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BILLY THOMAS • MATT CHAMBERLAIN • DALE CROVER
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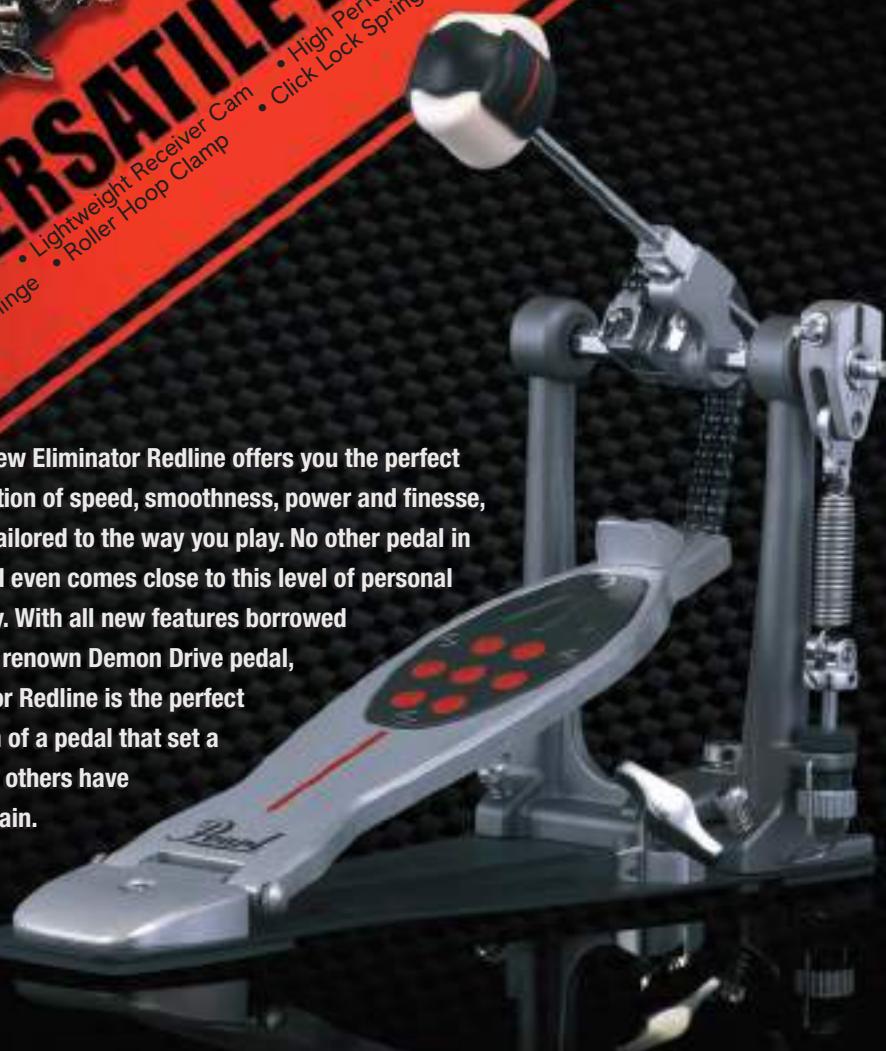
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"I wanted a natural drum sound, and we tried to avoid quantizing. So the grooves needed to be super-tight. That's where my intensive practice came in."

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by Ken Micallef

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Follow Your Heart

There are multiple reasons we go down particular paths of drumming education. Our first teacher introduces us to *Stick Control*, and we start getting our hands together. We hear "Achilles Last Stand," and John Bonham's right foot becomes the new bar to reach. Later Count Basie sets us on the long journey toward developing a righteous swing feel. And on and on.

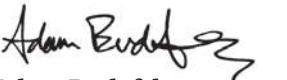
I've noticed that as we get older, some of us begin to be influenced more and more by things outside of music. Recently my passion for political and social issues has led me to try to cop some grooves that I've never attempted before, from parts of the country and the world that I want to learn more about. At the same time, lately I've been bumming because for far too long I haven't played regularly in a band—at least one that I've wanted to fully immerse myself in, head, hands, and heart. I need to get my act together, call some friends, and see what we can get going—maybe something that features topical and ethnic elements.

Meanwhile, I've been feeling unexcited by my setup these days. Despite having a woodshed full of drums and percussion, I haven't had much luck coming up with a unique arrangement that inspires me. Then last night, while listening to a CD of Nigerian funk from the '70s, an idea hit me that could potentially fulfill several of my current desires. What if I put together a playlist of some of my favorite dance music from around the world and used it as the basis to learn some unfamiliar rhythms? That list could also serve as a template for this band that I've created in my head—and maybe even inspire a new but practical setup.

The playlist came quickly. I guess some of these ideas have been swimming around in my subconscious for a while. (You can check it out at *Modern Drummer's* Spotify page. It's called AB's Imaginary Band.) The drum setup's still a work in progress, though. To be honest, my personal battle has never been coming up with cool arrangements; what's been tough for me is settling on one. Go to my Modern Drummer Facebook page to see my latest, though it's a good bet it'll change by the time this issue hits newsstands. Oh, well, I guess there are worse problems to have than obsessive-compulsive drum disorder.

If you've been in a rut lately—or even if you haven't—I encourage you to look to your own interests away from music and see if they lead you into some new territory. Put together a playlist based on, say, your love of old automobiles. There are a million great songs about cars and driving—"No Particular Place to Go" by Chuck Berry, "Radar Love" by Golden Earring, "Brand New Cadillac" by the Clash...you could do worse than spending time picking apart those drum parts. Or maybe you're into Clint Eastwood movies. Immerse yourself in Ennio Morricone's spaghetti-western scores and Lalo Schifrin's *Dirty Harry* soundtrack. Talk about a wide range of sounds!

Even if we don't end up taking our playlist inspirations to the stage, there's absolutely no risk of injury from falling down this type of rabbit hole. To the contrary, I can almost guarantee that we'll discover something about drumming that we didn't know before. And who knows, like Alice in Wonderland, we might even find ourselves in the process.


Adam Budofsky
 Editorial Director



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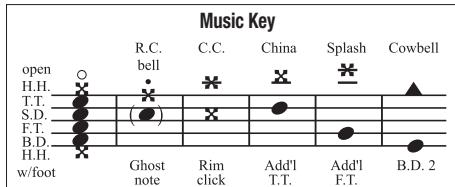
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Favorite Carter Beauford Track?

Since this month's *Gearing Up* features funk, fusion, and rock giant Carter Beauford of the Dave Matthews Band detailing his drum setup, we figured it was as good a time as any to ask our social media followers to tell us what their favorite tracks are that feature the founding DMB member. While "Drive In Drive Out," "Tripping Billies," "Ants Marching," and "Rapunzel" were certainly common choices, "#41" topped the picks by a healthy margin. Check out some of the comments below.

It's so hard to choose one track, because Carter's so versatile, but I'd say "#41." It encompasses all of Carter's groove abilities, sonic texturing, and creative meshing of styles into a modern sound: rock, one drop, jazz, and fusion. Whenever you listen to Carter's playing, you can hear his respect and understanding of the importance of tension and release, which is undoubtedly featured on this track, not only through his signature chopped-up and syncopated hi-hat work, but in the peaks and valleys he creates through his control of dynamics and the intensity of his playing. Of course there are some tunes where Carter's speed and chops are highlighted more, but this is probably his best overall track.

Jonathan C. Wilson

"The Dreaming Tree" is one of my all-time favorite drum tracks. The ride pattern that mirrors the guitar line with subtle splash and hi-hat accents gave me chills the first time I listened to it. The groove he created almost made me pass out. Genius.

Bradley Jon Sanders

I would say the intro and all of "#41." Yes, he's very technical, syncopated, and fast, but what I love the most about Carter Beauford is his musicality. He doesn't play a rhythm—he turns the drums into a very melodic instrument. Simply amazing.

Adel Bereksi

"The Stone" off the album *Before These Crowded Streets* taught me everything I've ever needed to know about dynamics, counterbalance, and an insane hi-hat approach. His style is one-of-a-kind, and Carter is definitely my biggest influence. Thanks for asking and for keeping Beauford's playing relevant to younger players.

Ian Teeley

From the beginnings of the Dave Matthews Band through 2007, we saw Carter take a more fusion-styled approach, which was based on

finesse and the incorporation of different sounds like splash cymbals. Since 2008, he's moved to more of a rock-oriented sound with a heavier reliance on China cymbals and double bass. Regardless of which "version" you prefer, he's still Carter. The best examples of Carter's playing come from live albums, as that's where he really gets to stretch out. His work on "Two Step" from *Live at Piedmont Park* is a great example of his fusion style as well as his ability to jam with Butch Taylor on keys and Stefan Lessard on bass.

Chris Zwyrych

"Too Much." It came on the radio one day while I was driving home from work. I'll

never forget the excitement of hearing Carter for the first time. It was incredible to hear so much creativity and groove just in that one song.

Malcolm Larri

It's such a tough call. There's the double paradiddles in "Drive In Drive Out," the 7/4 outro in "Dreaming Tree," the amazing and subtle groove in "Lover Lay Down." And it's hard to beat "#41," which is such a [combination] of genres that are new and old—not to mention that it totally solidified his place among the greats.

Andrew Pettway

That's easy. "Rapunzel." Sure, you can learn the tune and cover it well on YouTube, but like "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover," "Rosanna," and "Tom Sawyer" before it, good luck creating something so beautifully original yourself. Kudos, Carter, you're one of the greats.

Tom Kostka

"Drive In Drive Out" encompasses what he does for that band. He's conservative when the other players need to be heard, he accentuates technical parts in a way that still allows you to grab on to the beat, and he can put on a clinic with groove and showmanship.

Geoff Williams

The live version of "Crush" from *The Central Park Concert*. The ending is amazing. His ability to solo and always find his way back to beat 1 is so impressive. It also speaks to the talent of his bandmates.

Nate MacMillen

"Drive In Drive Out," because of the polyrhythms and push-and-pull. He has an innate ability to direct the flow of a song, and this one is a perfect example.

John Kregg

All the songs from *The Lillywhite Sessions*. I wish they would release this on vinyl. I was just jamming the whole album earlier. Also, the first song I learned, in 1996, was "Satellite." Learning the hi-hat rhythms will put your skills on a new level.

Brandon Allred

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

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NEWS

Out Now

Jimmy DeGrasso /// Black Star Riders' *Heavy Fire*

Hard rockers Black Star Riders, a group composed of former members of the hit 1970s rock group Thin Lizzy, issued its third and most eclectic release, *Heavy Fire*, this past February. "Song craftsmanship is hard to come by," says Jimmy DeGrasso, the veteran metal player who's worked with Alice Cooper, Megadeth, and Y&T, and who got the call in 2012 to join the project when original Thin Lizzy drummer Brian Downey opted out. "Every BSR album gets better, with *Heavy Fire* being the most diverse of the three. It's hard rock, Motown, soul, punk, and whatever we feel works best for the music. We even have gospel singers on a couple of songs. We're not pigeonholed into one style, which I love. There's no formula for success anymore, so we play what we want. So far, the BSR records are selling well, and the tours are packed."

Solid, spot-on drumming shines throughout *Heavy Fire*. "A lot of our songs have drum intros," DeGrasso says. "I always try to add something rhythmically creative, like in the intro to 'Who Rides the Tiger,' where I play a paradiddle-diddle with my hands and a double-pedal right/left pattern underneath."

According to DeGrasso, producer Nick Raskulinecz (Rush, Foo Fighters, Mastodon) took a hands-on approach during the recording process, working closely with the drummer. "Nick has a very astute ear for music and knows what works on every instrument," DeGrasso says. "I used a set of DW prototype stainless steel drums for the sessions, and even went retro with Remo black-dot heads and no muffling on the kit. Nick loved it, and the drums sounded amazing. We ended up using that kit for the entire recording." **Mike Haid**



Mark Hyland

Jason Trammell /// Sinkane's *Life & Livin' It*

Contagious hooks and gorgeous harmonies float over the tasty, soulful, and world-influenced grooves that drummer Jason Trammell lays down on producer and multi-instrumentalist Sinkane's diverse new release, *Life & Livin' It*. Throughout, Trammell handily tackles style shifts, a benefit, he says, of his various multicultural influences. "I love so many different styles of music," Trammell explains. "I also spin records out in New York City quite a bit. Within that, I travel through diverse styles of music while keeping a cohesive feel. Soul music is soul music, whether it's from Memphis, Lagos, Detroit, or Jamaica."

The multifaceted musician Ahmed Gallab, who founded Sinkane as a solo vehicle in 2008 after playing with Caribou, of Montreal, and other popular indie acts, worked closely with Trammell before hitting the studio. "Ahmed has a huge input on the drums," Trammell says. "He builds drum ideas in Ableton Live when he's working on his demos and has a very clear vision of where the drums live within his songs. The two of us played drums together for several years in another band before I joined Sinkane. I play on, within, and around his rhythms, adding my feel and style to the patterns. Ultimately when it comes to the recording process we do what's best for the song."

Willie Rose



MORE NEW RELEASES

The Godfathers A Big Bad Beautiful Noise (Tim James) /// **Lorna Shore** Flesh Coffin (Austin Archey) ///
Unearthly Trance Dream State Arsenal (Darren Verni) /// **So This Is Suffering** Palace of the Pessimist (Zechariah Gamez) ///
The Sadies Northern Passages (Mike Belitsky) /// **Thievery Corporation** The Temple of I & I (Jeff Franca)

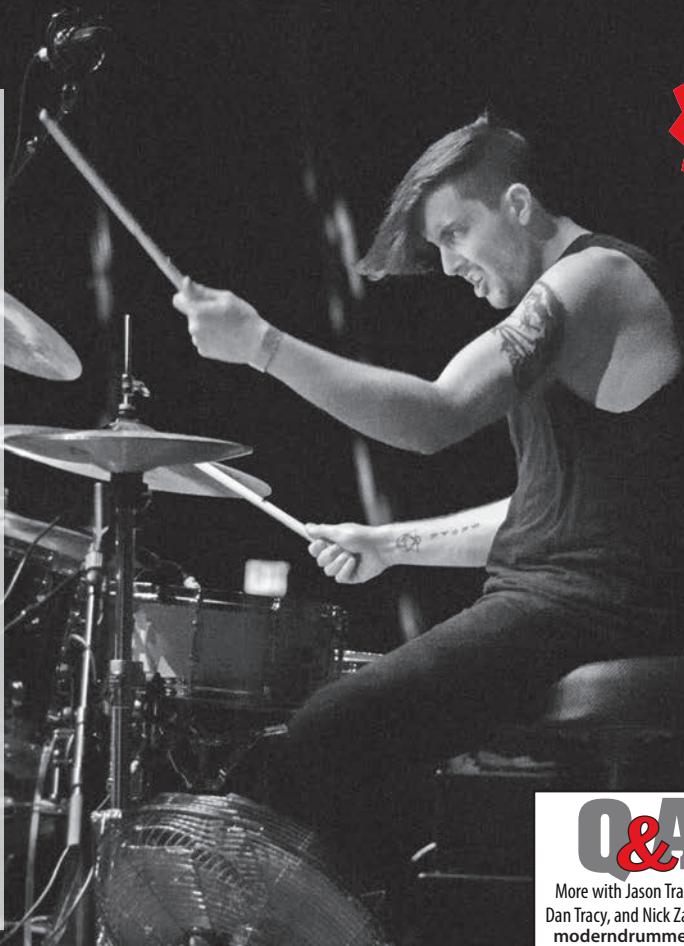
On
Tour

Dan Tracy with Deafheaven

Metal and shoegaze genre slashers Deafheaven are currently ripping across the country on a tour that lasts through late March. Blast-beat maniac Dan Tracy offers advice for attaining the speed needed to fuel the tsunami of drumming that powers the band's set during each show. "Developing speed on the drums is all about the hours you put into it," Tracy says. "The idea is to push yourself beyond your previous limit. Sit down and play single-stroke rolls until you physically can't anymore. Then start it all over again."

While plenty of handles could be applied to Deafheaven's sound—black metal and melodic post-rock, for instance—Tracy remains unfettered by labels. "I think the whole idea of needing to apply a genre name to a band is relatively new," the drummer says. "Consider 'metal' tours from twenty years ago. They would have completely different-sounding bands on the bill, because that's what people wanted. Who wants to go watch the same band four times in a row? Variety is key to discovering new concepts you wouldn't otherwise have. Isn't that the point of being a musician or artist?"

Willie Rose



Q&A

More with Jason Trammell, Dan Tracy, and Nick Zamora at moderndrummer.com

Nick Zamora with the Suffers

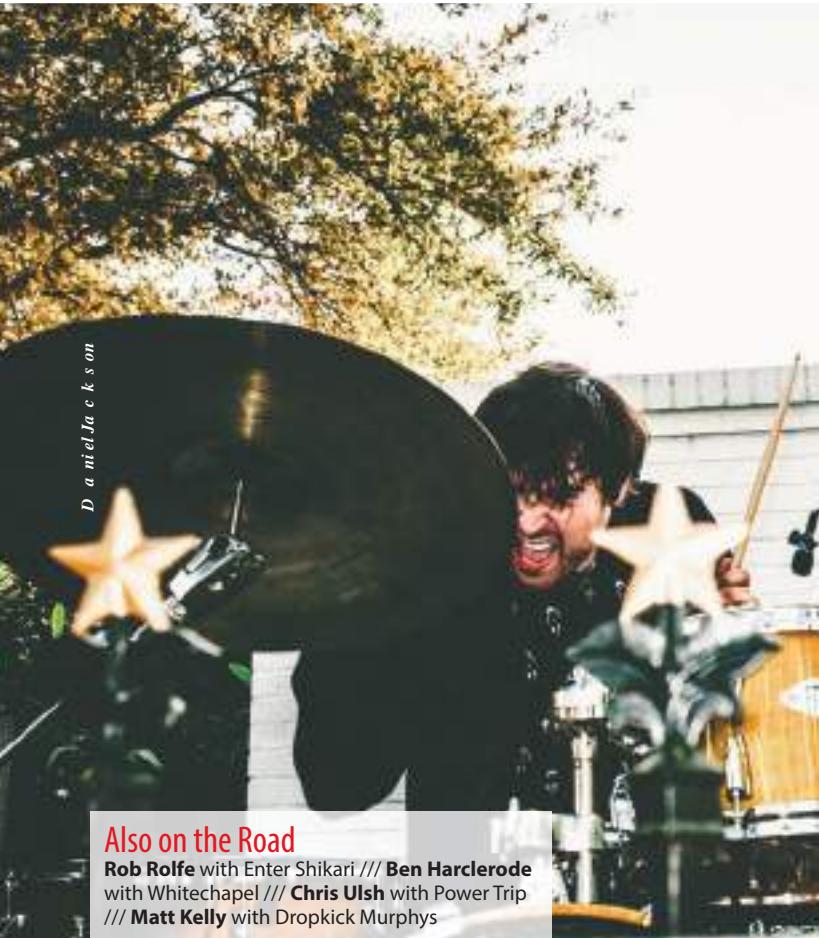
Drummer Nick Zamora's driving feel, blazing yet apt chops, and Motown grooves are supporting the Houston-based soul collective the Suffers on their current tour throughout March. The band members cite their home city as a major influence on their funky, poppy, and soulful sound, and for Zamora in particular, growing up in the Texas metropolis played a major role in defining his solid, wide-ranging style. "Houston has a program that will bus kids to schools outside of their zone to schools that have a special focus," the drummer says. "It wasn't a music-focused program, but the high school I attended, Jesse H. Jones, was in one of the city's lower-income neighborhoods that experienced 'white flight' after the baby boom. Going here exposed me to a completely different musical world that I would likely have missed had I attended my zoned high school. I was simultaneously marching in an HBCU-style band, playing punk and ska shows on weekends, and doing the occasional jazz gig."

Live, Zamora tastefully picks spots for fills between solid grooves to support the ten-member group, which includes percussionist Jose Luna. "With so many musicians, the number of individual notes that can be played at any given time increases significantly," Zamora says. "We find that the less disciplined we are, the less focused the song is. Also, leaving space opens up more opportunities for syncopation between instruments or, in the case of the drums, to use a fill to support a vocal or instrumental line instead of being the centerpiece of a transition. The songs as a whole take on a much better feel when everyone cooperates." **Willie Rose**

Daniel Jackson

Also on the Road

Rob Rolfe with Enter Shikari /// **Ben Harclerode** with Whitechapel /// **Chris Ulsh** with Power Trip /// **Matt Kelly** with Dropkick Murphys



Taylor Hawkins Mentors Students

Taylor Hawkins of the Foo Fighters recently played drums with students at Riverside Central Elementary School in Rochester, Minnesota. The visit was a celebration of the school's new infusion of arts and music education facilitated through President Obama's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities' Turnaround Arts program. Turnaround Arts empowers high-need, low-performing schools in thirty-six districts throughout the U.S. with resources; art, music, theater, and/or dance programs; musical instruments; arts integration across subject areas; and a Turnaround Artist mentor as a strategy to address challenges and turn around struggling schools. Mentors such as Hawkins, Jack Johnson, Sarah Jessica Parker, Chad Smith, Elizabeth Banks, and others are each paired with a Turnaround Arts school to offer guidance, inspiration, and encouragement throughout the school's journey with the arts.



Kelli Rafferty

Yamaha Honors Artists and Educators at PASIC With Legacy in Education Awards

This past November, Yamaha presented the company's Legacy in Education Awards to **Steve Houghton** and **Bret Kuhn** during the annual Percussive Arts Society International Convention in Indianapolis. The annual award recognizes distinguished Yamaha artists and music educators for their extraordinary service to and impact on the field of music education.

"Steve Houghton and Bret Kuhn have each contributed immeasurably to the field of percussion as music educators and clinicians, and have influenced the careers of thousands of aspiring percussionists," says John Wittmann, Yamaha director of artist relations and education. "During a lifetime of commitment to music education, they have earned respect from their peers as well as from the students who will become the artists and music educators of the future."

Houghton currently serves as professor of percussion and jazz at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music and has performed with Woody Herman's Young Thundering Herd, Freddie Hubbard, Gary Burton, Christian McBride, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Joe Henderson, Ray Brown, and many others. Kuhn is a nationally prominent clinician, arranger, and performing artist who is the percussion coordinator for

the Prospect High School music program in Mt. Prospect, Illinois, an adjunct faculty member with Northern Illinois Marching Band, and a consultant with Arizona State's Sun Devil Marching Band.

Among the previous recipients of the Yamaha Legacy in Education Award are James Campbell, Dave Samuels, Dave Weckl, Jim Petercsak, and Bob Breithaupt.



From left: Yamaha artist relations and education director John Wittmann, Bret Kuhn, Yamaha senior vice president Rick Young, and Steve Houghton

WHO'S PLAYING WHAT

Tim Kuhl (Margaret Glaspy, Sean Lennon's Ghost of a Saber Tooth Tiger, solo), **Sean Fuller** (Florida Georgia Line), and **Jamie Miller** (Bad Religion) have joined the **Vater** roster.



Kuhl

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PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

Dixon Little Roomer Drumset

A portable, on-the-go option for gigs and at-home practice.

Dixon is a full-line drum and hardware brand offering a range of affordable- to professional-grade drumsets, classic and modern snares, and innovative and reliable stands and pedals. The company also offers a trio of compact drumkits (Jet Set, Jet Set Plus, and Little Roomer) for players needing a portable kit for gigging in tight spaces or for those desiring a smaller, quieter option for practice and rehearsals.

The Jet Set and Jet Set Plus are designed to replicate the look and feel of a standard drumkit in smaller dimensions. (They come with 16" bass drums.) The Little Roomer, which we have for review here, is more of an expansion pack that can be utilized to turn a standard cajon into a full drumset.

The Little Roomer comes with a 7x10 rack tom, a 10x13 floor tom with legs, and a 3.5x10 single-headed Jingle snare. The snare has a wire fan that makes contact with the underside of the drumhead, and there are several layers of steel jingles mounted within the shell. The snare and toms have natural-finish mahogany shells, triple-flange hoops, and plastic gasket-insulated mounting hardware. The toms come with clear two-ply drumheads on top and bottom, and the snare has a coated single-ply batter.

The Little Roomer kit also includes a double-braced hi-hat stand, a double-braced boom stand, two L-arm mounts (for the snare and rack tom), and a boom arm extension for mounting a second cymbal to the boom arm of the other stand. The L-arms are long enough so that a cowbell, tambourine, or woodblock can be mounted atop the one used for the Jingle snare.

The Little Roomer setup couples perfectly with Dixon's Multi-Function Cajon pedal (sold separately), which is a remote bass drum pedal that allows you to place the beater in different places on the kit while keeping the footboard in the traditional position. The pedal comes with a bracket that mounts to a cajon so that the beater strikes the faceplate at the sweet spot where you get the most low-end thump. If you don't own a cajon, you can also mount the beater





to the underside of the floor tom to use the Little Roomer as a cocktail kit.

I thoroughly enjoyed playing the Little Roomer drumset. The toms tuned up easily and produced a full, round tone with even sustain and surprisingly deep low end (thanks to the softer mahogany shells). The Jingle snare is a unique instrument that's somewhat sonically limited; it works best tuned fairly tight for a popcorn-type tone. But I was able to coax some lower drum machine-type sounds out of it by detuning the head and muffling it with several strips of tape. The jingles add a cool high-end texture, especially when hitting the snare with rimshots or when playing the drum without the wires engaged. Cajon players will enjoy the additional drumset tones that the Little Roomer provides without adding too much gear or taking up much floor space. Gigging drummers playing smaller venues (coffeehouses, local bars, etc.) will also appreciate the portability, controlled volume, and flexibility of this kit. And for players looking for some alternative sounds to inspire new ideas, the Little Roomer, which also doubles nicely as a small practice kit, offers a lot of options.

Michael Dawson



VIDEO DEMO
moderndrummer.com

Istanbul Mehmet X-Ray Series Cymbals

Dirty, trashy sounds from one of Turkey's finest.

The Istanbul Mehmet brand is the brainchild of Mehmet Tamdeger, a legend in the cymbal-making industry who honed his craft in the 1950s while working in the K. Zilcan factory in Turkey. The company offers a wide swath of sounds, from the classic, old-world Heritage models to the cutting-edge Modern range and the specialized Custom and Signature series. For drummers favoring more unusual cymbals, there's the Xperience line, which includes the X-Ray options we have for review.

All X-Ray cymbals are perforated to increase trashiness and decrease decay, and they are available with three different patterns of holes. The Random models (14" hi-hats and 16" and 18" crashes) feature an alternating spectrum of large and medium-size holes. The Multi models (14" hi-hats, 16" and 18" crashes, and 16" and 18" Chinas) have rays of four small holes emanating from the bell to the edge, while the X-Ray 6 crashes (16"-20") have six large holes spaced evenly around the bow.

X-Ray Random

These 14" hi-hats and 16" and 18" crashes have the most surface

area removed, which makes them super-light and fast. The crashes decay fairly quickly and smoothly, and they have a sharp, trashy attack. The 16" worked best for fast bursts, and the 18" had a deeper tone for more dramatic accents. The 14" hi-hats have a very dirty, trashy tone that sounds like electronic samples played through an overdrive pedal. If you're a fan of riding on trashy, articulate stackers, consider tossing these bad boys on your hi-hat stand so you can explore an array of gritty tight and gnarly open sounds.

X-Ray Multi and X-Ray 6

These hi-hats, crashes, and Chinas feature multiple small holes, allowing the cymbals to ring out a bit more after the initial sharp attack. They sounded brighter than the Random models and had a firmer feel. The hi-hats had a strong metallic tone in addition to a gritty, trashy attack. They sounded best when played closed for a low-fi electronic-type effect.





The Multi China sounded super-trashy, as you'd expect, and the holes helped minimize gong-like overtones. The crashes had decent articulation for light riding on the bow, and edge hits elicited a nice amount of dissonance that removed discernable pitches from the sustain. The Multi crash and China models would work best in louder environments where you want more full-bodied tones to support the trashy effects.

The X-Ray 6 crashes (16"-20") have larger holes placed at the midpoint of the bow. They are medium-thin, so they spoke quickly but still had enough mass to withstand serious punishment and cut through on loud gigs. The 18" X-Ray 6 would serve well for players looking to bridge the gap between a China and a large, washy crash, while the 16" has a quick, flashy attack and fast decay.

When comparing the trash-to-crash ratio of the X-Ray series, the Randoms leaned more toward the trash side while the Multis are closer to the full, open sound of non-perforated cymbals. The X-Ray 6s fall somewhere between the two, making them a bit more versatile and able to blend well within a cymbal setup of more traditional models.

Michael Dawson



PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

Provenance 6x14 Jaguar XJS Snare

A one-of-a-kind drum cast from the inlet manifolds of a 1975 racecar.



English company Provenance has carved a unique niche in the collectors market, offering high-quality snare drums built out of reclaimed materials from retired high-performance machines. With a stated mission to build the ultimate historical musical instruments, Provenance is careful to preserve some of the iconic look and feel of the original object while also delivering highly musical tones.

We've reviewed a Provenance snare made from a fighter jet and another one constructed from the side panel of a VW work van. This month we're checking out a 6x14 8-lug drum that's been sand-cast from the aluminum inlet manifolds of a 1975 Jaguar XJS V12 racing car. The shell has a unique subtle sparkle that the company says was an unexpected result of the casting process. The snare came with eight chrome tube lugs, a Dunnett R4 multi-position throw-off, 2.3mm triple-flange steel hoops, Puresound Custom 16 wires, and Aquarian drumheads (Textured Coated batter and Classic Clear snare-side bottom).

The shell is lathed on the outside to ensure a smooth surface and a perfectly round diameter, but the inside is left rough from the casting to help break up the internal sound reflections for a slightly drier tone. The bearing edges are rounded to increase body and resonance, and the snare beds are modeled after those

found on classic American drums. The Jaguar XJS drum came with authentication materials that included "proof of origin" data comprising photos and info on the car from which it was made.

Aluminum snares are some of the most used and universally beloved drums of all time. The main difference between rolled and cast shells is that cast versions usually have greater volume headroom and a more robust, powerful tone, plus the potential for increased sensitivity at lower volumes, depending on how the edges are cut. This 6x14 cast-aluminum drum had a wonderfully open and resonant voice with well-balanced overtones and a smooth, even decay. It didn't ring forever, so I could play it unmuffled to capitalize on its vibrancy without the overtones becoming too prominent. Medium and higher tunings produced a strong, powerful "bark," while lower tunings brought out a punchy attack and increased low-end energy that translated great on studio recordings. Snare response was crisp and controlled across the entire tuning range and from the edge to the center. While there are plenty of talking points about how this snare went from speeding around a racetrack to cracking rimshots, the story would be meaningless if it didn't sound great. And it does.

Michael Dawson



Tama

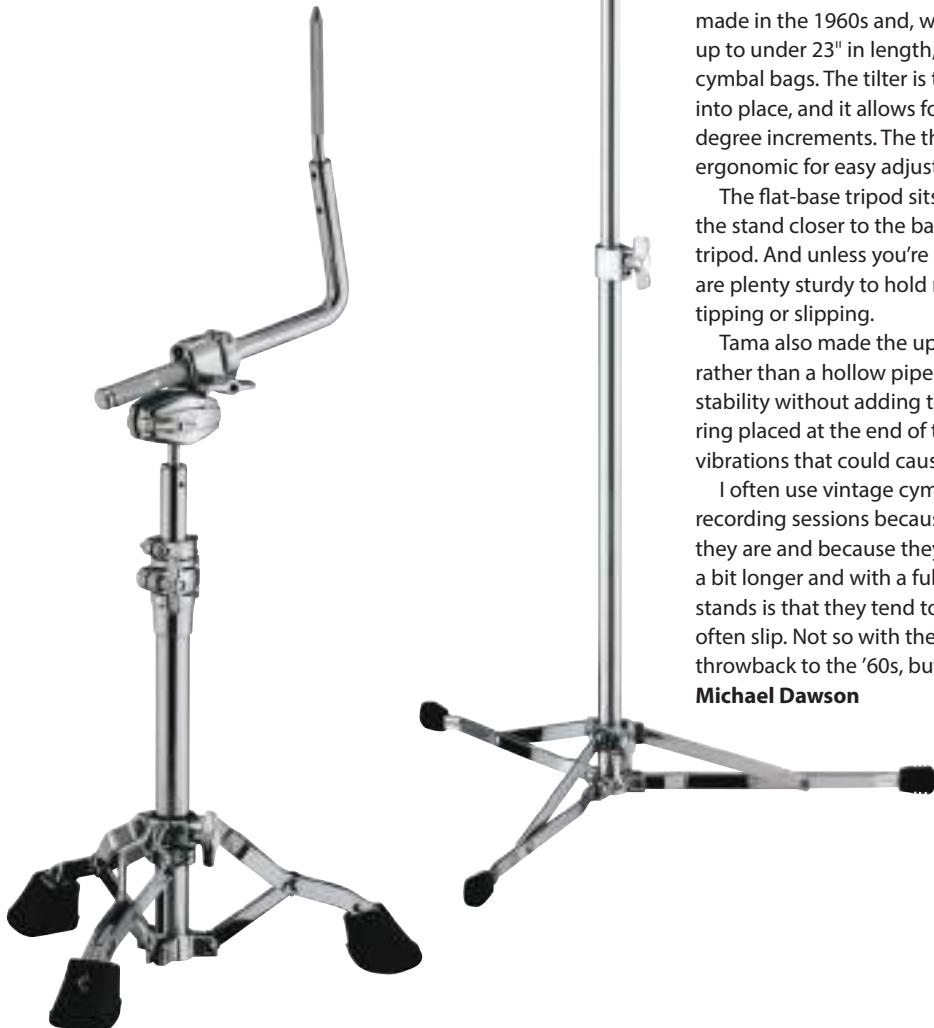
Star Single Tom Stand and Classic Stand

Ditch the snare basket and streamline your setup.

Tama is not only one of the world's premier drum makers, but it also offers some of the most stable, durable, and well-engineered hardware on the market today. This past year the company introduced two new pieces for drummers looking to simplify their setups without sacrificing sound and flexibility. These are the HTS108W Star single tom stand (\$227.49) and the HC52F lightweight Classic cymbal stand (\$100). Let's check them out!

Star Single Tom Stand

The HTS108W is designed as an alternative for drummers who like to mount rack toms in snare baskets but don't want to choke off the resonance. It's a hefty stand that can be used with any rack tom with a depth of 10" or less, and it has enough height adjustment to place a tom in a standard position above bass drums between 18" and 26" in diameter. The Omni-Ball tilter allows you to adjust the angle of the tom easily to achieve the most comfortable spot. The large steel L-rod, which can be adjusted up to 6" out from the base to accommodate different horizontal positions over the bass drum, is held securely in place with Tama's Glide-Tite grip joint and a memory lock.



The rubber feet are oversized for increased stability and have retractable spikes to prevent the stand from creeping away during the gig. The legs are double-braced to prevent tipping, and Tama insulated the inside of the top pipe with a True-Sound mute to keep the stand from absorbing vibrations from tom hits, and thus sacrificing sustain. This is a super-hefty tom stand, but it works great. It allowed me to extend my rack tom a few inches toward the center of the bass drum, which isn't possible with most standard snare baskets. I also didn't notice any tone dampening when playing the rack tom on the HTS108W stand. The only downside I found was that the .5" L-arm was too wide to fit the mounts on some of my vintage drums, and too small to accommodate one contemporary model I tried it with. So be sure to measure the bracket hole on your tom before making the purchase, or be prepared to purchase a correctly sized replacement mount. Otherwise, this stand is great for simplifying setups without compromising stability or flexibility.

Classic Stand

Contrasting the heavy-duty Star single tom stand, the HC52F Classic stand is extremely lightweight and compact. It features a flat base that borrows from the design of cymbal stands made in the 1960s and, weighing just 3.2 pounds and folding up to under 23" in length, is small enough to fit inside most cymbal bags. The tilter is toothed to keep the cymbal locked into place, and it allows for various angle adjustments at ten-degree increments. The thumbscrews are thin but sturdy and ergonomic for easy adjustments.

The flat-base tripod sits low to the ground, so you can place the stand closer to the bass drum than you can with a regular tripod. And unless you're a heavy hitter, the tripod and stand are plenty sturdy to hold ride cymbals and crashes without tipping or slipping.

Tama also made the upper tube out of solid 9mm steel, rather than a hollow pipe. This was done to provide additional stability without adding too much weight. There's a rubber ring placed at the end of the solid tube to insulate against vibrations that could cause the stand to rattle.

I often use vintage cymbal stands on club gigs and recording sessions because of how lightweight and compact they are and because they tend to allow the cymbals to sustain a bit longer and with a fuller tone. The problem with those old stands is that they tend to be a bit flimsy, and the thumbscrews often slip. Not so with the Tama Classic stand. It may look like a throwback to the '60s, but it's as cutting-edge as it gets.

Michael Dawson

PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

Tycoon

Hex-Jam Shakers, Udukere, and Small Fiberglass Shekere

Handheld gems from the world's sole percussion-only manufacturer.

Bangkok-based Tycoon has been making top-notch percussion instruments since 1983. Everything it produces is manufactured in its own factory, which allows the company to keep a keen eye on quality.

Tycoon is also dedicated to using the most environmentally responsible methods available. All of the wood is harvested from renewable sources, and all of the waste (sawdust, leftover rawhide and rope, and plywood pieces) is recycled and used for packing materials and fuel and to make dog

toys and smaller percussion instruments that are donated to impoverished communities in Thailand.

This month we're checking out four of Tycoon's newest handheld instruments: 6" (\$30) and 8" (\$35) Hex-Jam Shakers, a unique udu/shekere hybrid instrument called Udukere (\$249), and the Small Natural Fiberglass Shekere (\$139).

Hex-Jam Shakers

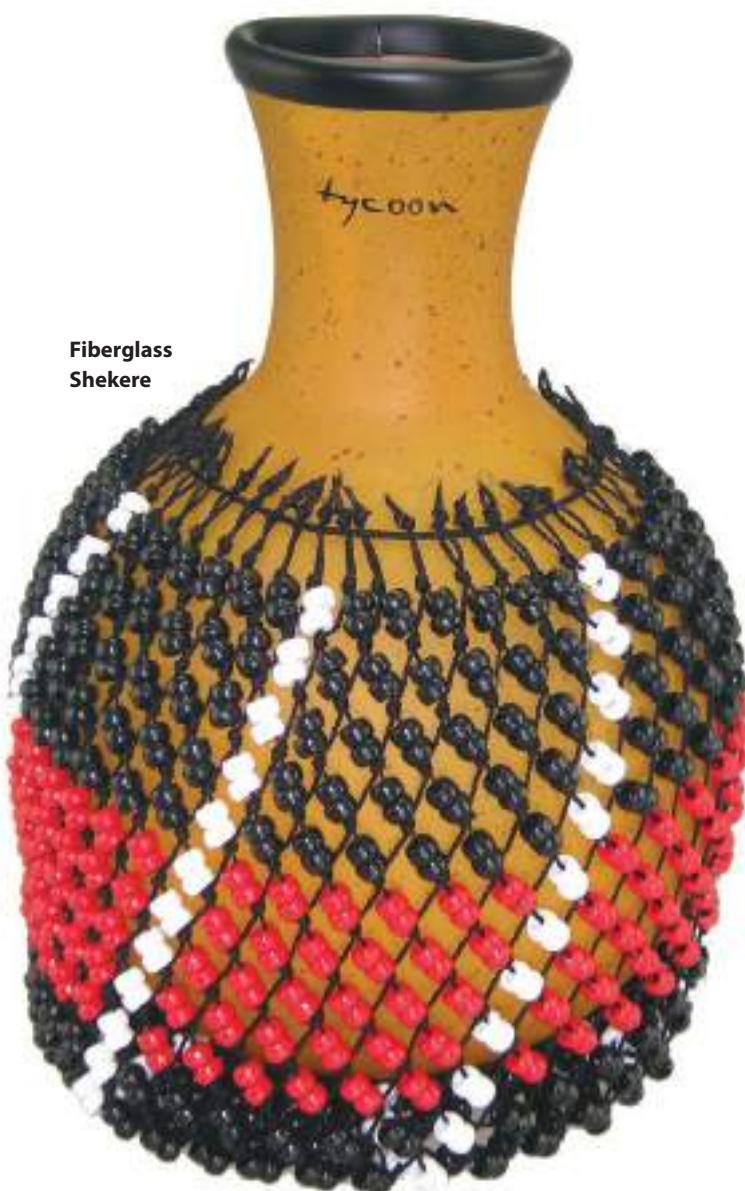
The Hex-Jam Shakers are available in two lengths: 6" and 8". Both are 6.5" wide and made from Jamjuree wood, which is also

known as Siam walnut. The flat wood sides and hexagonal shape make these shakers very comfortable to hold and play, and they produce a crisp, accurate sound with a touch of warmth. These are great all-purpose shakers for situations that require articulate patterns that sit comfortably in the upper midrange of the music. The 6" has a more subtle and slightly hollow sound, while the 8" is a bit louder and takes up more sonic space.

Udukere

The udu is a Nigerian instrument that originated as a clay water jug with an additional hole cut into the bottom. It can be used to create a wide range of high and low tones, depending on where you strike it. Tapping the side of the jug with the fingers creates a high-pitched texture, while cupping the hole on the bottom with the palm elicits a deep bass tone.

For the Udukere, Tycoon combined the udu design with a West African shekere, which is traditionally made from a dried gourd with beads woven around the circumference. The result is a unique instrument that can be slapped, shook, and twisted to create various shaker textures with a touch of high/low tonality. The Udukere was designed by Tycoon artist Kornel Horvath, who often holds the instrument upside-down in his lap while playing it, so he can take full advantage of the deep bass tones within two-hand rhythmic patterns. This is a super-fun



Fiberglass
Shekere



8" Hex-Jam
Shaker



6" Hex-Jam
Shaker

instrument for building kick/snare/hat-type percussion loops in the studio or for accompanying singers and instrumentalists on low-volume gigs. It measures 11.25" x 11.75", which makes the Udukere very portable as well.

Small Natural Fiberglass Shekere

As a more compact and lightweight alternative to the larger shekeres in Tycoon's catalog, the company developed this version, which measures 11.5" x 11.75" and is made from fiberglass that's finished to have the appearance of a natural gourd. The plastic beads are hand-strung to an adjustable nylon web and are smaller than the ones on the larger Udukere, which allows for greater control and softer rattle sounds while still providing enough sharpness and volume when required. The bass tones produced by striking the bottom aren't as deep and prominent as they are on the Udukere, but you can still achieve a functional sub-bass-type sound to incorporate into your patterns. There's a rubber ring around the opening to protect the edge from damage. I found the Small Natural Fiberglass Shekere to be most valuable for recording situations where I wanted to incorporate some of the dense, earthy texture of a traditional shekere without the mix getting overwhelmed with excessive rattle. You could also use this smaller version on gigs where you need a controlled and focused shekere sound.

Michael Dawson



Udukere



Session Great Matt Chamberlain

"Content" is not a word that exists in this perennial *MD* favorite's lexicon, who balances his day job as a top studio drummer with chasing the muse with creative artists like Brian Haas and Bill Frisell, as well as through his own man-machine solo projects.



Alex Solota



The past few months have been the most insane of my life," says thirty-year studio and touring veteran Matt Chamberlain, who's celebrating his fiftieth turn around the sun this April. "I just finished a two-week tracking session with an English singer named Jamie Lawson, and then I worked with producer Blake Mills for a new record by Perfume Genius. I also did a two-week tour with Bill Frisell, went to Nashville, and then did a thing with [keyboardist] Brian Haas."

The "thing" Matt is talking about is the incredibly inspired duo album *Prometheus Risen*, which was put together after three days of spontaneous improvisations at Frogville Studios in Santa Fe, New Mexico, with longtime friend Haas. The pair met back in the '90s when Chamberlain's experimental band Critters Buggin' shared the stage with Haas' group Jacob Fred Jazz Odyssey. "Brian is one of these guys who always does creative music; that's his life," Chamberlain says. "He wanted to get together and improvise to see if we could make a record out of it. *Prometheus Risen* is pretty much all live-on-the-floor improvs. We just found the ones that sounded more like compositions and used those for the record." To thrust the sonics of the sessions into new territory, Chamberlain brought along some of his favorite electronic gadgets. "I had a live-looping rig," he says. "And I used Ableton Live to create different catalysts for the improvs."

The album's opener, "Space Colonization," features Chamberlain's signature earthy-sounding acoustic drums, slinky ghost-note-laden grooves, and some interesting layers of metallic percussion loops. The track "Ancestral Availability" features the drummer letting loose with a dense double-stroke kick/snare/hat pattern interlaced with

bombastic fills and near-telepathic stops between drums and piano. The duo took the project on the road for a few weeks this past fall, playing completely free improvs. "We just made stuff up each night," Chamberlain recalls. "It was terrifying and liberating all at the same time."

Around the time that *Prometheus Risen* was being made, the drummer released, via mattchamberlain.com, his third solo album, *Comet B*, which originated from ideas he compiled in Ableton Live. "A lot of it was created on my laptop while I was on airplanes and stuff," Matt says. "After a while I had enough material put together that I decided to put drumkit on it. Then

incredibly fat and sweet drum tones, deeply textured grooves (combining live drumming with organic loops and electronic overdubs), and a gritty, earthy-yet-otherworldly aesthetic. Then check out how the drummer's endless creativity elevates recent hit records by Keith Urban ("Blue Ain't Your Color," "Break on Me"), Miranda Lambert (*The Weight of These Wings*, which was tracked completely live in a garage in East Nashville), and Phantogram (*Three*).

"For most singer-songwriter situations, I'm not going to be throwing down like I would in a jazz-improv situation," Chamberlain says. "I'm looking for interesting sounds while interjecting some performance aspects and making



I asked my buddy Chris Combs, who plays steel guitar, to add some melodic content. It was a process, but it's fun. What else am I going to do? I'd be bored out of my mind [laughs]."

If you're not familiar with Chamberlain's more artistic adventures, *Comet B* has it all:

the song feel good. Anybody can play this stuff technically, but it's about helping someone make the songs unique and different. There are only so many chord progressions and melodic ideas built into Western music, so what are you going to do?"

Michael Dawson

Chamberlain uses Gretsch drums, Sabian cymbals, Remo heads, and Regal Tip sticks



Dale Crover

The latest project from the drummer and his Melvins partner, Buzz Osborne, is hot enough to earn its own band name: Crystal Fairy.

When the Melvins toured with Le Butcherettes in 2015, they'd invite the group's vocalist, Teri Gender Bender, to join them for a number at the end of their set. Even after the exhilaration of a sticks-flying, riff-crushing Melvins show, the fiery singer kicked up the energy a big notch as she hit the stage. "We took note of that," Dale Crover says. "It was always the big highlight. She's so much fun to watch because you don't know what she's gonna do. She's got the intensity of Iggy Pop on stage.

"We thought we ought to maybe do a record with Teri," Crover continues. "And then we were like, 'Maybe we should just start a whole new band.'" Behold the all-star Crystal Fairy, where Crover and Melvins guitarist Buzz Osborne team up with Gender Bender and Butcherettes producer Omar Rodriguez-Lopez (*Mars Volta, At the Drive-In*), who plays bass in the new group.

Crystal Fairy's self-titled album was written and recorded in two 2015 sessions: first at the Melvins' Los Angeles studio, and then at Rodriguez-Lopez's place in El Paso, Texas. "It all just clicked immediately," Crover says. "In a couple days we had like half a record, and working with Teri was so

easy. She can come up with a melody and words as easily as I can sit down and come up with a drumbeat."

Given Crystal Fairy's members, the music is characteristically heavy, touching on punk, heavy metal, and Zeppelin-ish riff rock. Gender Bender is a live wire, bringing a different sensibility from Osborne and Crover's vocals in the Melvins; she's alternately fierce and playful, and songs like "Necklace of Divorce" and the title track have a

poppy catchiness. Never fear, though—sly twists abound. "Buzz was trying to write songs that were a little bit straighter," Crover explains. "He just can't do it. He says, 'I just can't help putting some weird part in there.'"

Working fast in the studio suits Crover. "Nowadays I like recording when the songs are fairly fresh and I don't have something completely worked out," he says. "You relax and get in the zone, and just let it go. Sometimes, if it's a song I know really well and I have a solid

part, I'll screw it up, you know? If it's more open for me to mess around with, then I can get it in one take."

The last few years have been good for the Melvins, seeing Osborne and Crover embrace a fluid, anything-goes approach to a career spanning more than thirty years and countless aesthetic triumphs. As



documented in Bob Hannam's 2016 film, *The Colossus of Destiny: A Melvins Tale*, the band has recently been a two-drummer quartet incorporating Big Business, a "Light" lineup with stand-up bass, a power trio, and a four-piece with two Butthole Surfers members. In 2012 the Melvins played every U.S. state plus Washington, D.C., in fifty-one days; in 2013 they released a collaborative album of covers that includes a Kinks song with Crover, Coady Willis, and Clem Burke on drums; and in 2016 they issued *Basses Loaded*, featuring six bassists (not all playing at the same time).

Meanwhile, Crover has gone even further toward perfecting the touring life by getting in shape on the road. He's put drinking aside and has been hitting the hotel gym, in

addition to sitting a bit higher on his throne. "It's the healthiest I've ever been on tour," he says, adding with a laugh, "I'm bummed if we're on stage at ten o'clock: *Oh no, a late show!*"

Watch for a Crover solo album on Joyful Noise in 2017. It will follow Dale's unique project *Skins*, a twelve-sided vinyl record whose 127 copies sold out immediately upon release last year. "The record has six spindle holes," Crover explains, "so there's a groove—a cut—that correlates with where each hole is. Because there has to be space enough for all these cuts, the songs can only be between fifteen and thirty seconds long, almost like a little commercial or a drum haiku. And when you put the record on your turntable, it's going to look really crazy when you play it." **Michael Parillo**



Alex Solca

Dale Crover uses Tama drums, Paiste cymbals, Aquarian heads, Regal Tip sticks, Pete Engelhart metal percussion, and Shure microphones.



Alex Solca



The Soul Machine Matt Garstka

Story by Ken Micallef
Photos by Alex Solca

Animals as Leaders' beat scientist has found heaps of inspiration and endless challenges in the wonderful world of mathematics. And for sure, he shares much of what he's discovered with us here. But studying the numbers only gets you so close to truly understanding any task—drumming included. As AAL's brand-new album makes abundantly clear, focusing equally on matters of the head and heart is what turns craft into art.

A dramatic, low-key photograph of a drummer in a camouflage shirt. He is captured mid-motion, leaning back with his head tilted upwards and to the side, eyes closed in a moment of intense focus or exhaustion. His right hand holds a pair of drumsticks aloft, while his left hand rests on a snare drum. The lighting is stark, casting deep shadows and highlighting the contours of his face and the metallic surfaces of the drum set. The background is dark, making the drummer the central point of the image.

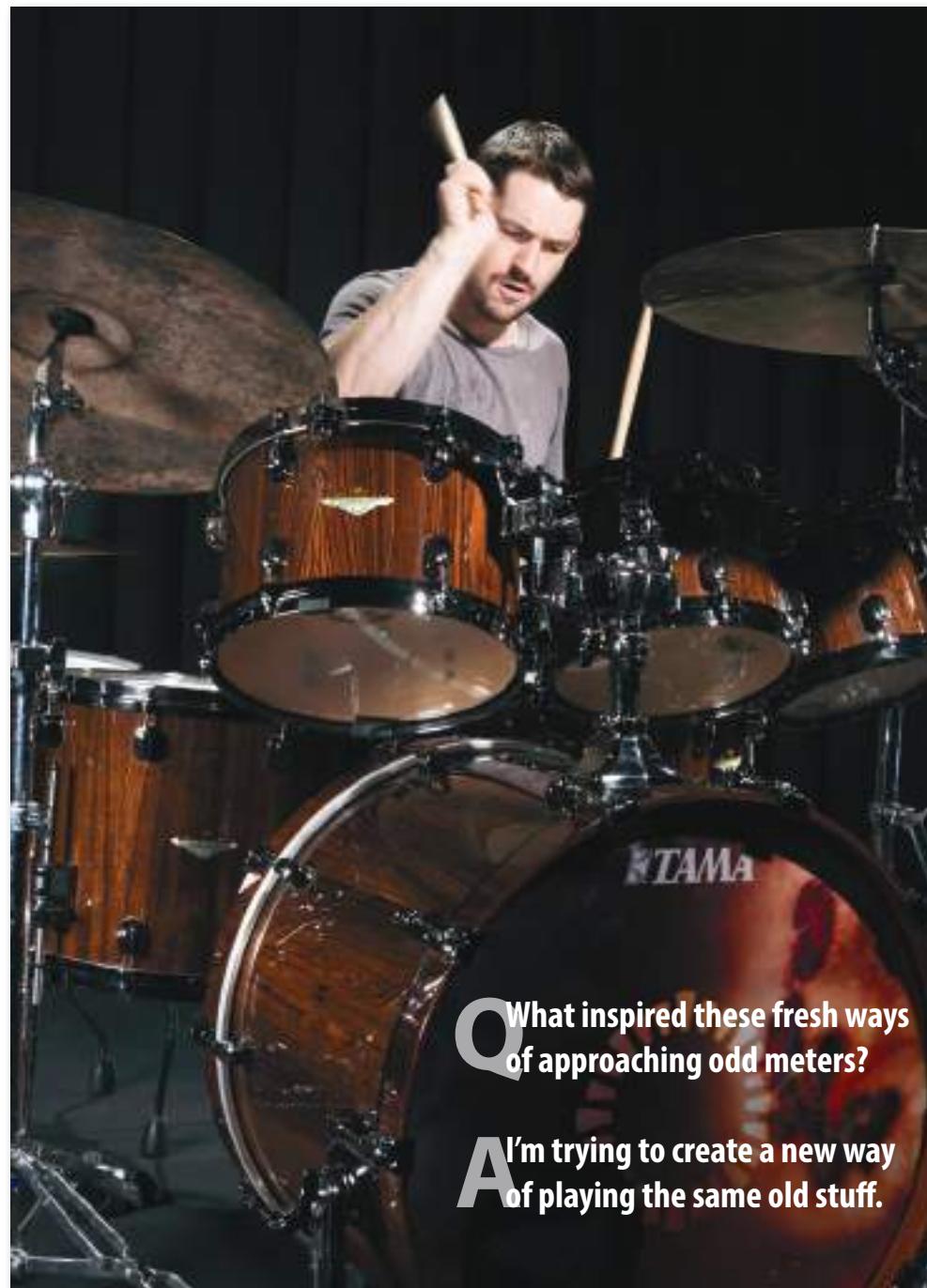
Jutting out
their progressive-
djent chins like warriors
conquering a city, Animals as
Leaders take prog and metal to
extreme heights of riff-rock intensity.

The D.C.-based band had challenged drummers Matt Halpern (*Periphery*) and Navene Koperweis (*Entheos*) to up their already significant abilities while navigating the maniacally twisted arrangements and tortuous rhythmic conundrums. Matt Garstka joined in time to record 2014's *The Joy of Motion*, and now, with the release of AAL's fourth album, *The Madness of Many*, it's clear that the twenty-seven-year-old drummer has raised the group's game even further, bringing a soulfulness and sense of ease to gloriously complex material, while injecting his own compositional slant and idiosyncratic musicianship.

The Madness of Many frames djent as an artificial-intelligence endgame, with song titles like "Ectogenesis," "Transcience," and "Arithmophobia" proposing a future dystopia where man and machine are one and humanoid soul is steered by robotic thought and computer machinations. The album is like something that the surrealist designer H.R. Giger would come up with if he had his own in-house band to direct, akin to the creature that he designed for the *Alien* movie series, or the biomechanical being on the cover of Emerson, Lake, and Palmer's *Brain Salad Surgery*—ambitiously conceived, remarkably detailed, and frighteningly powerful.

"This record is definitely more granular and fixated on the micro and subdivisions rather than the macro, like playing in 7/4 or 7/8," Garstka tells *MD* from his home in L.A. "That's where things start for us. [Guitarists] Javier Reyes and Tosin Abasi are very melodic players, and as advanced as they are rhythmically, they really have a great sense for harmony and melody. That's the greatest asset to my drumming, their harmonic and melodic prowess. It allows me to be highlighted in a context that's super-musical. It's not typical."

Whether Garstka is playing parallel time signatures, displacing odd meters, splitting metric modulations into increasingly smaller subdivisions, or grooving in a simple 4/4, his power, intelligence, and innovation are obvious and at times astounding. Among other profundities, Garstka metrically modulates triplets in 4/4 to 16ths in 3/4 and into groups of nine over four in "Cognitive Contortions"; maneuvers a tricky seven-over-four pattern in "Backpfeifengesicht"; and plays triplets rather than 8ths or 16ths in 7/4 while almost creating a four-over-three figure in seven in "The Brain Dance." All in all, it's a searing, soaring ride that only



Q What inspired these fresh ways of approaching odd meters?

A I'm trying to create a new way of playing the same old stuff.

Animals as Leaders would dare launch.

A product of the suburban sprawl of Westfield, Connecticut, Garstka showed an early aptitude for music, and by the age of fourteen he was making a living playing in clubs and with bar bands, eventually leading to enrollment at Berklee College of Music in 2007. While attending Berklee he toured with the Senegalese hip-hop/reggae band Gokh-Bi System

and recorded two albums with the French classical/jazz bassist Louis de Mieulle. After Berklee, Garstka relocated to L.A. and met Abasi and Reyes, who invited him to audition for Animals as Leaders.

The ensuing *Joy of Motion* required Garstka to program drum parts before recording them acoustically, and *The Madness of Many* is no different in that regard. New to the menu, however, is Garstka's

compositional input, which, coupled with the extreme cohesion and simpatico sentiments of Abasi and Reyes, results in music that is as viscerally powerful as it is intellectually stimulating. Garstka's technical exhilaration and soulful, deep-bottom grooves are the icing under the cake, as it were, his goliath drumming rising from strength to strength.

MD: What drumming concepts have you been working on since the previous Animals as Leaders album, *The Joy of Motion*?

Matt: I've become more concept driven. I'm more focused on specific patterns and trying to create my own patterns, ones that are not typically used. I've used those patterns in the writing of this new record. I'm always trying to improve all aspects of my drumming, of course, but finding my niche in very specific patterns and even certain rhythmic illusions, like parallel time signatures, has been my recent focus.

MD: What are parallel time signatures?

Matt: That's when a measure of 5/4 occurs within the same amount of time as a 4/4 measure. You take accents from a 5/4 time signature and group them as four groups of five instead of five groups of four [5/4]. You play the five groups of four as quintuplets in 4/4. Then you can convert the quintuplet pattern to the nearest 16th notes. This gives you a 4/4 version of the same approximate rhythm. We do this all the time when translating 8th-note patterns to swung triplets. It's the same concept. But with

parallel time signatures, instead of taking two 8th notes and interpreting them with an 8th-note-triplet feel, you're converting 16ths into quintuplets, or vice versa.

MD: It's an illusion?

Matt: Yeah, it sounds similar but it's a little different. Even considering subdivisions. Say you're playing a tumbao in 2/4 and it's divided into 16th notes as "1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2." You can take both of the three-note 16th groupings ["1, 2, 3"] and the two-note 16th grouping ["1, 2"] and force four notes over the three-note groupings and three notes over the two-note grouping. So now you have a rhythm with two four-note groupings followed by a three-note grouping. That sounds like it's in 11/16.

MD: Do these rhythmic illusions appear on the new Animals as Leaders record?

Matt: Those examples don't happen on the new record, but that's where my mind is going lately. The other stuff, polyrhythmic patterns and patterns I've curated, all that comes through on the record. "Curating" is, for example, how a typical pattern in seven can be divided into two groupings of four

and two groupings of three. A typical way of playing seven would be, "1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3." Those ways of counting or feeling seven have been around forever, and I'm trying to change that up.

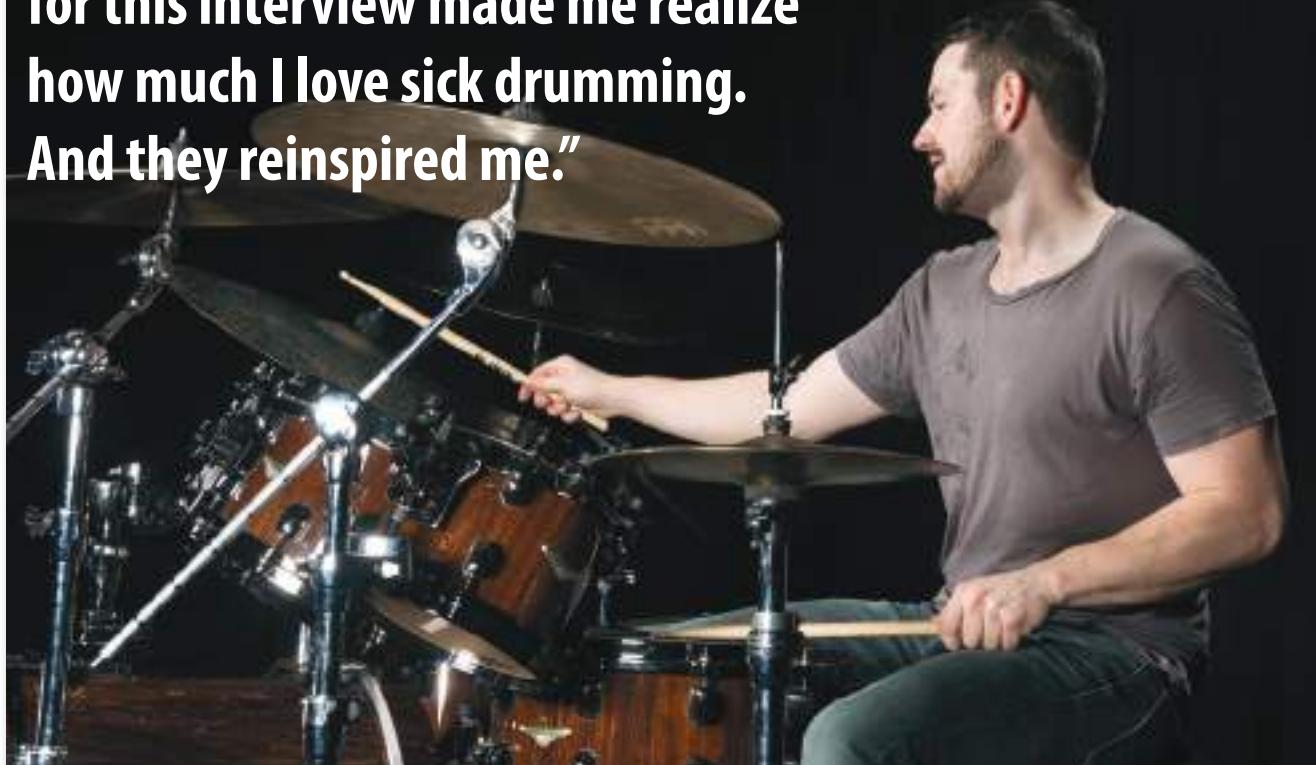
And furthermore, breaking up seven in a different way—for instance, playing triplets in seven rather than 8th and 16th notes, which are so common when playing a phrase in seven. It's rarer to hear triplets in 7/4. So I came up with a four-over-three in seven. It's kind of bastardized because it's not perfectly four-over-three, it's 4-, 4-, 4-, 5-, and 4-note groupings. And this triplet pattern in seven is played under a 4/4 backbeat. That's in the middle of "The Brain Dance." A displaced version of that concept can also be heard at the end of "Cognitive Contortions"; it's displaced as 4-, 4-, 4-, 4-, and 5-note groupings.

MD: What inspired these fresh ways of approaching odd meters?

Matt: There are different levels. The first level is being inspired by something someone plays and analyzing it. Once you do that enough, polyrhythmic patterns



"Compiling a list of my favorite solos for this interview made me realize how much I love sick drumming. And they reinspired me."



become normal. The next step is trying to create your own things, whether that's being scientific in your approach or simply using your musical ear. I'm trying to create a new way of playing the same old stuff.

MD: You're no doubt inspired by Tosin and Javier. How about drummers? For instance, are you inspired by Steve Gadd, Dave Weckl, Vinnie Colaiuta...?

Matt: I'm certainly inspired by the older guys; their playing has inspired me more than that of current drummers. But I don't know that they've inspired me to go on this path of deep patterns, and being super-fixated or focused on creating these

patterns. I owe that more to Meshuggah, or the guys in my band, or drummers like Virgil Donati, or even pianist Tigran Hamasyan.

Writing and Recording Madness

MD: What was the recording process for *The Madness of Many*? Were you required to program the drum parts before recording them, as on the previous album?

Matt: This time we were all in the same room, writing the songs linearly together. Usually Tosin plays a riff, then the songs evolve based on Javier's and my input. I tried to get them to improvise, and we did a couple times, as with "Cognitive

Contortions," then we went back to working on things in the computer. I still programmed drums before tracking this time, but from scratch. I would program an idea, and then we'd write to that as a group. That's how a lot of my patterns got on the record.

MD: How did ideas progress?

Matt: Each song took about two days of work to complete. In each session Tosin would begin by inputting a guitar riff into the computer, and from there I'd program drums or Javier might suggest a direction and I'd complement that—ask for a tempo and take an odd-metered pattern and modulate to a triplet at that rate, things like that. We'd collaborate on patterns beginning from Tosin's original idea.

MD: So the band discussed ideas verbally and then programmed parts?

Matt: Yes. That's what's cool about this process—it's like talking. It's more thoughtful, and we still write in an efficient fashion. The three of us are usually in Javier's apartment. He's got his computer with Logic Pro X up; sometimes I'd play a pattern through my Yamaha DTX electronic kit so I didn't have to ardously program it. I played acoustic drums on the record, though.

That's one of the challenging aspects

Matt's 10 Favorite Drum Solos

Gary Novak on "Tumba Island," from the Chick Corea Elektric Band II's *Paint the World*

Dave Weckl on "7th Sense," from the Dave Weckl Band's *Perpetual Motion*

Tony Williams on "Proto-Cosmos," from the New Tony Williams Lifetime's *Believe It*

Steve Gadd on "Nite Sprite," from Chick Corea's *The Leprechaun*

Dafnis Prieto on "Ironico Arlequin," from *About the Monks*

Dennis Chambers on "Elroy," from *Planet Earth*

Thomas Pridgen on "Wax Simulacra," from the Mars Volta's *The Bedlam in Goliath*

Billy Cobham on "The Pleasant Pheasant," from *Crosswinds*

Brian Blade on "Jazz Crimes," from Joshua Redman's *Elastic*

Mark Guiliana on "Abraham's New Gift," from Phronesis's *Alive*

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Matt Garstka

of the album—I programmed parts and then refined them to where they would be suitable for the record. I did three weeks of intensive preparation, four to six hours every day. I homed in on each of these parts. I could play the majority of them immediately, but some parts were conceptual. One part I wrote at a tempo that I was sure I could play, but it proved to be really challenging; that's on "Backpfeifengesicht." There's a crazy double bass drum part there too. I thought I could play it at tempo, but it proved very challenging.

MD: So after writing and programming, you'd spend time learning the parts?

Matt: Yes. So basically it was three weeks

of dialing in the parts. I had to get them to where they were good enough to be captured on record. I wanted a natural drum sound. We tried to avoid quantizing. So the grooves needed to be super-tight. That's where my intensive practice came in. We ended up quantizing 5 or 10 percent of the double bass drum parts. Aside from that you're hearing me—my feel, all natural.

MD: What was the recording process for the drums?

Matt: I recorded the drums first. I had a subdivided click for the main subdivisions; I'd crosscheck that first to make sure the click was accurate. Then I'd check to make sure that it felt good naturally without the click. After that, I checked the drum



MATT'S SETUP

Drums: Tama Starclassic Maple/Bubinga (custom) with cordia wrap

- 6.5x14 snare
- 7x8 tom
- 7x10 tom
- 8x12 tom
- 12x14 floor tom
- 14x16 floor tom
- 16x22 bass drum

Heads: Remo, including Coated Powerstroke 77 snare batter and Ambassador snare-side, Coated Vintage Emperor tom batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, and Coated Powerstroke 4 bass drum batter

Cymbals: Meinl

- 14" Sands Hats or 13" Extra Dry Hats
- 18" Extra Thin Jazz Byzance crash (or 18" Dual Byzance crash)
- 6" (or 8") Traditional Byzance splash
- 18" Extra Thin Hammered Byzance (or 20" Dual Byzance) crash
- 22" Vintage Pure Byzance ride
- 18" Extra Dry Byzance (or 18" MB20) China
- Matt Garstka Signature Phat Stack (18" crash over 16" China)

Sticks: Vic Firth 55A





recording with music. Each part on the record had to pass those three parameters. I took seven days to record drums, and they took two weeks for guitars. We changed a lot of synths and added additional layers in the mixing process. That gave us freedom and control.

MD: Did you tempo-map the tracks?

Matt: All of it is tempo-mapped. We were conscious of that. Each tempo change has some relation to the previous pulse.

MD: How was your setup miked?

Matt: We recorded at Sphere Studios in Los Angeles. We had a very large live room for

the drums. We recorded my custom Tama Maple/Bubinga Starclassic drums. We used a lot of room mics as well as close miking and different overheads. We used great gear, which was crucial in maintaining the natural sound of the record.

MD: Did you trigger samples?

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Matt Garstka

MD: No. All natural drums. I love the sound of maple; it's the go-to for live and studio recording for a reason. I changed out cymbals and snares. We used a Tama Bell Brass snare and some others, but I used the Maple/Bubinga snare from the Tama kit for the bulk of the record. Originally I'd asked for a maple kit with this exotic wrap, cordia, on the outside. But Tama needed to couple the maple with bubinga, so it's a hybrid kit. The drum layers begin with an inner and middle layer of maple, an outer bubinga layer, then a cordia wrap.

MD: The drums sound very warm.

Matt: It's a combination ply; it's punchy sounding and has plenty of body. The warmth is also attributable to the Remo Emperor heads that I like to use.

MD: Those heads don't give you much rebound.

Matt: Right. It's a double-ply head, and it's coated as well. With the lower tuning I use there's very little tension on the heads; they're a little more than finger-tight. You get a lot of body in the sound, but you have to work hard to get it.

Track by Track

MD: What does "Arithmophobia" mean?

Matt: Fear of arithmetic! I wrote that one; it's mainly my brainchild. I came up with those crazy patterns that fit into 4/4 over long periods of time. It doesn't resolve for eight measures of 16th notes in 4/4. But it may be hard to count!

MD: Did you have fear of math as a kid?

Matt: I did until high school. I learned that music helps with math skills, so I thought that surely math would help with music, and that's all I needed to know. I just tried harder to be better at it; now it's one of my strengths.

MD: What inspired the "rhythmic motifs" that you told us about before this interview?

Matt: I wanted to create a long phrase that took time to resolve, and which mimicked Indian rhythms in the way that the rhythms build until the moment they align and resolve, and it feels like magic. Then it was about trying to write and change up 4/4 phrases. Everyone is using a lot of the same phrases today, especially in the metal, djent, and rock worlds. I was just trying to start with different phrases, and the guys wrote to all the phrases I created. That's what "Arithmophobia" is.

MD: Can you break down the drum pattern in that song?

Matt: That's the hardest one! [laughs] I can tell you about the opening, the sitar part. Originally that sound functioned as a

timekeeper. That is a very simple phrase, but it spans the eight measures required for the polyrhythms to resolve. When they align, it creates a guide as to where the quarter-note pulse is. So it functioned as a timekeeper, and it's melodic.

MD: You're beyond counting these complex patterns, but initially were you thinking 16th or 32nd notes as the overriding pulse?

Matt: I was thinking 16ths. When initially developing these patterns conceptually, I'm quite focused on the numbers, and then it becomes second nature and musical. I still slow them down to understand them from the perspective of feel. After that I'm just feeling the groove.

MD: You also told me earlier, regarding "Ectogenesis," that the "middle double bass section has a couple fours where three 16th notes would be [at the end of a phrase], which would make them dotted 32nds." Did you compose this one?

Matt: Everything was cowritten. We did it all in a room together. Any time a melody is written, we're all three chefs in the kitchen.

MD: What's the basic meter in "Ectogenesis"?

Matt: It's 4/4, with some bars of 3/4 and one bar of 5/4. But mainly it's in 4/4. That has my signature Meinl cymbal stack, which will be released in early 2017. It's a 16" Extra Dry China with holes, placed upside down; on top is an 18" Extra Dry crash with holes. I love trashy and crunchy sounds and hate ringy ones. That kind of made the decision for me. I started experimenting with an upside-down China in a stack years ago. It was just a matter of getting the right cymbals that physically fit well together and interacted well sonically. I've been playing this stack for three years.

MD: Your solo at the end of "Ectogenesis" recalls Dave Weckl. Was that intentional?

Matt: I can't deny your allegations! I was such a Weckl-head for so long. That wasn't my specific intention there, I was just trying to rip a solo over that brief section. I wanted to accentuate the phrasing of that riff but still say something and add to it.

MD: You described "Cognitive Contortions" to me earlier as "metric modulation madness...constant modulation from triplets in 4/4 to 16ths in 3/4...even some groups of nine over four in the guitar solo...I wrote the end with the crazy polyrhythms." What sort of metric modulation is being created in the song?

Matt: It's triplets in 4/4 modulating to groups of 16ths in 3/4. That happens quite a few times in the song, but in a way that isn't jarring.

MD: You said, "The end of the track is a displaced '4, 4, 4, 4, 5' in triplets, which makes seven over four." Can you break that down?

Matt: It's triplets in seven grouped as 4-, 4-, 4-, 4-, and 5-note figures. I displaced it in seven, and furthermore I took the riff that goes over the seven quarter notes and put that under 4/4. The phrase in seven repeats four times to resolve under 4/4. That gives it an even cooler, longer resolve time.

MD: Do "4, 4, 4, 4, and 5" represent bars of those lengths?

Matt: Those are the subdivisions. So if you're playing triplets in 7/4 and you play [groupings of] 4, 4, 4, 4, and 5, there are twenty-one notes. Triplets in seven: seven times three. I displaced that pattern and furthermore put the pattern that occurs over seven quarter notes under 4/4. It repeats four times before it resolves.

MD: Do the group discussions become technically granular, or is it more about the ideas?

Matt: In this particular section of "Cognitive Contortions" I took their prerecorded guitars, chopped them up, and made these thumping riffs. No discussion. Then they recorded their own guitars. They're both as conversant in odd times as I am, but I'm the expert! [laughs] They want to push the boundaries.

MD: When playing these intense metric modulations, is it about ignoring one thing and focusing on another?

Matt: Metric modulation is typically a transition from one meter to another. It's shifting. You keep a consistent rate so as not to interrupt the flow. For instance, the rate remains the same, and you're playing 16th notes in 3/4, and then at the same rate you're playing triplets in 4/4. It takes the same amount of time for a measure to pass. You essentially play the same phrase over a different pulse.

MD: You play a complex double bass drum part in "Backpfeifengesicht."

Matt: I wrote that in the box and realized later it was a bit fast. It's a tricky seven pattern that happens under 4/4. It's based on a single-stroke, alternating four-stroke ruff on the bass drums. It's like a six-stroke roll in a hairta that makes the seven pattern.

MD: In "Transcendence," are those bars of seven and eight in the groove sections?

Matt: That song has the most meter changes of the entire record. It felt better to cut a beat or add a beat here or there—then it sounds like music.

MD: You wrote to me, "In 'Brain Dance'

at 2:23 there's a part in five based off quintuplets." So songs are often inspired by patterns developed during a practice session?

Matt: A lot of the patterns I wrote on this record came from trying to do something differently. One of those is playing patterns in quintuplets. I'd come up with a variety of ways to break up quintuplets that were interesting and challenging. I'd program a pattern and the guys wrote to that specific

pattern. In "Brain Dance" [the groupings are] 3-4, 3-3-3-4, 3-3-3-4, and 3-4.

MD: At 4:43 in "Brain Dance" you're playing triplets within groups of seven?

Matt: Yep. That's actually the same pattern that I play at the end of "Cognitive Contortions," but it's not displaced. It's groupings of 4, 4, 4, 5, and 4 instead of 4, 4, 4, 4, and 5. Both are in triplets—twenty-one notes, so that bar of seven takes four times to resolve in 4/4.

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Matt Garstka

Inspiration, Education, Perspiration

MD: Who are some current drummers you enjoy?

Matt: Aside from myself? No one! I'm the greatest! Damn, I'm good! [laughs] Moritz Mueller is one. He's incredible. Gavin Harrison. Mark Guiliana. Damien Schmitt. I try to find current badass drummers, but I have more luck listening to old records. Compiling a list of my favorite solos for this interview—which I've known for the longest time—made me realize how much I love sick drumming. And they reinspired me. In my search for amazing solos I was looking for Ronald Bruner. He does solo on record, but it's nothing compared to what he does live and how he can speak. He pulls off such crazy shit. I'm envious.

MD: What happens in one of your clinics?

Matt: I just blow everyone's mind! That's all I do the whole time. It's all about me! [laughs] I do a few things, some open drum solos, or I solo over specific metronome patterns. I take questions. I do a bunch of AAL tunes. I take time to answer questions. Someone will ask a question, and then I'll go on a rant and get deep into it. I want to show them stuff, and answers take time. I have material

on my website that explains a lot. I will probably release five of the AAL tracks on a DVD. I give full transcriptions of the tune, an explanation, and a play-through.

MD: What's made the biggest difference in your drumming to date?

Matt: The band. They're a huge help, because this music isn't easy to play. It represents a challenge for me. I will always develop my own concepts in my own time, and that also allows me to write with the band. That's my main musical outlet. And my passion. When I come off tour playing Animals music, I work on my own concepts.

MD: What are your practice regimen and warm-up routines like?

Matt: My practice is constantly changing, because it's dependent on my weaknesses and creative goals. On the road with Animals, there are various stickings and odd patterns that I like to work on before a show, but I'm usually trying to improve some weakness or trying to develop an idea. But I'm always thinking of the kit when I'm on a pad, and how everything translates.

Right now I'm practicing playing everything cleanly. After a while on tour your chops degrade, so you have to be

overprepared at the start of a tour to still be playing cleanly at the end. The road can wear away at your calibration. I have time to work on extra things now; the luxury of practicing is not available on the road. Neither is an abundance of free playing. It's about giving all for the performance. After a month certain parts of your playing can degrade. Road chops can be great. My endurance and strength go up after a tour, but being able to whip out creative ideas or be super-calibrated to where I have more control over smaller amounts of time—that stuff is less abundant.

MD: When can we expect the Matt Garstka solo album?

Matt: Damn, this is it! This is keeping me busy for now. I'm developing my own music in my own time, but my ideas are all over this new album. It's awesome. So I don't feel a need to do that now, which is how it should be in whatever band you're part of.

Continue to page 40 for an analysis of Matt's use of quintuplets on Animals as Leaders' "The Brain Dance."



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STYLE AND ANALYSIS

“The Brain Dance”

Matt Garstka's Quintuplet Groove

by Austin Burcham

Few drummers generate the sheer amount of excitement and enthusiasm within the drum community as Matt Garstka. Whether it's through his incredible display of solo chops or his mind-bending compositions with Animals as Leaders, Garstka continues to push the edge of modern drumming, inspiring many along the way. In this lesson, we'll analyze two quintuplet grooves from the song "The Brain Dance" off the Animals as Leaders album *The Madness of Many*.

Because they're an unusual subdivision, quintuplets can lay the foundation for interesting ideas and patterns. However, the question arises, *How would I use this?* This lesson should serve as a great example of how Garstka applies quintuplet grooves to an appropriate musical setting. Let's get started.

Groove 1

GROOVE 1

At around the 1:22 mark in “The Brain Dance,” the guitar establishes a flowing, quintuplet-based rhythm that lays the backdrop for Garstka to play some interesting patterns. This first groove starts at 1:30. It’s easiest to understand this figure by starting with a foundation. The first step is to play quintuplets on the hi-hat with alternating single strokes, as notated in Exercise 1. This helps to establish the underlying subdivision.

1 5 5 5 5

4 :|

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

Next, add the bass drum and snare on the quarter-note pulse to establish a basic quintuplet groove.

Once you can comfortably play Exercise 2, add in the other kick and snare notes. This is when the groove starts to come to life.

Now we'll add the hi-hat openings that fall on the last quintuplet partial of beat 1, the fourth partial of beat 2, and the last partial of beat 3. The openings make the groove sound very fluid and musical.



Start slowly with these patterns and gradually build them up to speed. They may not come easily at first, but if you start from the foundation and add each layer sequentially, these patterns become easier to digest.

Groove 2

This next pattern, which starts at 1:46, is a little more complex and difficult to execute than the previous example. The foundation is a quintuplet-based ostinato on the ride cymbal that's split into groups of four, with two notes played on the ride followed by two rests. This creates an interesting five-over-four polyrhythm that doesn't change throughout the groove.

Next, add in the kick and snare on the quarter-note pulse to establish the basic groove.

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is for the piano, showing a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. It features a series of eighth-note chords and rests. The bottom staff is for the strings, showing a bass clef and a common time signature. It features eighth-note chords and rests.

Once Exercise 6 is comfortable, add the other bass drum notes to make the pattern take shape.

Finally, add the ghost notes, which are quite challenging to execute. This layer brings cohesion to the groove and makes it flow beautifully.

A single melodic line for a soprano or alto voice. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is common time (indicated by a 'C'). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 109. The vocal line consists of eighth-note patterns, primarily consisting of eighth-note pairs (eighth-note followed by eighth-note rest) and eighth-note triplets (three eighth notes grouped together). The lyrics are in German, including words like 'Herr Jesu Christ' and 'wir danken dir'. The vocal range starts around middle C and goes up to G above middle C.

Garstka has an incredible talent for composing advanced patterns that work seamlessly inside Animals as Leaders' complex arrangements. These patterns are difficult and require a lot of control, independence, and precision to execute, but they're great examples of how to make advanced concepts groove in a musical context. Get practicing!



Austin Burcham is a graduate of Musician's Institute and creator of the YouTube educational series "Study the Greats." Visit youtube.com/abbdrums and abbdrums.com for more info.



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Billy Thomas

The Time Jumper

Seeing as he's got a recording and touring résumé as long as your arm, you'd think the longtime Vince Gill sidekick would have done pretty much everything there is to do as a first-call Nashville cat. But like they say, everything old is eventually new again, and a recent immersion in Western swing music has allowed this drummer to experience some completely novel situations—and up his game in the process.



Story by Mike Haid

Western swing was established in the 1920s and '30s with one foot in Appalachian roots music and the other in urbane big band. Groups playing this uniquely American hybrid filled dance halls in California, Texas, and Oklahoma, and as radio became more popular in the '30s, '40s, and '50s, the style surged on a national level—until rockabilly and rock 'n' roll changed the course of popular music forever. The early rockers were, indeed, heavily influenced by the Western swing sound. Rockabilly icon Bill Haley, for instance, led a group called the Four Aces of Western Swing well before becoming a rock 'n' roll trailblazer.

In modern times, few musicians have embraced the true Western swing format. The long-running group Asleep at the Wheel

Photos by Rick Malkin

is probably the most widely known keeper of the flame originally lit by artists like Hank Thompson, Spade Cooley, and, most famously, Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys. In the late '90s, though, a group called the Time Jumpers, which began as an excuse for some of Nashville's best pickers to jam on an off night, began to draw attention to their weekly performances at the Station Inn bluegrass club. In 2010 contemporary country star Vince Gill joined in, later enlisting his drummer, Billy Thomas, and considerably upping the group's cachet. Today you can usually find the ten-piece band filling the stage at Nashville's 3rd and Lindsley on a Monday night, performing to a packed house and typically joined by a high-profile guest or two.



"I liken the music of the Time Jumpers to a more sophisticated side of Western swing," says drummer and vocalist Thomas, a thirty-year Nashville vet. "That's what drew me to the band. When you go back and listen to Bob Wills, there's an incredible bounce to that music, but it's also rugged. I think Western swing artist Ray Benson [Asleep at the Wheel] picked up on that with an almost roadhouse approach to the style. The Time Jumpers have taken it to a more cosmopolitan side of the tracks. Our music is dynamic, with sophisticated arrangements, and some of the best players in the business are in the group. They understand what section playing is

and how to blend musically. There are ten people on stage, but we like to set up tightly together. The bass rig is about two feet from me. I could easily get away with not having a monitor. The only reason I have one is because I sing, and the only thing I have in there is vocals.

"[The opportunity to play in the group] was very intriguing," Thomas continues, "and very expanding for me, because this gig requires that I play brushes the whole night, which I had never done before. I got into Ed Thigpen's book on brush technique for a short while. But it was way over my head with all the shadings and subtlety that made him so great. So I picked up on the basics and then created my own approach."

Thomas knows about coming up with his own way of doing things, being a natural lefty playing a right-handed kit. "I'm not what you would call ambidextrous," he says, "so I do my best to play right-handed ride with left-handed 2-and-4 backbeats. When I first started playing, every drummer I saw played a right-handed kit, so I just assumed that this was the only way to play drums. I never knew that you could move things around. I'm self-taught, so I approach it my own way. It doesn't look schooled, but it works for me."

"When I started noticing open-handed players like Lenny White and Billy Cobham," the drummer continues, "I gave that a try, but again, it didn't really

Vince Gill on Billy Thomas

"The best drummers feel great to me," Vince Gill says. "That's why Billy and I have been playing together for thirty years. On top of that, he's a great singing drummer, and you can count those on one hand. You save yourself the expense of hiring an extra singer when you have a great singing drummer. In fact, I first met Billy when I hired him for background vocals on a session. He had just moved to town, and he told me that he also played drums. I said, 'Would you like a job?'

"Billy's a versatile player, but he's meat-and-potatoes and [doesn't give you] too much information, which is important to me. Most of all, he's a great hang. After all the notes get played, there's another twenty-two hours of life on a bus, and in all the years I've known Billy, I've never seen him have a bad day. He's good people, and even though he took off a couple of times to play with Emmylou Harris and with McBride & the Ride, we just can't get rid of each other!"





Tools Of the Trade

"I'm still evolving, looking for the right sound for the Time Jumpers," says Billy Thomas, who relies on vintage drums to help capture an authentic Western swing sound. At the time of this interview, he was using a 12x22 blue and white Duco-finish 1964 round-badge Gretsch bass drum and a 9x13 '60s-era Slingerland rack tom in a similar finish. The bass drum has a thin front head with no port and minimal internal muffling. The tom is mounted on a snare stand and fitted with a vintage thin batter head.

"The bass drum has single-rod tuning," Thomas explains, "and it was a bear to get the drums in tune. So I took them to Fork's Drum Closet in Nashville, and they cleaned them up and put some [vintage-style] heads on them. When I finally sat down to play them, they had an amazing sound that immediately made me play differently. It's a much warmer sound than I was used to."

Thomas's Time Jumpers snare is a 4x14 Kenner cardinal-wood stave-shell model fitted with an Evans J1 Etched thin batter head for extra brush response. "This drum is serving me

well with all of the metal brushwork the band's material requires," Thomas says. "Also, its thick shell gives me lots of bottom end [even though it's] tuned rather high. My backup snare is a 5.5x14 blue and white Duco-finish round-badge Gretsch that matches my bass drum. I used this drum for quite a while, but I changed to the ten-lug Kenner for finer tuning ability.

"These drums are set up to respond to a lighter dynamic range. They're all wooden shells, and the warmth I hear from them makes me play differently from how I've ever played before."

Thomas also uses a gig-specific Sabian cymbal setup with the Time Jumpers, including a pair of 14" Jazz hi-hats, a 10" HHX splash, and a 15" HHX X-Plosion crash. "The splash and crash were chosen for making fast punctuated statements," Billy says. "And the hats are really crisp when I'm pedaling to accent 2 and 4."

Thomas chose his Promark B300 Oak Handle Accent brushes for the Time Jumpers gig as well. "I like the way they feel," he says, "and I can turn them around to get a cross-stick

sound." Likewise, his DW 5000 model bass drum pedal is fitted with a lamb's-wool beater because it makes a less pointed attack, which is appropriate for Western swing.

When Thomas does regular Vince Gill gigs, he plays a Ludwig Classic Maple kit in sky-blue oyster pearl finish, with a 9x13 tom mounted on a snare stand, a 16x16 floor tom, and a 14x22 bass drum. His main snare is a Ludwig 5x14 Supraphonic, and he has a 6x14 Kenner Custom Cast Aluminum model for when he uses brushes. The bass drum has an Evans EQ2 batter head, the toms have G2 batters, the Supraphonic has a Level 360 Power Center Reverse Dot batter, and the Kenner has a J1 Etched batter. Thomas's Sabian cymbal selection includes 14" Artisan hi-hats, 18" and 19" HHX X-Treme crashes, and a 21" HHX Raw Bell Dry ride. Billy uses Promark Hickory 7A and 5A wood-tip sticks and B300 Oak Handle Accent brushes, Ludwig cymbal and hi-hat stands, a DW 5000 bass drum pedal, and a Porter & Davies BC Gigster throne.



Billy's Time Jumper Kit



Billy's Vince Gill Kit

Billy Thomas

work for me. Once I started playing with Vince Gill, I had to learn to play brushes. So I learned to stir with my left and ride with my right. This way I can pick up a stick and play ride with my right while still stirring with my left brush to create different shadings. I've tried reversing the pattern, and I'm making some progress."

Appropriate to the history of the music, Thomas approaches the Time Jumpers' material as a jazz drummer would, feathering the bass drum at low volumes and paying close attention to dynamics at all times. "I believe this music was designed for the listener to *feel* the bass drum, and for the upright bass to keep the quarter-note pulse," Thomas says. "What differentiates Western swing from big band swing is the simplicity of the beat. In a big band, you create a drum flurry to set up the horn lines. Western swing is not that. This is more of a two-beat thing, keeping time through the string lines. The arrangements still explode and have energy, but the drummer doesn't set that up like you would in a big band setting. You drive right through the figures."

"There's also a lot of help from the rhythm section to keep the pulse moving. There are three guitar players in this band, each playing a unique rhythmic part, and it all fits tightly together. We work on this stuff to create the right feel and flow for the music. There's also accordion and piano that fit into the rhythmic spectrum, while the three [fiddle] players carry the melody. When it all comes together, it's a powerful sound."

In addition to touring and recording with Vince Gill for the better part of thirty years, Thomas did extensive stage and studio work with A-list country acts like Dolly Parton, Emmylou Harris, Marty Stuart, Ricky Nelson, and Earl Scruggs prior to joining the Time Jumpers. During the early '90s, he was a founding member of the hit-making trio McBride & the Ride. But before recording the most recent Time Jumpers release, *Kid Sister*, he'd never recorded with a full band live in the studio. "*Kid Sister* was done in Vince Gill's home



studio," Thomas explains, "and the balance and blend [when you record a full band live] has to be perfect. This type of recording really separates the men from the boys. There's no click track or electronic guidance going on. We set up and played as a *band*."

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Thomas and the other Time Jumpers recorded in the same fashion when they contributed to half the songs on Willie Nelson's 2016 album *For the Good Times: A Tribute to Ray Price*. "That was another amazing experience," Thomas says, "setting up together and recording at Ocean Way Studios with Willie, who has always been an advocate of Western swing and a huge fan of Bob Wills."

"Western swing is feel-good music," Thomas says in explanation of the style's growing popularity. "It's infectious, and you can't help but tap your toes and want to dance. We just played Cain's Ballroom in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which is the mecca of where this music began, and the way the crowd responded, you would have thought we

were the Beatles. Cain's is a huge dance hall/museum with old wooden floors, and to see the people reacting with such enthusiasm was truly amazing. To get that kind of response and respect was really telling of the power and growing popularity of the music.

"The diversity of the players and singers in the Time Jumpers is what makes this band unique," Thomas says. "We've got some old-school jazz-type players as well as some hardcore country players. Then you have Vince, who's a hybrid of styles and influences, which comes through in his music when he writes for the band. I'd like to think that in my green way of approaching this music I bring a different element than a player who only plays Western swing music would. I'm always learning as I go. Plus I sing, and that changes my approach to playing as well. We have five lead vocalists in the band. Vince does the bulk of it, since he's writing most of the material. I sing lead on one tune, 'Blue Highway Blue,' and then we add vocal harmonies that are just as complex as the three fiddle players when they arrange their harmonic structure playing lines together.

"The Time Jumpers is a uniquely amazing experience for me," Thomas adds. "It's exciting to be a part of such a great group of musicians and wonderful people. I feel that we're creating something that's fresh and new but rooted in the tradition of Western swing. We're building a loyal fan base and helping to bring a new awareness to a fun, family-friendly American musical art form. We have a good time with our audience, because we love what we do, and we want to share that good-time feeling with everyone who comes out to see the band. And that's my job—to make it feel good."



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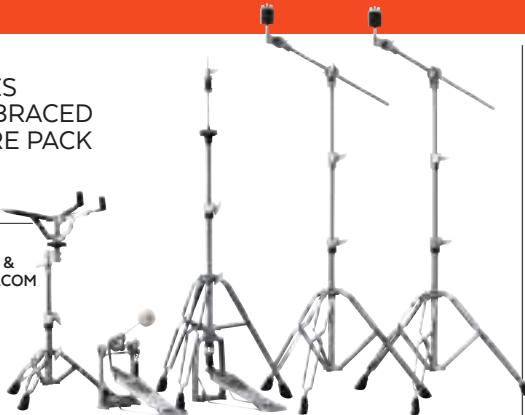


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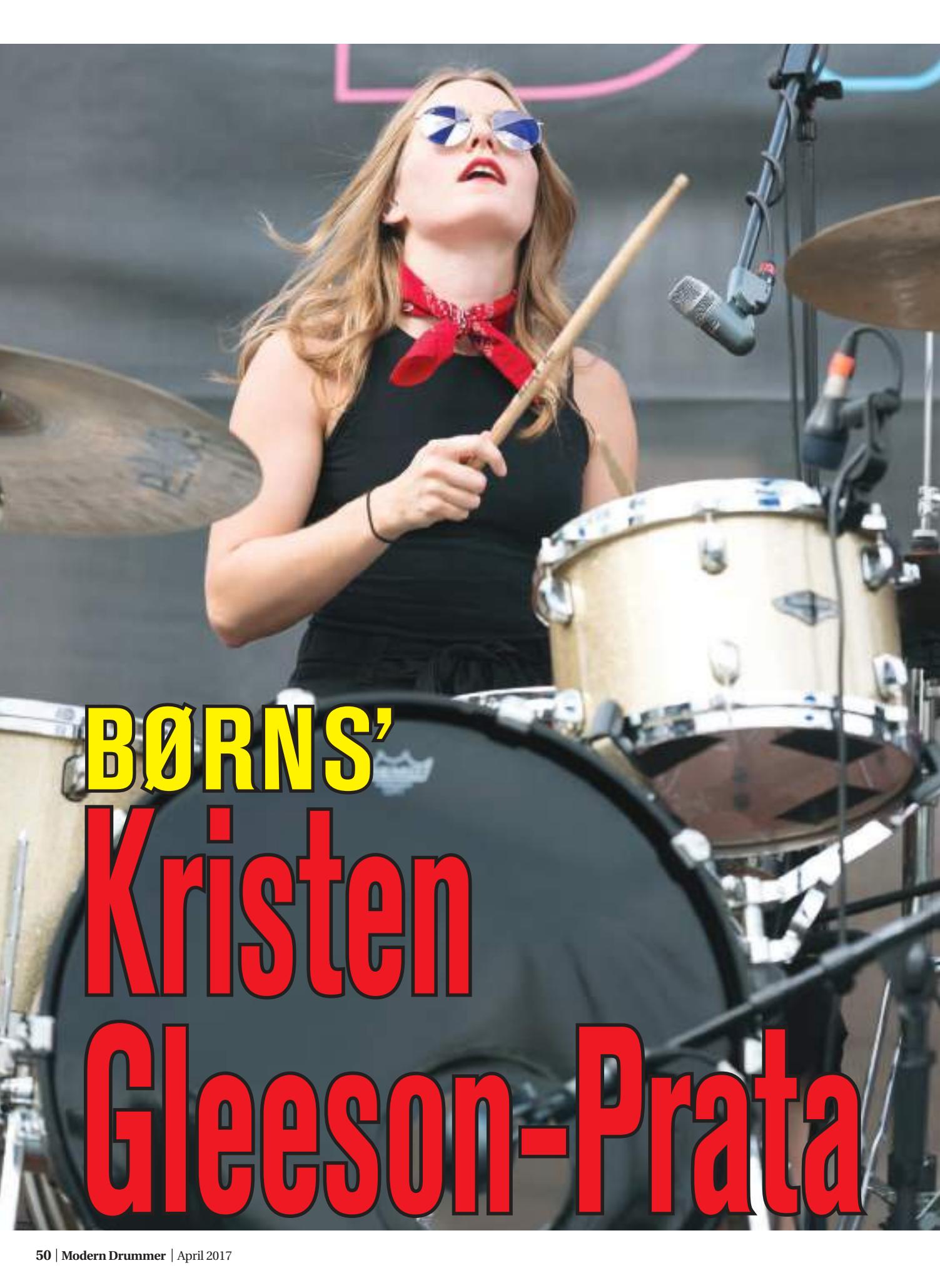
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BØRNS' Kristen Gleeson-Prata

With so many different paths that might lead to a full-time drumming gig today, it could seem daunting for aspiring professional players to choose the best road to take. The drummer for the indie/psychedelic pop songwriter BØRNS is proving that it's not the particular path you choose that matters, it's how hard you push yourself along the way.

When *MD* spoke by phone with Kristen Gleeson-Prata, the drummer was in Los Angeles enjoying a much-needed break after an almost two-year-long international tour with the indie pop star Garrett Borns, a singer-songwriter better known by the stage name BØRNS. "I don't know exactly how long it was since our last little break," Gleeson-Prata says. "But we haven't had more than a couple days off for probably a year and a half to two years. It's been pretty crazy. But we have a good amount of time off now. And we all needed it."

The group's latest marathon tour supported the 2015 release *Dopamine*, an album that shot to the top of alternative and rock charts

thanks in part to the gold-certified and infectious psychedelic single "Electric Love." And although Gleeson-Prata has watched it all unfold firsthand with the band from the beginning, she grinded through endless hours of networking and hustle, as well as plenty of time spent shedding in college, before she was even considered for the gig.

While taking her break in L.A., Gleeson-Prata tells *MD* about her current plans to dive back into the regimen that landed her the gig in the first place. But with spring recording dates in the works for a new BØRNS record and summer tours starting to book up, it doesn't look like she'll be hustling in her free time for too long.



Story by Willie Rose

Photos by Alex Solca



MD: How'd you get started playing drums?

Kristen: My dad took me to see Billy Cobham at a Guitar Center in Cleveland when I was around ten. I wiggled my way up to the front, and then afterward I got him to sign my sticks. I was hooked since then. I started taking private lessons, and my parents were always supportive. I come from a family of doctors and pharmacists, so it's a very different background. But they've always been supportive, and I'm really grateful and lucky.

I did every single possible musical thing I could do in public school—marching band, show choir, orchestra, and all of that. And I studied with a few awesome private teachers. Once I got into my sophomore or junior year, it felt like the next logical step was to go to college for music.

I ended up going to DePaul University in Chicago, but I transferred to Berklee after a year. And I think because I transferred to Berklee and was kind of frustrated before that, I had a good idea of what I wanted to do. I had a fire under my ass, which I think is really useful for a school like Berklee.

MD: How so?

Kristen: I absolutely love Berklee, but it's such a big school. No one's going to be on you about going after things and getting them done. It can be easy for people to kind of float through and just get by. But I think because I was motivated, I went after all of the amazing opportunities that the school has. I did so many things because I looked for them and went after them.

MD: Like what?

Kristen: John "JR" Robinson did a recording workshop, and drummers had to apply to get into it. I ended up being accepted and couldn't believe that I was there. We were assigned a song, and there was a house band, and we went through this whole process while JR coached us. The last day we went into the studio with an amazing band and recorded it. We were literally with the master. That was my senior year, so after that JR said to all of us, "If you guys ever come out to L.A., give me a call. I'd be happy to keep in touch." So I did, and he was one of the first people I knew here.

It's easy—it's *really* easy—with anything in life to say, "Nah, I'm going to pass," because it's easier to pass. But I didn't do that when I was at Berklee for the most part, and I think it really helped me to take advantage of everything there. I think it's what students need

to do there to get a really good experience.

MD: You graduated from Berklee and moved to Los Angeles right away. What was that experience like?

Kristen: It was so scary. I'm glad that I'm out of that phase, because I hardly knew anybody. Throughout my whole college experience, I was kind of in the moment, and I wasn't concerned about what was happening afterward. I was dealing with what was right in front of me. I was having so much fun learning and playing as much as I could in school. Afterward I thought, *Oh, shit. Now I have to go somewhere.*

I didn't want to stay in Boston, because I felt like the ceiling there



Kristen's Setup

Drums: Tama Starclassic Performer birch/bubinga

- A. 5.25x14 Fortune Drums maple snare
- B. 8x12 tom
- C. 16x16 floor tom
- D. 16x22 bass drum

Hardware: Tama

Heads: Remo

Sticks: Vic Firth X5A

Accessories: Big Fat Snare Drum "Steve's Donut" head

Electronics: Roland

Cymbals: Paiste

- 1. 15" Giant Beat hi-hats
- 2. 18" Signature Dark Energy Crash Mark 1
- 3. 20" Masters Dark crash/ride

is lower than somewhere like L.A. or New York. So I was considering those two, and I made a list of the people that I knew in both cities. I had a couple acquaintances in L.A. from school. I also figured in L.A. I could have a car for my gear. It just seemed more logical.

And at first, again, I knew nobody. It really sucked. But I would go to a lot of shows, jam, and hang with the few people that I did know. And I met a lot of people. But to be honest, doing that four or five times a week drained me mentally.

I did that for a while before cutting down. And from there it just grew very slowly. I joined a wedding band and met a couple people through that, and my network started growing exponentially. Within the first year or two, I kept meeting more people and slowly started getting a lot busier playing for singer-songwriters, playing percussion for yoga and spin classes, and doing cover and original gigs. I was just doing anything and everything and slowly growing my network.

MD: Is that how you met Garrett Borns?

Kristen: I joined BØRNS because of some connections that I didn't even know were important. You never know where those connections can come from to get you what you ultimately want. But none of us in BØRNS knew each other previously. I was on the road with another group and got an email from a music director who was looking for a female band to back Bonnie McKee. I was on the road, so I couldn't do it. It was almost like being in the wrong place at the right time, which I was upset about. But I said, "If you don't mind, when I get back in town I'll be in touch and see if you have any other bands that need drummers." When I got back, I emailed him every few weeks or so, and one day in 2014 he said, "There's this dude Borns who needs a band. We have auditions coming up. Are you interested?"

I listened to his songs and knew that they were amazing, and I really wanted to do it. I did auditions all the time, and you make like 2 percent of them. [laughs] But I ended up getting in to do an audition, and I got the gig. I was so psyched. And it started very slowly. Garrett wasn't signed yet.

And the transition from being a freelance musician to being just in BØRNS was tough. From the beginning I knew that it was a really important gig, even though the band wasn't very busy. Gigs would come up, and I might have had something with someone else, and I knew that obviously I had to play the BØRNS gig. I pride myself on my integrity, and I don't like saying that I'm going to do something and then backtracking. I knew the BØRNS gigs were important, but I also needed to be making money in between them. So to keep doing the other stuff that I was doing while letting those last-minute BØRNS gigs take precedence was really tough.

When we finally got busy enough for me to just do BØRNS full time, it got a lot easier. And the friends I was playing with thankfully understood that BØRNS was in my best interest. They were supportive, even though I might have canceled on them now and then. So it's been a long time, and it's been so cool to see Garrett grow and see the band grow into what it is today.

MD: What's your process for adapting BØRNS' material to a live show?

Kristen: It's definitely a fun process. Part of it starts with [cowriter and producer] Tommy English in the studio. He thinks like a producer and musician, so he doesn't know that it might be really hard to do something with your left foot or do something with your right hand. He thinks outside of the box and relies on me to figure out how to do it. I come from a more black-and-white, type-A kind of brain. I'll think, *No, you can't do it that way*. So he makes me think outside of the box, and then I'm eventually able to pull it off. Even in

the recording process I start to think about how I'm going to play it live.

Then Kris Pooley comes into the picture. He's the music director for Garrett and Katy Perry, Kesha—everybody. He really pushes me to think as well. We'll go in for the first day of rehearsals, and I'll play what I've figured out myself. He'll say, "Try moving your left hand over here to catch those claps on the SPD." And I'll be like, "Well, I'm already playing the hi-hat." And he'll say, "You can do it. Try it." And I'll try it, and it works. He'll just have me try stuff, and soon enough I'm covering most if not everything on the record. And there are minimal tracks to fill in the rest of it.

But I'm learning a ridiculous amount from both of them. And the whole band is so nice and supportive. Even if we're in rehearsal and Kris says to try something and I crash and burn, it's fine. They're all nice and supportive and just laugh at me. It's a good atmosphere.

MD: Do you have any parting advice for an up-and-coming drummer?

Kristen: Play with as many people as you can, get as much experience as you can, and learn as much as you can. But at the same time, be very true to yourself and what you're comfortable with. And be genuine. There are a lot of people who are just trying to get all the gigs, or the best gigs, and they're not being very genuine. People can see through that. And maybe you'll get a gig for a little bit. But soon people are going to be able to tell whether or not you're a good person, or a good hang, and that's what creates the longevity in your career.



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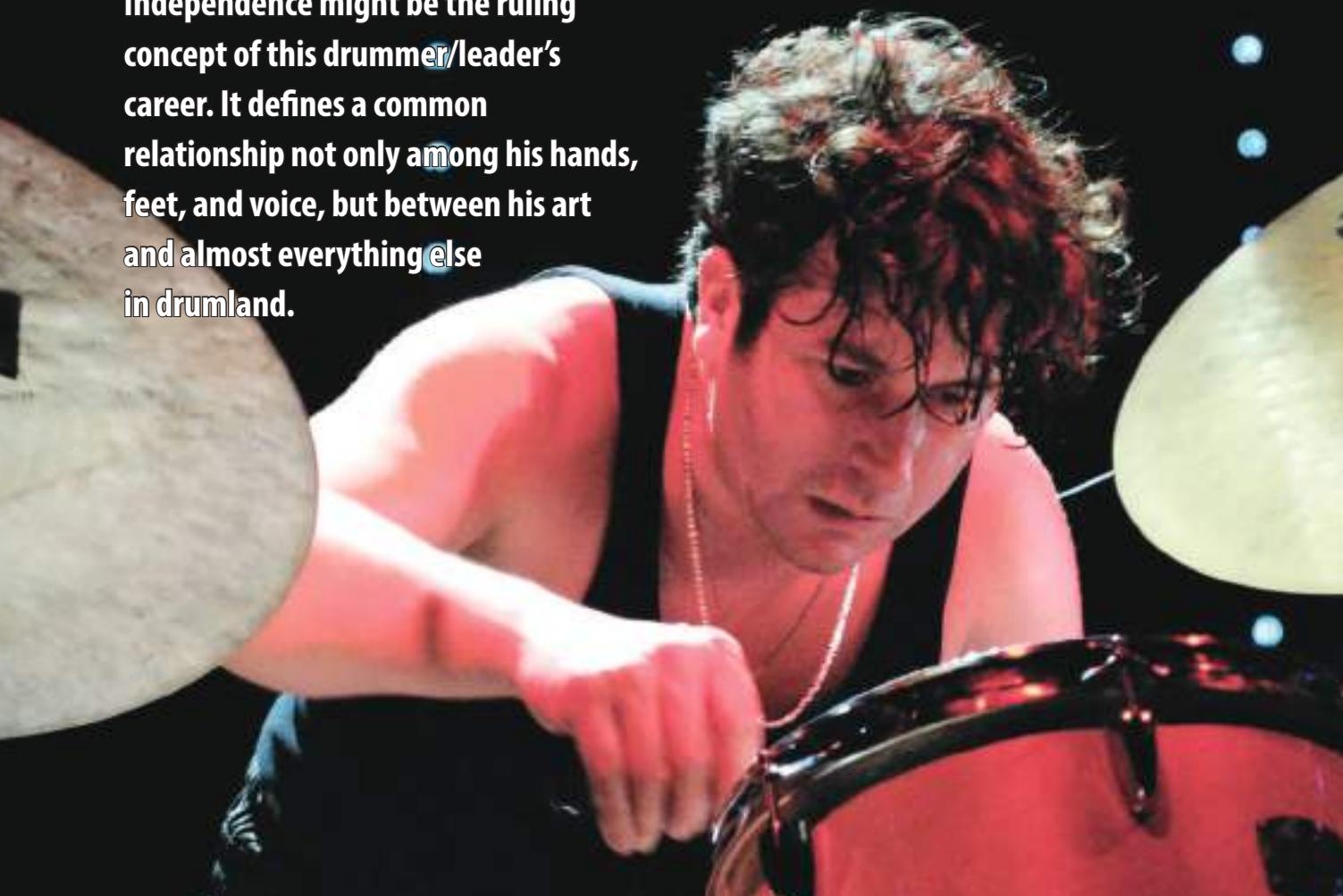
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Sean Noonan

Shaka!

Independence might be the ruling concept of this drummer/leader's career. It defines a common relationship not only among his hands, feet, and voice, but between his art and almost everything else in drumland.



by Ken Micallef



In performance at Joe's Pub in New York City recently, drummer/composer Sean Noonan took the stage wearing a gold lamé boxer's robe and matching trunks. Noonan strode the small space accompanied by his mates on upright bass and acoustic piano, bowing and thanking the crowd like Sugar Ray Leonard performing a stand-up routine. But Noonan's music and drumming are no joke.

Over the course of twenty albums, the forty-year-old Boston native has explored the outer edges of his vast creative kingdom, peering into corners, illuminating rooms, and generally visiting places no ordinary drummer would dare set foot. Noonan's shows are equal parts jazz improvisation party and absurdist theater set in



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Sean Noonan



some small European town—destinations changing at will. Noonan is drummer and vocalist, composer and performance artist extraordinaire.

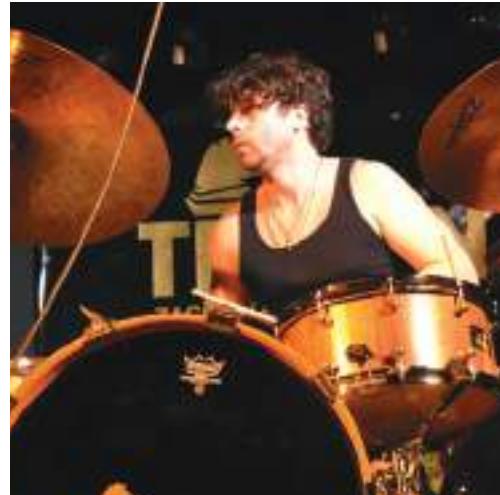
“It grew organically,” Noonan says from London, where he’s rehearsing with Zappanation for a debut European tour. “It wasn’t something I did self-consciously. The performance aspect began when I recorded the albums *Stories to Tell* and *Boxing Dreams*, where I explored Afro-Celtic punk jazz. It featured African vocalists; it was a large group. I thought of ways I could contribute to the project and realized I felt very comfortable just being myself. I wasn’t trying to imitate anyone. I didn’t try to replace the character of a West African singer or imitate that, but I found a way to put myself into the music and be authentic. And people can see that.”

Noonan has performed in Roman amphitheaters and Polish salt mines, in Danish jazz clubs and with European string quartets. His latest release, *Memorable Sticks*, features performance routines laced with wacky monologues, theatrical songs, and conversational drumming. He describes the album as “a keyboard trio that digs deep discovering folklore legends Skarbnik, salt mines apparitions from Wieliczka, Poland.” Noonan sings about a woman’s “left shoe” over roller-coaster beats in “Miata Baba.” “Hidden Treasures” recalls a relaxed Thelonious Monk tune (with Noonan singing “Olly olly oxen free”) over scattershot drum

fours. And “Shaka” recalls a lost B-movie about women in chains and jungle voodoo. Noonan explains that it’s based on the concept of a kind of Irish griot: “In Africa they called them ‘Shaka.’ Shaka Zulu is the warrior king. I like the way the word sounds. In *Memorable Sticks* we dig through the earth and eventually come out on the other side in Africa. It’s a fun journey.”

A carnival-like atmosphere fills Noonan’s music, and his punch-drunk drumming only adds to the merriment. “I approach music as being a little bit like a tinker, an Irish gypsy—these people who collect different stuff,” Noonan says. “I’m really interested in exploring new things, and if I come across different themes and stories, it’s like folklore. I’m like a cross between a songwriter and a storyteller, and I write about absurd personal stories and experiences.”

Noonan’s ability to perform vocal rhythms





Tools of the Trade

Noonan plays one of two kits: an Eames and a Troyan Professional. The Eames set includes a 6.5x14 Master Model snare, 8x10 and 10x12 toms, a 14x14 floor tom, and a 14x18 bass drum. The Troyan set features a 6.5x14 Sean Noonan Signature snare; 8x8, 10x10, and 10x12 toms; a 14x14 floor tom; and a 16x18 bass drum. His cymbals include 12" Tosco Super hi-hats, a 22" Zildjian Constantinople ride, a 22" Zildjian prototype Dark ride, a 20" Zildjian China Boy, and an 18" A Zildjian crash. He uses TreeWorks chimes, Vic Firth American Classic 7A sticks, Zildjian retractable wire brushes, and Remo Ambassador heads.

that are often in direct contrast to his drumming is but one of his unique talents. "Some pieces are conceived directly off the drumset, where the melody and rhythms are all from the drums," Noonan explains. "The first track on *Memorable Sticks* is derived from a Polish folk melody I only heard recently. A weird and funny story."

How did Noonan develop the ability to sing vocals of often time-defying density that oppose his internal pulse? "It's about developing independence between your four limbs," he says. "I suggest working on complete independence starting simply with your two hands, then incorporating your feet. Using your voice is a fifth [element]. You can have five-way coordination. Start extremely slowly. Try playing a simple rock or bossa nova rhythm while singing to yourself. It's about rewiring your brain, and it takes time. It's all about practicing. Now I'm working on playing odd meters that change every measure, and singing over that, similar to what Mike Patton does in Mr. Bungle."

Noonan's heroes include Elvin Jones, Buddy Rich, and Louie Bellson. Once enrolled at Berklee, Sean was tutored by three important mentors: Bob Moses, Jamey Haddad, and Robert Gullotti. Summer yard work paid for further studies with George Garzone and John Lockwood of the Fringe, a longstanding Boston experimental jazz trio of legendary renown, for which Gullotti played drums. Upon graduating from Berklee in 1999, Noonan headed to New York City, but with no intention of being another cog in Manhattan's jazz wheel. "I consciously chose to not play sideman

gigs in New York," Noonan says. "I was more interested in composing. In New York you have so much energy and only so much time, so you want to make the most out of it. I wanted to develop as a composer/drummer.

"I'm also influenced by [playwright] Samuel Beckett in the way he uses silence and repetition and rhythm," Noonan adds. "If you listen to his plays or audio recordings, it can give you a whole other way to approach drumming. There's a rhythmic way of using words and rhythms with combinations of different words. It made me realize that a lot can be done. My solo drumming project, *Being Brewed by Noon*, is inspired by Beckett. I have one story about a man trapped inside a wall. It's philosophical. The wall is a metaphor for an obstacle. That also helped me play different rhythms while using my voice."

In a world where drummers typically resist the leadership mantle, Sean Noonan charges forward, providing inspiration for those brave enough to follow. "Learn from your mistakes," Noonan advises. "Use your mistakes in a way to make your own voice. One time I broke my hand before a tour. I had to change the way I played or not tour. I embraced the obstacle in front of me. I spent the next couple months using my feet more creatively. I had one hand and my two feet. You can learn from experiences like that. And don't get caught up in copying technical drummer things. That can be a roadblock, and it will prevent you from hearing the musicians and interacting as well as you could. Find your niche, and be yourself."



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Mel Brown

Portland, Oregon, gave a young child the gift of music. The kid took that gift with him to Detroit, and proceeded to elevate the music of some of the greatest performers of all time. Back home, he's repaid the debt in full, providing the city's nightlife with endless hours of feel-good grooves and sharing with its up-and-coming musicians the same lessons that took him so far, all those years ago.



Brown in the '70s

He's not touring the world anymore, but life is good for Mel Brown. "I'm very blessed," the drummer says, "because I can play five nights a week—and play five different ways." Brown worked as a Motown drummer in the 1960s and '70s, recording and touring with Martha and the Vandellas, Diana Ross, the Temptations, the Spinners, the Four Tops, and the Miracles. After that heady time, he returned to his hometown of Portland, Oregon, and became the spark for that city's jazz revival, fronting bands in the styles of Art Blakey, Max Roach, Roy Haynes, Philly Joe Jones, and Bernard Purdie.

The Mel Brown B-3 Organ Group, featuring Louis Pain, recently celebrated the twentieth anniversary of Portland's jazz hub, Jimmy Mak's. The group nailed soulful takes of "I'll Be There," "House of the Rising Sun," "Watermelon Man," and Earth, Wind & Fire's "Getaway," and the drummer took his funk seriously too. A series of anniversary recordings from the club, as well as Brown's

2000 release, *Mr. Groove*, attest to Mel's wide-ranging skills.

It's not a stretch to say that Brown's experience playing for some of the world's greatest R&B singers has served him well in his career, even in instrumental situations. "Drummers need to learn to hum or sing the tune, kind of get a feel of what's going on," Brown says. "The best way to play a tune and make it feel good is to think like a singer. A singer has to take a breath sometimes, so when you're playing a tune, leave space for somebody else to play. You've got to know when to play and when not to, and to play real simple and steady."

Brown learned important musical lessons early. As a boy he delivered the morning paper through Portland's "jazz district." Sometimes the clubs' shows would just be ending as he was riding by. "This is like six o'clock in the morning," the drummer recalls. "The doors would open up and I could see guys playing inside. Back then there were shows with strip

dancers and comedians and tap dancers and all kinds of things going on. There were also a lot of musicians that lived in my neighborhood, and I could hear them practicing during the day, so I was around a lot of music."

Much of that music was jazz. "We called it jazz," Brown says, "but it was also an entertaining thing. People would go out and dance, and that's where you learn to play a groove. 'This is a shuffle,' or 'Give me a backbeat on this one,' or 'This is a ballad.' You learned to be part of a group. You weren't saying, 'Hey, look at me—I'm an outstanding player.' You said, 'Hey, listen, what tune is this? And how can I make it sound good?'"

Later Brown was mentored by Portland trumpeter Bobby Bradford and trombonist Cleve Williams. "I'd get home after high school," Mel remembers, "and guys would say, 'Hey, man, come by the house and sit down and listen to this record. Listen to the way Sam Woodyard is playing with Duke'

Ellington, and the way that Sonny Payne is playing with Count Basie, so you know how to set up figures.' When a horn player is getting ready to come in and make their shout, the good drummers will play a fill for a bar or two, or maybe half a bar. You could feel something coming up because of their fill, and it was always a big help for the horn players. I was always a good reader, but I had learned how to set things up. You know, if you're doing 'Satin Doll,' you do a bar of triplets, snare and floor tom, building it up."

In high school Brown performed with the Portland Junior Symphony, and while studying at Portland State University he played local jazz clubs with Billy Larkin and the Delegates. One summer the band took some gigs in L.A., where Brown met the legendary Miles Davis drummer Philly Joe Jones and immediately asked for lessons. "I wanted to have the drive like Art Blakey," Brown recalls, "but a clean sound like Max Roach—the musical sound. And I wanted some of the smoothness like Philly Joe, so I would study all these guys—Philly Joe, Blakey, Max, Roy Haynes, Jimmy Cobb. It was like, there are certain things that these guys do that I can't do."

Jones' lessons would always involve improving listening skills. "He would leave the room and have me play something," Brown says, "and he'd tell me what it was that I played and which hand I started with. And then it was my turn to do the same thing. He'd play something, and I'd say, 'Okay, you're playing some ratamacues, you're playing some paradiddles, you're playing the paradiddle-diddle, and you started with your left hand. He was giving me ear-training classes. So by the time I got back to Portland State, I could listen to that *Milestones* album, like the track 'Billy Boy,' and hear exactly what he was doing—he's starting with his left hand on the floor tom and working back to the snare drum. I could hear everything."

Brown suggests that drummers who are trying to find their voice on the instrument learn to be choosy about what they incorporate from their heroes. "You use whatever you can use, and the rest of the stuff you appreciate but don't even attempt to do. It's like taking stuff and putting it in a bucket. I've got the best of Philly, the best of Max, the best of Roy Haynes, the best of Art Blakey.... You take a spoon and stir it up,

and you say, 'Okay, now what kind of sound can I have?' Everybody's got a signature, a thumbprint."

After college, Brown took a steady gig in Vancouver with guitarist Tommy Chong (later of the comedy duo Cheech and Chong), and singer Martha Reeves happened to hear him on a gig. Soon Brown

was learning a whole new feel. "I came from the jazz side," he says. "The person who really showed me the Motown groove was Stevie Wonder, 'Little Stevie Wonder' back then. 'Hey, Brown, come here. This is the way we do it back in Detroit.' Oh, okay."

"It took me a minute to adjust, to fit with the snare drum being on the downbeat

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Mel Brown

and the bass drum on the '&' of the beat. It turned everybody around, because we didn't just play on 2 and 4. The snare drum was on 1, 2, 3, and 4, and the bass drum was on the '&'s, and that screwed everybody up. They were used to the bass drum being on 1, 2, 3, 4, not the snare drum."

There were always two drummers on the Motown sessions, according to Brown. "Guys would say, 'Do you want to play the top or the bottom?' If you played the top you were playing the snare drum and ride cymbal. If you played the bottom you were playing the hi-hat and the bass drum. That could be tough, but after a period of time you can read each other. Everybody thought it was one drummer."

Besides a pair of drummers, the rhythm section would usually feature bassist James Jamerson and three or four guitar players. "Everything was put together like a puzzle," Brown says. "We'd lay down a rhythm track at Hitsville, and then they would take that track across town and put the horn players on it. When they finished with the horn players, they'd bring the track back down

Mel Brown plays **Allegra** drums and **Zildjian** cymbals.

to Motown and put the strings on it. We had a chalkboard—it'd be, "Temptations at midnight," and the Temps would come in and put their voices on top of the track. And then at three in the morning they'd have the Supremes come in and lay their voices down on a track that was done for them. So everything kept going.

"We hardly ever were all in the studio at the same time. When a record came out, you'd listen back and say, 'Am I playing on this track?' Motown hated the idea of putting the musicians' names on records, so unless you kept a notebook in the studio, it was very hard to tell. Smokey [Robinson] would come in and say, 'Okay, this tune I want you guys to play is for Stevie, and this tune here is for the Four Tops, and this tune over here is for the Spinners.'"

The Motown era was an exciting one for all the musicians involved, and Brown never knew what opportunity awaited him next. While in England with the Temptations,

recording *Live at London's Talk of the Town*, he was surprised by a visit to his dressing room from Billy Preston and members of the Beatles. The next morning a limo arrived to take Brown to the studio, where he recorded the original version of George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord," which appears on Preston's 1970 *Encouraging Words* album.

Now in his early seventies, Brown hosts a jazz camp every summer at Western Oregon University. One of the things he tries to get students to understand is that the drummer isn't solely responsible for keeping the time in a band. "You have to listen to other people," Mel says, "and if you think you might be ahead of the beat, synchronize yourself with the bass player and the piano player, because no one knows who's in the wrong [if the time goes astray]. But if the rhythm section is together, everything works. Because every tune that you play, there's a sweet spot. You may have to pull back on the time, or push the time, but once you get to that sweet spot, no one cares. It just feels good."

Robin Tolleson



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Dave Matthews Band's Carter Beauford

GEARING UP ON STAGE AND UP CLOSE

Interview and photos by Miguel Monroy



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A. 7x13 Dunnett titanium timbale
B. 15x15 floor tom

C. 6.5x14 Ludwig Alex Van Halen signature rosewood snare

D. 8x8 tom
E. 9x10 tom
F. 10x12 tom

G. 12x14 tom
H. 14x16 floor tom

I. 7x10 Pork Pie mahogany snare
J. 18x20 bass drum

Hardware: Remo Coated CSX snare

batters and Hazy Ambassador resonants, Clear Pinstripe tom batters

and Ebony Ambassador resonants, Clear Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter

and Ebony Powerstroke 3 resonant

Percussion: LP Jam Block, Travis Barker cowbell, Granite Blocks, and Whole-Tone bar chimes, assorted hand percussion

Accessories/Electronics: Clark Synthesis Platinum transducers mounted to drum

throne, Aphex Impulse trigger module, Akai Z8 sampler, Grace Design 901

headphone amplifier, Sensaphonics custom in-ear monitors, Carter Beauford signature drumming gloves, and Roland

PD-8 dual-trigger pad

Microphones: Sennheiser e901 and e902 on bass drum, e903 on top and bottom of snare, DPA 4021 on toms, and DPA 4011 on ride cymbals;

Neumann KM 184 on hi-hats; Shure VP88 overheads, Beta 57A on timbale, and KSM137 on percussion tree and granite blocks; Crown CM-310A vocal microphone

Sticks: Vic Firth Carter Beauford signature model

"I tried to assemble a kit that would fit with what we were doing musically," says Carter Beauford. "Everyone in the Dave Matthews Band comes from a different musical background, and we were [representing] all those different backgrounds through the music. I'm psyched that the new Recording Custom has come out. When you're on stage trying to project a story to your listeners, it takes a lot of focus. You want to enjoy that conversation that you're having with your bandmates, and you want to enjoy the response that you're getting from the crowd."

"Carter has played Recording Custom since the beginning," says Beauford's longtime drum tech, Henry Lunieski. Regarding the new Recording Custom kit, Lunieski says, "It's awesome. It comes with thinner shells and heavier hardware, which gives you a different mass-to-resonance ratio. And it's a lot more dynamic, with lower lows and higher highs."

In terms of his massive array of cymbals, Carter says, "I use a lot of different cymbals because there are times when I want to sound just a little bit different from the night before. I'll use certain cymbals to make my job easier and to project the sound I'm looking for. Then there are nights when I don't need all that power, and I choose something else to allow the song to breathe."

When asked about the microphone setup, longtime DMB monitor engineer Ian Kuhn says, "We chose mics that aren't coloring the sound of the kit. They pick up the natural sound, but they're also durable. We've experimented over the years, but we keep coming back to the same things. We use DPA microphones exclusively on the toms. They're expensive, but we bought them twenty years ago and haven't had to replace them. They sound great and color the sound very little."

For more with Beauford, visit moderndrummer.com.



BASICS

Stickings That Rock

Part 2: Exploring an Additional Hand Pattern

by Rich Redmond

In this lesson we'll focus on another sticking that I acquired while working through George Lawrence Stone's classic book *Stick Control*. The rhythm in the right hand is rooted in the first part of a 3:2 clave rhythm. (Think of the Bo Diddley rhythm on Johnny Otis's "Willie and the Hand Jive.")

The bass drum figures I've presented here are simple, but they sound great. Feel free to incorporate more dense bass drum patterns once you have these mastered. You can also change the feel and lope of the groove by applying the right-hand rhythm to auxiliary hi-hats, cowbells, crashes, rims, floor toms, and more. As always, practice with a metronome to lock in the groove. Have fun!

The image shows the first section of the sheet music for "The Star-Spangled Banner". The page number "4" is at the top left. The music is in common time (indicated by a "4" in a circle) and consists of four measures. Each measure starts with a bass note followed by a treble note. The melody is primarily composed of eighth notes, with some sixteenth-note patterns. The lyrics "O say can you see" are written below the notes. Measure 1: Bass (F), Treble (D). Measure 2: Bass (E), Treble (C). Measure 3: Bass (D), Treble (B). Measure 4: Bass (C), Treble (A).



The image shows the 8th measure of the first system of a musical score. The key signature is A major (no sharps or flats). The time signature is common time (indicated by 'C'). The measure begins with a quarter note followed by a eighth note. The melody consists of eighth notes and sixteenth-note patterns. The lyrics 'I am' are written above the notes. Measure numbers 8 through 12 are written vertically along the left margin.

9

A musical score for a snare drum. The tempo is 12. The time signature is common time (indicated by '4'). The first measure shows a sixteenth-note stroke followed by two eighth-note strokes. The second measure shows two eighth-note strokes followed by a sixteenth-note stroke. The third measure shows a sixteenth-note stroke followed by two eighth-note strokes. The fourth measure shows two eighth-note strokes followed by a sixteenth-note stroke. The notes are marked with 'x' or '()' above them.

A musical score for a single staff. It consists of five measures. Each measure starts with a note followed by a fermata, then a rest. The notes are eighth notes, and the rests are sixteenth notes. The first four measures end with a fermata over the first note. The fifth measure ends with a fermata over the first note. The entire section concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Rich Redmond drums for country star Jason Aldean, is an award-winning clinician, and is an active session drummer in Nashville and Los Angeles. His recent book/DVD, *FUNDamentals of Drumming for Kids* (coauthored with Michael Aubrecht), is available through Modern Drummer Publications.

Groove Construction

Part 11: Perceiving the Click as Triplets

by Jost Nickel

In this ear-training workshop, we'll work on hearing a metronome on different partials of 8th-note triplets. Working on these exercises will improve your ability to internalize different rhythms before you start playing them. Plus, these exercises will definitely improve your timing.

Let's use a triplet-based shuffle groove to play along with the click. Here's an example, but feel free to try any triplet-based groove that you like.

1

4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

Turn on a quarter-note click at 70 bpm, and get used to the tempo by playing the shuffle along with the metronome for a few measures.

2

4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

Now try to hear the metronome as the last triplet partial of each beat. If you're having difficulties shifting your focus, start by going back to Exercise 1. Play a few bars until you've gotten used to the tempo, and then stop the click and keep playing. Then start the click on the last triplet partial while still playing.

3

4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

Once you're comfortable with the previous example, try hearing the click as the second triplet partial of each beat. This can be harder than Exercise 3, so try turning the click on while playing if you're having trouble.

4

4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

Once you can play to the click on each partial at 70 bpm, bump up the tempo. In the accompanying video on moderndrummer.com, I play the exercises at 110 bpm.

Now we'll try to hear the metronome as a six-over-four polyrhythm, which can also be thought of as quarter-note triplets. Start with a tempo around 100 bpm, which makes it easier for you to perceive the click as quarter-note triplets.

5

4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

In Exercise 6 we'll shift the position of the quarter-note triplets by trying to hear the polyrhythm starting on the second triplet partial of beat 1.



6

4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

Once you have the previous two exercises down, increase the tempo. In the accompanying video lesson I play these exercises at 170 bpm.

Next we'll push ourselves by trying to hear the metronome as a three-over-four polyrhythm, which can also be viewed as a half-note triplet. Try starting around 50 bpm. Using an 8th-note displacement, we can hear the three-over-four polyrhythm start on four different positions in the measure. Here's the first position.

7

4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

In Exercise 8, we'll try to hear the polyrhythm starting on the second 8th-note-triplet partial.

8

4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

Now we'll start the half-note triplet on the third partial of beat 1.

9

4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

And finally, here's the fourth position.

10

4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

Take your time with these exercises—this material can take weeks or even months to develop. Work on one exercise at a time, and eventually you'll learn to hear the click in different positions.

Each time you practice, take a few minutes to work on one of these exercises. You'll become a much better player by training your ears and improving your internal pulse with these concepts. For more, check out my book *Jost Nickel's Groove Book*.

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



STRICTLY TECHNIQUE

1,000 Ways to Practice a Single Page

Part 2: More Rhythmic Interpretations

by Libor Hadrava



In Part 1 of this series, we began exploring different approaches to utilize and practice a single page of rhythm. We started on the snare with 16th-note subdivisions while accenting the rhythms on the page. In this lesson we'll take the same approach and apply it to the drumset. Here's the rhythm we'll be using.

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff begins with a treble clef, a common time signature, and a key signature of one sharp. It features eighth-note patterns and rests. The bottom staff begins with a bass clef, a common time signature, and a key signature of one sharp. It features quarter-note patterns and rests.

In Part 1 we read this phrase by playing constant 16th notes while accenting the written rhythm. By simply moving the accented notes to the toms and keeping the rest of the 16th notes on the snare, we can create a musical variation with a natural flow and feel. Try playing every right-hand accent on the floor tom and every left-hand accent on the rack tom.

Hand drumming notation for a 2nd position exercise. The top staff shows a pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with corresponding R/L hand markings. The bottom staff shows a similar pattern with a different hand marking scheme. The measure numbers 1 through 8 are indicated above the staves.

Once that's comfortable, improvise with different tom placements, even if it means crossing your hands.

Now we'll make the accented tom notes sound a bit fatter by playing them together with the snare. Each right-hand tom accent will also get a left-hand snare hit, and every left-hand tom accent will get a right-hand snare hit in unison.

>' symbols above them. The bottom staff shows a similar sequence with 'R' and 'L' below the notes indicating which leg to play each note. The tempo is indicated as '3'."/>

Now move all of the right-hand accents to the ride and all of the left-hand accents to the closed hi-hat. This creates a smooth flow of 16th notes on the snare with an accented cymbal melody.

Once you're comfortable with Exercise 4, experiment with your own accented cymbal combinations.

Next we'll emphasize each cymbal or hi-hat accent with a bass drum hit to make it sound a bit more colorful.

Try playing all of the accents on an open hi-hat together with the bass drum. You can close the hi-hats on the following 16th or 32nd note.

Hand drumming notation for measure 6. The top staff shows a bass drum (B) on the first beat, followed by six eighth-note patterns: R-L-R-L, R-L-R-L, R-L-R-L, R-L-R-L, R-L-R-L, R-L-R-L. The bottom staff shows six eighth-note patterns: R-L-R-L, R-L-R-L, R-L-R-L, R-L-R-L, R-L-R-L, R-L-R-L. Each pattern includes a bass drum (B) on the first note. The notation uses vertical stems with arrows indicating direction and '+' signs for specific strokes.

Finally, try orchestrating the unaccented 16th notes around the drumset. Play them on the snare on beat 1, then move to the rack tom on beat 2, the second rack tom on beat 3, and the floor tom on beat 4.

Libor Hadrava is the author of the book *In-Depth Rhythm Studies: Advanced Metronome Functions*. He also plays with Boston metal band Nascent and is an endorsing artist for Evans, Vater, Dream, Pearl, and Ultimate Ears. For more info, visit liborhadrava.com.



Bebop Syncopation

Part 1: Max Roach and Art Blakey

by Mike Alfieri

Ted Reed's *Progressive Steps to Syncopation for the Modern Drummer* is considered a timeless book by many leading drummers and educators. One page alone can inspire a lifetime's worth of practice material. In this series of articles we'll explore new approaches to Exercise One (found on page 38 of the most recently published editions) that are inspired by the styles of various jazz drumming masters. This month we'll take ideas from Max Roach and Art Blakey and apply them to the rhythms in *Syncopation* to improve facility while also developing vocabulary.

Only the first line of Exercise One is used here, but these concepts should be applied to the entire page. Strive to read all of the figures while applying these ideas without stopping. Here's the rhythm we'll be working with for demonstration.



1

First, read the line as double stops (unison hits) on the snare and floor tom while the bass drum fills in 8th notes. Play the hi-hat foot on beats 2 and 4.

2

Next, play the line by alternating double stops between the rack tom and floor tom. The bass drum continues to fill in 8th notes while the hi-hat foot plays on beats 2 and 4.

3

Consider the sticking in Exercise 3. Art Blakey can be seen in videos playing the rack tom and snare combination with the left hand on the tom and the right hand on the snare, while Max Roach would play the opposite—right hand on the rack tom and left hand on the snare. Both would keep the right hand on the floor tom to avoid crossing over.

You may find one sticking to feel more natural at first, but spend time playing both. Taking yourself out of your comfort zone when practicing will foster the most growth. Also be conscious of your technique. Different players interpret technique differently, but whatever you use should result in a clean and comfortable execution of musical ideas. Start practicing slowly to be aware of your physical motions and develop muscle memory. I've found the most success when I stay relaxed and move the sticks laterally across the drums. I let each stick rebound, but I think of moving my hand away from my body, like I'm extending a handshake.

Now try playing the bass drum and hi-hat simultaneously to sound even more like Art Blakey.

4

Continue to experiment and explore your own combinations of these phrases. Mix and match different elements to find the vocabulary that gets you most excited about playing. This lick from Max Roach's eminent recording of "For Big Sid," from his 1966 album *Drums Unlimited*, illustrates a musical application of the concepts in this lesson.



Also check out this phrase from Art Blakey's opening solo on "The Freedom Rider," from Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers' 1961 album of the same name.



It's very important to listen to the recordings to help you get a better feel for how each drummer put their unique stamp on these concepts. Go to the source to hear the masters, and then hit the woodshed!

Mike Alfieri is a freelance drummer in New York City and has a bachelor's degree in music education from the Crane School of Music. He currently studies with John Riley at SUNY Purchase. For more info, visit mikealfieri.net.



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A New Perspective

Part 2: Three-Over-Two Linear Polyrhythms

by Aaron Edgar

The **three-over-two polyrhythm** is made up of two contrasting rhythms (three equally spaced notes over two equally spaced notes) that are played simultaneously. We can build this polyrhythm by choosing one subdivision to act as a common denominator between the two rhythms. In this lesson, we'll use 8th-note triplets in 2/4. The quarter-note pulse comprises the "two" side, and every other triplet partial comprises the "three" side.

Within that 8th-note framework, we can displace either side (or both sides) of the polyrhythm to start on any part of the beat. The pattern starts to get especially interesting if you double the subdivision from 8th-note triplets to 16th-note triplets. Doing that allows you to displace the rhythm into positions where none of the notes line up at the same time, which results in a linear polyrhythm.

In Exercises 1–4, we'll displace the three side of the three-over-two polyrhythm to four positions within 16th-note triplets. Be sure to keep time with your left foot.

1 > 6 > 6
2 > 6 > 6
3 > 6 > 6
4 > 6 > 6

When you get the hang of the previous examples, it's time to start displacing the bass drum, which is outlining the two side of the polyrhythm. You can play the bass drum on any of the six partials of the 16th-note triplets. In Exercise 5, we're using the accents from Exercise 4 while moving the kick to the fourth partial of each 16th-note triplet.

5 > 6 > 6

Experiment with the six different kick positions under each of the accent patterns from Exercises 1–4. There's a total of twenty-four variations, and you can check them out at aaronedgardrum.com/3over2. When you can play the rhythms freely, try experimenting with a paradiddle sticking while moving the accents around the drumset.



One of my favorite ways to practice these rhythms is by using them as snare and bass drum comping figures under a swing ride pattern. Since the swing pattern is played in 8th-note triplets, the rhythm will take twice as long to complete within 4/4.

Let's use the swing context to explore some of the different bass drum variations. In Exercises 6–8, we'll keep the three side of the polyrhythm consistent on the snare while displacing the bass drum to different parts of the beat.

6 3 3 3 3
7 3 3 3
8 3 3 3

Once the three previous examples are comfortable, try the remaining placements as comping patterns. They're a lot of fun, and they'll help you internalize the rhythms on each part of the beat.

Next let's try something a bit heavier and put the 16th-note triplets on double bass. We'll voice the three side of the polyrhythm on the snare. We'll outline the two side using doubles within the kick pattern. This is a great workout for your feet. If you can't play left-foot doubles, simply reverse the patterns in Exercises 9 and 10 so that all of the doubled notes are played with the right foot.

In Exercise 9, the bass drum doubles start on the second partial of each 16th-note triplet while the three side of the polyrhythm starts on the third partial with the snare.

Exercise 10 places the double on the last partial of each beat while the snare starts the three side of the polyrhythm on the fourth partial of beat 1.

The last double bass variation we're going to try cuts the 8th-note ride pattern down to the “&” of each beat. The bass drum doubles are played on the fifth 16th-note-triplet partial, and the three side of the polyrhythm starts on the second partial with the snare.

The last feel we'll check out is a 16th-note-triplet shuffle. Play these examples on an auxiliary pair of hi-hats or the ride cymbal, because we'll be incorporating our hi-hat foot.

Exercise 12 starts both sides of the three-over-two polyrhythm on beat 1. The two side is played with the bass drum while the three side is played with the hi-hat foot. Take this slowly to work out the coordination.

Things start to get a little tricky in Exercise 13. The bass drum plays the two side on the third partial of each 16th-note triplet while also playing the downbeat. The hi-hat foot starts the three side of the polyrhythm on the second partial.

In Exercise 14, the hi-hat foot starts the three side of the polyrhythm on the third partial while the bass drum is placed on the last note of each 16th-note triplet.

The final shuffle example is challenging but fun. Each side of the polyrhythm starts on the second 16th-note-triplet partial. But opening and closing the hi-hat foot within the three side of the polyrhythm poses an interesting coordination challenge because the hi-hat foot splashes and shuts on unique parts of

the beat. Learn the pattern without the openings at first, and keep the subdivision solid until you have the coordination down.

The best way to practice these rhythms is to pick one of the feels and work your way through every displacement of the polyrhythm. Then you can try to blend these rhythms into your own grooves.

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



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Do I Need an Attorney?

Part 1: When to Expand Your Team

by Russ Miller

I was recently in a difficult situation with a business I was doing work for on a weekly basis. They owed me a considerable amount of money but had no intention of paying me for my services. After failing to convince them otherwise, it became clear that I needed legal representation.

"Wise men don't need advice. Fools won't take it."

—Benjamin Franklin

Once my attorney got involved, I finally received the money I was owed. Before he stepped in, the other party was aggressive and was trying to take advantage of my good will. Once they knew my attorney was handling it, their position changed very quickly. I won't be dealing with this organization again, but I received payment and walked away feeling like I had been as professional as possible.

I've been fortunate over the past several years to work with an amazing attorney, Paul Quin, from Tampa, Florida. Besides being a lawyer, Paul is a drummer and a good friend. I recently asked him a few questions regarding when and why to consult an attorney. His responses are included in the sections below.

Do I Need an Attorney?

Every situation is different. Some dealings are for significant amounts of money. And when a lot of money is involved, everybody gets a bit jittery. Quin says, "An artist needs to define that point when playing ceases to be a hobby and becomes a career. Once that happens, it's time to think like a business. The businesses you will be dealing with already have lawyers that understand complex systems of contracts and agreements, so it's important to level the playing field. Secondly, in most jurisdictions, a lawyer cannot enter into an exclusive representation agreement for a set amount of time. You can always fire your lawyer, so hire him or her first."

How Do I Avoid Being Taken Advantage Of?

One thing I always say in college lectures on the music industry is that it's very difficult to get someone to pay you thousands of dollars just to play drums. To get that to happen hundreds of times per year, year after year for the rest of your life, how good

do you have to be? How organized do you have to be? How serious do you have to be? How prepared do you have to be?

Being well prepared and well represented in business dealings can help you navigate through the ups and downs of a playing career. I asked Paul to

expound on this. He said, "Once you have embarked on a pro-level career, you should consult an attorney to make sure that the appropriate business entities are in place. They'll help you determine whether or not you need to form an LLC (limited liability corporation) for your business, and they'll help you understand the legalities that will govern your business. Creating an LLC has tax benefits, and it can limit your personal liability in the event that claims are made against you. A lawyer should be the first member of your team that you hire."

How Can I Make Money in Music?

I had no idea of all the ways to make a buck in the music business when I first started. I thought that I would get paid for gigs and if my band's record sold well. Performing rights, union special payments, consulting fees, product royalties, mechanical rights, product sales, publishing sales, and patent fees are just a sampling of some of the ways that you can earn income besides playing your drums. Almost every one of those revenue streams requires organization, advice, and some knowledge of how they work. Finding a proper attorney with knowledge of industry standards is vital to effectively negotiating these deals. "While your uncle might be a great real estate lawyer, he might not have an understanding of how mechanical royalty rates and publishing splits are traditionally handled in our business," says Quin. "Always find an attorney with experience in the music business."

One of the reasons I hired Paul as my attorney was because he was an entertainment lawyer *and* a drummer. I asked him about how that's helped him regarding the legal aspects of this business. "Creative people are sometimes suspicious of the 'suits,'" he said, "and having worn the drummer cap, I have sometimes been able

to get past that suspicion.

"In dealing with matters in the instrument manufacturing industry, understanding the details and advantages of the products I was dealing with has been tremendously valuable to me. Being a musician as well as a lawyer, it was much harder for someone to pull the wool over my eyes. Moreover, my knowledge in those areas can save the client money because I don't have to go back and ask for additional information."

The music business has an aura of "We're all in this together, so it will be cool." I've felt like that a time or two over the years. But after talking with a few NFL players, I found it interesting that when it comes to money, they don't talk to their employers. They have agents and lawyers that handle every negotiation. They stay out of it and only deal with their personal agent. There are many benefits to this. First, you can remain the "nice guy" and let your representatives be the "bad guys." Second, you can stay focused on doing what you do well, which is playing music. It's obviously not reasonable for every musician to take this firm of a stance, since we often have multiple dealings (gigs, lessons, sessions, etc.) that involve relatively small amounts of money. It's just good to know who to go to should the need to consult an attorney arise.

Efficiency is one of the primary keys to success. In this day and age, we have an unlimited number of things vying for our attention. If you plan to keep moving "onward and upward," as my friend Dom Famularo always says, you need to execute things correctly the first time. If you have a coach for the purpose of improving your efficiency and development as a drummer (which in my case is Peter Erskine), then why shouldn't you also have someone to help coach you through legal and business dealings? We'll continue this discussion next time. See you then!

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



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CRITIQUE

MULTIMEDIA

Toto Live at Montreux 1991

Captured live on stage a year before his untimely death, session great JEFF PORCARO pounds out Toto's hits on his final tour with the band on this CD/DVD package, and it's a bittersweet triumph.

Produced by firebrand lead guitarist/vocalist Steve Lukather, this effervescent eight-song set is a blast, bristling with blistering previews from the L.A. outfit's 1992 album, *Kingdom of Desire*, as well as Jimi Hendrix and Sly Stone covers. (When Porcaro is introduced, keyboardist/vocalist David Paich even slips in a trance-inducing snippet of Steely Dan's "FM [No Static at All]," a 1977 recording featuring the groovemeister.) Toto favorites dominate here, though. Porcaro's oft-analyzed shuffle propels a raucous rendition of "Rosanna" and an eight-minute-plus version of the number-one hit "Africa," which percolates with cyclical rhythmic patterns and Afro-Latin interludes, courtesy of Porcaro and percussionist Chris Trujillo. This concert feels like a party, and the peak performances counter the accepted historical narrative that technically proficient commercial music was kaput at the dawn of alt-rock's global dominance. This stuff is smokin'—and better late than never. (Eagle Vision/Universal) **Will Romano**

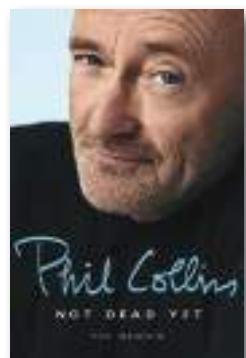


Eagle Rock Entertainment

Phil Collins Not Dead Yet: The Memoir

Stardom is rarely the easy ride it seems. The prodigiously talented drummer with Genesis would be the first to tell you that.

If you've picked up *Not Dead Yet* in hopes of learning how Phil Collins made *Face Value*, you'll be satisfied. But if you're expecting P.C. to pull back the curtain on the genesis of Genesis's magnum opus "Supper's Ready" or do a deep dive into his trove of Brand X anecdotes, realize he goes only so far down his own musical rabbit hole. Collins spends a good portion of his memoir cathartically detailing how his inability to turn down any project in the '70s and '80s ruined his first two marriages, and how his battle with alcoholism later in life nearly killed him. It's not all mea culpas, though. He does dish substantive dirt on the squirrelly Zeppelin reunion at Live Aid and on working with a passive-aggressive Tony Bennett. And in a moment of self-effacing reflection, the author admits that even he grew sick of the ubiquitous Phil Collins in the '80s. (Crown Archetype) **Patrick Berkery**



RECORDINGS

Rossington Take It on Faith

The seeds of this project were planted ten years ago, before the passing of the beloved drummer who graces its tracks. You'll be happy it finally sees the light of day.

Assisted by a host of sonic sous-chefs, including Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top and the once and future king of Cajun-spiced skins-beating, **RICHIE HAYWARD** (Little Feat), Lynyrd Skynyrd co-founding guitarist Gary Rossington and his wife, vocalist Dale Krantz-Rossington, serve up a dozen blues-baked morsels seared in a soupy mixture of simmering shuffles and slow-cooked grooves. Hayward died in 2010, but his patented ghosting in "Highway of Love" and funky, polyunsaturated phrasing in "Two Very Different Things" testify to his effortless command of both time and space. (Loud & Proud) **Will Romano**



Wolfgang Muthspiel

Rising Grace

Sublime production, a stellar band, and BRIAN BLADE's beautiful touch in session.

Any time Brian Blade is given the ECM treatment, you know you're going to hear the most gorgeous cymbal sound and that the music will have the right amount of introspection and fireworks to keep you riveted. Guitarist Muthspiel's compositions give trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, pianist Brad Mehldau, and bassist Larry Grenadier a large canvas to paint on, so the tracks benefit from a collective group sound in which each musician reacts to the others and interjects the perfect phrase but never too much. Check out the delicate "Triad Song," where Blade glides through the 7/8 with the softest snare and tom rolls, and transitions from the guitar solo to the trumpet solo with a wonderful offbeat hi-hat phrase that decrescendos before melting upward into a cymbal that picks up the same rhythm. There's snappy brushwork ("Wolfgang's Waltz") and snares-off mallet backbeats ("Oak"), so Blade gets to roam the playground with all his toys, but always at the service of the (enchanting) music. (ECM) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



ELEW And to the Republic

Look out below, as JEFF "TAIN" WATTS has room to move like only he can on this piano trio date.

Pianist Eric Lewis spent many years swinging with Wynton Marsalis and others, until he rebranded himself as ELEW and embarked on a career playing piano renditions of popular rock music. Here he returns to the classic jazz piano trio format and assembles formidable sidemen to bring his originals to life. It's no secret Jeff Watts is a volcano of ideas and notes, attacking with tom fills and crashes here ("Monk") and laying down a brisk ride pattern there ("Quirkwork"). There's a quasi-reggae beat on "Jamaica Girl" and a tremendous control to the flow of lone standard "My Favorite Things," which falls right into Watts' reverential Elvin Jones-esque wheelhouse. The album closes with the sensitive "The Philly Groove," a rare opportunity to hear Watts lay down a funky backbeat on a traditional jazz session. ELEW revisits his past, but Watts always has an eye and ear to what's next. (Sunnyside) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



TAKING THE REINS

Vladimir Kostadinovic *The Left Side of Life*

Full speed ahead with live energy on this skilled drummer's newest offering.

A hot, swinging live date from a 2014 Swiss jazz festival, Vladimir Kostadinovic's new record is a nice showcase for the drummer's well-honed chops and the accomplished players in his ensemble. "Face to Face" bursts out of the starting blocks, Kostadinovic's charging ride cymbal leading the way, while the title track includes some wicked doubles and fluttering snare work during a drum solo early in the tune. Saxophonist Seamus Blake is excellent throughout, and he and the drummer provide much of the intensity here, though pianist Marko Churnetz also jumps into the fray on tracks like "Comfort Zone," where the keys and drums entwine with a sense of purpose while avoiding the rhythmically obvious. While a bit more detail and crispness in the recording would have benefited the music here significantly, *The Left Side of Life* remains an overall strong effort, and Kostadinovic drops on the radar as a player to watch. (Enja) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



Amendola vs. Blades Greatest Hits

This battle goes seven rounds—but everyone's a winner in the end.

Although "vs." appears between the artists' names—possibly because they perform face to face—this rousing live duet set is, quite oppositely, about thrilling synergy. And the title is cheeky, of course. Hammond B-3 player Wil Blades melds the finesse of early jazz organ masters and the grit of soul-jazz with modern ideas. Combining his organ and Clavinet, he's an imaginative, ultra-funky one-man band. And as always, Scott Amendola proves that he's a



highly inventive progressive jazz drummer with chops in his limbs and groove in this heart. He draws from multiple stylistic sources here, with a heaping serving of New Orleans flavor. Both players brilliantly orchestrate their parts, making their melodic compositions and improvs

endlessly engaging and fun. On the cockily down-tempo "Slow Zig" (a nod to Zigaboo Modeliste?), Amendola plies greasy, rolling dynamics, then sneaks into a breakneck, blistering solo over the set's slowest bass vamp. Bet you didn't see that one coming. (Sazi)

Jeff Potter



The Band's *The Last Waltz*

The film and live album documenting the star-studded final concert given by the Band's original lineup on Thanksgiving 1976 at the Winterland Ballroom in San Francisco is a chapter in drummer Levon Helm's story that fascinates to this day.

Levon Helm had issues with *The Last Waltz*. For starters, he couldn't fathom why the roots-rocking combo that helped Bob Dylan go electric and boasted superfans in superstars like George Harrison and Eric Clapton was calling it quits when, to his thinking, there was still plenty left in the tank. It angered him that a pop singer like Neil Diamond, whom he felt had nothing in common with the Band, was sharing the stage with them that night amid a roster of much more simpatico contemporaries, including Neil Young, Van Morrison, Joni Mitchell, Dylan, and Clapton, plus well-respected elders like Muddy Waters and Ronnie Hawkins. It especially angered Helm when he learned that Diamond was there because Band guitarist and songwriter Robbie Robertson had produced the singer's new album.

And speaking of Robertson, Helm took great umbrage with director Martin Scorsese's editing job on the *Last Waltz* movie. He felt the legendary filmmaker tried to cast Robertson as the bandleader, carefully framing the scarf-clad guitarist's animated movements so that it appeared as though he was conducting the show.

The late drummer's jaundiced view of

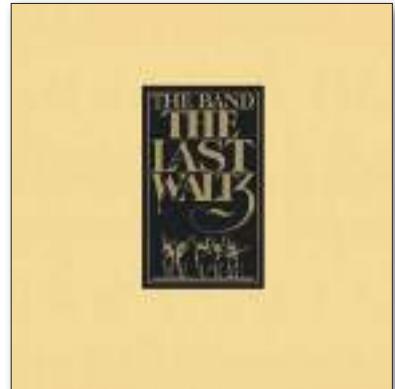
Hot Stuff

"Mannish Boy." Levon Helm whips some menace into this lurching groove. It's so deliberate, so spacious, and such a perfect foundation for Muddy Waters' howl and Paul Butterfield's single harp note that he holds for all five-plus minutes of the song.

"Rag Mama Rag." Singing lead and drumming here, Helm commands the ensemble in his uniquely funky, song-sensitive style. He slices and dices the Dixie rhythm in the verses, then drops to half time during the instrumental breaks. The Band, the brass, the woodwinds...they all fall in line behind Levon.

his group's swan song certainly hasn't diminished its place in rock history—*The Last Waltz* is justifiably regarded as one of the greatest concert films/rock docs of all time. Nor should it in any way devalue Helm's mighty contributions to the effort. The Turkey Scratch, Arkansas, native plays his country ass off throughout the marathon show (and on the soundstage extras and rehearsal takes tacked on to both the original release and the recent fortieth-anniversary reissue). By Levon's own admission in his 1993 autobiography, *This Wheel's on Fire*, his playing and singing got a little ragged over the course of the evening. But the music betrays that notion. Helm is totally on point from start to finish. And though producer John Simon served as the musical director for the concert, and Robertson might appear to be running things on film, just listen to the swampy strut of "Up on Cripple Creek" at the top of the show, the jazzy brushstrokes that guide Mitchell through "Coyote" in the middle, and the funk groove the drummer sweats out during Marvin Gaye's "Don't Do It" at the end. You can *feel* that Levon is the heartbeat of the whole damn thing.

The Dylan stretch—which plays like one fevered twenty-minute medley—is the most indicative of the Band's craftsmanship as a unit, and of Helm's role as the glue. As Dylan leads the group through a torrid "Baby, Let Me Follow You Down," you can feel a fire being stoked beneath him, and it's emanating from Helm's tumbling tom rolls in the guitar breaks and a backbeat that kicks everyone on that stage straight up the backside in the verses and choruses. From there, they stumble elegantly into the ballad "Hazel," where Helm's typically graceful and melodic fills answer Dylan's exasperated pleas. They eventually settle into a ramshackle groove on "Forever Young" before hurtling back into a fiery reprise of "Baby, Let Me Follow You Down." Listening back to that Dylan segment forty years on, you can hear why Levon thought they were fools to pack it in.



The Last Waltz (1976)

Theme From the Last Waltz • Up on Cripple Creek • Who Do You Love? • Helpless • Stage Fright • Coyote • Dry Your Eyes • It Makes No Difference • Such a Night • The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down • Mystery Train • Mannish Boy • Further On Up the Road • The Shape I'm In • Down South in New Orleans • Ophelia • Tura Lura Lural • Caravan • Life Is a Carnival • Baby, Let Me Follow You Down • I Don't Believe You • Forever Young • Baby, Let Me Follow You Down (Reprise) • I Shall Be Released • The Last Waltz Suite • Don't Do It

Levon Helm: drums, vocals, mandolin

Rick Danko: bass, vocals, fiddle

Robbie Robertson: guitar, piano, vocals

Richard Manuel: keyboards, drums, vocals, dobro

Garth Hudson: keyboards, sax

With Eric Clapton, Paul Butterfield, Dr. John, Bob Dylan, Van Morrison, Neil Diamond, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Emmylou Harris, Bobby Charles, Ronnie Hawkins, and others
Produced by Robbie Robertson

Where they zig and zag with Dylan, the Band plays the role of steady accompanists with Van Morrison, riding a sweet six-minute groove in a show-stealing version of "Caravan." It feels as pocketed as any Band song, even though Helm is playing uncharacteristically square on top of the beat throughout, as they take it a few clicks faster than Morrison's studio version. Locking in with the horn section, the snare accents add might to the "la, la, la-la" refrains, and Helm keeps the whole ensemble tight as they wait on Morrison's "Turn it up!" cues.

Whatever bitterness that may have been stewing inside Levon leading up to *The Last Waltz* sounds like it melted away the second he dragged his left hand across the snare during the intro of "Cripple Creek." Whether you're listening or watching, you can sense the joy as Levon lays it down one last time with the legendary unit. His band might have been taking its last breaths, but the drummer wasn't going down without some fight. He was up there playing for his life.

Patrick Berkery



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PASIC 2016

The world's largest drum and percussion event returns to Indianapolis.



Mayer

This past November 9–12, thousands of students, hobbyists, and professional drummers and percussionists convened at the Indiana Convention Center in downtown Indianapolis to attend dozens of clinics, master classes, and concerts, performed by some of the most revered artists and educators from around the world, at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention, or PASIC. An exhibit hall filled with the latest offerings from publishers, drum and cymbal manufacturers, and drum shops provided attendees with a chance to test and purchase new gear.

Headlining the drumset segment of PASIC was perennial favorite **Jojo Mayer**, who used his hour-long clinic to discuss his holistic approach to practice that intertwines physical, conceptual, and emotional concepts. Mayer's electronica band Nerve closed out the convention with a live set of creative, atmospheric, and groovy instrumental music. Jazz great and North Texas University professor **Ed Sopf** was inducted into the PAS hall of fame this year, and he gave a swinging clinic with his trio.

Other marquee drumset performers included German drummer and *MD* columnist **Jost Nickel**, who focused his time slot on the groove construction topics included in his aptly titled book, *Jost Nickel's Groove Book*. Another German

drummer and *MD* writer, **Claus Hessler**, blew everyone's minds with some advanced ways to collapse the rhythmic spacing within rudiments to create a fresh, new vocabulary.

Jazz/funk legend **Mike Clark** gave a great evening performance with his jazz trio that showcased the drummer's innovative blend of hard bop and R&B vocabulary. Nashville rhythmist and Robben Ford sideman **Wes Little** demonstrated the power of the pocket in his clinic, which was titled "Rhythm Section Master Class."

For a flavor of world rhythm, attendees were treated to great clinics by Nigerian-born drummer **Tosin Aribisala**, Brazilian drumming specialist/educator **Andy Smith**, and Afro-Cuban drummer/percussionist **Fidel Morales**. Taylor Swift's **Matt Billingslea** broke down the demands of contemporary pop drumming by showcasing how he builds his live rig so that he can trigger samples and loops from the original recordings while also adding his own acoustic elements.

New York City jazz was represented by Juilliard-trained and self-proclaimed "young swanger" **Bryan Carter** and Drummers Collective instructor **Marko Djordjevic**, who explained and demonstrated a few ways he approaches improvising drum solos based on sound explorations and rhythmic anchors.

Another informative presentation



Sopf



Hessler



Clark



Nickel



Aribisala



Billingslea



Djordjevic



Carter

was given by University of the Arts professor and dean **Mark Diccianni**, who shared his results from years of study and research into the most effective ways to practice. Other top drumset artists/educators, such as Jason Aldean's **Rich Redmond**, jazz legend **Peter Erskine**, and Indiana University professor **Steve Houghton**, were spotted on stage throughout the weekend as well.

PASIC 2017 will take place in Indianapolis November 8–11. Find out more at pasic.org.

Story by Michael Dawson

Photos by Warren LaFever

ProgPower USA XVII

The seventeenth edition of ProgPower USA was held this past September 7–10 at the Atlanta, Georgia, venue Center Stage, drawing a sellout audience. What began more than fifteen years ago as a noble vehicle for founder and promoter Glenn Harveston to help promote America's progressive music scene has since evolved into a premier prog, power-metal, and rock festival. Fans witnessed exclusive performances from a wide spectrum of international progressive and power-metal artists, some of whom rarely make the trek to the States. This year the festival officially became a four-day event and featured twenty international bands.

Opening-day performers included drummer **Simon Batley**, who backed the powerhouse Australian metal act Lord, and the European groups Stream of Passion and DragonForce, with **Martijn Peters** and **Gee Anzalone**, respectively, occupying the drum thrones. Iconic progressive band Spock's Beard's performance featured an impressive turn from **Jimmy Keegan**, and the drummer's seasoned prog, fusion, and vocal expertise were on full display.



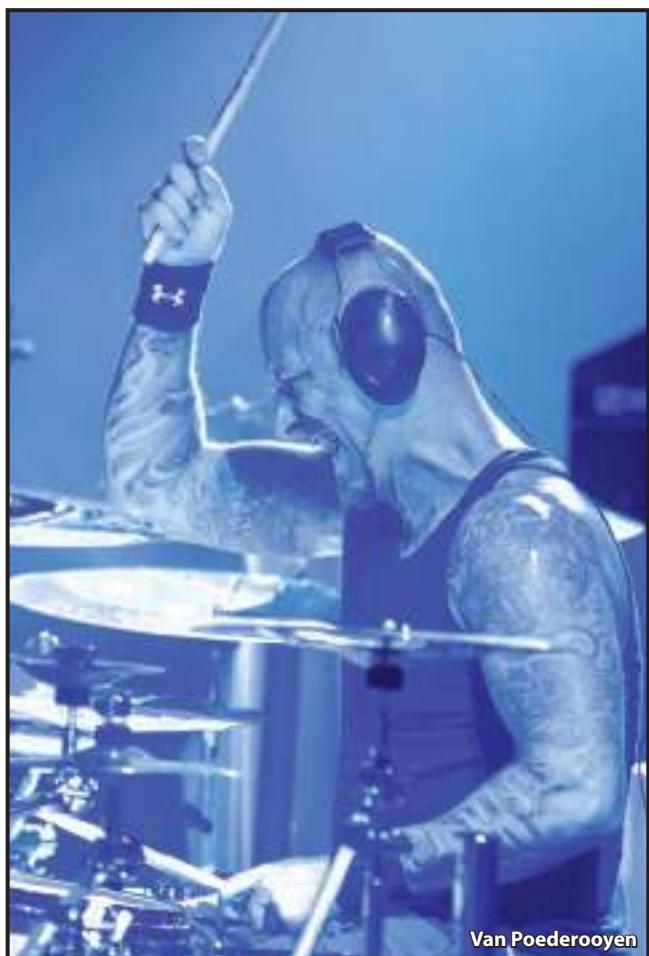
Keegan

Day two featured **Van Williams** with melodic-prog group Ghost Ship Octavius, **Morten Gade Sørensen** with Denmark's Pyramaze, **Truls Haugen** with Norway's Circus Maximus, and masterful double bass player **Frederik Ehmke** with legendary German power-metal headliners Blind Guardian.

Day three's performers included **Billy Lov** with Canada's Ascendia,



Portnoy



Van Poederoyen

Luke Beltramo with Australian symphonic metal band Vanishing Point, **Ramy Ali** with German power-metal group Freedom Call, and Netherlands' symphonic prog-metal favorites the Gentle Storm, who showcased the outstanding technique, emotion, fluidity, and feel of drummer **Ed Warby**. **Henrik Ohlsson** followed with the Swedish melodic death-metal band Scar Symmetry, and **Steve Zimmerman** and the original lineup of Fate's Warning reunited to close the set by performing the group's 1986 progressive-metal classic *Awaken the Guardian* in its entirety.

Day four featured **Andrea Gorio** and the U.K. thrash-metal band Savage Messiah, **Alex Holzwarth** with the multinational power-metal group Serious Black, **Tommy Jacksonville** with Norway's Green Carnation, **Vassilios Maniatopoulos** with German metal band Refuge, and U.K.'s rising prog-metal band Haken, who showcased the dynamic drumming skills of **Raymond Hearne**. **Modern Drummer** Readers Poll Hall of Famer **Mike Portnoy** accompanied Haken by banging a gong at the end of "Crystallised" at the conclusion of their set. Canadian metal madman Devin Townsend closed out the festival with special guest Anneke van Giersbergen, and the group was backed by powerhouse drummer **Ryan Van Poederoyen**, who displayed musical chops with tasty and melodic cymbal accents.

House gear for this year's festival included a PDP Concept maple kit, Sabian cymbals, Evans heads, DW hardware, Promark sticks, and Shure microphones. The 2017 edition of ProgPower is planned to feature the bands Katatonia, Metal Church, Between the Buried and Me, and Mike Portnoy's Shattered Fortress.

Story by Mike Haid

Photos by Stephen Schmidt





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Our best deals—on sale March 1 thru March 31

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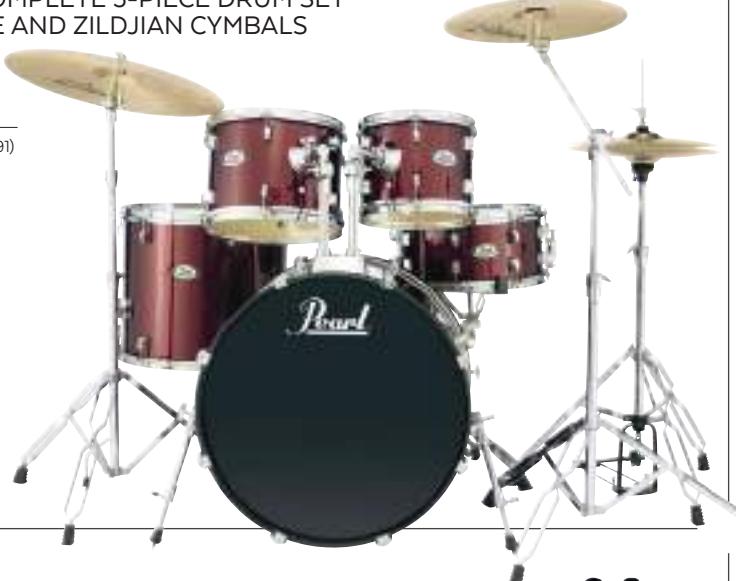
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The Dream Police Kit



This vintage gold sparkle kit comes to us from Minnetonka, Minnesota, reader Rob Gilboe, who explains that the set was custom-built by drum tech Paul Jamieson and manufacturer Patrick Foley for former Cheap Trick drummer Bun E. Carlos in the late 1970s. According to Gilboe, Carlos took the kit on the road during a yearlong Cheap Trick tour in 1979, as the group was riding the success of their platinum albums *Cheap Trick at Budokan* and *Dream Police*.

Gilboe, who spoke with Carlos about the drumset, says Bun E. met Jamieson and Foley on the West Coast during the '70s, while they were restoring old Radio King snares for session players in the area. "When Jamieson and Foley approached Bun E. about making him a snare in 1978, he said, 'Why not do an entire kit?'" Gilboe explains.

"They started building the kit in October of 1978, and Bun E. used it on tour from April to December of 1979."

The kit comprises a 14x26 bass drum, 9x13 and 12x14 toms, and a 16x16 floor tom, and originally came with two 5.5x14 snares. "This number-40 snare is the only surviving snare from this kit," says Gilboe. Two coffee cans of brass shavings and fifteen coats of lacquer went into the finish.

And although drummers may want to play the same tubs Carlos used with Cheap Trick, it'll be difficult finding a Jamieson/Foley set, according to Gilboe. "In 2015," he says, "Jamieson confirmed with me that he made only one or two other complete kits, and fewer than one hundred snares."

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

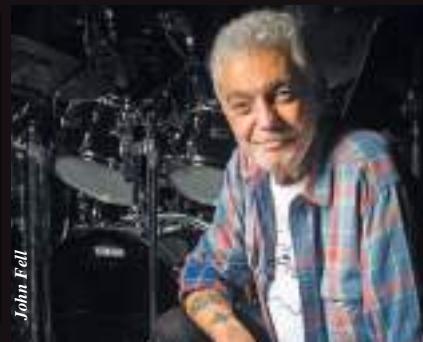


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