

Get the phone numbers of drummers you come in contact with at every show. Not only will it help you network, but if gear gets mixed up, you can contact the other drummers and arrange an exchange.

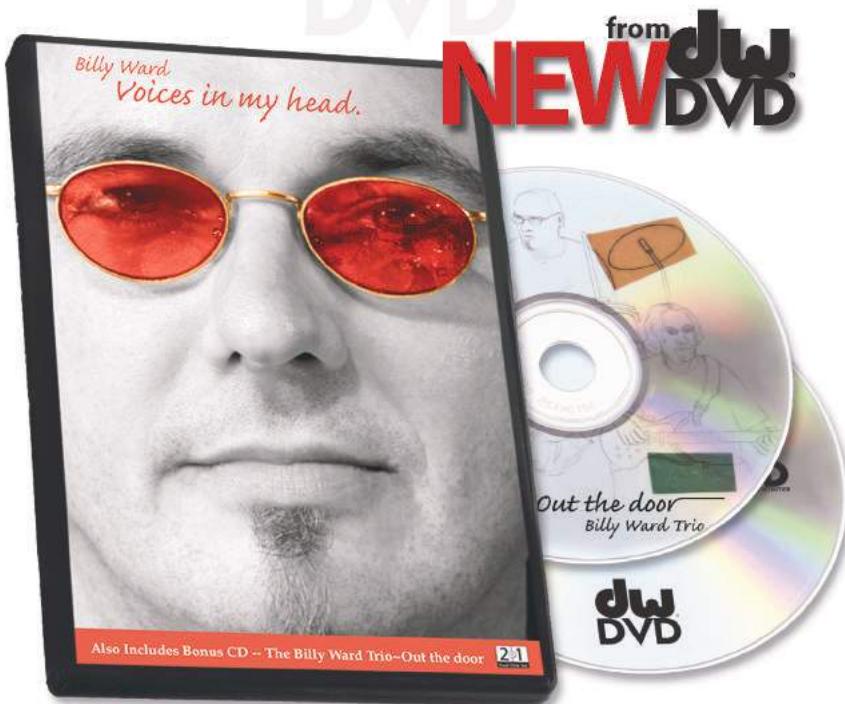
Talk to your band about having an organized set-up and breakdown routine. Your performance starts the second you get on stage, and if your band isn't fortunate enough to have roadies, that means your set-up and breakdown are part of your performance, and they should be taken just as seriously.

Practice setting up and tearing down as a band. It will save precious minutes at a show, and it can help calm the butterflies before you begin playing. Have the person with the easiest set-up help whoever has the most equipment to handle. And remember, come breakdown time, if everybody knows his or her job, and everybody does that job in an efficient manner, everybody gets home sooner.



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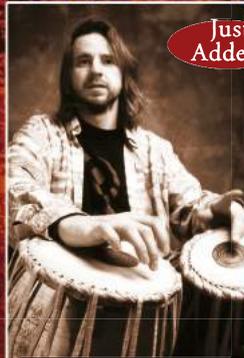
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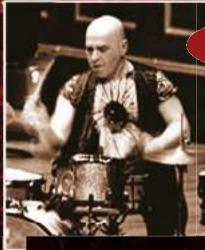
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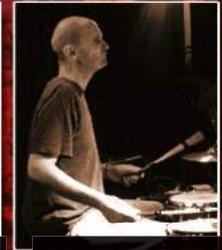
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# Designing Your Setup

## It's All Personal

Story by Billy Ward  
Photos by Paul La Raia

**F**or a percussionist, it's part of each and every gig to select and rearrange his or her gear. If there are a lot of xylophone parts, then the xylophone will be prominently positioned, while the orchestra bells that are played only once during the show will be placed farther away. This concept of selecting and positioning instruments plays a part in how I think a drumkit should be set up.

When I get a new gig, I'll first listen to the music of the artist to decide what my setup should be. For instance, if the artist is a singer/songwriter that has an acoustic sound, I might think about whether I want to place one or more of my Taos American Indian drums (my "Flintstone" kit) within the drumkit.

What about the snare drum? Will that solid brass model with the die-cast hoops and all of that "thunk" work for the music, or would it be better to use a drum with more flexible dynamics and tone? Will there be lots of shakers? (Do I need a tray to hold them?) Do I want to mount a tambourine such as when I last played with Jimmy Webb?

As for cymbal selection, it depends upon register (pitch) and dynamics (volume). If the music is loud, I won't be bringing my jazzy cymbals. Obviously, I'm not going to choose a teeny bass drum for a loud rock band either.

This time of selecting instruments is, for me, one of my greatest joys. There's always a secret hope that I'll need to have three snare drums within the same kit. Maybe I'm going to come up with a truly original, new setup. And I hope that one day I'll get a gig where I can bring my Line 6 guitar emulation products as part of my rig. (They sound great on drums—wacky stuff!)

As I said, coming up with the right setup for a project is one of my favorite, most optimistic times, as I'm filled with anticipation. Of course, it's important to not fall too much in love with your gear. I know of one drummer who got fired from a very important gig because, during soundcheck, the artist asked the drummer to use a different snare drum. Apparently, the drummer refused to even try another drum because the snare drum in question was his signature model. *Fired*. Ouch! (Maybe it's an advantage for a drummer to not have a signature snare drum. Heck, now that I think of it, I have a signature snare drum, but I don't bring it to every gig.)

### Working With The Artist

When I bring this custom-chosen kit to the rehearsal or show, I'll explain to the artist what I brought and why. After all, there's always that first time that the "boss" or band sees the kit, and the comments are sure to flow: "pretty!" or maybe, "Wow, big drums, huh?" I think it's smart to involve them in the initiation, or "get acquainted," process. I think it bodes well

for future, wide-open communication.

If I'm uncertain about my snare drum choice, I'll ask the band for their opinion—yeah, even the singer or guitarist (which is usually worth a laugh—they usually address the "look" of the kit more than the sound). But I enjoy being open to everyone's opinion.

That said, with some personalities, this can be like playing with fire. It can be risky to put your head (or drumset) on the chopping block, because sometimes you run into an artist or bandmember who wants to kick the tires of your car way too much.

Admittedly, as much as I try to develop a setup that is new and original, it usually ends up being something quite normal or traditional. You can't wear gloves on your feet and shoes on your hands, and there must be a pretty good reason why you don't see drumkits with four snare drums and no tom-toms.

### Where It All Goes

One thing that is completely personal and in fact more important than your drum and cymbal selection is *where* you place the stuff in relation to your own body and playing abilities. Setting up your drums ergonomically is a subject that is near and dear to me. In fact, it's so important that the "Make The Drumset Your Ally" chapter is one of the first things you see in my first instructional DVD, *Big Time*.

I remember, as a teenager, setting up the drums and stepping back to look at them. Then moving the second tom because it wasn't as flat as the other drums. This is great fun! The only problem is, drums are not decorative. They need to work as a drumset and they need to work with your body and its abilities. Those drum catalog pictures sure look good, but most of the drum makers I know can hardly play their way out of a paper bag. Why should we follow their lead on where to position drums? We shouldn't—simple as that!

So, what do I recommend for the placement of drums? Here are my current thoughts:

It makes no sense for a drummer who is 5'5" to play a 26" bass drum with an 11x13 tom mounted over it. Heck, I don't know if I could reach that tom, and I'm 6'2"! Like it or not, we humans have physical bodies that have to be respected, or else our bodies will get even with us when we approach the age of forty. (If you don't believe me, then you're not yet forty years old.)

My personal setup is like a three-speed transmission in a car. First gear is respectful of the throne height. My hips are parallel with my knees (or slightly higher than the knees) and the snare drum is in front of me. My hands, upon playing the drum and freezing at the point of impact, are in a position of rest. In fact, if I weren't playing the drum, my hands might be resting there.



First gear also involves having my feet in a natural position. My bass pedals and hi-hat pedal are in the same spot as my feet would normally be anyway—not too wide or narrow. As for seat height, yeah, Vinnie Colaiuta sure looked cool sitting so low way back in his Zappa days, and Trilok Gurtu was amazing making all of those sounds while almost sitting on the floor. But these guys both sit up on thrones now because pain is not fun.

In second gear, my right arm (I'm a righty) reaches forward and to the left to play the hi-hat cymbals. This is a natural motion and one that we humans have done since birth.



Now freeze that hand and stick position while it's on the hi-hat and sweep your arm to the right, moving from the hi-hat, to the rack tom, to the floor tom. (Go left if you're a lefty.)



This is where your toms should be placed. Don't worry about how it looks, just do it. You've now got one motion for your hi-hat work as well as for tom fills.

In third gear, my arm reaches straight up from second gear and out just the tiniest bit. This is where I position my cymbals, and this gear enables me to hit all of them in their ideal location for the sound that I want.



Perhaps a fourth gear (or overdrive?) would be reaching just a bit more for the bell of each cymbal—but that's it! (Check out my DVD, *Big Time*, for an in-depth discussion of this concept.)

### Kit Moods

I change my drum and cymbal choices constantly, depending on the music as well as my mood. Sometimes I'll change my kit's setup just to kick me in the butt. For example, playing a jazzy kit can be a musical vacation if you're usually playing in a metal band. Plus you might get the bonus of learning new techniques. These new things from other stylistic influences always find a way to sneak into our playing in other genres of music—and that's a really good thing!

Having different sounds and shapes can be very inspiring if you find yourself in a musical rut. Lately I've discovered that I feel more creative with fewer drums and cymbals around me. So I'm always asking myself, "Do I really need that extra cymbal, or can I get by without it?"

The single thing I *don't* mess with is my three-speed transmission. I'll continue to seek the most minimal movements within each setup I play for the rest of my life, and that's very reassuring. How can a drummer have exceptional timekeeping skills if he or she is reaching an extra inch for one sound compared to another? That's time traveling, my friends, and that's what happens sonically—the time travels, or shifts! Don't let your setup do that to you..

**Billy Ward** is an in-demand session drummer and clinician. He's worked with Carly Simon, B.B. King, Robbie Robertson, Ace Frehley, John Patitucci, Jimmy Webb, and Joan Osborne, among many others. Billy can be reached through his Web site, [www.billyward.com](http://www.billyward.com).





# Location, Location, Location

## Thoughts On Drum Positioning

by John Riley

**T**hey say that necessity is the mother of invention. Perhaps the most important moment in the history of drumming came with the invention of the bass drum pedal. Who could have imagined everything that that invention would lead to?

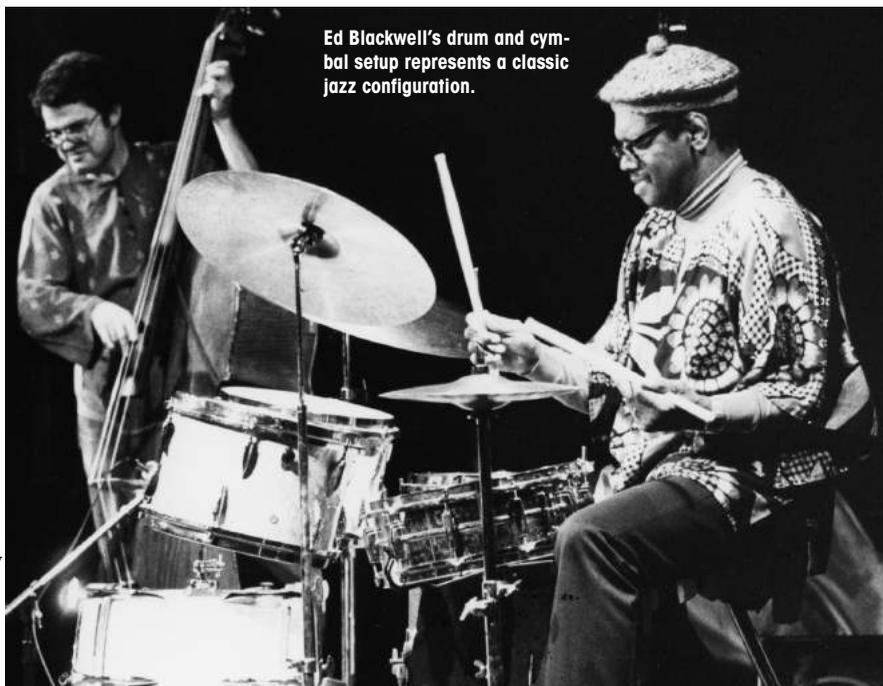
In the pre-TV, -MTV and -YouTube days, practicality was the prime driver of drum and cymbal positioning. Drummers made the most efficient instrument-placement choices possible within the limits of the hardware that was available. If you check out photos of drummers from before the mid-1940s, you may wonder why all their cymbals were set up "flat." Ed Shaughnessy reminded me that this was simply because there were no cymbal tilters in those days. Ed told me he got the idea to create a cymbal tilter after he went to see Max Roach play. He noticed that Max had filed a keyhole into his ride cymbal so that it would hang on a slant and would therefore be easier to play. Cymbal tilters aside, many older drummers chose to stay with the setups they grew up using, even after the innovations offered on more modern equipment made logical options available. Buddy Rich played his cymbals flat for his entire career.

Today we take the flexibility of modern hardware for granted. Most drummers have refined the exact position of each drum and cymbal on their kits. They "memory-lock" each stand, mark their carpet so that each component is placed exactly the same way every time, and often even wear a specific type of shoe. And there are obvious advantages to giving some thought to your setup and to the consistent arrangement of your instrument.

Even so, some drummers make unusual choices and adapt to unnatural and awkward setups. Take, for example, jazz great Paul Motian. For a period, Motian didn't even carry a stick bag to gigs, let alone drums. Paul's thinking was that he wanted a fresh musical experience every night, so he let the backline company provide the drums, the cymbals, and the sticks, brushes, and mallets.

### You Can't Always Get What You Want

As a student I had an awful time playing on a drumset other than my own. Different drum angles, tuning, seat height, and



Ed Blackwell's drum and cymbal setup represents a classic jazz configuration.



Chick Webb found places to put—and play—a wide variety of drums and percussion effects.

pedal tension really threw me. Today I play my own drums at home and at the Village Vanguard, but almost everywhere else it's either a house kit or a kit provided by a backline company. In other words, "drums du jour." Of course, I request Yamaha drums in my sizes, and I often get them. But the range and variety of drums I've been sup-

### Let's Face It

On an occasion when the great Arthur Taylor and I were discussing all things drumming, Arthur told me, "If it looks good, it probably sounds good. If it looks bad, it probably sounds bad." He also suggested that jazz drummers should set up with their chests parallel to their bass drums. While

## Varying one's set-up or tuning from time to time is a good way to feel and hear different ideas.

plied with over the years has run the gamut from exactly my setup to absurd alternatives.

On one occasion in Russia I had to play an Amati brand "kit" with a 10x28 marching bass drum. On another gig, in Egypt, I was provided with a classic Rogers kit. It was in the right sizes, but it was simply un-adjustable and un-tunable. It looked like it had been buried in the desert for forty years.

### But If You Try Sometimes...

These days I feel I can function on just about any kit. When faced with a gigantic bass drum and power toms, I have two choices: Sit at my normal height so that my feet are comfortable while my upper body is off kilter, or raise the seat so that my upper body is in the same plane as on my kit, while my feet dangle. Since my range of movement is greater—and changes in direction are more rapid—with my hands than with my feet, sitting so that my upper body is comfortable is the ticket for me. My feet seem to adjust to variations in seat height more easily than my upper body adjusts to reaching up to the drums.

You may have seen me at a Modern Drummer Festival, a PASIC event, or in a club sitting down at other drummers' kits. I always ask permission, and I always say "thank you" afterwards. I like to get a feeling for other drummers' kits because it gives me insight into how and why they sound and play the way they do. Miles Davis was a huge fan of the drums and of drummers, but he was known to leave a club before a band had played a note if the drummer's setup looked strange to him.

rock drummers might want to orient themselves toward the instrument they play the most—the hi-hat—jazz drummers should orient themselves so that the kit is laid out straight in front. When I sit oriented towards the hi-hat and then try to play the ride cymbal, I feel that either my right forearm has to reach for the cymbal or my torso must twist. With the parallel-chest position, you'll find yourself sitting left of center and that your foot will not line up square on the bass drum pedal. I am perfectly comfortable playing with my heel slightly to the left of a center-line drawn on the pedal.

### A New Angle On Things

The volume we play at and the kind of sound we're going for do lead to certain kinds of instrument positioning. When I played with John Scofield for the first time, twenty-five years ago, John looked at my setup and said, "I see you have the Gadd slant." At first I didn't know what he was referring to. Then I realized that my snare drum was slanting slightly towards me a la Steve Gadd, rather than slanting away from me in the more traditional "downhill" jazz position. My experimentation with the "uphill" position was brief, because it was contrary to a physics lesson I had with Joe Morello. But I think I was favoring that angle at that time to make unintended rimshots less frequent.

### Building A Jazz Kit Configuration

When positioning a kit, the first thing I do is set the high tom on the bass drum and then build everything around that position.



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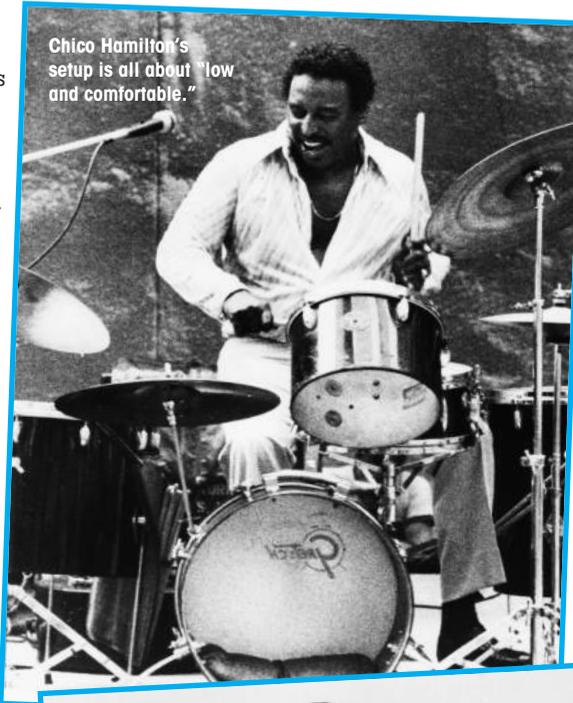
# JAZZ DRUMMERS' WORKSHOP

My overall position is most comfortable when my seat is more or less in line with my high tom, not directly behind the bass drum pedal. So that's what I suggest you do.

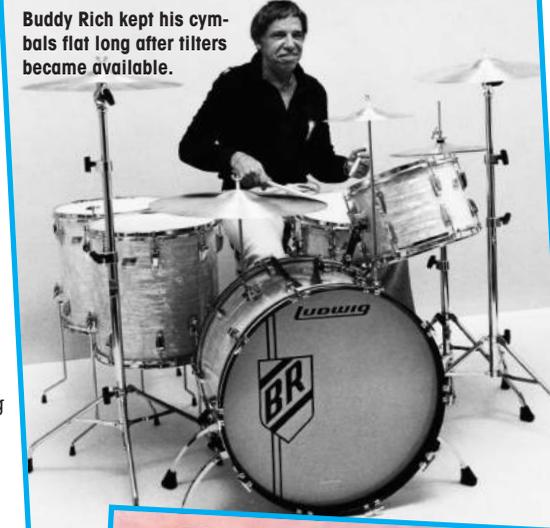
Next, position the snare drum so that, with your upper body relaxed and your forearms parallel to the floor, the tips of your sticks fall in the center of your snare drum. Gently rotate your right hand to the right, into a French or American grip position, and note where the tip of your stick is. Place the sweet spot on your ride cymbal there. Note the position of your relaxed left foot, and place the hi-hat there. Set up the rest of your kit so that you don't have to reach, stretch, or strain. Adjust your angles so that the rebounding stick works in your favor by rebounding more or less straight up and down. Avoid angles that lead to the stick rebounding away from you.

Varying one's setup or tuning from time to time is a good way to feel and hear different ideas. Practicing in front of a mirror or videotaping yourself might help you refine your setup, help you see inefficiencies or tension in your movements, or simply make you aware of "directional" repetition in your playing.

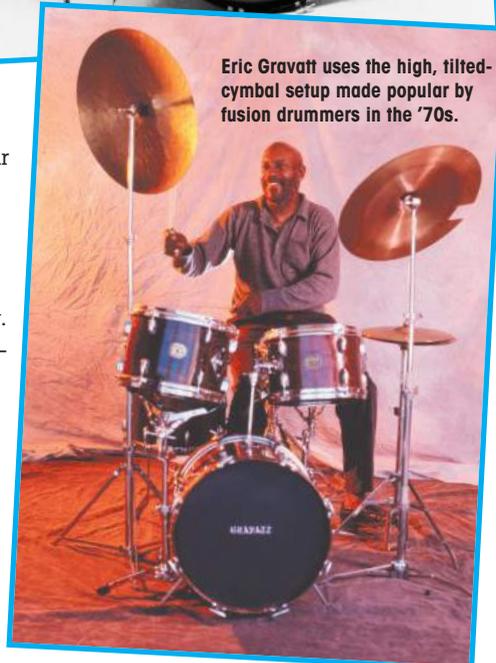
Years ago Dave Weckl told me that making audio recordings of his gigs no longer provided him enough feedback, so he switched to videotaping every gig. Some drummers have gone as far as visiting sports movement specialists and being filmed with sensors positioned at each joint like Olympic athletes, golfers, and ball players. These sensors generate stick figures that show the "coach" ways to refine the drummers' movements, as well as the placement of their instruments.



Chico Hamilton's setup is all about "low and comfortable."



Buddy Rich kept his cymbals flat long after tilters became available.



Eric Gravatt uses the high, tilted-cymbal setup made popular by fusion drummers in the '70s.



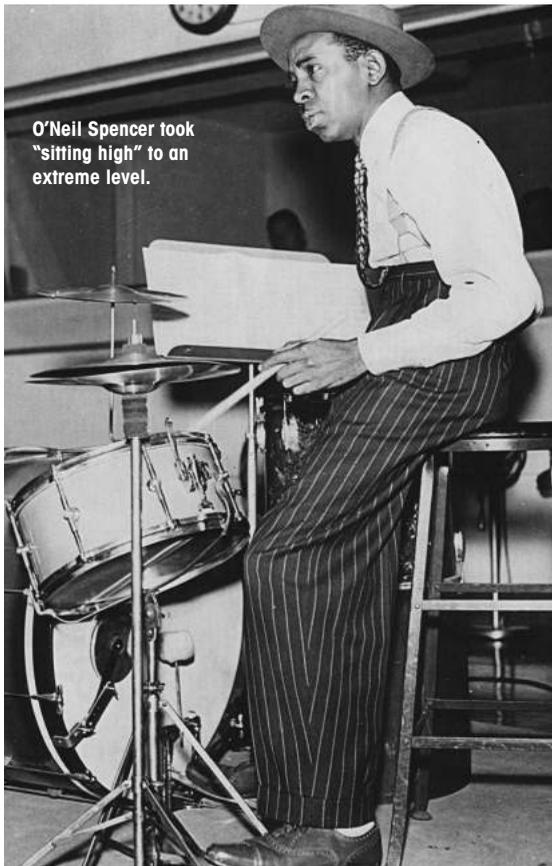
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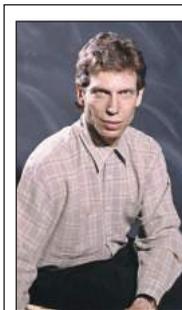
O'Neil Spencer took "sitting high" to an extreme level.

### The Way The Jazzers Do It

Let's take a look at the setups of some jazz drummers of the past and present. We'll start with what I consider to be the classic modern positioning, as used by Ed Blackwell. Compare this setup to the photos of Chick Webb, O'Neil Spencer, Buddy Rich, Chico Hamilton, and Eric Gravatt. Obviously some of these positioning choices were dictated by limitations in available hardware. Others were carefully arrived at for musical, physical, or visual reasons. Temple blocks must have been more important to Chick Webb than tom-toms. Buddy Rich stayed with flat cymbals even after tilters became available. And because their bass drums were large and their thrones had limited height adjustments, most older drummers sat higher than many players do today. (However,

many drummers find that sitting very low leads to back pain.)

Over the years, cymbal positioning went through periods of extremes. Compare the photo of Eric Gravatt to that of Buddy Rich or Chico Hamilton. Consider how and why each man arrived at his specific instrument placement. Consider the impact that playing these kits might have on your sound, fluidity, and stamina. Set up your kit like one of these men and play along with one of their recordings. You may hear different ideas or be inspired with possible refinements to your own setup. Most of all, enjoy the fantasy.



**John Riley's** career has included work with such artists as John Scofield, Woody Herman, and Stan Getz. His latest book, *The Jazz Drummer's Workshop*, was recently released by Modern Drummer Publications.



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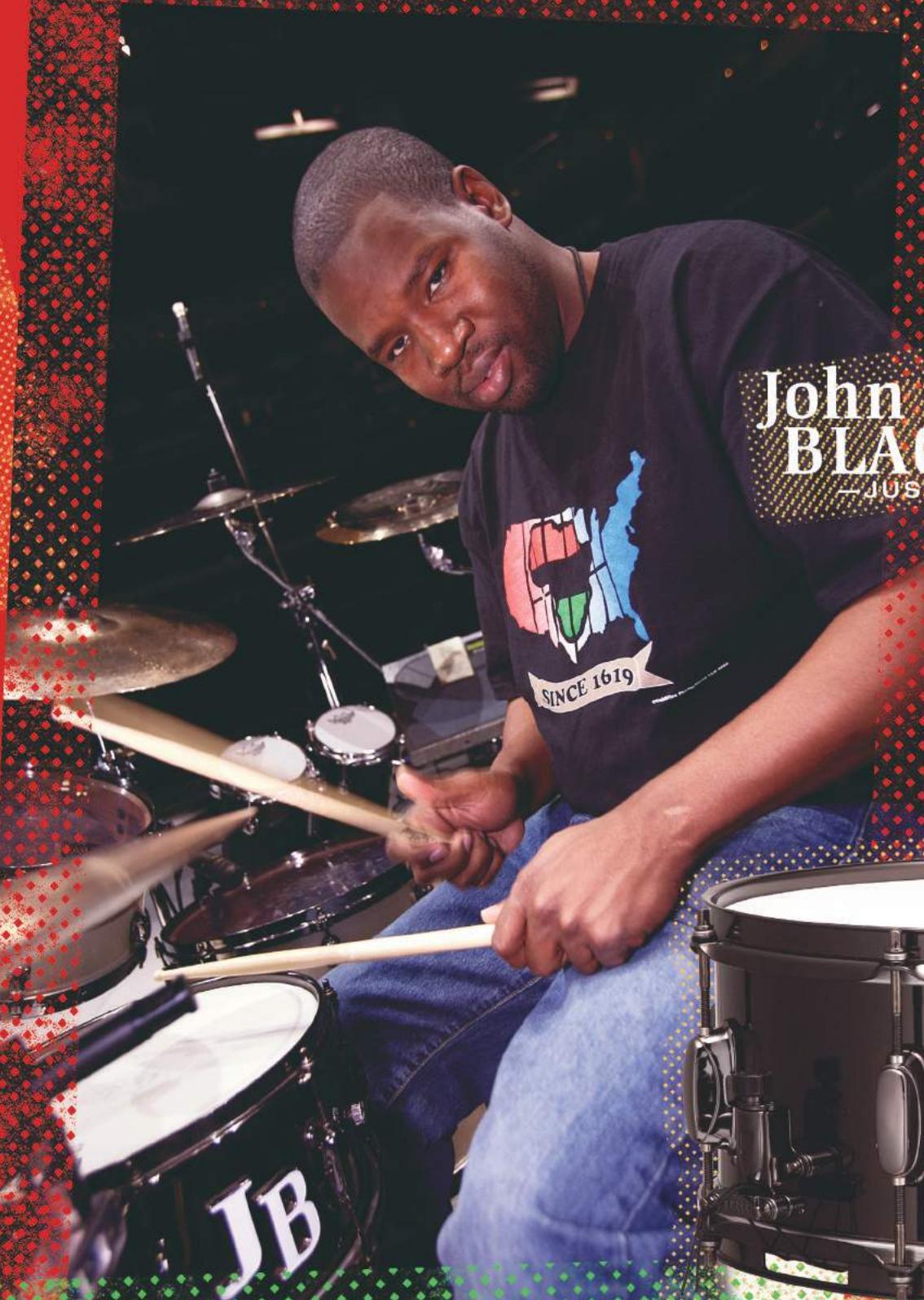
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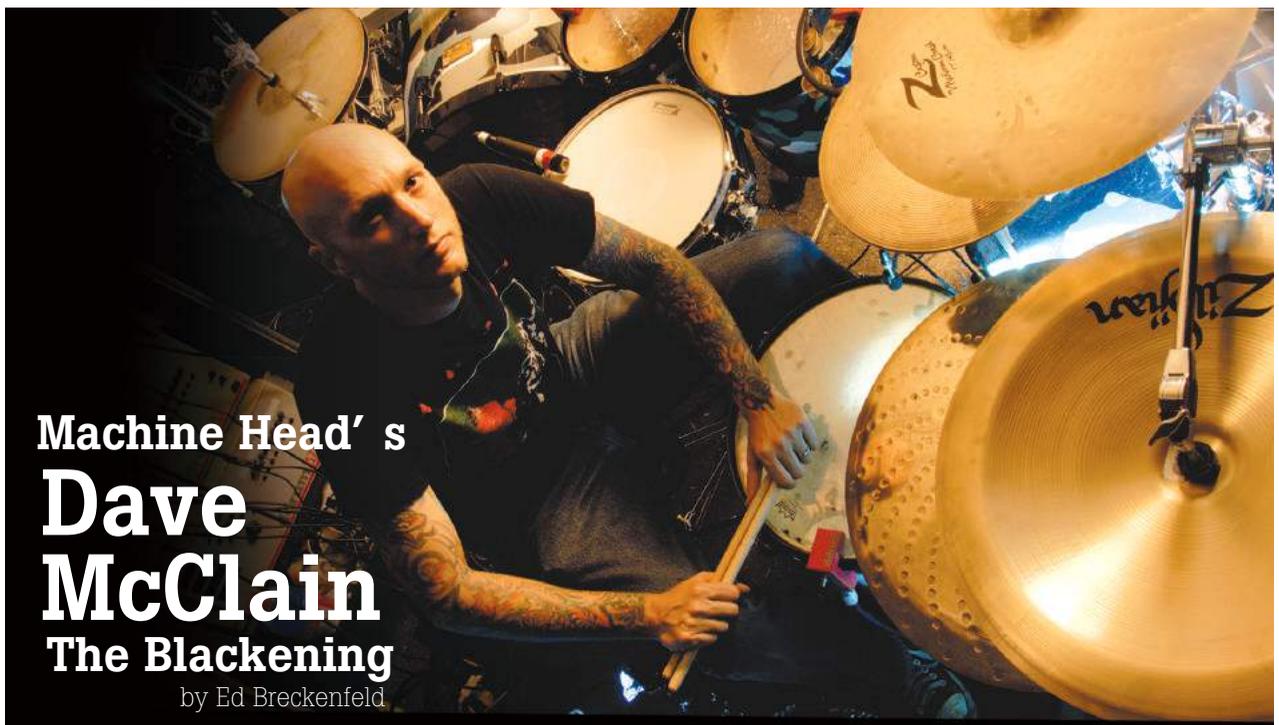
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# Machine Head's Dave McClain

## The Blackening

by Ed Breckenfeld

**MUSIC KEY**

open	○	R.C.	China
H.H.	●	Bell	×
T.T.	×	C.C.	×
S.D.	×		
F.T.	×		
B.D.1.	×	B.D.2.	Add 1
H.H.	×	T.T.	
w/foot			

**H**eads up, thrash fans! Machine Head's latest album is filled with earth-scorching vocals and ferocious guitar riffs, all propelled by the strong drumming of Dave McClain.

In-your-face double bass dominates, but McClain doesn't slather it on with reckless abandon. Instead, he finds creative ways for his double kicks to enhance the music. Here are some highlights.

### "Clenching The Fists Of Dissent"

The disc's ten-minute opening track moves through various moods and tempos. Dave's groove for the half-time chorus contrasts double bass with open space. Notice how the triplet fill at the end of bar 2 becomes the rhythmic theme in measures 3 and 4. (2:56)

Musical notation for the drum part of "Clenching The Fists Of Dissent". It shows four measures of music in 4/4 time, starting at measure 132. The notation includes double bass patterns, triplet fills, and various drum symbols (open circles for cymbals, solid circles for snare, and 'x' marks for hi-hats or toms). Measure 2 features a triplet fill that becomes a rhythmic theme in measures 3 and 4.

Later in the track, the band erupts into a frantic thrash riff. (5:49)

Musical notation for a thrash riff in 4/4 time, starting at measure 107. It features a complex double bass pattern with many sixteenth notes and eighth notes, interspersed with cymbals and snare hits.

### "Beautiful Mourning"

This four-bar chorus pattern shows McClain using double bass to spice up a section without trampling over it. The fill in the last measure is a cool touch. (1:04)

Musical notation for the drum part of "Beautiful Mourning". It shows four measures of music in 4/4 time, starting at measure 154. The notation features a consistent double bass pattern with occasional snare and cymbal accents, and a fill in the final measure.

### "Aesthetics Of Hate"

Dave mirrors this song's percussive guitar riff with his own 32nd- and 16th-note combination. The space in the second and fourth beats allows the groove to breathe. (1:49)

4  $\text{♩} = 106$

McClain switches to a 16th note-triplet kick pattern in a climatic section of this track. (3:52)

5  $\text{♩} = 110$

### "Now I Lay Thee Down"

This heavy 6/8 groove divides 16th notes into groups of three and two. Dave ends this section with some quads around the kit. (3:20)

6  $\text{♩} = 196$

### "Slanderous"

McClain's sparse beat in the half-time intro of this heavy shuffle allows the triplet guitar riff to carry the section. The double-kick flourish in measure 4 really stands out against the open groove. (0:17)

7  $\text{♩} = 146$

### "Halo"

Here's a slow, grinding groove that's loaded with 16th- and 32nd-note kicks. (1:02)

8  $\text{♩} = 76$

### "Wolves"

McClain's quarter-note snare pattern helps anchor this foot-heavy chorus groove. (1:08)

9  $\text{♩} = 81$

### "A Farewell To Arms"

Before the album's closer turns ultra-heavy, McClain delivers this compelling pattern in the chorus. The reoccurring tom figures add tonal variety to the beat. (3:37)

10  $\text{♩} = 67$

 You can contact **Ed Breckenfeld** through his Web site, [www.edbreckenfeld.com](http://www.edbreckenfeld.com).




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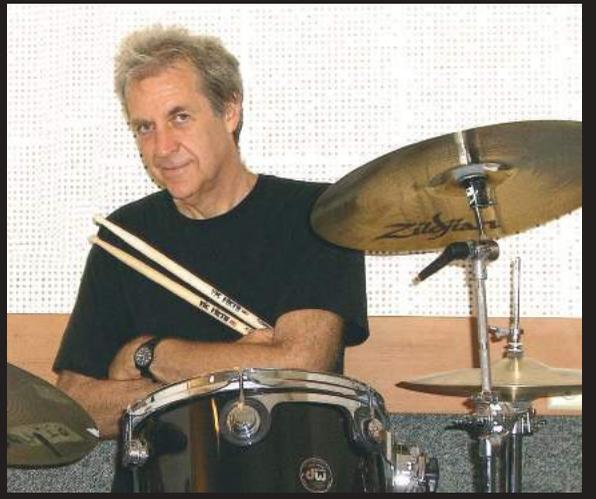
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# Elvis Costello & The Attractions'

# Pete Thomas

## Style & Analysis

by Eric Novod



### MUSIC KEY

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

Since the late '70s, the prolific Elvis Costello has created pop music infused with the sophistication of a genuine music historian. Many pop/rock players often cite Costello's twenty-plus albums as major influences. Of course, Costello's band has had an inimitable role in his success, with longtime Attractions/session drummer Pete Thomas performing on nearly every EC record.

Thomas has had a busy thirty-five-year career as a touring and session drummer. His appeal to bandleaders is based in part on his innate talent for creating very thoughtful and musical parts. He joined the Attractions when they formed in 1978 for Elvis Costello's second record, *This Year's Model*. Even though the history of the Attractions is complex, with many hiatuses and partial reunions, Costello and Thomas have remained good friends and musical collaborators. But because Costello occasionally uses a different band for his solo tours, Thomas has also had the opportunity to work with other notable artists, including Bonnie Raitt, Sheryl Crow, Los Lobos, Randy Newman, Vonda Shepard, and Elliott Smith.

Pete Thomas's drumming is a master class in drum-part composition. He rarely settles for a basic groove when something more musical and sophisticated is possible. But he never overplays or gets in the way of the melody. Some of his parts are simple and some are deceptively complex. Either way, the drum parts always develop as a song progresses. The following examples showcase a few of Thomas's most interesting musical choices with Costello and others.

### "No Action"

ELVIS COSTELLO & THE ATTRACTIONS

*This Year's Model* (1978)

On the first track of the first Attractions record, Pete rapidly changes his part. Measures 5–7 are prime examples of his compositional style: sudden floor tom additions on beat 2 of measure 5, a seven-note ride pattern on beats 3 and 4 of measure 6, and the tom and cymbal fill in the first half of measure 7. Although these nuances might at first seem improvised, they reappear throughout the tune. (0:49)



## "The Beat"

This Year's Model

This example shows how Pete develops a simple groove. The straightforward groove in 2A is altered with bass drum notes on the "ah's" of beat 1 in measures 1 and 2 of Example 2B. Example 2C is a more complex version of 2B. (0:00, 0:07, 0:22)

2A

2B

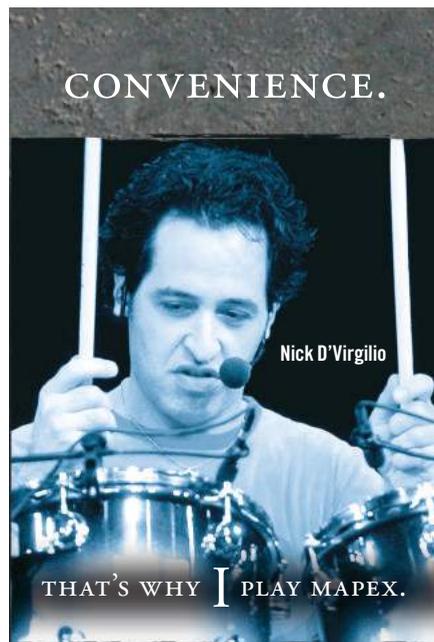
2C

## "(I Don't Want To Go To) Chelsea"

This Year's Model

This is one of Thomas' signature performances. Check out how he leaves off the bass drum on the downbeat of measures 2 and 3 in his chorus groove. Also note how he develops the groove by adding bass drum notes on beat 3 in measure 3 and beat 1 of measure 4 before stopping for the break in measure 5. (0:43)

3



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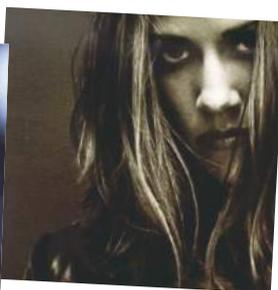
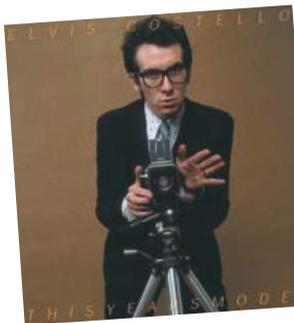
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## "Senior Service"

ELVIS COSTELLO & THE ATTRACTIONS

Armed Forces (1979)

This track is also one of the finest examples of Thomas' s compositional drumming style. There are many different grooves happening throughout this tune. But each minor variation is played in order to lock up with the bass line or vocal. Here are three variations. (0:14, 0:29, 0:58)

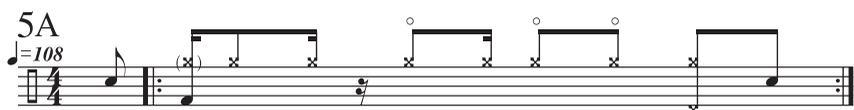


## "New Lace Sleeves"

ELVIS COSTELLO & THE ATTRACTIONS

Trust (1981)

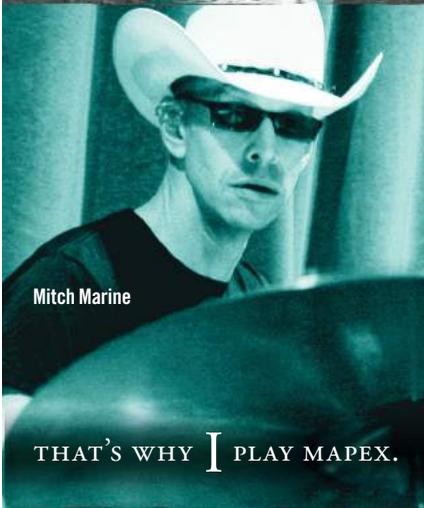
Pete' s entrance groove sounds as if the downbeat could be in one of several places. But when the band enters, it becomes clear that the bass drum is played on the downbeat of each measure. (0:00)



Here' s Pete' s swinging groove in the choruses. (2:30)

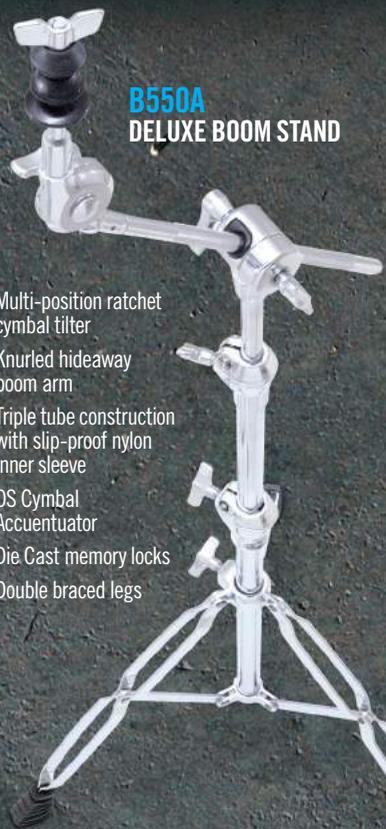


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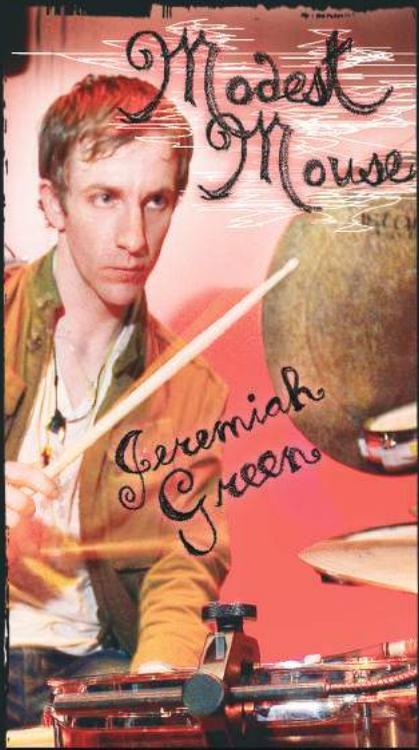
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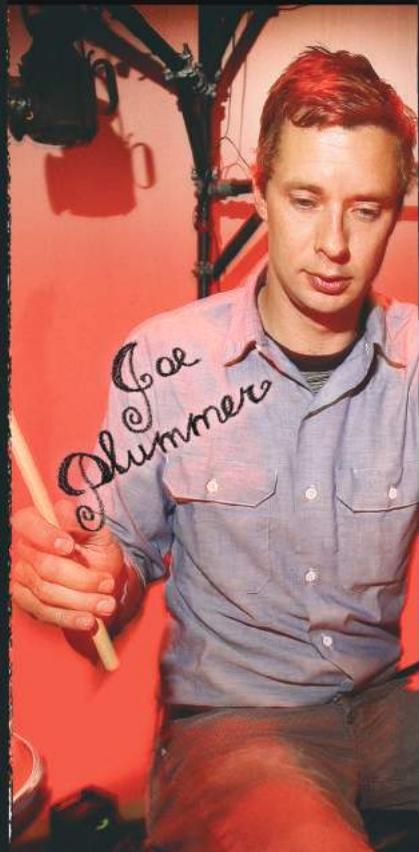


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## "Beyond Belief"

ELVIS COSTELLO & THE ATTRACTIONS

Imperial Bedroom (1982)

Pete combines different stylistic choices during the chorus of "Beyond Belief" in order to help the section develop. The bass drum plays quarter notes throughout, while the ride cymbal pattern adds syncopation. The fills in measures 2, 4, and 6 end on the "&" of beat 4, which creates a barline-blurring effect common in jazz. (1:20)

6  
♩ = 185

## "Oh, Marie"

SHERYL CROW

Sheryl Crow (1996)

Thomas plays some great grooves on Sheryl Crow's self-titled second disc. During the verse of this song, he plays an alternating 8th-note (beats 1 and 3) and 16th-note (beats 2 and 4) groove with a heavy brush (or bundle-stick) on a muffled floor tom. (0:00)

7A  
♩ = 114

For the choruses, Pete adds the 16th-note pattern on every beat. The transition between the two grooves is flawless. (00:47)

7B

## "Hard To Make A Stand"

Sheryl Crow

Pete is doing his best Charlie Watts impression on this track, including a single snare drum note on the "&" of beat 4, which Watts used to great effect on many Rolling Stones hits. (0:00)

8A  
♩ = 104



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Here's a slinky fill that Pete plays later in the track.

8B

**"Junk Bond Trader"**

ELLIOT SMITH

Figure 8 (2000)

Pete Thomas, Joey Waronker, and Elliott Smith share drumming duties on the late singer/songwriter's 2000 release. Pete's two-measure groove repeats through most of this song. Note the smooth 16th note-triplet groove on the "&" of beat 4 in the first measures of the groove. (0:00)

9

♩ = 67



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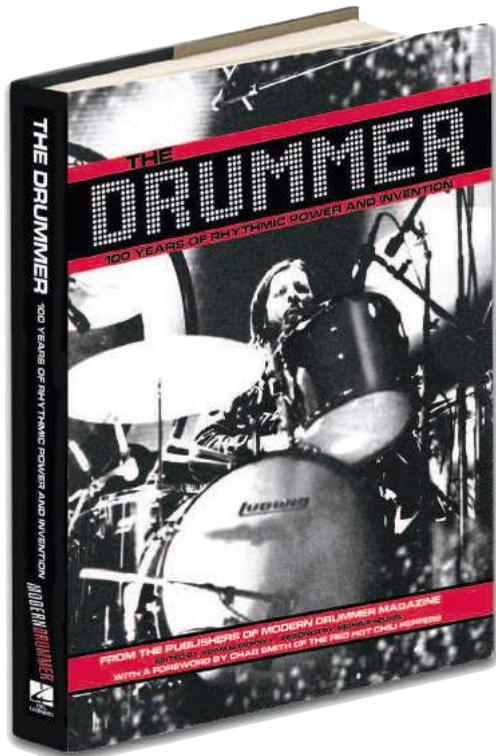
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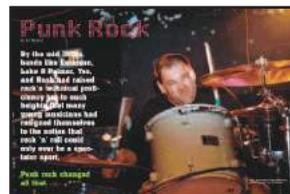
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by David Garibaldi

**MUSIC KEY**

H.H.	✕	L.H.	✕
T.T.	○	H.H.	✕
S.D.	○		
F.T.	○		
B.D.	○		
H.H.	✕		
w/ foot			

**A**s I look back at what I've learned throughout my musical career, probably the most useful tool I've found in building drumset technique and vocabulary is the

**concept of permutation. I think of permutation as a rhythmic solfeggio system. (Solfeggio is a way to train your ears to hear note intervals by assigning a vocal syllable to each note in a scale.) Like solfeggio, the concept of permutation has helped me develop the ability to hear unusual rhythms.**

Permutation is a great way to learn unusual rhythms as they relate to a specific time signature. I've covered this topic many times in my books, articles, and clinics. It's very simple, but it's also incredibly elastic and adaptable. You can use permutation in any type of music because it's not a style of playing, but what I consider a "root concept." You can learn it alongside rudiments and other technique-building ideas.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the concept, permutation can be defined as "all the possible ways to order a group of numbers." For example, we can order the numbers 1-4 as follows:

- 1 2 3 4
- 4 1 2 3
- 3 4 1 2
- 2 3 4 1

You can apply the permutation concept to any rhythm or time signature. In this article, we're using the time signature 4/4,

where there are four beats to the measure and each quarter note gets one beat.

We begin our permutation by moving the last beat of Example 1 to the front. This gives us a new groove for Example 2. Then we move the last beat of Example 2 to the front for Example 3. Example 4 repeats this process, moving beat 4 of Example 3 to the beginning. Brackets are placed beneath each exercise to illustrate how the permutation works.

The following exercises are written for two hi-hats, positioned so that you can perform open-handed. The right hand (notated above the staff) plays a hi-hat on the right side of the kit, while the left hand (notated on the fourth line of the staff) plays the main hi-hat and snare drum. (You may substitute a ride cymbal bell for the right hi-hat.)

There are five groups of four exercises. Each group is based on the quarter-note permutation idea. Practice the beats slowly, and make sure to count aloud. Counting aloud—an often under-appreciated concept—will ground your playing and help to unify your limbs. The results will surprise you.

Also, don't forget to pay attention to the sound levels of your strokes. Play each beat using strong, accurate accents, and quiet, delicate ghost notes.

A detailed explanation of the concepts of permutation and sound levels can be found in my book *Future Sounds*. You can also try playing some of these grooves with the loops that are included in my latest book, *The Code Of Funk*.

Next time we'll take these ideas to another level. In the meantime, practice, practice, practice!

The musical notation consists of three staves, each representing a 4/4 time signature exercise. Each staff has two parts: a top part for the right hand (hi-hat) and a bottom part for the left hand (main hi-hat and snare drum).  
**Example 1:** Shows a standard 4/4 pattern with four quarter notes. Brackets below the staff are labeled 1, 2, 3, and 4, corresponding to the four beats.  
**Example 2:** Shows the last beat of Example 1 moved to the front. Brackets below the staff are labeled 4, 1, 2, and 3.  
**Example 3:** Shows the last beat of Example 2 moved to the front. Brackets below the staff are labeled 3, 4, 1, and 2.

4

2 3 4 1

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

# DAVID GARIBALDI

15

16

17

18

19

20



David Garibaldi is the award-winning drummer with legendary funk band Tower Of Power.



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**MODERN DRUMMER**

# Modern Street Beats

## A Galactic Approach To New Orleans Drumming

by Stanton Moore

MUSIC KEY	
H.H.	bell
T.H.	bell
S.D.	x
F.T.	x
B.D.	x
	rim-click
	click

In my last article (Dec. '06 MD), I introduced a modern approach to New Orleans drumming. I'd like to explore this approach further, this time focusing on how I came up with some of my beats for my band Galactic.

### The Backbeat Street Beat

Galactic plays a lot of up-tempo brass band-type tunes. After some experimenting, I came up with a beat to use on those tunes that's a hybrid funk/second-line groove. Like the traditional second-line beat, my variation is based on the 2-3 clave. But I added a backbeat in the first half of the phrase. (Note: The second note of the 2-3 clave lands naturally on the backbeat.)

Let's check out this groove on the snare drum.

1

You can move the hands around the kit to get different textures. This works well because you can make the groove sound different for different sections of the tune, while maintaining continuity by staying with the same sticking. For instance, you can play the groove for the A section on the snare, then move to the hi-hat for the B section. Then you could move to the ride for the start of the first solo, and then move to the bell once the soloist starts to build. You could also move to the cowbell at the start of your drum solo, and so on.

Let's check out the groove with the right hand on a cowbell.

2

### For Fills

You might be saying to yourself, This is all well and good, but how can I incorporate it into my playing? You can also use this sticking to create different types of fills. The kick/snare/hat groove works well as a fill in a funk context. (See Example 3.)

3

2nd and 3rd time only

Even in the most straight-ahead grooves, you could use the sticking for a fill around the toms.

4

### Take It Further

I like to explore new ideas in as many different ways as possible. After playing the previous grooves for a while, I realized that the first half of the sticking (RLRR-LRRL) pops up in different contexts all the time. Drummers as varied as Idris Muhammad, Steve Gadd, Mel Lewis, and Shelly Manne have used it many different ways.

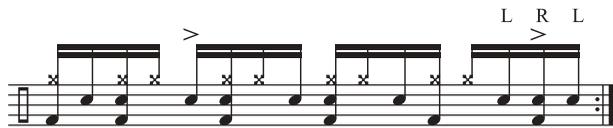
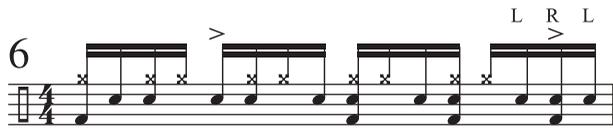
The second half of the sticking (RRLR-RLRL) is a pattern that my teacher Johnny Vidacovich showed me years ago. When you put the two stickings together, you get a very useful groove, in which the right hand outlines the New Orleans 2-3 clave.

Check out the following variation. This groove works as a modernized version of Zigaboo Modeliste's groove on the Meters' "Jungle Man" or Smokey Johnson's "It Ain't My Fault."

5

To get more adventurous, turn the RRL sticking into a Swiss triplet by adding a left-hand grace note. This puts you into the territory of funk master David Garibaldi. Try the sticking with straight and slightly swung 16th notes. When played "in the cracks", these grooves sound like modernized New Orleans funk.

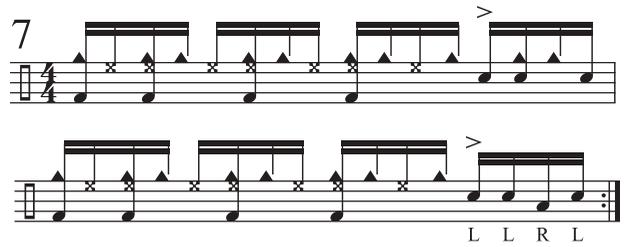
Here's the pattern with the right hand on the hi-hat (except where notated).



**Parts of New Orleans are still devastated from the damage caused by hurricane Katrina.**

If you'd like to help New Orleans musicians who have lost their instruments, homes, and way of life, please make donations to the Tipitina's Foundation at [www.tipitinas.com](http://www.tipitinas.com).

Now put the right hand on cowbell and the left hand on the hi-hat (except where notated).



Once you get comfortable with these grooves, come up with your own variations by moving your hands around the kit.

Until next time: Be creative, have fun, and stay funky!



**Stanton Moore** is the drummer for popular New Orleans funk band Galactic. Their new album, *From The Corner To The Block*, is out now.



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# Effective Warm-Ups

## Part 4: Flamming Odd Groupings

by Ari Hoenig

**If you've been practicing my previous three columns (February, April, and May '07), you should be familiar with the stickings we'll be using this month. This is when it really gets fun.**

All the following exercises are written in four-bar phrases, but they should be practiced in eight- and sixteen-bar phrases. On beat 1 of each bar, say the measure number out loud as it corresponds to the phrase. Don't think about how many times you have to play the sticking to fit into eight or sixteen bars. The idea is to feel the polyrhythm *and* the eight- or sixteen-bar form simultaneously.

First, we'll apply an odd-note sticking to 8th notes, and then to triplets. The basic rhythms are written above each exercise for clarity.

Example 1 is a five-note grouping. The sticking is either IRRRL or rLLRLR. (Lowercase letters are grace notes.) This sticking is not meant to reverse. So choose one and repeat it throughout the phrase. Here's what it looks like written in 8th notes.

Now try the sticking in triplets.

Here's a different five-note sticking that reverses each time: IRRrLLR rLLIRRL.

Here's what it looks like in triplets.

Example 5 is a grouping of seven notes. The sticking—which doesn't reverse—is IRRRLRL or rLLRLRLR.

Here's the same sticking in triplets.

LR R L R L LR R L R L R L LR R L R

LR R L R L R LLR R L R L R LLR R L R L R LLR R L R

etc.

Here's a different grouping of seven notes in which the sticking reverses: IRRLLRRL rLLrLLRL.

7

LR R L LR R L R RL L R RL L R L LR R

Now try it in triplets.

LR R LLR R L RRL L RRL L R LLR R LLR R L RRL L R

etc.

Example 9 is a nine-note grouping that consists of a grouping of five and a grouping of four. It's written out in an eight-bar phrase to give you an example of how to practice all of the previous exercises.

> \_ \_ \_ > \_ \_ \_ > \_ \_ \_ > \_ \_ \_

LR R L R L LR R L R RL L R L R RL L

RL L R L LR R L R L LR R L R RL L R

etc.

In triplets, this grouping becomes a familiar swung dotted quarter-note rhythm.

If you haven't had enough of these stickings, here are two systems you can use with pages 38-45 of the new edition of Ted Reed's book *Progressive Steps To Syncopation For The Modern Drummer*. I recommend practicing these pages initially by looping one bar at a time.

For the first system, give all 8th notes the sticking IRRL or rLLR. Quarter notes and notes of longer values are given the same sticking followed by single strokes. So a quarter note would be IRRLLR or rLLRLR. Here are the first two bars of page 38 using this approach.

LR R LLR R L R L RRL L RRL L R LLR R LLR R L RRL L R

etc.

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For the second system, play each note of the written line as a flam. Then fill in the remaining triplets with ghost notes. This system will use the following stickings, depending on how many notes occur between the flams.

One note: IR rL (reverse flams)

Two notes: IRR rLL (flam tap)

Three notes: IRRl or rLLR (Swiss army triplets)

Four notes: IRRlR rLLRl (single flammed mill)

Five notes: IRRlRl or rLLRlR

Here are the first four bars of page 38 written out with this system. Enjoy!

12

LR RRL L RRLR R LLR R L LR R LLR R L R LLR R LLR

RL L RRL L RRL LLR R LLR RL LLR R LLRLL R L R L

etc.



Jimmy Katz

**Ari Hoenig** is a top New York jazz drummer. He currently works with Kenny Werner, Wayne Krantz, Jean-Michel Pilc, Chris Potter, and Kurt Rosenwinkel. Ari also leads his own band on Monday nights at New York City jazz club Smalls. His new album, *Inversations*, is available through Dreyfus Records.



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## Celebrating Remo's Fiftieth Anniversary Half A Century Of Heads..And More

by Rick Van Horn

**I**t would be virtually impossible to be an active drummer today and *not* know the name of Remo. The brand has dominated the drumhead market since its inception fifty years ago. And the company has also made major inroads into the hand percussion, recreational drumming, and even drumset arenas.

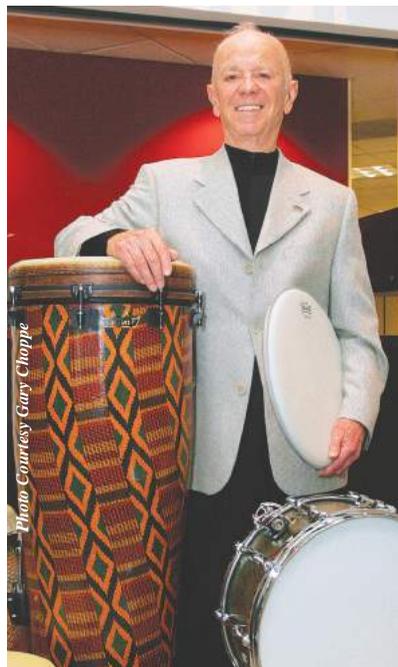
This sort of brand recognition is the result of a singular vision and dedication toward percussion innovation. It pervades the entire Remo operation, but it starts at the top, with the man for whom the company is named: Remo Belli. Remo (the company) is celebrating its fiftieth birthday this year, while Remo (the man) is celebrating his eightieth. Neither shows any signs of slowing down.

The founder and chairman of Remo Inc. can be found at the factory almost every day. According to company president Brock Kaericher, "Remo tends to head right to the R&D area. He's deeply involved in the development of all new products. In fact, many of the ideas for those products come straight out of Remo Belli's mind."

Remo Belli's mind is that of a drummer who started playing as a youth in South Bend, Indiana, and wound up as a professional in Hollywood. While he pursued his pro career in Tinseltown in the 1950s, Remo also opened a retail drum shop. It was there that he heard complaints about the inconsistencies and eccentricities of calfskin heads—which were the only heads available at the time. Remo put his mind toward solving the problem.



Remo Inc. president Brock Kaericher displays the company's new Powersonic bass drum head.



**"I believe that the drum will become the next must-have personal recreation item."**

**—Remo Belli**

"In the late 1950s I was aware of Mylar film as a potential drumhead material," says Remo, "because other people had already tried it. In fact, when Dupont patented the material in 1953, their patent stipulated that it could be used as a drumhead. So I bought some Mylar, stapled it to a wood hoop, put it on a drum, and played it. And it sounded very good. I was later introduced to a chemist named Sam Muchnick, who came up with the idea of using a channeled aluminum hoop filled with epoxy to secure the head—along with many other manufacturing details. I provided the drumming details, like the amount of tension that was required, and whether it got coated or not. At the time, the thickest film that Dupont made was 7½ mil, so that was what we used for batter heads. I selected 3-mil film for snare-side heads. We introduced our aluminum-channel drumhead at a trade show in Chicago in 1957, and that's how I got into the drumhead-making business."

Remo's business took off quickly, as drummers came to appreciate the durability and imperviousness to weather offered by the new heads. An operation that started off in 500 square feet in the back of Remo's drum shop in 1957 now occupies a 230,000-square-foot facility in Valencia, just north of Los Angeles.

### From Humble Beginnings

Remo's drumhead line started with one basic model, with the only variation being whether or not it was coated. But that didn't

## DRUMHEADS

### Weatherking Series



Weatherking drumheads are categorized by weight. Ambassador medium-weight, single-ply 10-mil heads produce an open, bright,

and resonant sound with plenty of attack. Diplomat light-weight, single-ply 7.5-mil heads are Remo's brightest, most open-sounding models. Emperor heads feature two free-floating plies of 7-mil Mylar film for durability and an open, warm tone. List prices range from \$20.25 (6" tom) to \$117.75 (40" bass).



### Pinstripe Series

Clear and coated Pinstripe heads are made with two free-floating plies of 7-mil Mylar with a layer of ring-reducing agent applied between them to create a "fat" sound for pop, rock, and R&B. Ebony Pinstripe

heads are black 2-ply (10-mil & 5-mil) Mylar, with the ring reducing agent at the outer edge of their trademark stripe to control high frequency overtones for warm resonance. List prices range from \$22.75 (6" clear tom) to \$105.50 (40" Ebony bass).

### Controlled Sound (CS) Series

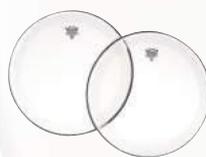
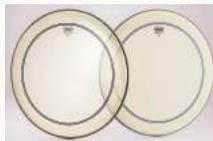
Controlled Sound heads have two distinct playing areas. The outer area offers mid-range tone and sensitivity, while the laminated center "dot" adds durability and tonal



focus. Heads are available in clear, coated, and Smooth White, with black, white, or clear bottom or top "dots." List prices range from \$21.75 (6" tom) to \$127 (40" bass).

### Powerstroke 3 Series

Powerstroke 3 single-ply, 10-mil heads are distinguished by a thin underlay at the outer edge of the head to subtly dampen high frequency overtones. This model is often used as a bass drum head to create a balance of response and tone control. Heads are available in clear, coated, Smooth White, and Ebony versions. List prices range from \$21.00 (6" tom) to \$155.25 (40" bass).



### Powerstroke 4 Series

Powerstroke 4 heads feature two free-floating plies with a thin underlay ring at the outer edge of the head, giving the head more focused mid-range tone as well as warmth and durability. Powerstroke 4 clear and coated models are

two plies of 7-mil Mylar; the Smooth White model is two plies of 7.5-mil Mylar. List prices range from \$21.00 (8" tom) to \$155.25 (40" bass).

### Fiberskyn 3 Series

Fiberskyn 3 heads combine Mylar film with a poly-spun fiber surface laminate to produce warm full tones, as well as resonance and sustain. Thin models feature 5-mil Mylar, Diplomat models feature 7.5-mil Mylar, and Ambassador models feature 10-mil Mylar. Powerstroke 3 versions are available in 7.5-mil or 10-mil film, both with a thin underlay at the outer edge to subtly dampen high frequency overtones. List prices range from \$23.75 (6" tom) to \$163 (40" bass).



### World Percussion Nuskyn Drumheads

Frequency analysis of Nuskyn shows that it closely resembles the performance of animal skin,



while actually expanding the sound response spectrum. It sounds natural, warm, and full-bodied, with enhanced low and mid-range frequencies, but without any lingering high-pitched overtones. Crimplock, tucked, and Mondo versions are available for congas, bongos, djembes, and other drums. List prices vary with the type and size of drum for which the head is designed.

### World Percussion Skyndeeep Drumheads

Skyndeeep is the graphic infusion of pigment into a polyester surface making it unique and attractive while maintaining the integrity of the sound. Skyndeeep heads are weather resistant, produce warm tones, and increase volume and projection in any environment. They are available for various World Percussion drums. List prices vary with the type and size of drum for which the head is designed.



## GOLD CROWN DRUMSETS



Gold Crown drumsets focus on the bright, crisp, and projecting tonal qualities of traditional jazz kits. Drums feature Advanced Acousticon shells with 45° bearing edges for optimal drumhead contact and greater tuning range, and they come fitted with chrome-plated die-cast hoops. Unique Metalized finishes in brass, bronze, and nickel-silver offer style and durability; black lacquer is also available. Kits are offered in BeBop (\$1,956), Fusion (\$2,265), and Euro (\$2,368) configurations.

## WORLD PERCUSSION



### African Drum Collection

Remo has taken the tradition of African drums and made them more accessible to students and professional percussionists. Acousticon

drumshell material and Remo drumheads make these drums lightweight, portable, easy to play, and weather resistant. The collection includes the key- and rope-tuned djembes, in-line djembes, Nesting Drums, ashikos, djun djuns, ngomas, and talking drums.

### Taiko Drum Collection

Remo Taiko drums follow authentic Japanese designs with shaped shells that are contoured both inside and out. They're fitted with Acousticon shells and Nuskyn drumheads, and they're available in wrench-tuned, rope-tuned, turnbuckle-tension, and pre-tuned models. A recent addition to the collection is the tunable Nagado made from Siam oak wood with a piano-like high gloss finish. Nagado Daikos range from \$1,694 to \$2,534; Shime Daikos list for \$938 and \$1,275; Hira Daikos range from \$435 to \$1,238; Okedos list for \$825 and \$1,673, and the Odaiko lists for \$7,485.



### Brasilian Drum Collection

The Brasilian Collection brings the spirit and traditions of Carnivale to new audiences with advances in materials and portability. Drums feature Acousticon



shells and weather-resistant heads. The collection includes agogo drums & bells, cuicas, pandeiros, surdos, tamborims, timbaus, and tan tans.

### Latin Drum Collection

Latin Collection drums feature Acousticon shells that are reinforced for maximum durability, high-density rubber molded bottoms, conga guards on all tuning lugs for protection from impact and scratches, and curved counterhoops for comfort. They are equipped with Nuskyn or Fiberskyn 3 drumheads for reliability, durability, and



great sound. Congas range in price from \$626 to \$827, bongos range from \$324 to \$524.

### Middle Eastern Drum Collection

The doumbek plays a central role in both popular and classical Middle Eastern music and is often played with the riq and the tar. Remo offers a new generation of these drums, as well as tambourines and frame drums. The drumshells are made from Acousticon and have Fiberskyn 3 or Renaissance drumheads. Doumbeks range in price from \$112 to \$169; rics range from \$112 to \$133; tars range from \$83.50 to \$184.50; tambourines range from \$14.50 to \$174; frame drums range from \$21.75 to \$139.95.



### Ergo-Drum System



Remo's Ergo-Drum System is a totally original percussion design. Ergo-System drums feature an ergonomically designed counterhoop and bearing edge, as well as recessed tuning that

improves the way one's hands and body feel while playing the drum. The system is currently available on a tubanito (\$199), various doumbeks (\$293-\$383), and Remo's innovative Modular Drum (\$299 singly, \$524 for complete pack).

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## SOUND SHAPES COLLECTION



Sound Shapes are high-quality, affordable percussion instruments for young people, professionals, and educators. They come in a

variety of geometric shapes and sounds and can be combined in endless configurations with Handle-Leg Connectors. Their durability and portability also make them great for drum circles. Sound Shapes packs list for \$66, Circle Shapes packs list for \$92.75. Handle-Leg Connector Packs range from \$36 to \$185.50.

[www.remoo.com](http://www.remoo.com)

# REMO

last long. Says Remo Belli, "We learned to develop new models in response to requests from professionals who were seeking specific sounds or performance qualities."

One such response was the development of twin-ply heads. "It was right at the beginning of the transition from jazz and big band into rock 'n' roll," Remo recalls. "Drummers like Hal Blaine were beginning to hit drums a little harder. Since Dupont didn't make anything heavier than the 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-mil film, I began to think about combining films. We started by combining the 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-mil film with the 3-mil film we were using for the snare-side heads, and that created the original Ambassador head. That process then led to the development of Emperor heads, which led to Pinstripe heads, which led to all the other self-dampening drumheads on the market. One thing led to another in a natural evolutionary process."

## Acousticon

As important as drumheads are to Remo, they're only part of the company's product line. A generation ago Remo introduced a totally original drumshell material called Acousticon, made from wound-paper tubes with a phenolic coating. "We'd developed a method for shrinking polyester film," says Remo, "which led to the creation of PTS pre-tuned heads. At that time the market for inexpensive, entry-level drumkits was really beginning to grow. So we wanted to put our PTS heads on drums that were simple to use and inexpensive to make. The convolute tube was a good candidate to fill the bill.

"At first we worked with tubing made by our container company," Remo continues. "Then we learned how to make our own tubing. Since then we've learned how to use the material in a variety of ways, including the development of bending and forming techniques that let us shape it into many different percussion instruments. I'm delighted with how we're using Acousticon today. It's what lets us be as diverse as we are."

## Taking Things Global

In addition to the Valencia headquarters, Remo has factories in Tianjin, China, and in Taichun, Taiwan. As Brock Kaericher explains, "The quality of the drumsets made in Asia has improved dramatically in the past few years—to the point where the price/quality relationship of what you can purchase now is unbelievable. Fortunately for us, almost all the manufacturers making drums in Asia chose to use Remo heads. But it was impractical to ship heads from the US to Asia to put on drumsets that were going to be shipped right back into the American market. So we set up factories specifically to supply the drumkit manufacturers over there."

Since a lot of those Asian-made kits are sold here, drummers often see Remo heads that carry designations like UT, UM, and UK. "The des-



These shells for Shime Daiko drums (from Remo's Taiko series) feature a beautiful grain structure—but aren't made of wood! They're an example of what the company is doing with its Acousticon shell material.

# The First Fifty Years

- 1957: Aluminum channel drumhead
- 1957: Ambassador and Emperor: the first 2-ply drumheads
- 1957: Sandblasting drumhead film for uniform look and better brush response
- 1958: Chemical coating of drumheads for better sound and superior brush response, which replaced the sandblasting process
- 1961: Remo Belli is instrumental in the creation of the Percussive Arts Society
- 1961: The world's largest bass drum
- 1962: Tunable practice pad
- 1963: The Versatilic Practice Pad drumkit
- 1968: Spray-coating the underside of Drum Corps heads for strength and durability
- 1968: Custom Graphic drumheads made using multi-color silk-screening
- 1968: Sparkleton drumheads made with metalflake coatings
- 1968: Roto-Toms
- 1972: Controlled Sound (CS) drumheads with adhesive reinforcement patches ("Black Dots")
- 1973: Transparent and Smooth White varieties of drumheads
- 1973: Bongo heads
- 1974: Pinstripe drumheads
- 1975: Fiberskyn calf-like drumheads
- 1979: Tuning pedal for Roto-Toms, closely resembles timpani tuning systems
- 1980: Fiberskyn 2 drumheads
- 1981: PTS Pre-Tuned Series drumheads
- 1981: Acousticon synthetic drumshell material
- 1982: Low-cost, high-quality hand and ethnic drums
- 1982: Jr. Pro Drumset: the first drumset designed for kids
- 1983: Quadura drumshell covering
- 1983: Muffl's ring control device
- 1984: Powerstroke, Ebony, and Starfire drumheads
- 1985: A full line of drumsets featuring innovative "Powersnap" lug technologies
- 1985: Dynasty stands and hardware
- 1986: Remo Belli elected to PAS Hall of Fame
- 1987: K-Series Falam drumheads
- 1988: MasterTouch drumkits
- 1988: Spoxe percussion effect instruments
- 1988: Putty Pad portable practice surface and Remo sound dampening rings
- 1990: FalamSlam Kevlar-based bass drum patch
- 1990: Legato marching snare drum
- 1990: Graphics Department is created, dedicated to designing and mounting graphics to any Remo product
- 1991: Legero compact five-piece drumkit
- 1991: Personal Percussion instruments developed in support of the drum circle movement
- 1992: Remo, Inc. Music Therapy and Wellness Movement programs are created
- 1993: Powerstroke 3 drumheads
- 1993: Irregular-shaped Acousticon World Percussion instruments (djembes, congas, talking drums)
- 1994: Kids' Percussion instruments
- 1995: Fiberskyn 3 heads
- 1996: Fruitshakes, Veggieshakes, and Pocketshakes
- 1997: Mondo drumset
- 1997: Custom components for Roland V-Drums
- 1998: Remo Percussion Center established as a meeting place for anyone interested in percussion
- 1998: Renaissance drumheads
- 1999: Expansion of Taiko product line due to the ability to stitch Fiberskyn 3
- 2001: Nuskyn drumheads
- 2002: Sound Shapes and Rhythm Tools
- 2002: Gold Crown drumsets
- 2003: EmperorX drumheads for heavy hitters
- 2004: Tuneable Sound Shapes
- 2004: Pro Pad and Thomas Lang practice kit
- 2005: Designer's Touch custom fabric finishes
- 2005: Cybermax high-tension marching drumhead
- 2006: Handle-Leg Connectors for Sound Shapes
- 2007: Skyndeeep Graphic drumheads
- 2007: Powermax drumheads
- 2007: Powersonic bass drum heads

ignations refer to film types," Brock explains. "The UT is a Mylar film and the UM is a Melanex, both of which come from Dupont. The UK is a film that we purchase out of Korea. All of the heads made in China and Taiwan are crimped. None of them are made the way we pour the head in our US factory."

### A Healthy Market

When asked his opinion of the state of the drum business today, Remo Belli answers that it's in better shape now than it ever has been. His confidence is based on a particularly broad view of what "the drum business" involves.

A little over fifteen years ago Remo became personally involved with research and marketing efforts that connected the activity of drumming to the science of health & wellness. As part of that involvement, he supported the research of Dr. Barry Bittman, who was exploring the use of music for health purposes. Dr. Bittman's first study revealed a direct relationship between group drumming and the creation and increase of cancer-fighting cells in the human immune system. Remo funded subsequent studies in conjunction with Yamaha, and the research continues.

"Once I got involved in the health & well-

ness benefits of percussion," says Remo, "I recognized that our company's manufacturing technology was perfect for making instruments that would be useful to that segment of the market. So about ten years ago we started developing those instruments."

### Drums Are Fun

Remo also sees a great potential market for drums as recreational items. "Everybody listens to music," says Remo. "But trying to produce music is a challenge to a lot of people. I work closely with Mickey Hart—who's done a lot of investigation into the use of drums in many aspects of life—and with Arthur Hull, who uses drums in the building of community. Between us, we came to understand that if drumming could be made simple and fun, it could reach a whole new demographic. The drum is the sandlot...it's this big field out there that says, 'Here's a soccer ball...now go out and kick it. We don't care how far or how straight you kick it, just have fun with it.' That's what's been going on in the drum circles and other events that we hold in our North Hollywood recreational facility. It's amazing to see some of the first-time experiences that take place. I believe that the drum will become the

next must-have personal recreation item."

### Don't Forget The Rockers

Nobody—least of all the Remo company—is suggesting that recreational drumming is a replacement for traditional pop/rock music. As Brock Kaericher says, "More people are playing conventional drums than ever before. So that market is alive and well, along with the recreational market. The beauty of that is that while the two are not dependent upon each other, they can correlate. When a child who banged on a Remo Sound Shape at the age of four turns thirteen, he or she might think, 'I had fun doing that, maybe I'd also have fun on a drumset.' And a percentage of those children will go on to become serious musicians."

### Heads In The Shops

The Remo company has been making and selling aftermarket drumheads for fifty years now. Certain models have existed for virtually that entire time, while new models have been added regularly. The result is a product line that offers lots of choices. As Brock puts it, "It's our responsibility as the biggest drumhead manufacturer in the world to present options to help drummers get the sound and

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# REMO

performance characteristics they're looking for."

But with all those options, how is a drummer to know what head might best suit his or her needs? "Our drumhead racks feature displays that provide full explanations of the families of drumheads," Brock replies. "In addition, the *Remo Drumhead Guide* and *Pocket Catalog* are very descriptive of all the product lines. However, I think it's also the dealer's responsibility to understand who their clientele is. Drummers in an area where the bands play mostly hard rock and punk music aren't going to be needing a lot of Diplomat heads.

"Still," Brock continues, "There are stores in which our connection to drummers comes from their seeing and playing the heads, rather than from anybody explaining anything. Frankly, I think one of the most powerful sales boosts for Remo drumheads is the fact that if you buy a new drumset, there's a 90% probability that you're going to see a Remo drumhead on it. Brand recognition is an extremely important factor. At one time, many of the drum companies made their own heads. These days, they don't need to. They can focus their attention on what they do best, and leave it to us to take care of the heads."

## Clinics

Owing to Remo's involvement in traditional drumset playing, world percussion, and recreational drumming, the company is a major supporter of clinicians, educators, and drum-circle facilitators. As Brock explains, "When it comes to drumset clinics, in most cases we partner with the artist's drum, cymbal, and stick companies. With world percussion artists, such as Leon Mobley and Poncho Sanchez, Remo tends to take the lead. And when it comes to our involvement in the recreational end of drumming, the funding is phenomenal. But Remo Belli believes deeply in the idea that drumming is *good* for people. The charter of this company is to spread that idea."

## Still In The Lead

In the fifty years since Remo started making drumheads, other brands have established themselves. But Remo has consistently remained the industry leader. To what do they owe their success?

Brock Kaericher replies, "Specifically in relation to drumheads, I believe that the quality of the product—and the attention we pay to maintaining and improving that quality—is extreme. Today, drummers have access to bet-

ter heads than ever before, no matter which brand we're talking about. Technology has improved as a result of competition. And that's a good thing. But it's not by chance that almost every drum company in the world puts Remo heads on their drums, or that in 2006 eleven of the twelve top DCI corps in the world played Remo. There are a lot of good products on the market, but I think our product speaks for itself."

Remo Belli concludes by saying, "Our focus is to provide drummers with tools with which to accomplish what they want to do. We're also committed to programs that none of the other companies are involved with. Having these social, academic, and medical programs has allowed us to expand into other areas of the business. And that, I think, is why more people recognize the name 'Remo' connected with drums than any other. I believe that the combination of all these things is what has kept us in the forefront."



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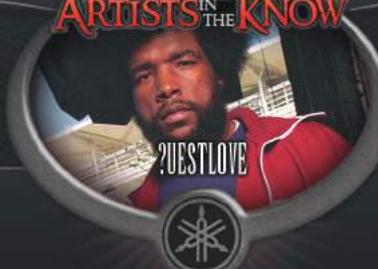
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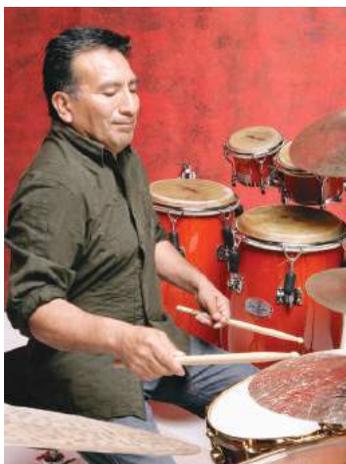
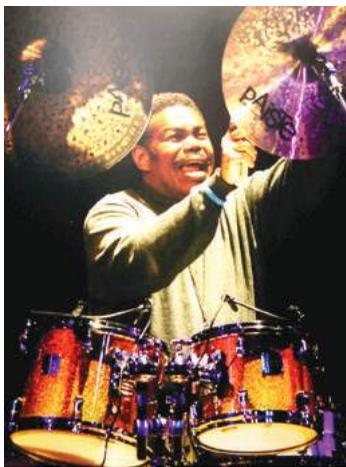
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# Greg Errico

## A Life In Time

Story by Patrick Berkery  
Photos by Jay Blakesburg

**“Yeah! For Greg Errico, who is sometimes called ‘Hand Feet’ because of his clear communication between his mind and his fast, funky hands and feet. Greg is so good because he plays the best licks, the fastest and the funkier.... ‘Hand Feet’ is probably workin’ on a new lick this very moment.”**

**—Sly Stone, from the liner notes to Sly & The Family Stone’s *Dance To The Music* (1968)**

**D**on’t think of Sly & The Family Stone’s Greg Errico as unique because he was the lone caucasian keeping time with the original funky drummers like Clyde Stubblefield, John “Jabo” Starks, and Al Jackson Jr. Instead, give a listen to those classic Sly albums like *Stand!* The beats will tell you Errico was one of a kind. He put it down hard and funky, laying the template for future white funky drummers like John Bonham and Chad Smith.

Those groundbreaking grooves from Errico’s tenure with Sly & The Family Stone have resurfaced thanks to an extensive reissue campaign. The memories of a career keeping time for Sly, Jerry Garcia, David Bowie, Weather Report, and others are all right here.

“I was born and raised in San Francisco,” says the fifty-eight-year-old Errico. “We lived in the outer mission District. My father was from Italy, and he came here during the ‘30s European migration. He was in the restaurant business. My mother’s father was a drummer, but he died pretty young. I never got to meet him.

“My father had this turntable, and I wasn’t supposed to touch it,” Errico continues. “But I’d climb up on a chair before he got home from work and put records on, like ones by Buddy Rich. So I wanted to play drums at a very early age. But I didn’t really start playing until I was fourteen, when I got my first set.”

Growing up in the Bay Area was exciting for the young drummer. According to Errico, “San Francisco was a cultural intersection at the time, like New York, so there was a lot of music there. When I was in my early teens, I’d go downtown to where all the clubs were and put an ear to the wall or look through the window and just watch the drummers. I had exposure to a lot of different music and rhythms. There’d be guys blowing jazz and blues. You could hear everything.”

Errico is very open about how he developed his playing style. “I developed my style by not knowing any better,” he admits. “I had friends in high school who were very well-educated drummers. They’d go home every day and practice their rudiments and hit the books and the pads for three hours. I never took lessons. I’d come home from school and play along to Dave Brubeck’s ‘Take Five,’ James Brown, Wilson Pickett, and Latin stuff by Xavier Cougat. I used to drive those drummers crazy. ‘You can’t do that!’ is all any of them ever said to me. I’d smile and say, ‘Why not?’ As things moved forward, these guys started giving me serious respect. By the time I was fifteen, I was playing in nightclubs with older guys doing Top-40 stuff.”

How did Errico come to join Sly & The Family Stone? “When I was about sixteen,” he says, “I met Leon Petillo [ex-Santana]. One night I was about to go out, and Leon called: ‘You gotta help me, my drummer’s sick.’ So I threw my kit in the car. Freddie Stewart, Sly’s brother, was playing with Leon that night. After the gig, we’re talking and Freddie tells me he’s thinking of starting his own band called Freddie & The Stone Souls, and he asked me if I’d be up for playing with him. I told him yeah.

“Sly had a great radio show at the time, so he was well known in the Bay Area,” Greg continues. “I used to listen to him all the time. He’d already made two attempts at starting a band, and they just weren’t happening. The third attempt started when I showed up to rehearse

# “Playing Woodstock was such a heavy social thing at the time. Today, people ask about it like, *You were there?*”

with Freddie one night at their house. Sly had a place in San Francisco, and that's where the whole family lived. I knocked on the door and his mom answered. She said, 'Freddie's in the kitchen with Sylvester. They're having some chicken. Go on in.' I say, 'Where is everybody?' and Freddie says, 'We're gonna start a new band tonight. You wanna do it?' I say, 'Sure. I'm here, right?' Freddie had never said anything about it to me, but he and Sly had obviously talked about it. Typical Sly.

"Sly had already contacted Larry [Graham,

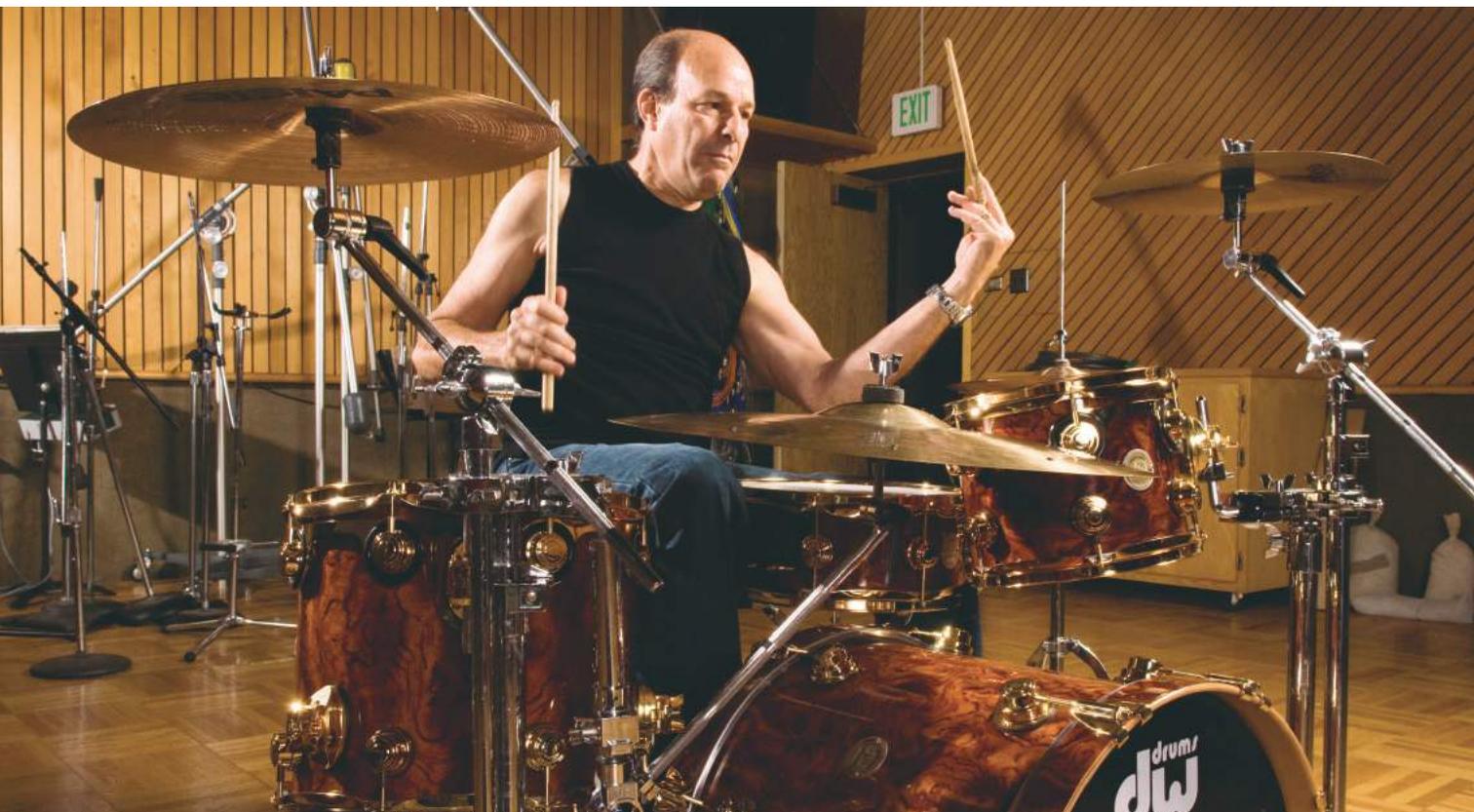
'66. My parents just let me do it because they sensed I wasn't taking no for an answer."

Sly's band became tight early on because they worked constantly. "We played mostly nightclubs in the beginning," Errico says. "Then we'd do an after-hours show. We'd play a club somewhere, tear down, then travel across the bay to another joint and set up about 3:00 A.M., and start the after-hours set."

Things began to happen fast. "Within a year," Greg says, "we were doing originals and we'd signed to Columbia. We were play-

we just tore it apart, so in the studio I just did what came naturally. I think it gave the music a certain feel. It gave it a little attitude and a little edge that made it stand out.

"In the studio," Errico continues, "we'd mike the kick, snare, and toms, and then there'd be a big fat Neumann for an overhead. To get that sound on the snare, we'd add a little bit of compression. On all the singles—'Everyday People,' 'Hot Fun In The Summertime,' 'I Want To Take You Higher'—we would cut basic tracks, but then the songs



bassist/vocalist] and Cynthia [Robinson, trumpet]. He had written a few things, but nothing close to the stuff he'd eventually have. We knew if we wanted to work, we had to do Top-40. We weren't going to be like every other band, though, so we'd rearrange the stuff and make it our own. We rehearsed for a week and then started working at the Winchester Cathedral. And I was still in high school at the time. When we started the group, it was December of '65; I graduated in June of

ing in Vegas, six nights a week from 8:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M., eight or nine sets. On our day off, Mondays, we'd fly to LA and work on the first album. We were immersed in what we were doing."

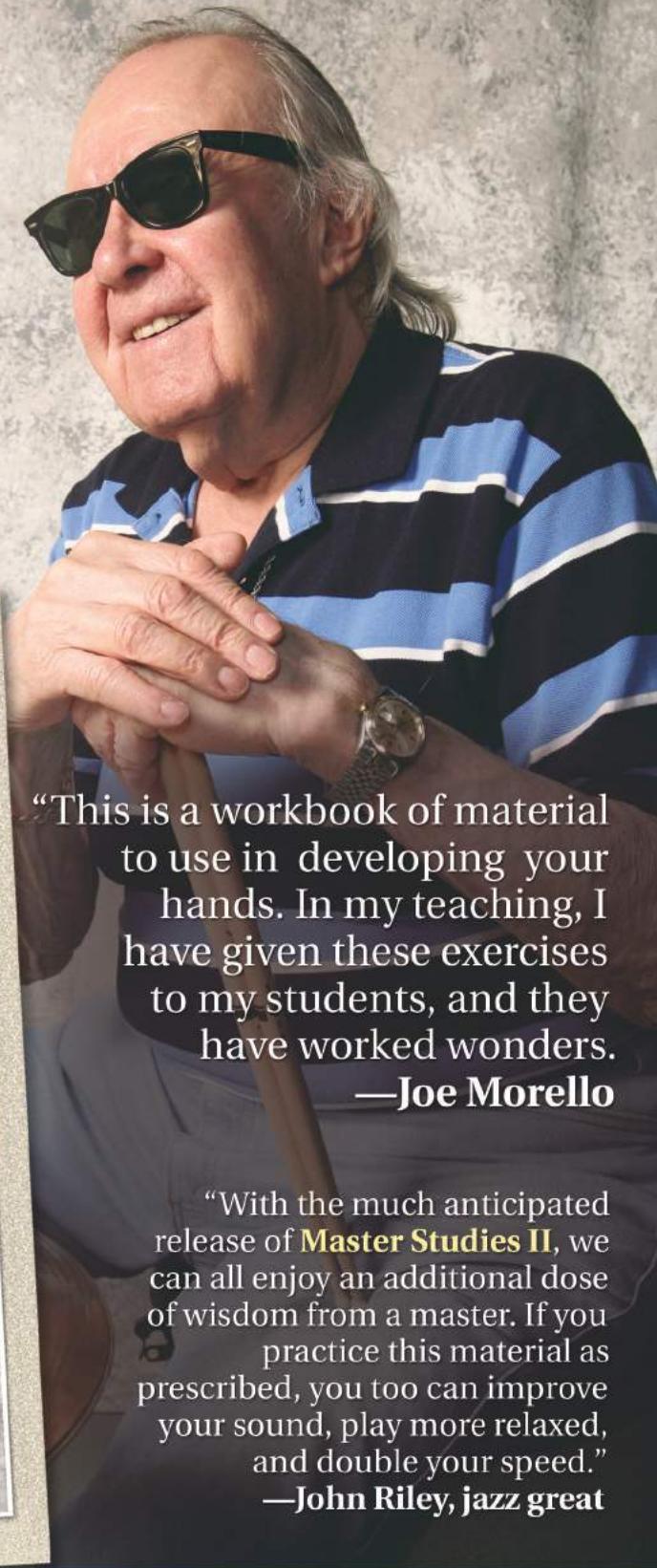
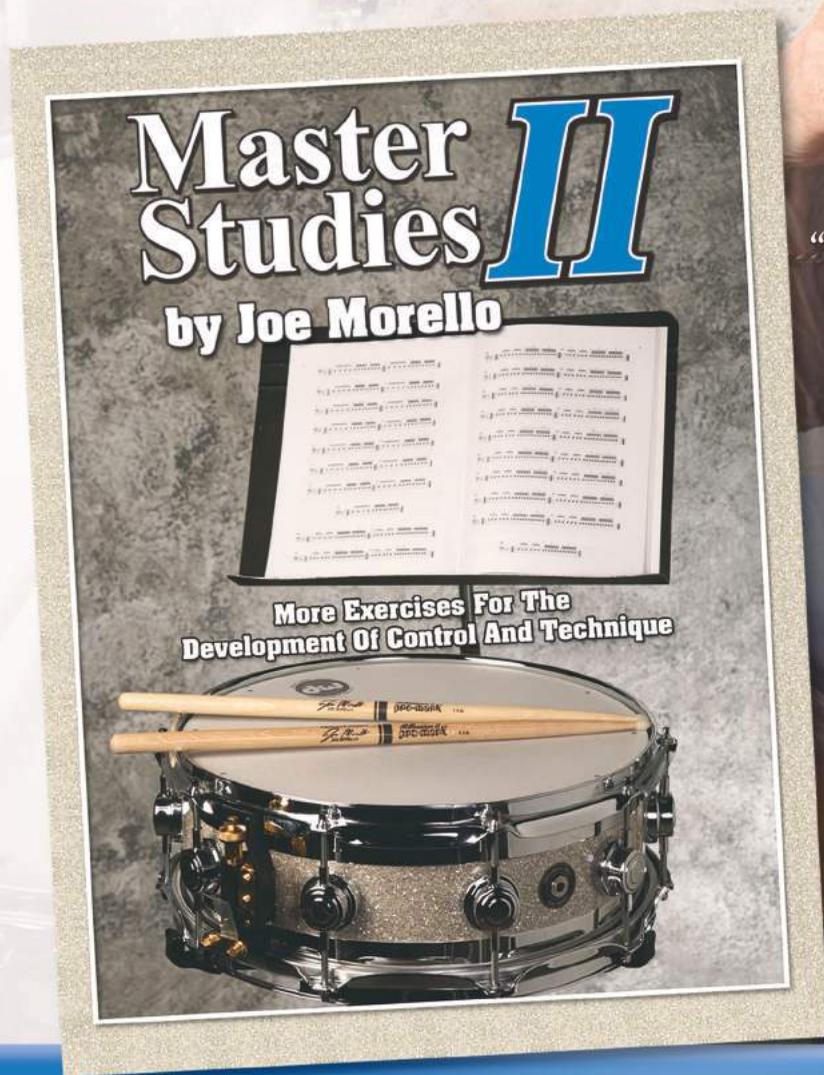
Speaking of that first album, how did Errico do in the studio? "I had to learn studio chops," he admits. "I used to drive engineers nuts. A seasoned studio drummer would play with a lighter touch. I just attacked the drums—pushed everything into the red. When we played live,

would morph. Sometimes the feel, the approach, and even the arrangement would change. When we got toward the finish, I'd go back in and re-cut the drums. No click. Put on the headphones and go for it. You listen to all those singles—that's me playing again at the end of the process. This was very pre-Pro Tools."

And what was it like on stage with the group? "Well, you could never rely on the house PA—feedback, horribly distorted sounds,

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## GREG ERRICO

etc. When we started getting some money, I bought two Fender Showman amp bottoms and placed them right in back of me, with the microphones plugged into the heads to amplify my bass drum. I'd just mike the kick, but it'd pick up a little bit of the kit, too. We didn't mike the snare, so I developed my left hand to be a sledgehammer. The kick was very important. I realized early on how people responded to drums. When people could hear and feel the kick and snare, they got up and into the spirit."

When asked what was it like performing with Larry Graham, one of the premiere funk bassists of the era, Errico responds, "Playing with Larry was fantastic. It wasn't like I heard him develop slap bass on the spot. Everything we did, we developed over time,

so the slapping and popping came a little later on. We had a great chemistry, though. We didn't sit around and talk about it. We just played. Even if it was the development stage of a song, we still never talked about what to play. We talked through our instruments, literally. That's just the way it was."

Sly & The Family Stone played many important gigs, but the biggest might have been at the legendary Woodstock festival. "Playing Woodstock was such a heavy social thing at the time. Today, people ask about it, like, You were there?—like it was the Boston Tea Party. Also, playing The Ed Sullivan Show was huge at the time. Back then, there were no videogames, no Internet, just three network TV stations. When you were on one of them in prime time, forty or fifty million

# 10 Stone Grooves

From Greg Errico

If you want to learn how to play funky, be sure to check out these classic Errico grooves. You can hear these masterpieces, along with a whole lot more, on *The Collection*, Sly & The Family Stone's recently released box set. It's highly recommended.

**1) "Dance To The Music"**—A steady pulse from Errico keeps a tight, funky rein on this signature Sly & The Family Stone tune.

**2) "Dynamite"**—Errico sits in the pocket with Larry Graham's slap & pop bass, dropping in blazing snare rolls every now and then.

**3) "Hot Fun In The Summertime"**—Errico's lazy, hazy beat fits this warm-weather classic like a Speedo.

**4) "Love City"**—With his drums hot in the mix, Errico slams out a choppy groove that sounds like he left a well or two on his snare head.

**5) "Runnin' Away"**—Errico's subtle turn-arounds in the bridge make this mellow funk tune a classic.

**6) "Somebody's Watching You"**—Just a simple groove that perfectly serves this melodic little gem.

**7) "Stand!"**—One of Errico's favorites features a rare overdub: the 16th-note hi-hats clattering over the hip-shaking coda.

**8) "Underdog"**—First track, first album, first example of Errico's frantic-yet-refined playing. A great mix of swelling buzz rolls and hard-hitting funk.

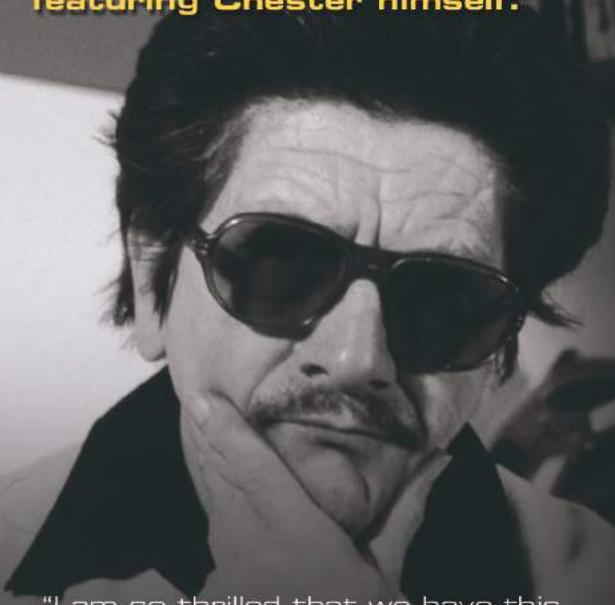
**9) "Thank You For Talkin' To Me, Africa"**—Errico's swan song with Sly & The Family Stone was nothing but raw, sexy funk.

**10) "You Can Make It If You Try"**—The syncopated intro fill gives way to a groove that is simple when it has to be and busy when it wants to be.



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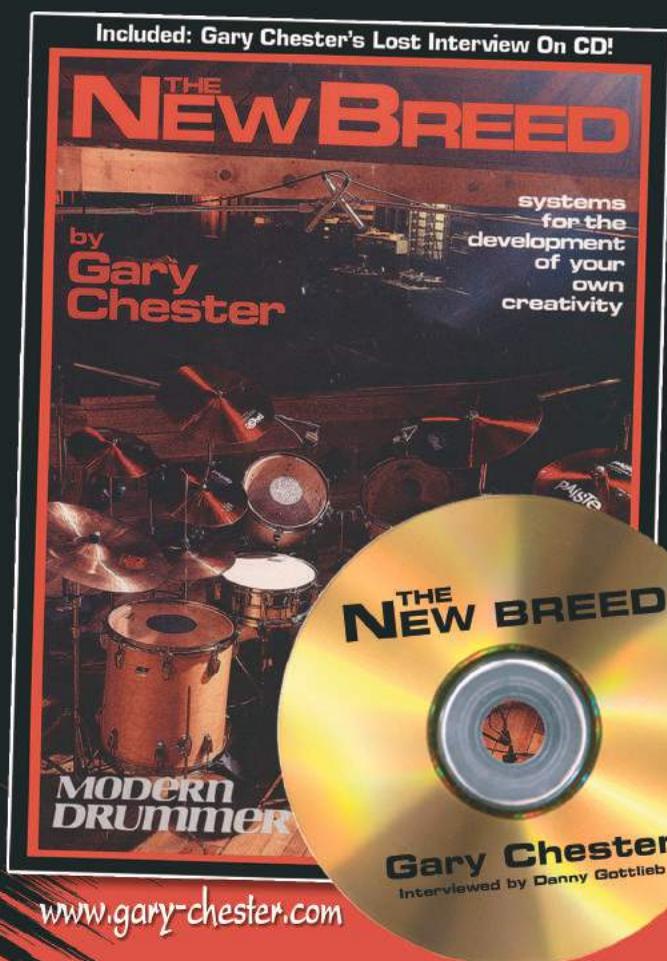


"I am so thrilled that we have this recording of Gary, with him going through his concepts, inspiring us all, in his own words."—**Danny Gottlieb**

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"Gary Chester was my teacher. While I studied with him he taught me some unique exercises that helped me improve as a drummer. I still use those exercises today. Amazing book, amazing teacher, and an amazing person."—**Kenny Aronoff**

"The things I learned and skills I developed through Gary's studies are applied all the time. He systematically, yet subconsciously for the student, I believe, taught the drummer how to concentrate."—**Dave Weckl**



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## GREG ERRICO

people saw you. You were it. The next day, walking through the airport, was nuts. It was kind of like what The Beatles and Elvis experienced. That's when my dad finally said, 'Yeah, I guess you can make a living at this.'

What was the money like back then? "For a while," Greg admits, "we weren't making huge money—we were on a small salary. But that changed around 1969. We got a pretty good advance from Columbia after 'Dance To The Music' hit big. I bought a house. We all bought cars.

"Unfortunately, Sly moved down to LA," Errico continues. "We all looked at each other and said, 'This is the beginning of the end.' It just didn't seem to be a good move. His writing was still good, but as far as the health of the band, it started splintering. He was immersed in all the hype; he lost all perspective.

"We almost never rehearsed anymore. If we did rehearse, we'd never stick to what we'd rehearsed, as opposed to the early days. Every concert became a little bit different. But that was great. That's how we got the respect of Herbie Hancock, Miles Davis, and a lot of the jazz world."

Why did Errico leave the band? "It started not being fun," he says. "We used to have fun when we played. The whole thing was just a blast. And it really was kind of a family. When that element went away, it stayed away. It was attacked by a lot of different forces. It became all about Sly's entourage and the drugs. He was showing up late for gigs or not showing at all. This went on for a year—and

these were big shows. We did Madison Square Garden for three nights, sold out, which was a record for that time.

"Sly got into the drum machine [the original Rhythm King] as a result of me not going down to the sessions at his house in LA. It got too crazy for me, so I left in early '71. It might look like I was replaced by a machine, but that's not what happened. As a matter of his moving forward, and not having a drummer that he felt comfortable with, he got into the Rhythm King just to work on tracks. If you listen to the tracks on There's A Riot Going On, that's what a lot of it is. We had cut those tracks before he really developed them. After I left, he went back and finished them with the drum machine.

"It was hard to leave," Greg admits. "The musicianship was just so incredible. Sly's ideas were phenomenal. You could hear it in the arrangements, like the horn parts. We only had two horns, but his voicings were so unique that it sounded like we had a horn section. I also loved the contrast between Sly and Larry's singing voices."

What did Greg do after leaving the band? "I quit music for a year," he admits. "What was I going to do to top that? Plus I was pretty burned out. So I just hung out with friends and rode my Harley. I was getting calls for tours, but I ignored everything. And Sly would call at all hours of the night and even come by the house. And, for a bit, I thought, 'What was I thinking?' But I'd made up my mind. As hard as it was, I didn't see the situation turning. And it didn't. Larry left not long after I did."

How did Errico get back into music? "I was

fortunate; a lot of good stuff came my way. A lot of it was due to my friend [late Santana bassist] Doug Rauch. He lived at my house for a while, and he was friends with Miroslav Vitous from Weather Report. They'd come down to my house and we'd jam. Different worlds, my rock and funk to their jazz-fusion, but it was phenomenal—off the hook. I really enjoyed touring with them."

How did Errico get the call to tour with David Bowie? "Doug called and said, 'Bowie wants me and you on the tour.' What a band that was: Luther Vandross singing backup, David Sanborn on tenor sax, Michael Garson on keyboards, Earl Slick on guitar. It was just amazing. David had this huge production—sixty trucks, one of the biggest productions ever on the road at that time. He was English rock 'n' roll, but he understood and really dug funk and wanted that spice in his music. He was one of the more intelligent fellows of that stature I'd run into at that time. I really dug him."

Errico has also produced records. "The first Betty Davis [Miles Davis' ex-wife] record was one of the first things I produced," he says. "The lineup on that record was a who's who of San Francisco at the time. I had Larry Graham playing bass, Neal Schon on guitar, the Tower Of Power horns, and The Pointer Sisters singing background. The record didn't do anything, but Betty became this great cult funk artist who is still getting attention today. It was like the first Sly record. It wasn't commercially successful but musicians had it."

Another amazing period for Errico was when he worked with Jerry Garcia. "I was sitting in

# FOR EVERY STYLE.



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 Hot Sticks

with the Grateful Dead all the time," Greg recalls. "I was good buds with Mickey Hart. Jerry Garcia then asked me to join his band, and I ended up playing with him on and off between 1974 and 1984.

"I really enjoyed playing with Jerry, very free," Greg continues. "I remember rehearsing for the first gig the afternoon of the show—that was it. And he was really comfortable with that stuff, and I loved that impromptu feel. There'd be times when we could really challenge each other's playing. Man, he had his amps cranked, too. He was one of maybe two or three guys whose guitar playing hurt me. He had such a great clean sound, but when he'd crank it up, it went beyond where it could hurt you."

A few years back, Errico and a few of the other original Stone bandmembers reunited. "We did these Original Family Stone sessions without Sly," Greg says. "The music was great. I really wanted us to get back on stage, and I thought this might be the only thing in life to entice Sly to come back out—him seeing us all, playing the music, and having fun. Everyone's tried everything else to get him to perform again, but they've always failed. At that point in time, he just wasn't ready to come back out, and Freddie didn't want to perform live. We would have had everybody's support. Clive Davis was into it. But we fell short on getting out there."

How is Errico's relationship with Sly today? "He actually moved back up to the Bay Area,"

Greg says. "I talk to him occasionally. He'll call and leave on my voice mail some new lyrics and songs he wrote. Really good stuff, too. Amazing songs. He can still write. He says he wants to go out and perform again, and I really support him in doing it. Sly really wants to get back up to speed, where he can have the original band again and go out and do shows. But there are some issues he needs to deal with—being a recluse all that time and the chemicals...we're talking thirty-five years. I don't know what he's going to do.

"If he's serious and deals with whatever he needs to deal with to actually get up and perform, I would definitely do it with him," Errico urges. "But if it's just going to be a circus, what's the use? I don't want to go backwards. He's got great material. He can still write. But people are suspicious now of what he would bring to the table. Our appearance on the Grammy Awards last year worked against us. We were playing with all of these great people, but then Sly came out for one minute—that just confused the people watching. But if we were all to get together and do it, I think people would come out."

Despite Sly's trying behaviour, Greg says he's more than satisfied with his career. "I am blessed, lucky, fortunate...all of the above. I thank God every day. I've definitely had angels watching over me. It's not like it hasn't been trying. But I'm still here, still doing music."



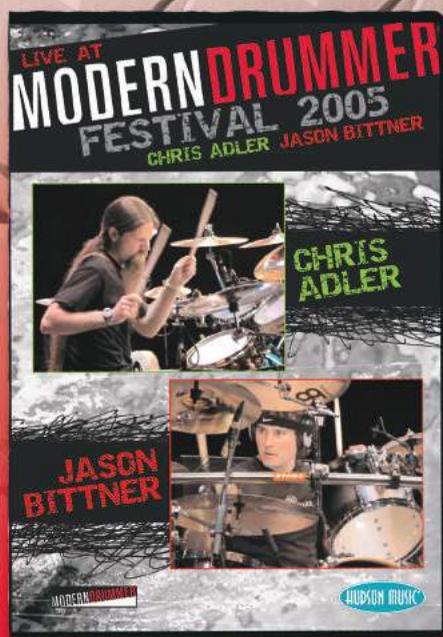
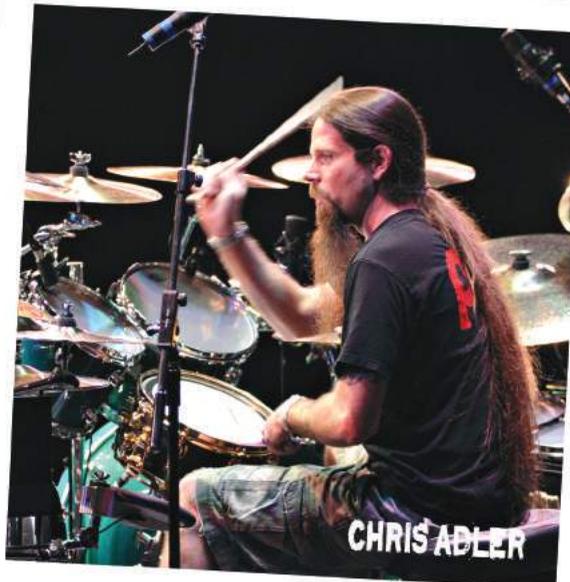
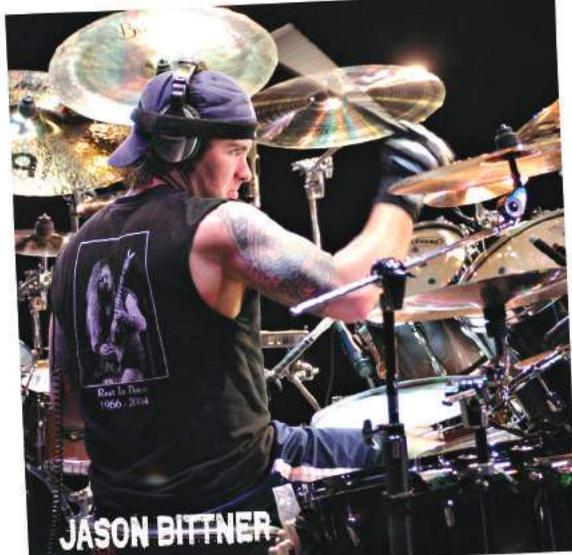
Sly And The Family Stone back in the day. L-R: Greg Errico (drums), Rosie Stone (piano), Sly Stone, Cynthia Robinson (trumpet), Fred Stone (guitar), Jerry Martini (saxophone), and Larry Graham (bass)



# SPEED KILLS.

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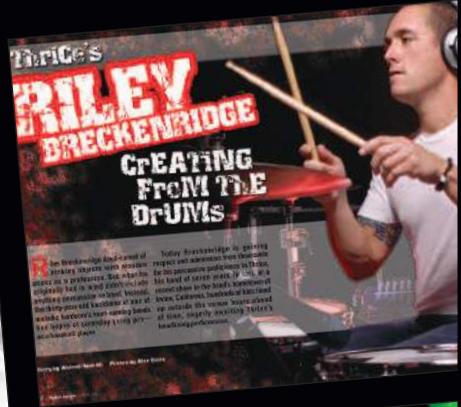
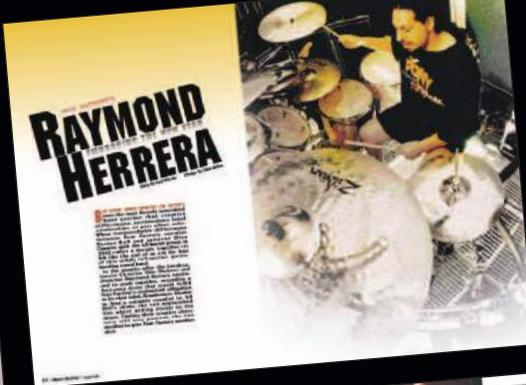
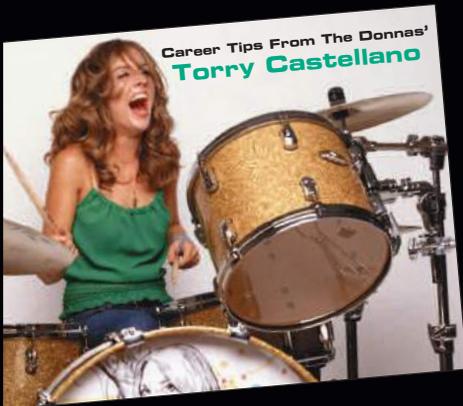
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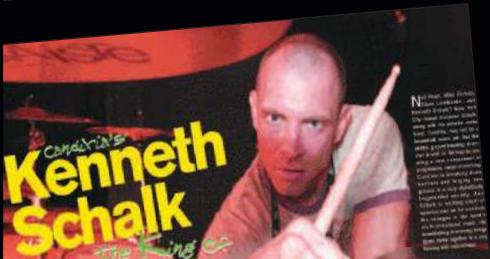
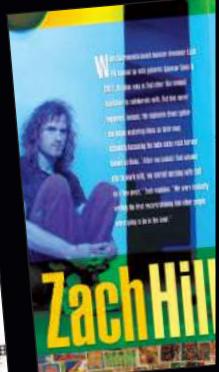


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### Ratings Scale

- ★★★★★ Classic
- ★★★★☆ Excellent
- ★★★☆☆ Good
- ★★☆☆☆ Fair
- ★☆☆☆☆ Poor



### ANDRÉ CECCARELLI GOLDEN LAND

★★★★★

A jewel of the European jazz world, French drummer **ANDRÉ "DEDE" CECCARELLI** serves up sophisticated, exciting, and supremely listenable kit work. He's endowed with threatening, precise chops, but like the famed cuisine of his homeland, the portions are perfect and never, ever overdone. Ceccarelli's fine acoustic quartet includes **David El-Malek** (sax), **Hein Van de Geyn** (bass), and a brilliant showing from Italian pianist **Enrico Pieranunzi**. Rich-voiced **Elisabeth Kontomanou** sings the gorgeous title track. From the tender, lovely waltz "Love Whispers" to the hard popping "This Side Up," Ceccarelli's marvelous swinging touch spreads joy. (CAM Jazz) **Jeff Potter**



### HELLYEAH HELLYEAH

★★★★★

Comprised of members of Nothingface and Mudvayne with Damageplan/Pantera's **VINNIE PAUL**, Hellyeah aims to revive the ear-shattering force of seminal southern boogie metal. Opener "Hellyeah" signals that Vinnie Paul is back indeed, his unmistakable double bass pummel (no click track here) like a bucket of nails to the brain. "You Wouldn't Know" offers a similar scorched-earth message, as does the triple-time "Matter Of Time" and the rubbery "Nausea." There is no mistaking Paul with the speed/thrash metal drummers of today: His time fluctuates, his snare smack is not particularly powerful, and his drum fills are decidedly old-school. In a word, he sounds human. **Ken Micallef**



### JEFF BABKO MONDO TRIO

★★★★★

Though currently well documented, **VINNIE COLAIUTA**'s recorded works are sometimes limited by the music in which he participates. Conversely, keyboardist Jeff Babko's *Mondo Trio* contains some of the Vinster's best ever full-on performances: the bullet-train tempo and free solo of "Vote 4 Morals," the hard-blowing rubato atmospherics of "El Nino," the super syncopated cruising funk of "Akimbo," and the manic jazz waltz "Young Dr. Jung" among them. Vinnie really stretches within a super-charged trio (organ/saxophone/drums) format, constantly pulling new ideas out of his bag of insanity. Equally groove-heavy and texturally diverse, *Mondo Trio* challenges the monster inside The Man. **Ken Micallef**

## MY LATEST OBSESSION



### JIM WHITE OF DIRTY THREE ON...

You get two people playing together and three is much more complex—you got music going on, not just the song. You know how there are moments that you always remember. I was driving down Alexander Parade in Melbourne, listening to Gary Young deejaying on 3CR, community radio station. Gary Young is the great drummer of Daddy Cool and many other bands from the '70s until now. It sounded so good I had to pull the car off the road and sit there and listen: *Sam Cooke Live At The Harlem Square Club*. I know it so well—I don't have a copy anymore but I can play it in

my head whenever I like, and that way I can jump the overly sentimental part in the middle of the LP. People get so attached to the incidentals around where one heard/felt something, sounds, conventions; the feelings of music are more robust than that. We know that because otherwise musical fashion couldn't change, and yet people are still getting the feelings from it. Stick it in. It's like when The Saints came on TV the first time, or when I first heard "Marriage" by Palace. What those people were doing that night in Florida was affecting me in my car that day in Melbourne.

Check out Jim White on his new duo album with Nina Nastasia, *You Follow Me*.

## TAKING THE REINS

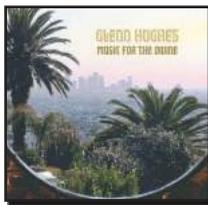
### BILLY WARD TRIO OUT THE DOOR

This gentle Scofield-esque instrumental jazz flows like a lazy river. Thoughtful and dynamic, with excellent production, the guitar/bass/acoustic drums lineup plays for the music, not the ego. The trio is rhythmically and melodically connected, soaring gracefully like birds in flight, together, yet each with their own unique pattern. Ward's drumming is organic, sensitive, and poetic. ([www.billyward.com](http://www.billyward.com)) **Mike Haid**



### MARCO KAPPELI & THE EVEN ODDS PRISONER OF TIME

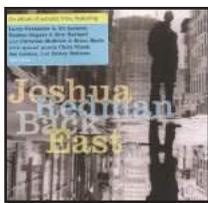
The Even Odds aren't afraid to swing, groove, rock, or play *way out*—all in the same song. Swiss drummer **MARCO KAPPELI** leads the fearless proceedings with quirky half-time shuffles, ghost note-laden second lines, and—you guessed it—odd times. The unconventional compositions also benefit from interesting instrumentation. (Two basses!) ([www.altrisuoni.com](http://www.altrisuoni.com)) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



## GLENN HUGHES MUSIC FOR THE DIVINE

★★★★★

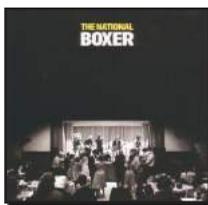
Former Deep Purple bassist/vocalist Glenn Hughes knows a stomping mad drummer when he hears one. Years with Ian Paice provided ear training, and his recent albums feature **CHAD SMITH**, who plays here. More than a simple rock album, *Music For The Divine* is ambitiously grandiose, with Smith playing a large role in its success. Both flashy and purposeful, Chad is a master groover and perfect accompanist, whether accenting bullet-hard changes in "Steppin' On," supporting cinematic strings in "The Valiant Denial," or slapping a smoking stroke in "Monkey Man." Hughes and Smith make a mighty team, maybe even better than Smith and Flea—it's *that* good. **Ken Micallef**



## JOSHUA REDMAN REDMAN BACK EAST

★★★★★

Joshua Redman's strongest album in some time finds him blowing in a sax/bass/drums format, allowing him ample space and showing his growth as a player. Fueled by three different rhythm sections, this album also provides an opportunity to hear the exceptional talents of drummers **ALI JACKSON**, **BRIAN BLADE**, and **ERIC HARLAND**, as they each take their turn. Whether it's Blade adding elastic colorings, Jackson tearing it up in closing "East Of The Sun," or Harland taking an excellent solo on the title track, each drummer comes through with a formidable and individual voice. Overall, an exceptional display of modern jazz drumming. **Martin Patmos**



## THE NATIONAL BOXER

★★★★★

How *Boxer's* meditative opening track "Fake Empire" swells from the triplet-feel of a plinking piano, to a dance-y, odd-time beat that sounds like Larry Mullen Jr. channeling Neil Peart, to an intoxicating brass-drenched coda—all quite stealthily—is a testament to the unobtrusive kit work of drummer **BRYAN DEVENDORF**. His method of pulsing songs without pushing them still allows room for twisted parts, like the verse figures in "Mistaken For Strangers" and "Brainy," both of which sound like drum machines come to life—albeit at markedly different tempos. Devendorf is yet another indie rock drummer bringing rhythmic sophistication to a genre where once there was only drab timekeeping. (Beggars Banquet) **Patrick Berkery**

# SIGNIFICANT REISSUES

## THE TRAVELING WILBURYS

Though **JIM KELTNER's** participation in The Traveling Wilburys was obscured by his legendary bandmates (**Bob Dylan**, **Tom Petty**, **Roy Orbison**, **George Harrison**, and **Jeff Lynne**), his steady swing and versatile chops are all over the super-group's two LPs, finally reissued by Rhino as the two-fer set *The Traveling Wilburys Collection*. Keltner's lazy pulse is topped off by **IAN WALLACE's** overdubbed tom fills on "Handle With Care," while his big beat moves "She's My Baby" along like a locomotive in the fast lane. (Rhino) **Patrick Berkery**



**ALSO CHECK OUT:** BOTCH AMERICAN NERVOSO (HYDRA HEAD) /// THE REMAINS THE REMAINS (SONY/LEGACY) /// THE ALAN PARSONS PROJECT I ROBOT, EYE IN THE SKY (ARISTA/LEGACY) /// FOO FIGHTERS THE COLOUR AND THE SHAPE (RCA/LEGACY) /// TOKEN ENTRY THE RE-ISSUES (SCREAM) /// ELECTRIC LIGHT ORCHESTRA OUT OF THE BLUE (EPIC/LEGACY) /// AL STEWART MODERN TIMES, 24 CARROTS (COLLECTOR'S CHOICE)

# EXTREME BEATS

by Michael Parillo

## The End, Temple Of Brutality, Psyopus



The End is cleaving its fan base with its new LP, *Elementary*, which is admittedly a bit more, uh, elementary than the Canadian quintet's earlier releases. But metal songcraft this strong apologizes to no one, regardless of whether the dizzying grindcore has been scaled back. **ANTHONY SALAJKO** favors a measured attack that prizes power over speed, and he navigates his kit fluidly, putting his toms and ride bell to excellent use. (Relapse)

A throwback to old-school thrash, Temple Of Brutality's *Lethal Agenda* features big guitar riffs that would be right at home on classic '80s recordings—but sadly the album's thin sound also plays like a product of that largely unfortunate decade. Meanwhile, **STET HOWLAND** pounces on every chord change with straight-forward orchestration and an energetic feel. (Demolition)

Now for the most extreme of this batch of Extreme Beats, *Our Puzzling Encounters Considered*, by Psyopus. As song ideas appear, splinter, and repeat, you'll be forgiven for wondering whether a CD player has a needle, and, if so, whether the needle can get stuck. Nope—music this nuts can only be deliberate. Beneath shredding, sliding fretwork, and Mike Patton-influenced vocals, **JON COLE** navigates constant time and pattern shifts with baffling precision and savant-like powers of memorization. Could he be using sheet music? We doubt it. (Metal Blade)

# LIGHTING THE FUSE

by Mike Haid

## DEREK SHERINIAN, GAMBALE/DONATI/FIERABRACCI, SLAUGHTERHOUSE 3, TOM GROSE



On Derek Sherinian's *Blood Of The Snake*, the ex-Dream Theater keyboardist continues to impress with high-velocity fusion, prog metal, and straight-up heavy metal. Drummers **SIMON PHILLIPS** and **BRIAN TICHY** share the inspiring drum chair. (InsideOut Music)

Gambale/Donati/Fierabracci's *Made In Australia* is a well-recorded document of a 2003 live show in Melbourne. This all-star guitar/bass/drums fusion trio sound comfortable and cohesive on this funky, rock-influenced instrumental material. **VIRGIL DONATI** displays a strong groove throughout, spiced with his insane polyrhythmic sensibilities. (Wombat)

On *S3*, long-time Tribal Tech bandmates **Gary Willis** (bass) and **Kirk Covington** (drums) collaborate with inventive Spanish sax wiz **Libert Fortuny** under the group name Slaughterhouse 3 to create a fresh, funk-based collection of experimental, improvisational groove-scapes. Covington's loose, explosive, and beautifully recorded drum tracks bring dynamics and major personality to this sonically far-reaching collection. ([www.abstractlogix.com](http://www.abstractlogix.com))

Finally, the extreme talents of multi-instrumentalist/composer **Tom Grose** and drummer extraordinaire **SEAN O'ROURKE** explode on two powerful Zappa-esque instrumental releases, *At Bay* and *Jetsam*. ([www.tomgrose.com](http://www.tomgrose.com))

# MULTI-MEDIA

## BILL BRUFORD'S EARTHWORKS VIDEO ANTHOLOGY VOLUME 1 (THE 2000s) VOLUME 2 (THE 1990s)

DVDs LEVEL: ALL \$38.99

★★★★★

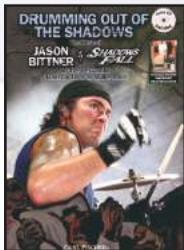


Bill Bruford's post-prog career doesn't get enough credit. By now, he's been leading a version of Earthworks for over fifteen years, redefining what jazz means. His beautiful touch, top-notch group interplay, and cerebral compositions are on full display in a separately packaged two-DVD set. *Volume 1* chronicles the latest, mostly acoustic incarnation. *Volume 2* showcases the electronic origins of the band, during which Bruford relied on Simmons pads to provide a chordal basis for tunes. Throughout, Bruford's solos are about economy of motion and taste. Bill barely moves his arms while fluidly breaking up quick doubles between his toms and crackling snare. (www.billbruford.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

## DRUMMING OUT OF THE SHADOWS: THE MUSIC OF JASON BITTNER & SHADOWS FALL BY JOE BERGAMINI & WILLIE ROSE

BOOK/CD LEVEL: BEGINNER TO INTERMEDIATE \$26.95

★★★★★



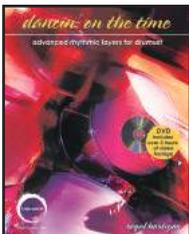
You won't hear drum tracks on this book's accompanying CD of Shadows Fall recordings, and that's because author Bergamini and transcriber Rose know the importance of recognizing double-kick patterns before they're applied to the kit. The reader is offered sufficient building blocks of Bittner's style, from various 16th- and 32nd-note patterns to triplet and four-stroke ruff feels. While this 122-page hybrid instructional resource/bio isn't for everyone, Shadows Fall fans will get a real kick out of its sixteen transcriptions, its two-part interview, and Bittner's recording-session memories and personal photos. (Carl Fischer)

**Will Romano**

## DANCIN' ON THE TIME: ADVANCED RHYTHMIC LAYERS FOR DRUMSET BY ROYAL HARTIGAN

BOOK/DVD LEVEL: ALL \$40

★★★★★



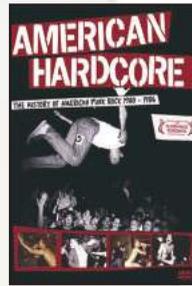
With a family legacy of tap dance, Royal Hartigan brings a background in African drumming, ethnomusicology, and world music to his comprehensive coordination-development book. He uses rudiments—grouped into single-stroke combinations (ruffs & d'ruffs), rolls, paradiddles, and ratamacues—in endless combinations of tones and timbres by utilizing the four limbs. All the exercises are either two-way (one hand alternating strokes between the snare and bass while the other plays time on a cymbal), three-way (one hand alternating between the snare, bass, and hi-hat), or four-way (omitting the time pulse on the cymbals so each pattern can use all four limbs), and they're presented in both duple and triple feel. The easy-to-use, spiral-bound 254-page book is clearly laid out and includes numerous pictures of Hartigan over the years. The three-plus-hour DVD, portions of which were recorded in Ghana, demonstrates all the exercises and includes several ensemble performances, as well as a drumset/tap dance duet between Hartigan and Roosevelt Jackson. (www.tapSPACEpublications.com)

**Andrea Byrd**

## AMERICAN HARDCORE

DVD LEVEL: ALL \$19.94

★★★★★



In 1981, at the dawn of the Reagan era, as the country moved to the right, bands like Minor Threat, Bad Brains, The Effigies, and Black Flag responded by creating a new movement, hardcore—the fastest, most intense punk rock imaginable. This was seriously uncommercial music. *American Hardcore* documents the rise and fall of hardcore's first wave, featuring vintage live footage and present-day interviews with many of the genre's pioneers. It's a riveting, insightful look back at a time and scene where DIY was a necessity rather than a choice. Most of *American Hardcore's* electrifying live footage is of the fan-shot, single-camera variety, which means drummers tend to get short shrift. That said, there are exciting glimpses of Minor Threat's **JEFF NELSON**, MDC's **AL SCHVITZ**, Bad Brains' **EARL HUDSON**, and others laying waste to their kits. Twenty-five years later, the music still sounds vital. And hardcore's influence can still be heard in basements and punk clubs—and in the music of platinum-selling artists like AFI, Fall Out Boy, and Metallica. (Sony Pictures Classics) **Jon Wurster**

## AND FURTHERMORE...



### MICHAEL BRECKER PILGRIMAGE

Saxman Brecker could not have composed a better finale than *Pilgrimage*, and drummer **JACK DEJOHNETTE** is a big part of it, along with daring guitarist **Pat Metheny**, probing pianists **Herbie Hancock** and **Brad Mehldau**, and the ever-ready bassist **John Patitucci**. There's a breathtaking moment in "Tumbleweed" where DeJohnette and Brecker are both just laying everything on the line, and they match wits on the fiery duo out-vamp on "Cardinal Rule." (Heads Up) **Robin Tolleson**

### PAUL RODGERS LIVE IN GLASGOW

The singer for Bad Company retains his thick tone and precise intonation. Scroll through the hits to a deluxe version of "All Right Now." The drumming, courtesy of Collective Soulster **RYAN HOYLE**, is lean. Fills, Glaswegians would say, are scant. Backbeats are '70s-fat. Note the pleasant triplet lilt on the kick. (www.hatchfarmstudios.co.uk) **T. Bruce Wittet**

### SCOTT FISHER & 1 A.M. APPROACH STEP INTO THE FUTURE

An alternative to John Mayer and Jack Johnson, Scott Fisher's gentle vocals are more beach-shore wistful than backroom bluesy. Ably negotiating a diverse collection of rhythmic feels, drummer **ENRIQUE GONZALES** frequently sneaks in ornamentation, adding ruff value to "3,000 Years" and a rock shuffle in the manner of "Reelin' In The Years." (www.scottfishermusic.com) **T. Bruce Wittet**

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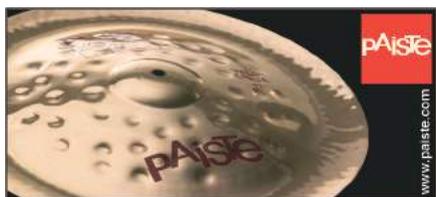
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## Percfest 2007

Story and photos by Mario A. Riggio



Nice gig if you can get it. A fitness session on the Italian Riviera beach, with drumset players Alex Battini de Barreiro (left) and Luca Capitani.

The eleventh edition of Percfest, Italy's premier drumming event, was held this past June 25 through July 1 in the town of Laigueglia, on the Italian Riviera. The festival features top Italian and international drummers and percussionists—not to mention sandy beaches and warm sun. More than a hundred drum and percussion events are held in six days, including lessons, seminars, concerts, jam sessions, and marching bands. And it's all for free!

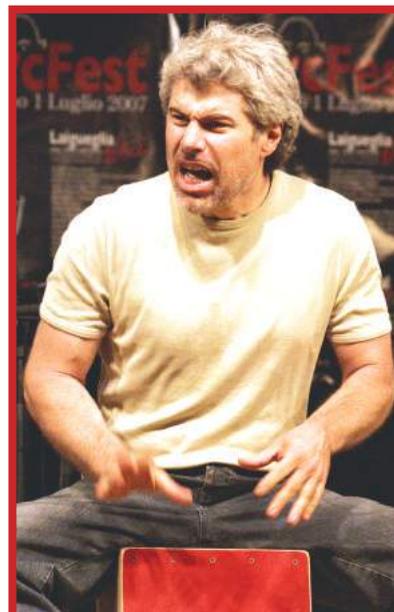
A typical Percfest day starts on the beach, where hundreds of people exercise to the beats played by drummers like Italian studio great **Ellade Bandini**, accompanied by other Percfest artists and enthusiastic "jammers." By the afternoon it's time to study. Five teachers offer percussion classes: **Gilson Silveira** (Miguel Bosé Ana Torroja) on Brazilian percussion, **Giorgio Palombino** on Cuban "cu-bop," **Marco Fadda** (Billy Cobham, Noa) on cajon technique, **Dado Sezzi** on live and studio effects, and **Lorenzo Gasperoni** on African percussion and polyrhythm. Meanwhile, drumset star **Luca Capitani** holds forth on rock drumming, Argentinean drummer **Alex Battini De Barreiro** teaches Latin drumming and foot independence, Peruvian master **Paulo La Rosa** teaches Latin percussion, and **Sangoma Everett** (Clifford Jordan, Dizzy Gillespie, Dee Dee Bridgewater) teaches funk drumming.

In the early evening drum circles take life throughout the streets of Laigueglia. Hundreds of people play, led by members of the Percfest faculty. Later come the concerts—three or more every night. Notable among the 2007 roster were The Steve Grossman band with Sangoma Everett, Italian frame-drum artist **Alessandra Belloni**, and a quintet led by top Italian jazz drummer **Roberto Gatto**. Other highlights included Gilson Silveira and his Brazilian "samba-batucada" band, as well as young drummer **Alessio Guadagnoli**, who exhibited spectacular chops coupled with great stick tricks and showmanship. The concerts are followed by multiple nightly jam sessions that last into the wee hours.

After six days and nights of music, I realized that I had still missed more than half of the events. It's too much... it's Percfest! For more information, go to [www.percfest.com](http://www.percfest.com).

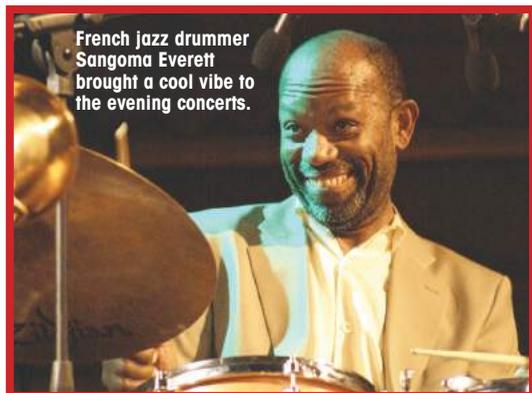


The Percfest crowd dug the showmanship of young stick wizard Alessio Guadagnoli.



Marco Fadda is one of Europe's top percussionists. He's currently touring with Billy Cobham's band.

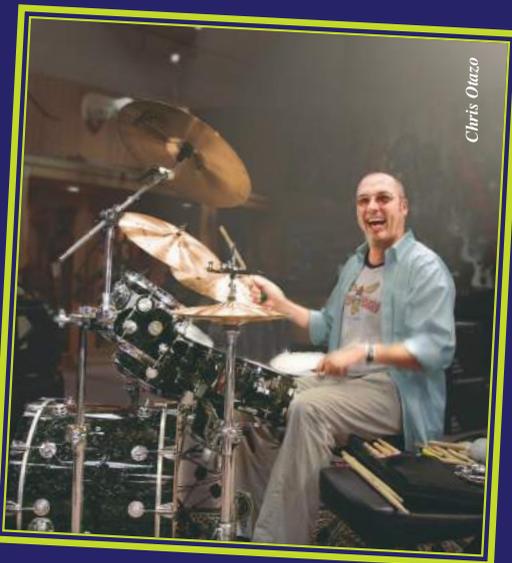
Drummer/percussionist Gilson Silveira anchored his Brazilian trio for an exciting performance.



French jazz drummer Sangoma Everett brought a cool vibe to the evening concerts.

# Billy Ward Guitar Center Tour

Drumming great Billy Ward, who was voted #2 in the drum clinician category of the 2007 Modern Drummer Readers Poll, recently completed a five-show/five-city tour at Guitar Center stores in Boston, New York, Columbus, Detroit, and Chicago. Hundreds of clinic attendees were treated to Billy's concepts about harmony and melody in drumming ("Art lies in the details"), as well as a preview of his next DVD, *Voices In My Head*, which emphasizes jazz concepts and how they apply to today's music. The tour was sponsored by DW, Zildjian, Evans, Trueline, and Shure.



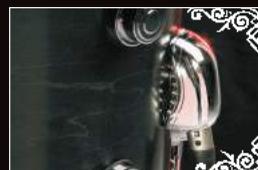
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# In Memoriam Charlie Donnelly

Charlie Donnelly, one of the first American drum dealers to specialize in vintage percussion instruments and a long-time member of the *Modern Drummer* Advisory Board, died at his home in Newington, Connecticut on July 1. He was ninety-three years old.

In the 1930s when he was in his twenties, Charlie applied for a job at Bill Mather's Drum Center on 47th Street in New York City. Mather recognized the young drummer's passion for the instrument and put Charlie to work repairing, tuning, and delivering drums for the stars of the swing era. From the 1940s until the late 1960s, Charlie led his own dance bands in central Connecticut and acted as a local booking agent, bringing jazz greats like Gene Krupa, Cozy Cole, Coleman Hawkins, and Jo Jones to area clubs. He was also a manager at Hartford's foremost drum store, owned by renowned percussionist and teacher Al Lepak.

In 1970 Charlie opened his own shop and teaching studio in nearby Newington. Toward the end of the decade, his son Chuck noticed the burgeoning market in vintage guitars and suggested that concentrating on older instruments might be a good way to clear out some back inventory and parts. The move was a perfect professional fit for Charlie, whose first-hand knowledge reached back to the days when Ludwig Black Beauties and Slingerland Radio Kings were new products. Charlie Donnelly's Vintage Drums became a regular stop for both local players and an international clientele of rock and jazz musicians, including Bun E. Carlos, Phil Collins, Carl Palmer, Mickey Curry, Ed Blackwell, the Doobie Brothers, and many others. Historic sets played by Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa, Cozy Cole, Sonny Greer, and other legends passed through Charlie's tiny shop on their way to collections around the world. As an obsessive tinkerer, Charlie was equally content brokering a telephone deal for a rare Gretsch Gladstone kit or helping a neighborhood kid fix a tricky bass drum pedal.

Charlie closed his shop in 2001, but he never lost his enthusiasm for drums and drummers. His passing breaks a link to the first great era of American drum-making, but his knowledge lives through the generous advice he passed on to many of today's leading vintage dealers and generations of musicians.

Tom Smith



# Upcoming Events

The *Amelia Island (Florida) Jazz Festival*, which is being held this October 7 through 14, will feature a week-long series of events under the creative direction of jazz drummer and bandleader *Les DeMerle*. These events will include several jazz concerts, a Sponsors' Party, and educational programs for youth in the schools, for families, and for seniors. Concerts will feature world-class jazz artists performing in a wide variety of styles. For more information, phone (904) 504-4772 or visit [www.ameliaislandjazzfestival.com](http://www.ameliaislandjazzfestival.com).

Les DeMerle



The *2007 Montreal Drum Fest* will be held Saturday and Sunday, November 10 and 11 at Pierre-Mercure Hall in downtown Montreal. Saturday's roster of artists includes *Daniel Adair* (Nickelback), *Will Calhoun* (Living Colour), *Dave Langguth* (Nelly Furtado), *Yanic Bercier* (Quo Vadis), and *Terreon Gully* (Christian McBride). Sunday's show will feature *Peter Erskine & Alex Acuña*, *Thomas Lang*, *Dave Lombardo* (Slayer), *Marko Djordjevic*, *Blandiloquentia*, and a showcase of Cuban drummers and percussionists. Go to [www.montrealdrumfest.com](http://www.montrealdrumfest.com) for more information.

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# Who's Playing What

New Zildjian cymbal artists include **Sheila E.**, **Jeff Ballard**, **Patrick Johansson** (Yngwie Malmsteen), **Sandy Gennaro** (Bo Diddley), **Pete Escovedo** (Pete Escovedo Latin Jazz Orchestra), **Joe Porcaro** (Emil Richards/Joe Porcaro Quartet), **Gil Sharone** (Dillinger Escape Plan/Stolen Babies), **Matt Flynn** (Maroon 5), **Andy Hubbard** (Little Big Town), and **Hannah Ford**.

**M. Shawn "Clown" Crahan** (Slipknot), **Travis Smith** (Trivium), **Mike Bennett** (Hilary Duff), and **John Miceli** (Meatloaf) are now endorsing Gibraltar hardware.

Canadian studio and touring drummer **Adam Hay** (Chantal Kreviazuk) is now playing Los Cabos drumsticks.

**Nioshi Jackson** (Nashville Star tour) is a new Mapex drummer.

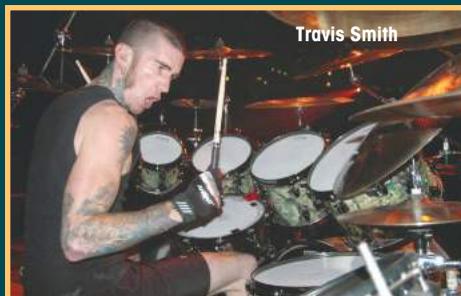
Qwikstix drumstick holders has added **Jim Riley** (Rascal Flatts), **Rich Redmond** (Jason Aldean), **Scott Metko** (Adam Fears), **Chris Frazier** (Edgar Winter), and **Chip Ritter** (independent) to their roster of artists.



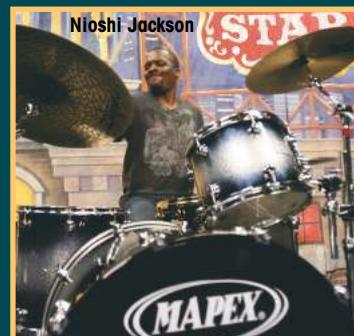
Patrick Johansson



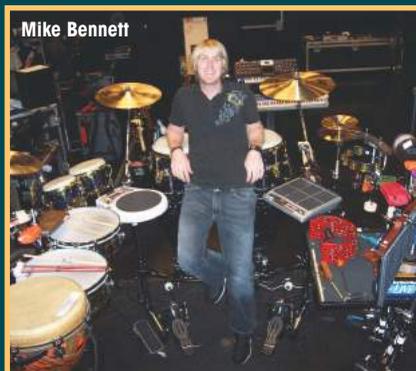
Sheila E.



Travis Smith



Nioshi Jackson



Mike Bennett



John Miceli

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Chris Bennett is a big guy, but he and his kit are comfortably supported by the stable platform.

Three composite-plastic dunnage racks combine to form Chris's affordable drum riser. Each section features eight legs: four at the corners, two on the sides, and two in the middle for added support.



## When You Need A Lift...

In keeping with the special "setups" focus of this issue, Kit Of The Month focuses not on Orlando, Florida drummer Chris Bennett's drumkit—attractive though it is—but rather on the riser it's sitting on.

Chris read Jason Bittner's June '07 Ask A Pro answer about his steel-grate drum riser with interest, because Chris wanted a similar riser for his own kit. "I called the company that Jason mentioned," says Chris, "and they told me that a 6'x6' riser would run \$3,000, which was way over my budget. But shortly after that I was at a WalMart garden center, where I noticed some grated shelves that they used for their outdoor plants. I searched online and found a manufacturer called SPC Industrial Systems. They call the shelves Dunnage Racks. They're made of nylon/composite plastic, and SPC

makes them in 66" x 24" sections with eight 12"-high PVC legs. I contacted SPC, and they put me in touch with a local dealer."

Chris ordered three of the 66" x 24" racks at a total cost of \$350, including shipping and taxes. Together they create a 5 1/2' x 6' riser for Chris and his kit. "The sections only weigh about 20 lbs. each," says Chris, "They're durable, and their size makes them easy to transport. They can hold up to 350 lbs. each—which is good, because I'm a pretty big guy—and they can be held together easily by four C-clamps. The grated design lets me put lights and a fog machine under the riser for effects.

"Drummers can contact SPC at (800) 523-6899," Chris concludes. "I hope this information helps other drummers find a way to elevate their kits without breaking the bank."

## Is Your Drumkit Something Special?

Of course it is! Now how about sharing your cool creation with thousands of fellow *Modern Drummer* readers. Simply send us some photos and a brief description of your unique set, and we'll consider it for inclusion in *Kit Of The Month*. And if we do pick your pride & joy for coverage in *MD*, we'll send you a cool new MD Drum Bag/Cooler—for free! Just follow the simple directions below.



### Photo Requirements

1. Photos must be high-quality, sharp-focus, well-lit, and in color. High-resolution (300 dpi) digital photos are preferred; color prints will be considered; Polaroids not accepted.
2. You may send more than one view of the kit. 3. Show only drums, no people. 4. Shoot drums against a neutral background. Avoid "busy" backgrounds.
5. Clearly highlight special attributes of your kit. 6. Digital photos on disk and print photos may be sent to: Kit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Photos cannot be returned. 7. Digital photos and descriptive text can also be emailed to [rvh@moderndrummer.com](mailto:rvh@moderndrummer.com). Show "Kit Of The Month" in the subject line of the message.



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