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MAY 2008

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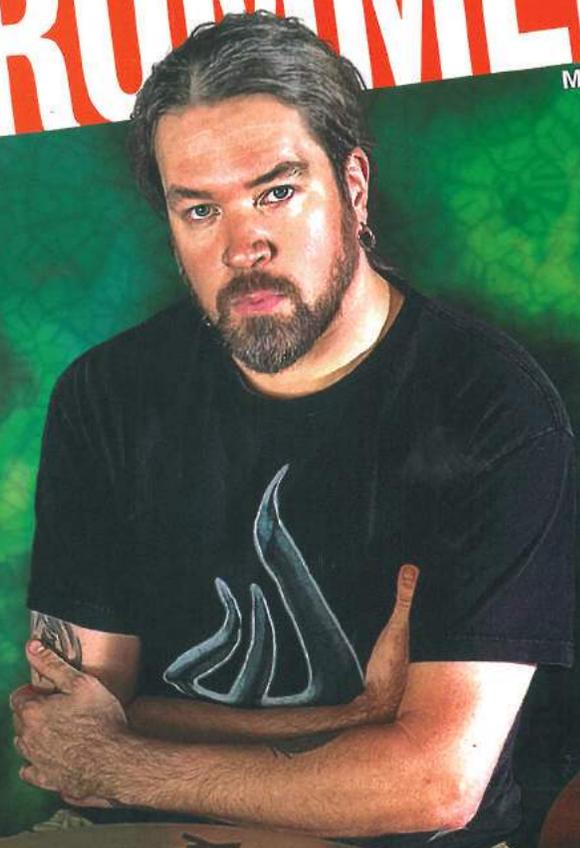
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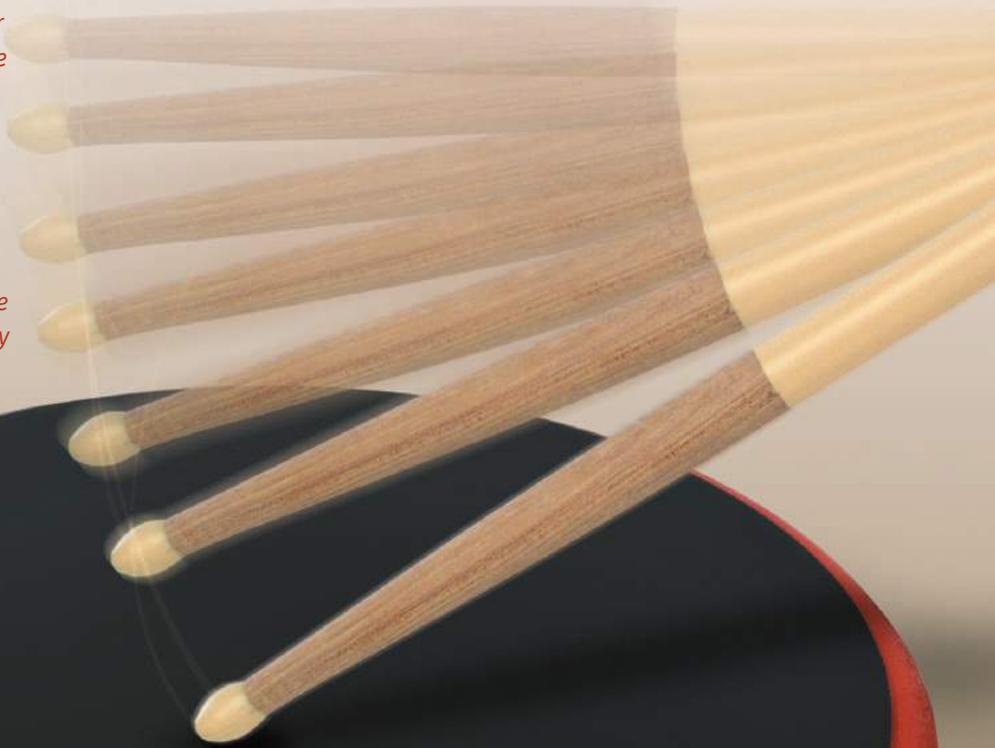
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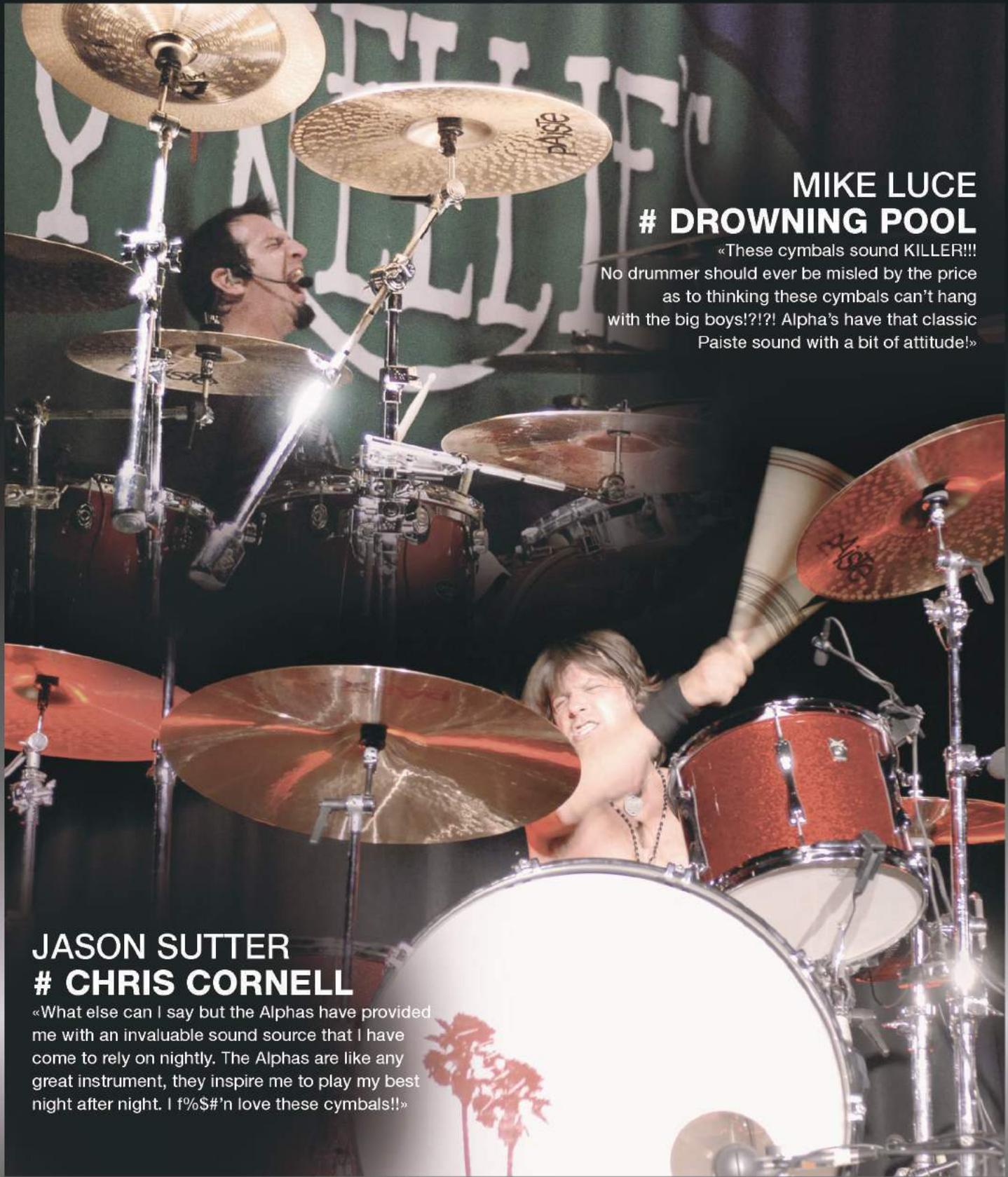
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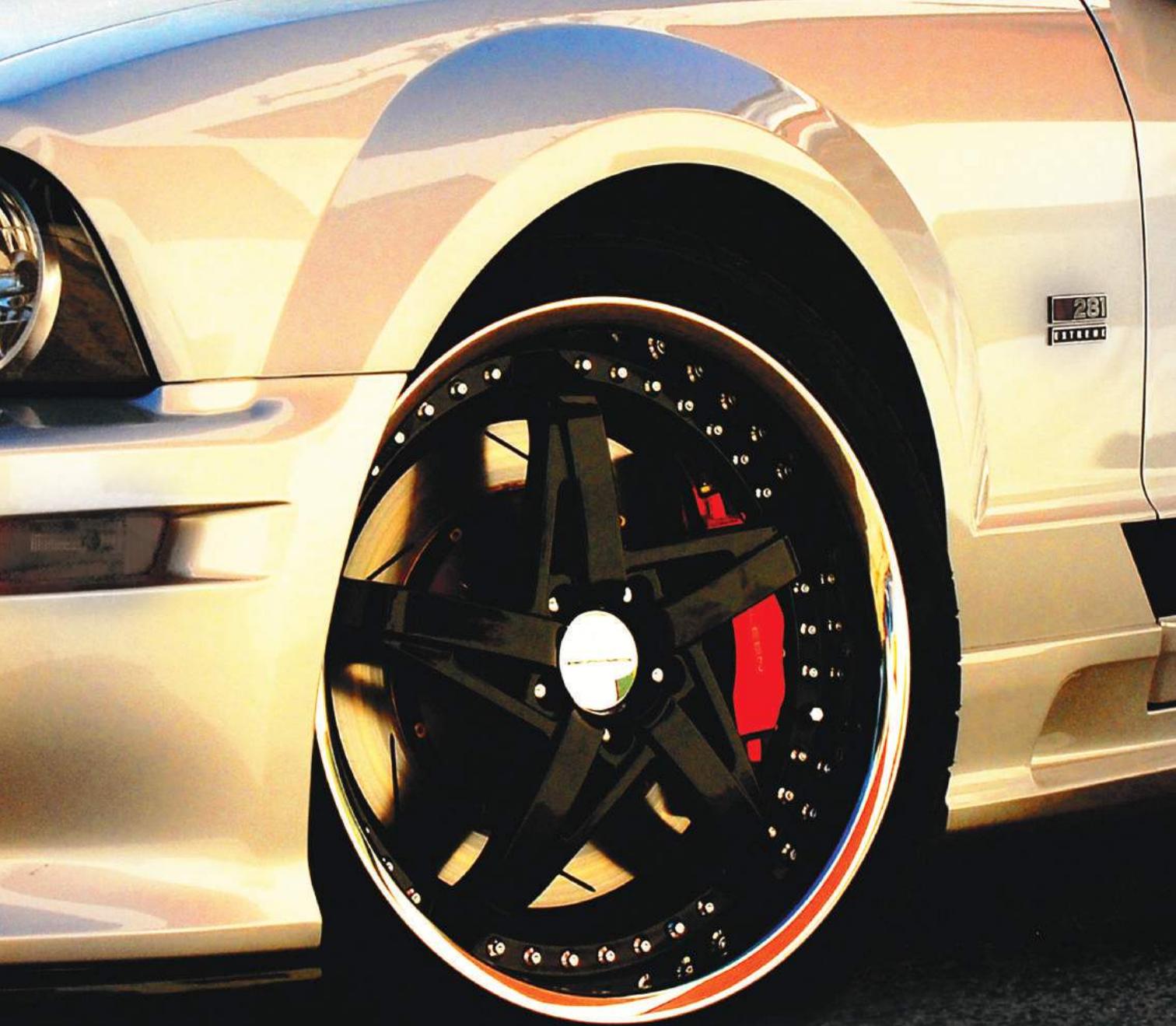
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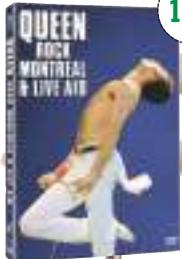




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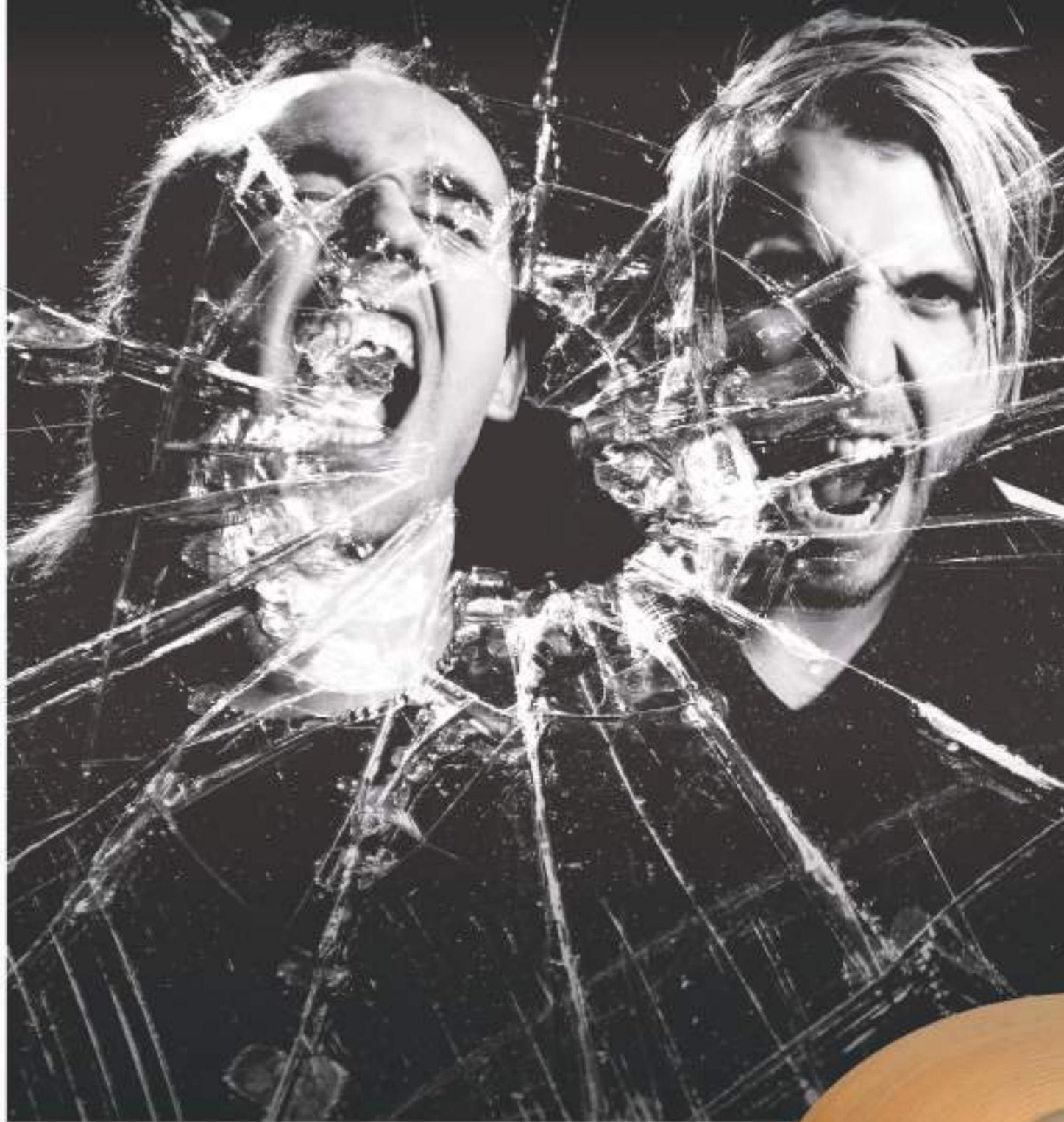
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# How I Spent My Winter Vacation



Okay, four days at the winter NAMM show in Anaheim isn't quite a vacation, especially if you're an exhibitor. An overwhelming amount of business gets done at NAMM, the huge, biannual convention put on by the National Association of Music Merchants. Hundreds of major and independent manufacturers use the event to launch their latest products, and distributors and shop owners walk around with bulging checkbooks, deciding on the spot what they'll be carrying in the coming year. It's intense.

For a drummer, seeing so much gear in one building is pretty mind-blowing too, and you'll certainly get a good impression of this in our coverage of the show next month. Inevitably what sticks with me most from Anaheim isn't the newest gear, though. Rather, it's the fascinating and diverse people I meet there: A hugely enthusiastic European avant-garde drummer at the Paiste cymbal booth...the drummer on Rick James' "Super Freak"...the touring drummer with Avril Lavigne...A Monkee. Sure, working for a drum magazine increases the chance of talking with cool people like this, but at a NAMM show it's by no means necessary. Since NAMM is designed as an "industry" event, not a fan-boy gathering, the famous and not-quite-famous musicians who attend are out there walking the floor like everyone else, and are usually more than happy to chat for a sec with a polite fan, or pose for a photo at one of the many manufacturer-sponsored artist signings.

Now, I can't vouch for how approachable your average lead singer in an MTV2-sanctioned emo band is. But I can give it up for the drummers out there, who without a doubt are some of the most sharing, open-hearted professionals you're likely to bump into. If you're serious about playing, no matter how "unknown" you are, a pro drummer will immediately pick up on that from your attitude. So they'll likely treat you with the same respect that they were probably treated with by Louie Bellson, Elvin Jones, or Gregg Bissonette, when those drumming legends came into their home town on a clinic tour ten, twenty, or thirty years ago. By and large, drummers remember where they came from, and they actively pass on their love and respect for the instrument—and for those who obsess over it.

So if you've already "made it," be like your heroes: Spread the love, and respect the fans who buy your records and concert tickets. And if you're still climbing that ladder, wear the drummer badge with pride; you've got some pretty tall shoulders to stand on as you reach for the stars.

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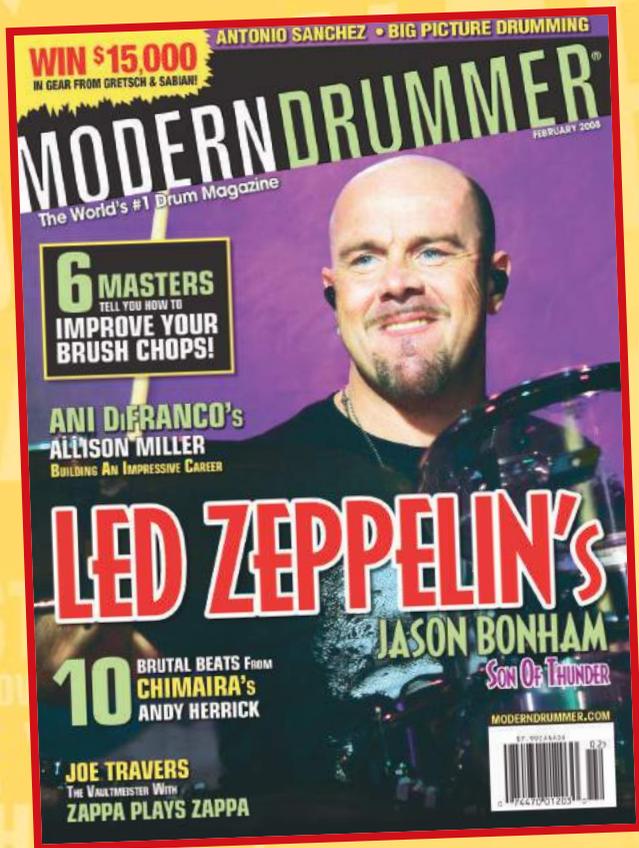
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## Jason Bonham

I've had the pleasure of meeting and speaking with Jason Bonham on three different occasions and stages in his career. Each time he was genuinely kind, professional, and a blast to "talk shop" with. I can't tell you how happy I am that he got the chance to play with Zeppelin once again, and that he made the cover of Modern Drummer.

Jason, I hope you enjoy many more successful years to come.

Scott R. Amos

I received my new MD just in time for the holidays—you guys have perfect timing. What a great cover story with Jason Bonham! In fact, the whole issue was superb.

I was stunned when I saw the Readers' Platform letter from Billy Doherty of The Undertones, commenting on Aynsly Dunbar. You need to trace that email back and get an interview with Billy. He was a huge influence on seminal punk drumming. The Undertones were just documented a couple of years ago with a full-length DVD, and they're still going strong. Check out their site at [www.theundertones.com](http://www.theundertones.com).

Bill Fleming

## Fathers And Sons

I loved Bill Miller's "Fathers And Sons" editorial in the February MD, and I'm sure you'll hear from many others like me. I play snare drum in a bagpipe band, and I also play on a kit. My son has been familiar with the pipe band since day one, and he started banging on my kit when he was old enough to sit on my lap and hold the sticks. He recently started lessons on the kit at age five. It's a joy to watch him.

Dennis Scanlon

## We're Glad You Think So

I've been a regular MD reader since 1980, and in my humble opinion the December '07 (Max Roach) and January '08 (Jojo Mayer) issues are the best you've ever published. Both issues have the perfect mix of history, current news, and technical information. I went out and bought Jojo's Secret Weapons DVD the day after I read about it in MD. It's helping me review my technique, and is adding much to my playing even after all these years.

Thanks so much. You've made [MD founder] Ron Spagnardi proud!

Adrian Peek

## Allison And The Big Picture

I enjoyed your February interview with Allison Miller. She's a great asset to the drumming community and the music industry.



In addition, Peter Kaufmann's Concepts article, "Big Picture Drumming," skillfully examined a subject that I've been trying to convey to my students and peers. Unnecessary fills have absolutely nothing to do with the music or with helping to move a composition. Hopefully

Peter's article will open some eyes and ears. Thanks again for another great issue.

Jared Steer

## Thanks From Nick

I appreciate your running a review of my books, Exotic Coordinations and Exotic Interdependence, in the February '08 Modern Drummer. I would, however, like to correct the Web site listing, which should have read [www.nicksdrumstudio.com](http://www.nicksdrumstudio.com). Thanks!

Nick Marcy

## A Note From The Cymbal Guy

Thanks for mentioning me and my cymbal customizing and repair business in the March '08 It's Questionable. I'd like to let your readers know that my email has changed since that issue was released.

My new email address is [bubba\\_looster@comcast.net](mailto:bubba_looster@comcast.net). Thanks again.

Mike Skiba

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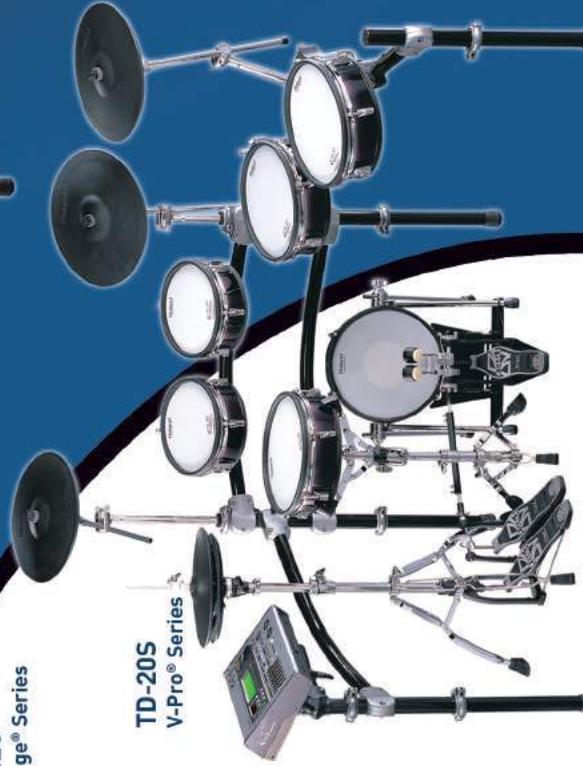


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# THE HEART AND SOUL OF A DRUMSET

## [CHAPTER ONE IN A SERIES: "BASS DRUM HEARTBEAT"]

Among the many advantages of living in Southern California, despite wildfires, mudslides, and earthquakes, is being so close to Drum Workshop's headquarters. The factory itself is a drummer's paradise, of course — nothing but drums, here, there, and everywhere, and nobody but drummers and drum-makers. But the journey is good, too, up the Pacific Coast Highway through Malibu and the wilder regions of the Santa Monica Mountains into Ventura County.

Even on a day like yesterday, with January rains and gusty winds pushing me and my bike around the road, there was still the ocean and the mountains. And at the end, there were all those drums, and some friendly drum-makers to take me out for lunch.

While we ate, we talked about how I might share with other drummers my enthusiasm for DW's recent innovations, all of which have been so valuable to me in the business of music-making.

For myself, I told the DW guys that I thought it would be *easy* for me to talk about those new products — the 23-inch bass drum, the VLT snare drum, and the X shells — because each of them has such a story behind it. Plus, in a small way, I felt part of those stories.

Leaning back from the table, I spread my hands like an old-time comedian, "You couldn't make this stuff up!"

The story begins in 1974, on Rush's first American tour. Back then we were an unknown opening act from some northern wasteland called Canada, and we played anywhere that would have us — clubs, colleges, theaters, arenas, puppet shows, and kite-flying contests.

Many promoters in those days threw together a whole bunch of bands on what they called "multiple-act shows," with three, four, even five other bands. When we drove our campervan up to some Midwestern



BY NEIL PEART  
PHOTOS BY ROB SHANAHAN

arena, the backstage area would be a chaos of road cases and equipment. The bands above us on the bill were sometimes competitive, insecure, ill-tempered, drug-addled, or all of the above, (and likewise their road crews), so the lowly opener couldn't expect too much.

First, the headlining band would set up and do their soundcheck, then the "special guest" (second on the bill) in front of them, and so on — until somebody ran out of time and the doors were opened. Very often our two-man crew would be setting up our amps and drums on the edge of the stage, in front of all the other amp-lines, while the seats filled.

So for us in those days, soundchecks were rare, deli trays were meager, and our set was brief —

twenty-five or thirty minutes. One time our set was actually cut to just *two songs*, at the old Stanley Warner Theater in Pittsburgh. A multi-act show was running late, so naturally the first band's set would be cut. I guess we were lucky to play at all (true enough, in every sense).

One good thing about being the opener on those shows was that once our brief set was done, I could stand backstage, or go out into the house, unknown and unnoticed, and watch the other bands. I paid a lot of attention to the drummers (of course), and to how their drums sounded from the audience. In all different kinds of venues, from bars to arenas, and through widely varying sound equipment, I listened to snare drums, bass drums, toms, and cymbals.

Back then I was impressed by the sound of 24-inch bass drums, as they seemed especially powerful out front (for once the indignity of the term "kick" would be appropriate). However, when I tried playing a 24-inch myself, it didn't work for me — it felt a little too loose and "floppy." For playability and my preferred response and dynamics, I stayed with the versatility of a 22-inch bass drum for the next . . . thirty-three years.

And now our story flashes forward those thirty-three years, to 2007.

During a visit to the DW factory early that year, I was telling the above story to John Good, DW's maestro of instrument design (the Wood Whisperer), telling him how "in the olden days" I had liked the sound of a 24-inch bass drum, but not the way it played.

Without dropping a beat, John turned to me and said, "What about a twenty-three?"

I could only laugh, "What about it?"

Everybody knows there is no such thing as a 23-inch bass drum.

But at that moment, all at once a 23-inch bass drum *did* exist — in John Good's imagination.

"ONCE I GOT MY HANDS —  
OR MY FOOT —  
ON THAT 23-INCH BASS DRUM,  
I WAS SOLD."

He set out to make it real, but the challenge of that enterprise was sizeable — starting with the simple fact that if there had never been a 23-inch bass drum, it follows that

there had never been a 23-inch bass drum *head*.

Not one to be discouraged by that minor detail, John contacted the various drum-head manufacturers. Right away Remo stepped up to the plate, and offered to make a few prototypes, by hand. John went on to design a shell that would express his latest theories growing out of the Vertical Low Timbre philosophy — a further refinement that would eventually become the "X" series.

Once I got my hands — or my *foot* — on that 23-inch bass drum, I was sold. As John had suspected, it retains all the response and dynamics of the 22-inch, but adds the punch and bottom-end of a 24-inch.

For me, the bass drum is the heart of the drumset, and this heart, like a good drummer, is both strong and sensitive.

Like all of us . . .

**to be continued.**





## Kenny Aronoff On Fogerty's Revival

**I've enjoyed your playing and clinics for some time. Your recent work with John Fogerty on his Revival album exquisitely complements his songs. The disc seems perfectly recorded. What setup did you use in the studio, and how was such a clear, well-balanced recording accomplished?**

**Allen Saxon**

Thanks for your kind words. Let me say first that John Fogerty is very particular about everything in the studio and live, even though his music might appear simple. He'll go as far as to suggest what pick the bass player or other guitar player should use. Back in 1996, when I played on John's Grammy award-winning Blue Moon Swamp record, he would tune the kick drum and snare drum every day before the session.

On the Revival sessions I used my Tama Bubinga drumset, with a 14x24 kick drum, a 10x12 rack tom, and 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms with legs. We spent one week in pre-production, learning five songs. We recorded those songs the next week

at NRG recording studio in North Hollywood. A month later we spent another week in pre-production learning eight more songs, which we recorded the next week.

In pre-production we'd record and listen, over and over again. After every listening session John would make suggestions about the sound of our instruments or what we were playing. If I used a wood snare drum on a song, he wanted me to record with every wood snare I had until he decided which one he liked best. He took the same approach with my metal snares, bass drums, cymbals, and drumheads. He was trying to get the right combination of sounds from the band to make his record have a certain sound and feel. But he has always let me come up with what I think is the right beat to his music.

When we finally recorded the album we did it with no click. We'd record a song, listen to it, and record it again...repeating the process all day for eight hours a day, with only a few breaks. It sounds brutal, but John has amazing ears and he knows what he wants. He was helped in this process by our engineer, Jim Scott, who made us all sound amazing.

# HIGH FAT CONTENT



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Nick Lynn - Drummer

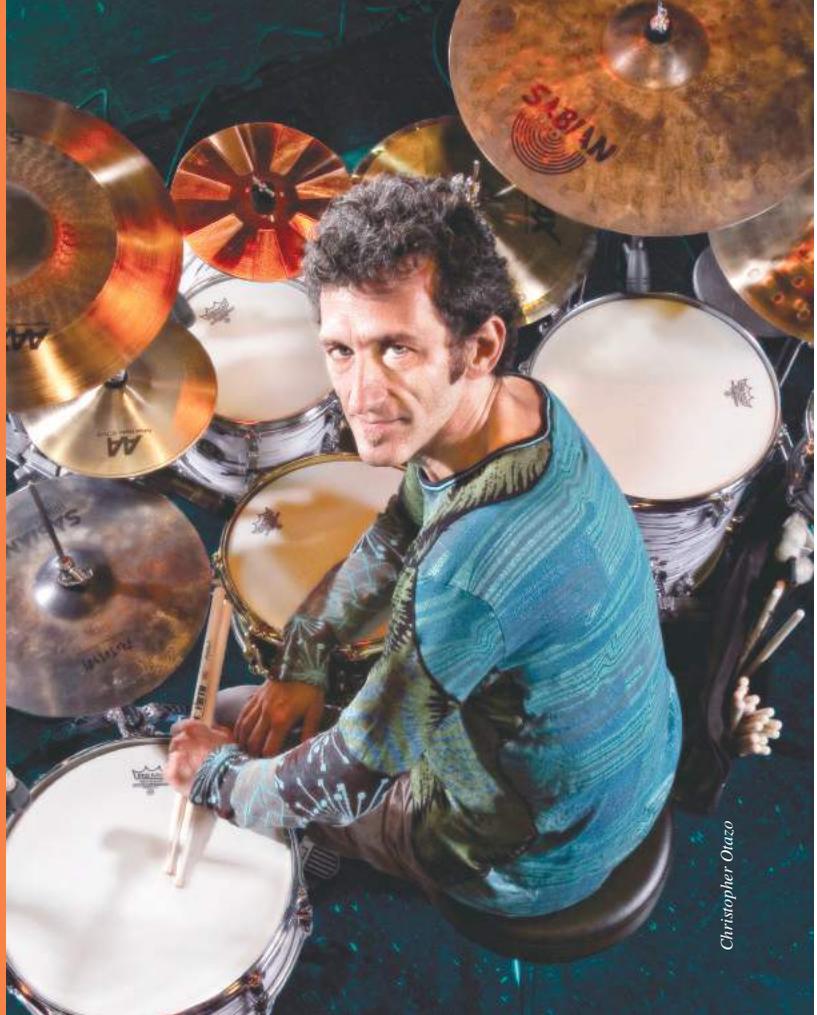
# Jojo Mayer's Recorded Work

In your January '08 MD interview you list some of your best playing on recordings. The list included NERVE's Prohibited Beats, Depart's Reloaded, Rebekka Bakken's The Art Of How To Fall, and Screaming Headless Torsos' Live! I'd like to check out these recordings, but I haven't been able to locate them. Were they ever released commercially? Any info would be of great help.

Mark Lucas

All but the NERVE record have been commercially released and are available in stores or on the Internet. Prohibited Beats is slated for international release in spring of 2008. Depart's Reloaded was released by ACT; Rebekka Bakken's The Art Of How To Fall was released by Universal Music.

There was a slight error in the listing, in that I did not play on the Screaming Headless Torsos' Live! album. That was the very talented Gene Lake. Instead, I played on the Torsos' debut record, 1995. That recording was originally released by Discovery Records, and is now available directly from [www.screamingheadlesstorsos.com](http://www.screamingheadlesstorsos.com).



Christopher Olazo

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# QUICK BEATS

text and photo by Joe Perry

# Johnny Rabb

**Place of birth:** Fairfax, Virginia

**Influences:** My parents, Gregg Bissonette, Jojo Mayer, Steve Jordan, Steve Smith

**Next up-and-coming drummer:**

Benny Greb (or is he already there?)

**Hobbies/interests:** Fishing, DJ scratchin'

**If I wasn't a drummer, I'd be:**

A fisherman or a puppet manufacturer

**How I relax:** Sleep

**Favorite food:** Chicken burrito

**Favorite junk food:**

Reese's Peanut Butter Cups

**Favorite fast food:** Baja Burrito in Nashville

**Favorite drink:** Iced mocha

**Favorite TV shows:**

*The Sopranos, The Office*

**Favorite movie:** *Napoleon Dynamite*

**Favorite album:**

*Storyville* by Robbie Robertson

**Vehicle I drive:** Jeep Compass

**Other instruments I play:** Piano, bass

**Place I'd like to visit:** Alaska

**I wish I'd played drums on:**

"Snake Dance" by Wang Chung

**Musicians I'd like to work with:**

Les Claypool, Annie Lennox,

Mark Mothersbaugh

**Most prized possession:** Life

**Person I would like to talk to:**

Thomas Edison

**Person I admire:** Neil Peart

**Most memorable performance:** Montreal Drum Fest. It was the first festival I'd done, and the crowd was incredibly receptive.

**Most embarrassing moment on stage:** Counting off the wrong song after the set list was changed, in Bakersfield, California

**Most unusual venue played:**

A flatbed truck in a cornfield in California

**Largest venue played:** The Colorado

Country Fest in 1998, for 10,000 people

**Most unusual item autographed:** A dog



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Guitar Center, Sacramento  
guitarcenter.com

Guitar Center, San Diego  
guitarcenter.com

San Jose Pro Drum, San Jose  
sanjoseprodrum.com

West Coast Drum Center, Santa Ana  
westcoastdrums.com

#### COLORADO

Drum City Guitarland, Wheat Ridge  
drumcityguitarland.com

#### ILLINOIS

Guitar Center, Chicago  
guitarcenter.com

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musiccenter.net

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guitarcenter.com

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guitarcenter.com

Sam Ash, NYC Manhattan  
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Forks Drum Closet, Nashville  
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#### TEXAS

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## Han **BENNINK** Solo Snare Escapades

**K**nown to solo with anything that will instantly augment his kit, from clogs to a fire alarm, Han Bennink is Holland's most radical drumming export. By turns profoundly traditional and wildly revolutionary, Bennink has worked with everyone from Cecil Taylor to Derek Bailey, and he remains a central figure in Europe's free improvisation scene. But while he's known for his duet, group, and big band work, Bennink's solo spiels are truly something to behold.

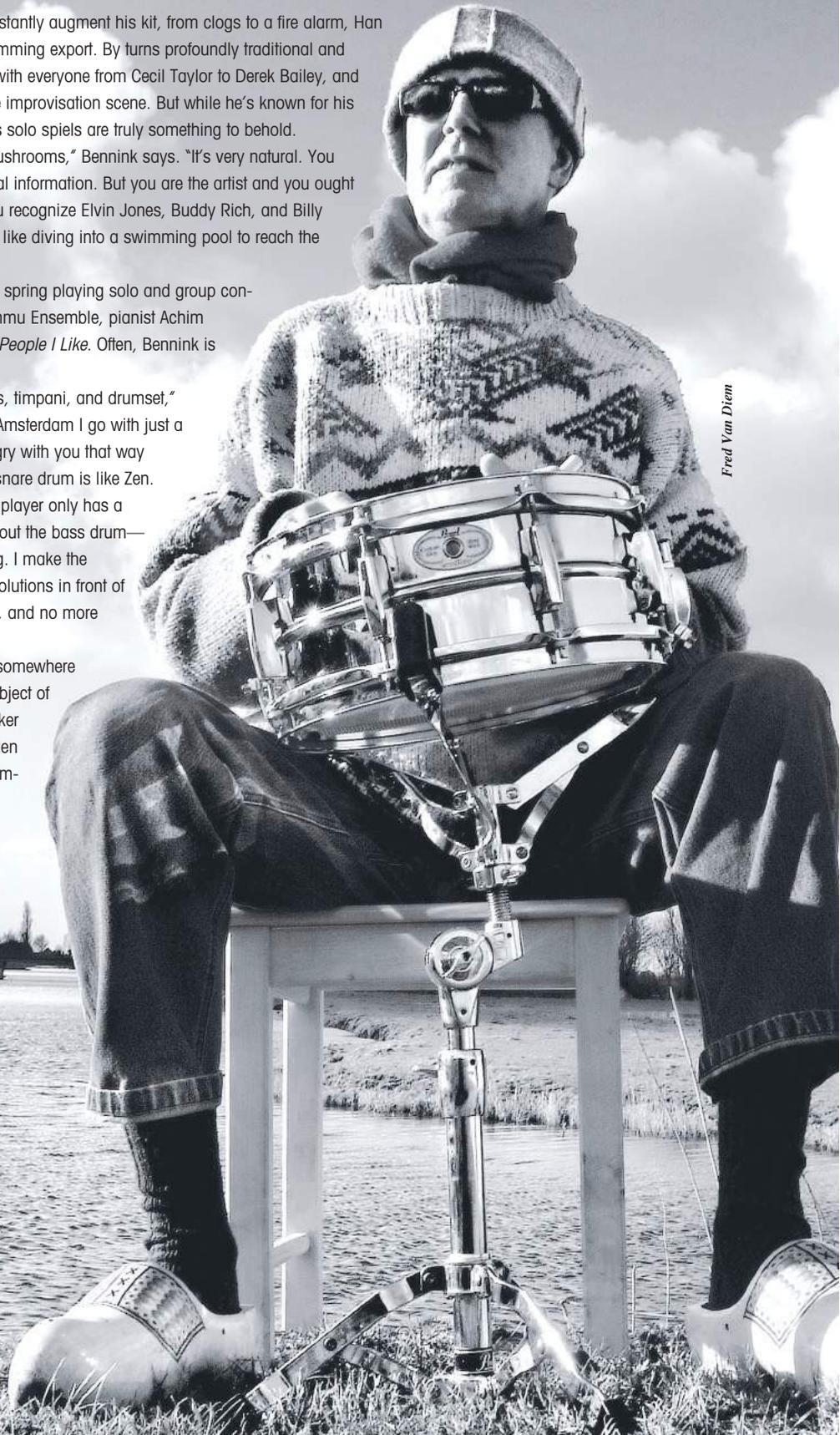
"Playing a drum solo is like growing mushrooms," Bennink says. "It's very natural. You access your backpack with all your musical information. But you are the artist and you ought to add something new to it. That's why you recognize Elvin Jones, Buddy Rich, and Billy Higgins. They had their own language. It's like diving into a swimming pool to reach the other side."

Bennink is scheduled to tour the US this spring playing solo and group concerts, and he recently recorded with the Ammu Ensemble, pianist Achim Kaufmann, and on The Blueprint Project's *People I Like*. Often, Bennink is likely to show up with only a snare drum.

"I used to have a whole car full of tablas, timpani, and drumset," Bennink recalls. "Then I reduced. Often in Amsterdam I go with just a snare drum and brushes. Nobody gets angry with you that way because you don't play too loud. Playing snare drum is like Zen. You only have a snare drum, like a conga player only has a conga. European jazz fans complained about the bass drum—totally ridiculous. So I went back to nothing. I make the music from there rather than have all the solutions in front of me. The only solution you have is yourself, and no more than that."

Currently practicing double-stroke rolls somewhere on a pillow or cigar box, Bennink is the subject of an upcoming DVD by filmmaker Jellie Dekker and an authorized biography by Erik van den Berg. For more info on the truly unique drummer, go to [www.hanbennink.com](http://www.hanbennink.com).

**Ken Micallef**



Fred Van Diem

# The Dap-Kings' Homer STEINWEISS In-Demand Funksta

It's been quite a year for the members of much-heralded New York City funk outfit The Dap-Kings. Powered by longtime drummer Homer Steinweiss, the band recently released their third full-length album with Sharon Jones, *100 Days, 100 Nights*. They also played on Amy Winehouse's hit album *Back To Black*. They were sampled by Jay-Z for his latest release, *American Gangster*. And they recorded with soul legend Al Green, all while churning out numerous 45s and assorted side projects as the house band for Daptone Records. Their passion for '60s soul music has made Daptone a modern day Motown-inspired label, disregarding almost every current musical trend for the purity of old-school recording. Click track? No way! Pro-Tools? Out of the question! Format of choice? Vinyl!

"At Daptone, the gear is all analog," Homer says. "When tracking drums, the mic placement varies. But there's usually a sweet spot somewhere a foot or two off the ground pointing towards the snare drum but behind the bass drum. For the most part one mic is all we ever need. Sometimes a nice one, sometimes a cheap Radio Shack model."

Although Homer says his style hasn't changed in several years, it was the suggestion of an early percussion teacher that paved the way for the style he has fully embraced as an adult. "In junior high, all I wanted to do was play like Dave Grohl," the drummer admits. "I had a private teacher, Matt Patuto, who would teach me the basics and songs that I wanted to learn. But he also made me get *The Best Of Booker T. & The MG's* and made me learn many of the songs. It was then that I started to develop a feel for the classic '60s style of soul drumming."

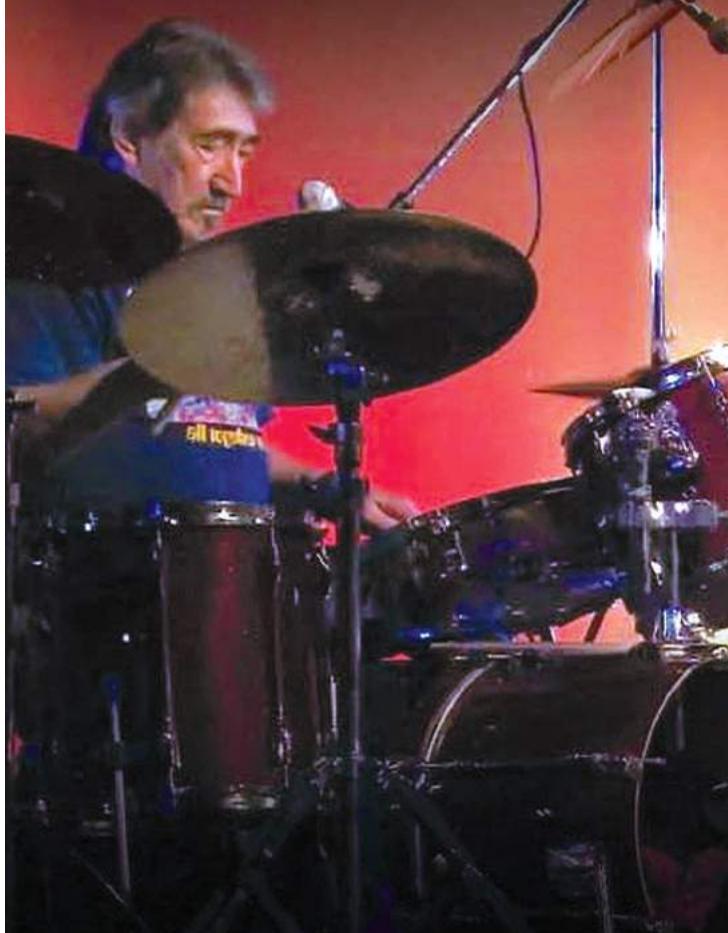
In 2006 The Dap-Kings were hand-picked by British DJ/producer Mark Ronson to play on a handful of tracks for the latest Amy Winehouse CD, a runaway hit due in part to the Dap-King "sound" being featured on her hit singles. Homer reflects, "I remember leaving the studio after that session thinking that we had just recorded some really good stuff. But we had never heard of her, and never expected the sounds we were using to end up on the radio. I am so used to hearing a certain sound on the radio, especially the way the rhythm section is produced, and it's just not what we do."

Check out the soul excitement that is Daptone at [www.daptonerecords.com](http://www.daptonerecords.com).

Jeff Schaller



# Jimmy Carl BLACK Hearing Is Believing



Jimmy Carl Black, of Mothers Of Invention and Captain Beefheart fame, just turned seventy—and says last year was one of his busiest ever. First, there's the band The Jack And Jim Show, which recently released *The Jack And Jim Show Presents Hearing Is Believing*. It's an off-the-wall recording that Black describes as "a mix of all kinds of music—country, jazz, blues, improv, free jazz, and comedy. All the songs on the CD were fun to do. I like 'Cheney's Hunting Ducks' and 'It's 5:00 O'clock Somewhere.' 'What's Going On' is also out there."

The Jack And Jim Show played over fifty gigs last year on a trek dubbed The Think 69 Tour, since that was Black's age at the time. "I also did my first disco recording in Italy with a band called The Happy Metal Band, which is pretty funny," he says. "Maybe I've been going about this music business all wrong. I should have done disco a long time ago and maybe made some money out of it. This year I've released three new CDs that I sell through my MySpace page and Web site as well as off the stage. I'm too old at this point to get a proper recording contract from a major label."

Speaking of age, Black says, "I feel I play better the older I get because I've learned some tricks that help me play better without hurting myself. I'm not as fast as I used to be, but I know how to compensate for that."

"This year will be my fiftieth year as a professional musician. In my book, that's a long time. I've made well over a hundred CDs in those fifty years." Black adds that he's recently been diagnosed with leukemia, but says he hopes that it won't slow him down. "I plan to bop 'til I drop," he insists. For more on Jimmy, check out [www.jimmycarlblack.com](http://www.jimmycarlblack.com).

Robyn Flans

## Silverchair's Ben GILLIES Capturing The Magic

In a wildly successful twelve-year career spanning five award-winning albums, Australian rock trio Silverchair have ridden an astounding creative musical trajectory. Few could have imagined that the "grunge version of Hanson" responsible for 1995's breakthrough debut, *Frogstomp*, would metamorphose into the vibrant, '70s-influenced art rockers you hear on 2007's *Young Modern*. After a five-year break from recording, drummer Ben Gillies believes that Silverchair experienced a rebirth during the sessions for *Young Modern*.

"In the past," the drummer explains, "we've played together in the studio to capture the good drum parts and then built everything around that. This time we were really determined to keep the original 'bed tracks' from all of us, so the entire record was tracked live. If you can capture that magic, there's no reason not to keep it."

For *Young Modern*, Ben and vocalist Daniel Johns envisaged a dry, fat drum sound similar to '70s recordings by Fleetwood Mac. "We tried various things to achieve that sound, from the classic Ringo method of putting tea towels on the heads, to putting newspaper in the bass drum, to placing magazine pages, covered by a thin sheet of construction paper, on each drum."

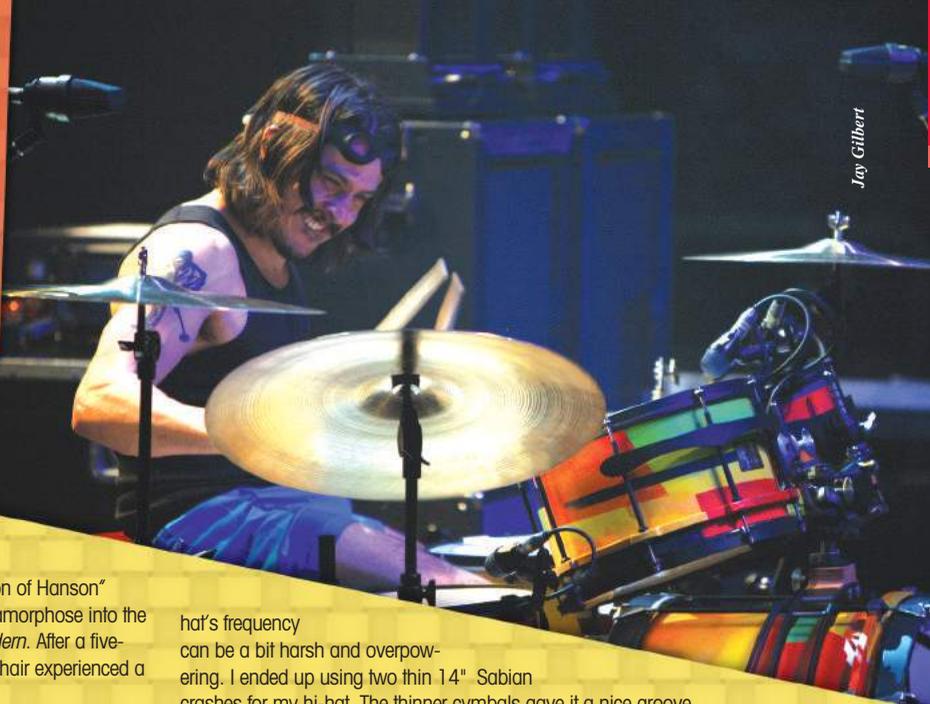
The drummer also made minor adjustments in his gear, using "fluffy beaters" on the kick drum and abandoning the use of traditional hi-hats. Ben explains, "The hi-

hat's frequency can be a bit harsh and overpowering. I ended up using two thin 14" Sabian crashes for my hi-hat. The thinner cymbals gave it a nice groove and kept the flow."

Gillies also enjoyed recording without a click track. "I reckon they take away the human element of playing drums," he says, "because it's just natural to speed up and slow down." To ensure his timing was spot on, Ben first practiced extensively with and without clicks. "I'd program the clicks *really* far apart," he explains. "I'd start at 140 bpm, halve that, and halve it again to get to 35 bpm. Playing to that involved concentration, and working with that space helped my feel as well."

As for his thoughts on tempo, Ben says, "In the confinement of the studio you can listen back. If it's too quick, you can always pull it back a notch. Whatever you're trying to achieve, you have so much more freedom playing without a click."

**Gail Worley**



Jay Gilbert

## Orgone's Sean O' SHEA That Warm, Retro Feel

For drummer Sean O'Shea and his band Orgone—a nine-piece instrumental group specializing in the retro sounds of '60s and '70s funk and soul—2008 is the best year ever. Not only has Orgone recently released a critically acclaimed CD, *The Killion Floor* (see the review on page 150), the group has also been gigging steadily as the backing band for noteworthy funk acts like The Pharcyde, Breakestra, Connie Price & The Keystone, and Tone Loc. According to Sean, a groove-based player who specializes in applying vintage tones and feels to today's revitalized funk scene, "We've played together for so long that we have a chemistry you can't get from just hiring a group of individual players."

In fact, Orgone's work as both the studio and live band for producer Jack Splash's award-winning side project, Plant Life, continues to open doors for the band. The drummer explains, "Jack has become an in-demand producer for artists such as John Legend, Alicia Keys, and Lauryn Hill. Originally he was programming and playing everything himself, but he decided he wanted to go in a different direction and use a live band."

Based on his work with Orgone on various Plant Life albums, Splash chose the band to cut over a hundred instrumental tracks that he could then rework and bring to his upcoming projects. To facilitate getting his desired drum sounds, O'Shea uses all vintage gear: a '60s Ludwig set live, a '60s Rogers kit in the studio, and a set of '70s Zildjian cymbals. His minimal setup includes only a kick, snare, hi-hat, and ride—and no toms.

When Splash signed on to produce songs for Alicia Keys' *As I Am*, two of the tracks he'd recorded with Orgone became "Teenage Love Affair" and "Wreckless Love"—both of which have been singled out by critics as having a particularly warm, retro feel. "It's a great break for us," Sean enthuses. "Our tracks definitely don't sound like a typical Alicia Keys production, because we're not about the perfect pop sheen. It's truly exciting for us to be a part of bringing organic, live, and imperfect music with an actual human feel back to pop music."

For more info on Sean, visit his MySpace page at [www.myspace.com/oshandy1](http://www.myspace.com/oshandy1).

**Gail Worley**



# UPDATE NEWS

Filming has completed for **Todd Sucherman's** highly anticipated instructional DVD. He is currently on the road with Styx.

**Steve Gadd** is on a new CD by guitarist John Tropea.

**Ringo Starr's** latest CD is titled *Liverpool 8*. It's his first new album with Capitol/EMI since 1974's *Goodnight Vienna*.

**Rick Allen** is on a new album from Def Leppard, due out soon. A world tour will follow.

According to **Darrin Pheiffer**, the new Goldfinger CD sounds like "Iron Maiden mixed with Celine Dion." Expect a summer release with four dates to follow.

It is now confirmed that **Joey Jordison** and Slipknot will hit the road with **Mike Wengren** and Disturbed on the first-ever Rockstar Mayhem tour this summer.

The classic '70s lineup of Return To Forever—Chick Corea, Stanley Clarke, Al Di Meola, and, of course, the great **Lenny White** on drums—will reunite for a tour of the US this summer. And a new album may be recorded later this year. Stay tuned!

Cavalera Conspiracy, featuring Max and **Igor Cavalera**, just released their new debut CD, *Inflkted*.

**Joe Tomino** is on the new Dub Trio release *Another Sound Is Dying*.

**Dennis Chambers** is preparing to tour with Santana on the Live Your Light tour this spring.

**Andy Hamburger** is on Randy Thompson's *Further On*.

**Donald Barrett** has been sitting in with the house band on *Last Call With Carson Daly*. He also plays with Seal, Jesse McCartney, and Pussy Cat Doll Nicole Scherzinger.

**Ben Tileston** is playing drums with Tony Perry (guitar) and Adrian Perry (bass and vocals)—both sons of Aerosmith's Joe Perry—in a band called TAB. The group has just released their full-length record, *Pulling Out Just Enough To Win*. For more visit [www.tabtheband.com](http://www.tabtheband.com).

**Derek Ries** is on teen sensation Push Play's debut, *Deserted*. The band is also touring to promote the CD. Check out [www.myspace.com/pushplayrox](http://www.myspace.com/pushplayrox).

**Billy Eberts** is on The Meddling Kids' self-titled debut.

**Chris Parker** and **Buddy Williams** are on percussion great **Ralph MacDonald's** latest, *Mixty Motions*, which also features two new performances by Ashford & Simpson. For more info, check out [www.ralphmacdonald.com](http://www.ralphmacdonald.com).

Kenny G's Latin-inspired CD, *Rhythm And Romance*, features **Alex Acuña** on drums with **Michito Sanchez** and **Paulinho Da Costa** on percussion.

Congratulations to Terri and **Morgan Rose** on the birth of their son Jonas Jack Rose.



## DRUM DATES

This month's important events in drumming history

**Zutty Singleton** was born on 5/14/1898, **Mel Lewis** on 5/10/29, and **John Bonham** on 5/31/48.

**Billy Higgins** passed away on 5/4/01, **Elvin Jones** on 5/18/04.

**5/15/53:** *Jazz At Massey Hall* is recorded by "The Quintet" and will mark the last reunion of trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, alto saxophonist Charlie Parker, pianist Bud Powell, bassist Charles Mingus, and drummer **Max Roach**.

**5/5/59:** saxophonist John Coltrane records *Giant Steps* with pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Paul Chambers, and drummer **Art Taylor**.

**5/27/75:** Genesis performs *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* at the Palais de Sports in St. Etienne, France (with **Phil Collins** on drums). It will turn out to be the last show Peter Gabriel performs with the group before announcing his solo career.

**5/15/82:** Asia, featuring ex-ELP drummer **Carl Palmer**, tops the US charts with their self-titled debut.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

**Freddie Gruber** (famed teacher): 5/27/27

**Levon Helm** (The Band): 5/26/42

**Billy Cobham** (drum legend): 5/16/44

**Bill Kreutzmann** (The Grateful Dead): 5/7/46

**Butch Trucks** (The Allman Brothers): 5/11/47

**Bill Ward** (Black Sabbath): 5/5/48

**Bill Bruford** (Yes, Earthworks): 5/17/48

**Paulinho Da Costa** (percussion great): 5/31/48

**Prairie Prince** (The Tubes): 5/7/50

**Sly Dunbar** (reggae master): 5/10/52

**Alex Van Halen** (Van Halen): 5/8/53

**Mark Herndon** (Alabama): 5/11/55

**Stan Lynch** (ex-Tom Petty): 5/21/55

**Will Kennedy** (ex-Yellowjackets): 5/9/57

**Kenny Washington** (jazz great): 5/29/58

**Mel Gaynor** (Simple Minds): 5/29/59

**Dave Abbruzzese** (ex-Pearl Jam): 5/17/64

**Charley Drayton** (sessions): 5/9/65

**Sean Kinney** (Alice In Chains): 5/27/66

**Todd Sucherman** (Styx): 5/2/69

**Matt Flynn** (Maroon 5): 5/23/70

**Alan White** (Oasis): 5/26/72

**Robin Diaz** (sessions): 5/16/77

**Les Cleveland** (Larry Graham): 5/30/82

**Joey Zehr** (The Click Five): 5/10/83



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# Rounded Bearing Edges

I have recently been reading that rounded bearing edges are returning to fashion. This trend appears to counter the theory, which has been dominant over the past decade, that bearing edges should be sharply and precisely cut. Without going to a trade show and sampling all the different types of bearing edges, how does a drummer suss out his preference in bearing-edge design?

In addition, I'm becoming interested in animal-skin heads for drumset use. Is there a preferable bearing-edge design for such skin heads?

Michael Ray

The rounded bearing edges of yesteryear were created mainly in order to accommodate calfskin heads. Those skins had to be attached to flesh hoops ("tucked") and fitted onto the drums while wet, during which they were prone to tearing. A sharp bearing edge would have increased that risk. Once dried, the fitted calfskin heads tended to produce a fairly mellow, warm tone (as compared to today's plastic heads).

In the years since, rounded edges have come back into vogue in response to drummers searching for that warmer, more "vintage" sound—even with plastic heads. This is a case of what was originally a functional reason for an edge evolving into an acoustic reason.



## THE DOCTOR IS IN by Asif Khan, M.D.

Editor's note: This new mini-department has been established to address your questions related to drumming and health.

# Drumming-Related Ankle And Foot Problems

I've developed a condition in both of my ankles called tarsal tunnel syndrome (TTS). My feet tingle, and I have pain in my ankles and toes. This condition is similar to carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) in the hands, which I also suffer from. My neurologist is amazed that I have both conditions. All blood tests and other tests came out clear. Only an EMG did show some slowing conduction. I have no systemic illness.

I play mostly metal music, with lots of double bass and blast beats. However, I've always used a relaxed grip and good posture, and I don't bury my beater in the bass drum head. I've taken private drum lessons and done studying on my own. I also swim and lift light weights, and I just began a yoga regimen.

Is it unusual for a drummer to get both of these conditions at the same time? Might it be genes—or just bad luck? And can you offer any suggestions for treatment?

Jarmo

Drummers can definitely develop ankle and foot problems due to the repetitive motions involved in drumming. So it's important to take steps to avoid those problems. Arch support for the feet, stretching before and after playing, and proper posture while playing are paramount. And take breaks during practice and shows, to give your muscles and joints a rest.

Metal drumming and forceful technique could contribute to your symptoms. However, there are thousands of metal drummers who play pain-free. After reviewing all the journals I could find, I have to agree with your neurologist that the two conditions—CTS and TTS—presenting together without other joints involved is quite rare. Might there be a genetic cause? It's possible, as there is with rheumatoid arthritis. But I couldn't find any literature on your specific symptoms. Morton's neuroma and plantar fasciitis are other common conditions that can be misdiagnosed as TTS.

Effective treatment for both CTS and TTS includes rest, ice, and rehabilitation with splinting. Anti-inflammatory medicines and cortisone (steroid) injections can decrease pain and swelling. If these conservative measures fail, surgery has been shown to be effective by releasing the pressure on the vessels and structures that pass through the tarsal tunnel. The recovery period may vary from three to eighteen months. The outcome of the procedure varies, depending on the nature of the entrapment and the damage that the posterior tibial nerve sustained prior to

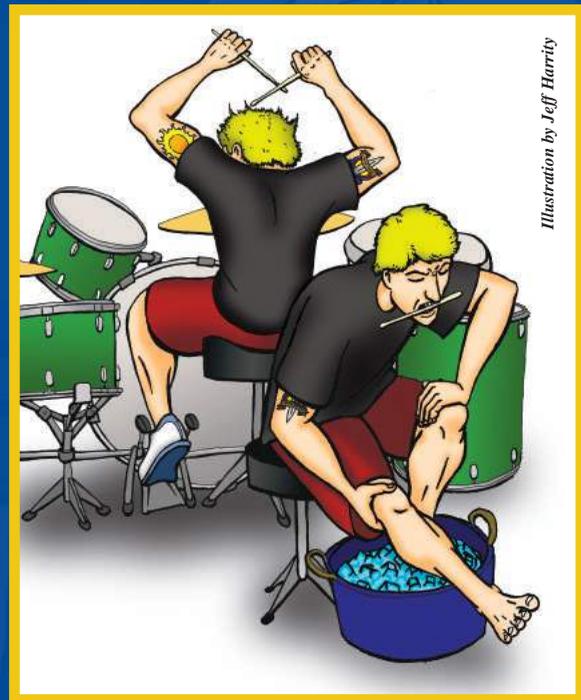


Illustration by Jeff Harrity

surgery. Rarely, symptoms are severe enough to require specific medication to decrease the nerve irritability.

You should discuss all these options with your doctor. In the meantime, continue your yoga and swimming, since both promote good health. To help your joints, you might want to stop or at least ease up on the weightlifting. You get enough cardio and muscle exercise with drumming.

**Dr. Asif Khan** is a board-certified internist specializing in allergy and immunology. He is currently in private practice in Cleveland, Ohio. He's also the director of a nonprofit organization called Passion And Profession ([www.passionandprofession.com](http://www.passionandprofession.com)), which focuses on career counseling and education. Dr. Khan has been an avid drummer for twenty years and is currently performing with Johnny Hi-Fi ([www.johnnyhi-fi.com](http://www.johnnyhi-fi.com)).

# Leedy/Slingerland Kit

I recently purchased a three-piece Leedy kit made in December of 1958, according to stamps on the insides of the shells. However, the shells appear to have been made by Slingerland. The number "P-040" is also stamped inside the shells, and I've seen the same stamps on vintage Slingerland kits I've owned. The shells appear to feature 3-ply mahogany/poplar/mahogany construction, with maple reinforcing hoops. All the internal mufflers are in place.

The wrap is called Silver Veil Pearl. I've seen online that it was used on Slingerland snare drums in 1958, but when I looked up Leedy colors they didn't have any such finish. Was 1958 the only year that this finish was available? Was it made for both companies? How rare is it? And what would the estimated value of these drums be?  
**Mark Pulst**

MD historian Harry Gangany replies, "That's a well cared-for kit. Leedy was a division of the Slingerland Drum Company in the late 1950s. At that time Slingerland had some proprietary finishes, including Gold Veil, Silver Veil, Turquoise Veil, and Fiesta. Some of those finishes turned up on Leedy-branded kits.

"A drum with any of these finishes is worth at least twice that of a similar drum in a popular color. I'd estimate that your three drums are worth at least \$2,000, even with their less-expensive double-flanged hoops and clips. You'd get more if the kit were complete, but it would probably be easier to part the Red Sea than to find a matching floor tom."



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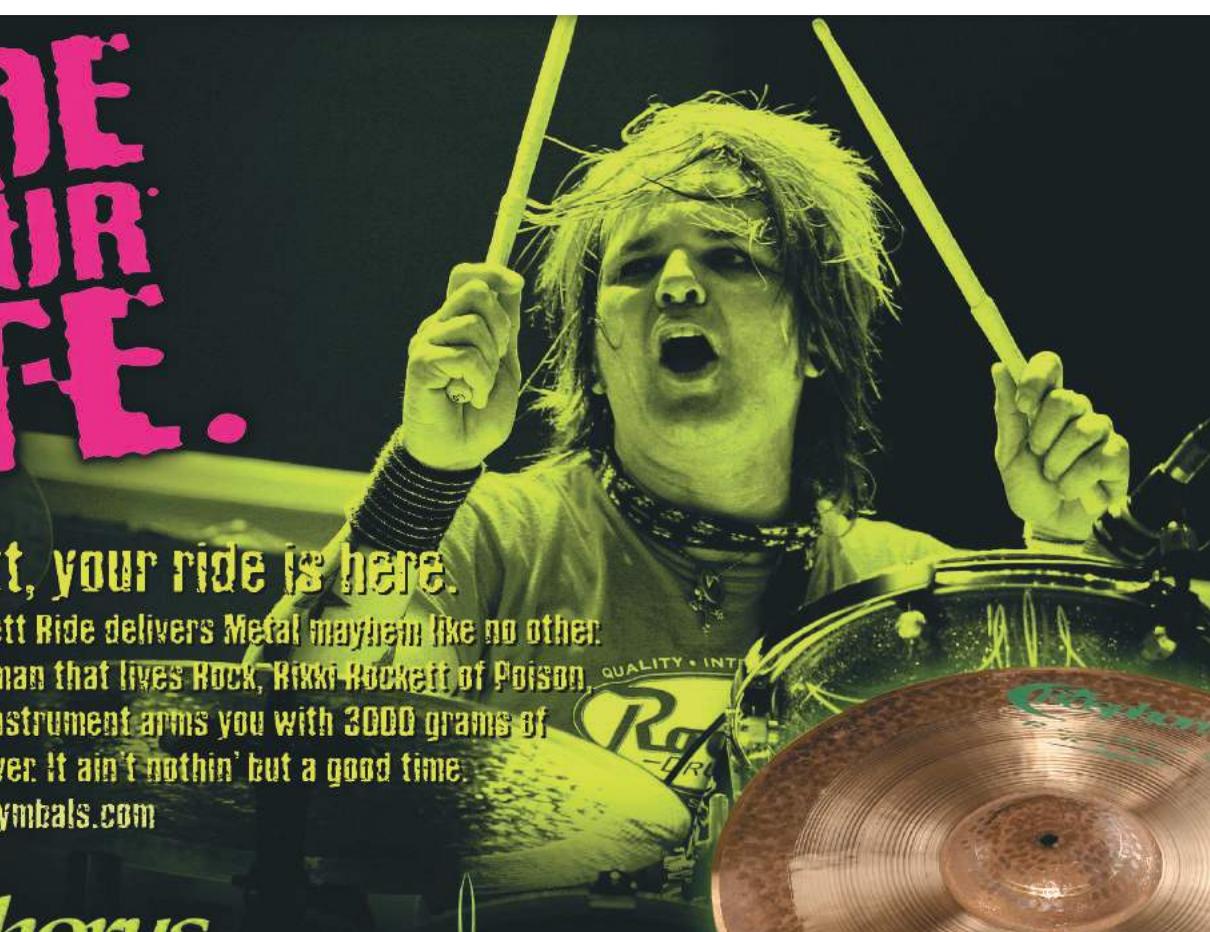
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# Bosphorus





# Ddrum Dominion Ash Pocket Kit

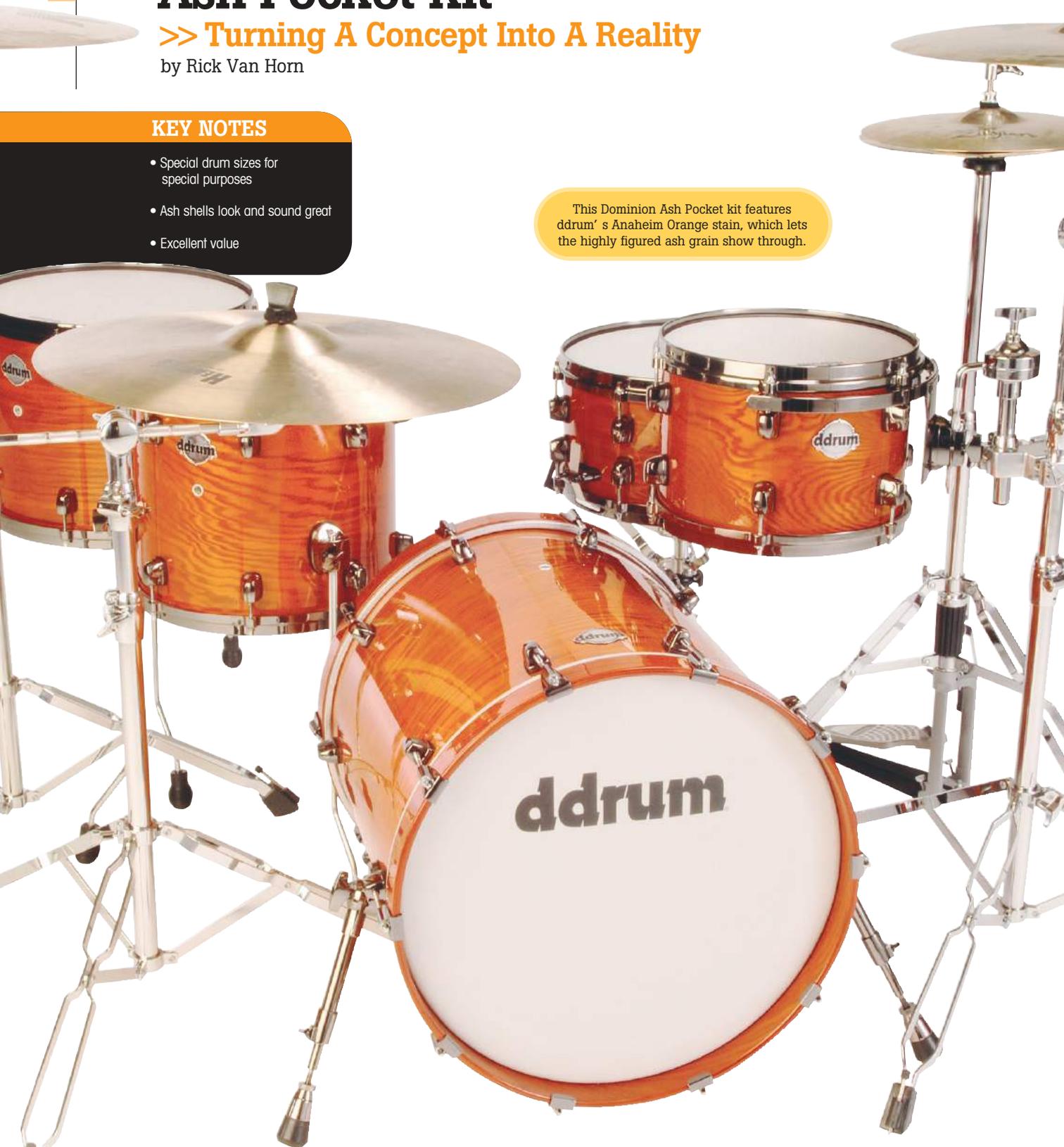
>> **Turning A Concept Into A Reality**

by Rick Van Horn

## KEY NOTES

- Special drum sizes for special purposes
- Ash shells look and sound great
- Excellent value

This Dominion Ash Pocket kit features ddrum's Anaheim Orange stain, which lets the highly figured ash grain show through.



Sometimes, drumkit designations can be deceiving. Take, for example, ddrum's Dominion Ash Pocket kit. You might think that the term "pocket" refers to a compact or mini-sized kit designed for portability. There are certainly lots of those out there these days. However, in this case the term refers to the musical "pocket" created by groove-oriented drummers.

The Dominion Ash Pocket (DAP) kit is what I call a "concept" design.

It employs a specific—and somewhat unusual—combination of drum sizes to create a specific acoustic performance. It also employs a type of wood that isn't yet common in drum manufacture (though it seems to be gaining popularity among those in the know).

### Construction And Configuration

First, let's talk about that wood—ash, to be precise. Long revered for its resonant properties in the construction of acoustic guitars, ash is just now starting to be used for drums, with ddrum leading the charge.

Visually, ash wood is stunning, with a distinctive grain structure similar to that of oak. Acoustically, ash exhibits properties of birch and maple, creating a warm and resonant sound that also offers strong attack characteristics and powerful projection. The DAP kit is designed to take full advantage of these properties.

So let's talk about that design. What makes the DAP kit unique is its combination of drum sizes. You get a snare and a bass drum that are small in diameter but extra-deep (7x13 and 20x20, respectively), and you get standard-diameter rack and floor toms that have shallow depths (8x12, 12x14, and 12x16). Add-on rack toms in 6½x8 and 7x10 sizes are available. The idea is to generate tight, controlled snare/kick backbeats for solid grooves, combined with big and expressive tom sounds for fills.

### Sonic Boom

So now let's talk about sound. According to ddrum's Web site, the 20x20 kick is designed to "keep the feel tight without sacrificing much-needed bottom end," while the 7x13 snare is designed to "deliver sweet crack without being robbed of depth." In contrast, the shallow toms are intended to "create a more musical tone down the scale." It all works.

I'm partial to 13" snare drums, for the crisp response and high pitch they can create without having to be cranked up. In the DAP snare's case, that response and pitch was augmented by a depth and fullness worthy of a classic "fat-back" drum. Toss in the warmth and projection of the ash shell, and you've got a backbeat made in



heaven. And this was with the original Remo UK series Chinese-made batter head, which is serviceable but not great. Swapping that head for a high-end Ambassador only enhanced all the features heretofore described.

The DAP snare had a zesty sort of ring, which some of the MD editors liked for the liveliness it provided. I prefer a slightly dryer sound, which was easily obtainable with a Zero Ring. In either case, the die-cast hoops helped produce penetrating rimshots.

The snare was also easy to tune, with good response to changes in drumhead tension. It also comes with a wonderful snare strainer that puts the throw-off lever and the tension knob far enough away from each other to make operating each one easy and comfortable.

The 20x20 kick drum might be a victim of its own appearance. It just looks so deep that one immediately assumes that it will have an ultra-low, rumbling sound. But depth of pitch is a function of a drum's diameter, not of its shell depth. What shell depth does is affect the tonality and projection of that sound. So what we got with the 20x20 Pocket kick was the respectably low pitch of a 20" bass drum, with a focused, punchy projection shaped by the deep shell. The drum came with a solid front head and a self-muffling batter—again, from Remo's UK series—so the sound was tight and somewhat contained. That sound recorded very well in our in-house testing booth. The installation of a ported front head let a bit of air—and sound—out of the drum, which might be more appropriate for live gigs.

The toms were the antithesis of the snare and kick. Their full-sized diameters and shallow depths let the fundamental pitch of each drum get out of the shell quickly, with plenty of projection and resonance. The rack tom on the DAP kit must be suspended from a cymbal stand; the floor toms are on their own legs. Even with the clear Remo UK heads they came with, these toms sounded big, deep, and powerful. Just for fun we swapped them for Remo clear Emperors, and they sounded even deeper and warmer.

We understand that the use of UK series heads on the DAP kit helps keep its initial cost down, which is a plus for budget-con-

Hardtail Burst is another stained finish.



Our review kit was finished in a dramatic purple fade.

conscious buyers. And again, those heads are perfectly serviceable. We just think it's cool that when it comes time

to replace those heads, stepping up to higher-quality models will improve an already impressive sound.

### A Classy Look

According to ddrum's Web site, current DAP finishes include Lime Green and Java sparkles, along with Redburst (an orange-to-red fade over natural grain), Anaheim Orange (orange stain over natural grain), Hardtail Burst (a turquoise-to-blue fade over natural grain), and Purple fade (over natural grain).

Our review kit came in the purple fade finish. In a nutshell, it was exquisite, looking deep, glossy, and rich—especially in combination with the black-nickel chrome hardware and die-cast rims on all the drums. The darker part of the fade obscured the ash grain, but the lighter part let the grain show through to good advantage. This was, in every way, a very professional-looking kit.

### The Bottom Line

I stress the "professional" appearance of the DAP kit because it might come as a surprise, considering the kit's price. The five-piece

shell pack described in this review lists for \$1,247.50. That's getting down into entry-level pricing, folks. And this kit is anything but entry-level in terms of construction quality, finish, and sonic performance. Granted, you'd need to add a hardware package if you were buying a complete kit. But that might only add another \$300 or so, which would still make the DAP kit a bargain.

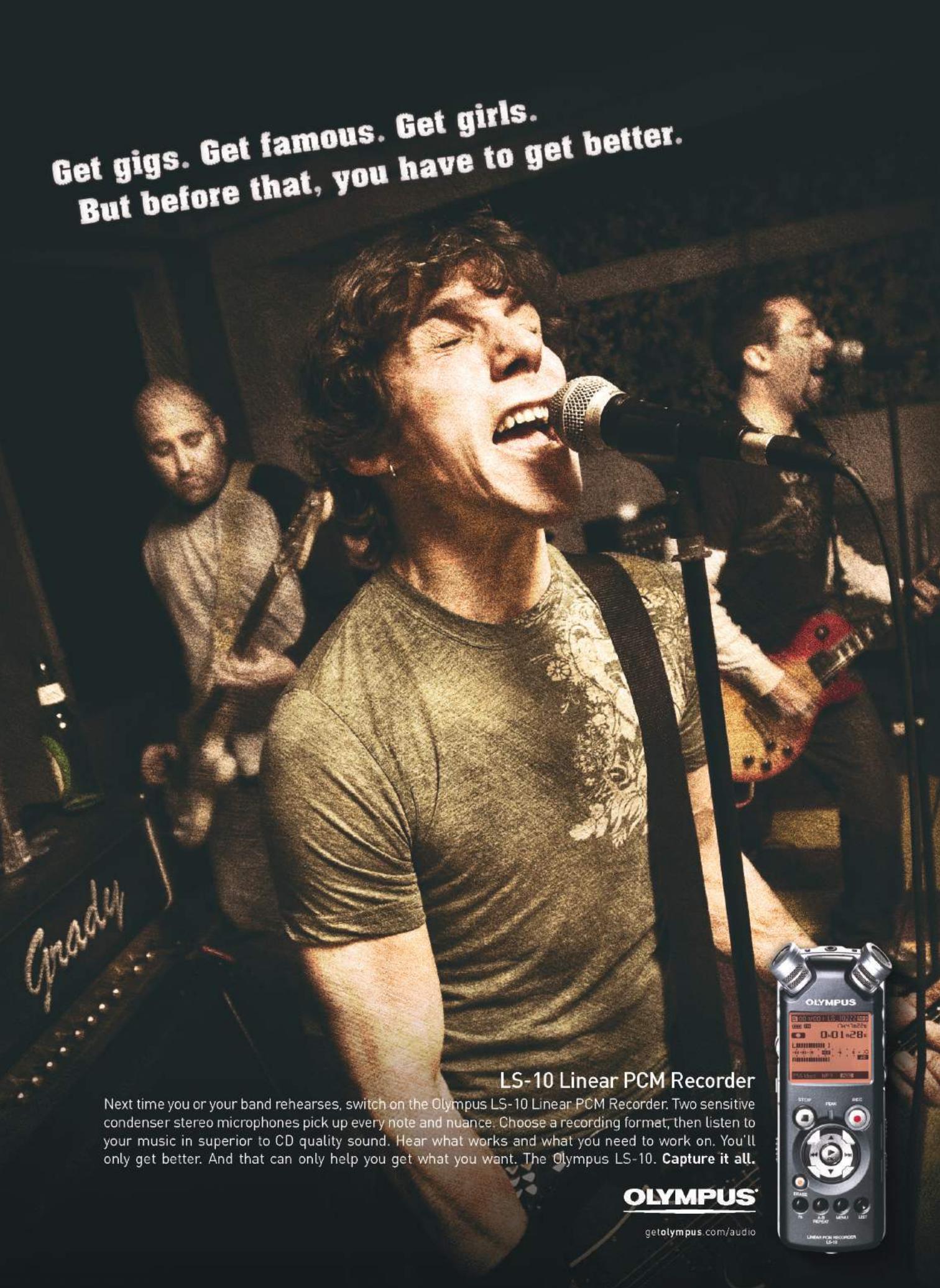
Ddrum entered the drum market with the right attitude from the get-go: Design kits with the needs of drummers in mind, make them as good as anybody's, and keep them affordable. That's what they've done with the Dominion Ash Pocket kit, and it's definitely a winner.

## THE NUMBERS

<b>Dominion Ash Pocket Kit</b> .....	<b>\$1,247.50</b>
Shell pack includes a 20x20 bass drum, an 8x12 rack tom with suspension mount and tom arm, 12x14 and 12x16 floor toms with legs, and a 7x13 snare drum. No stands or pedals are included.	
<b>6 1/2x8 add-on tom</b> .....	<b>\$169.99</b>
<b>7x10 add-on tom</b> .....	<b>\$184.99</b>
<a href="http://www.ddrum.com">www.ddrum.com</a>	

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# Meinl Byzance Extra Dry Series And Spectrum Ride

>> Looks Can Be Achieving

by Michael Dawson



## KEY NOTES

- Spectrum and Extra Dry rides are ideal for players looking for dark sounds in higher-volume situations.
- Extra Dry crashes and hi-hats have minimal sustain.
- Extra Dry rides feature pronounced stick sound with minimal wash.

**G**erman cymbal and percussion manufacturer Meinl has made a major push in the hand-hammered market with their B20 bronze Byzance line. Two additions to that line include the Extra Dry series (which consists of two rides, two crashes, and a pair of hi-hats) and drummer Rodney Holmes' signature 22" Spectrum ride. These new cymbals are aimed towards drummers looking for darker and more esoteric sounds to add to their setups. Sound like your thing? Let's find out.

### Rusty, Crusty Rides

A few months back, I had the pleasure of checking out a show by one of my favorite rock bands, Clutch. Their drummer, Jean-Paul Gaster, knocked me out not only with his loose

and slinky feel, but also with his earthy and organic-sounding setup. I was particularly interested in the dark and dry cymbal to his right that he used to punctuate the ends of fills and for occasional ride patterns. That cymbal was the 22" Byzance Extra Dry medium ride.

The Extra Dry medium rides, which come in 20" and 22" sizes, are unique cymbals, both visually and sonically. Both surfaces of the cymbals are completely untreated and unlathed, which gives them an aged, buried-in-the-yard appearance. They

also feature large, random hammer marks on the bow, while the bell is untouched.

The 22" model was my favorite of the two. When played on the bow, the sound had a nice balance of dry stick attack and dark overtones, with a short and slightly trashy sustain. The bell also had a complex tone that complemented the cymbal's overall smoky vibe. Shoulder crashes were a little too loud and jarring for Bill Stewart-type push accents. But I can see why someone like Jean-Paul Gaster would go to this sound for roaring build-up sections.

The 20" Extra Dry medium ride was not quite as versatile as its big brother. But the stick definition on this cymbal is remarkably dry and clear, almost like there was a strip of tape on the underside. Even after striking the edge with a full swing, I was able to play clean ride patterns on the bow without the overtones overpowering the rhythms. The bell sound was a little too loud and clangy for my tastes. And there was a slight gonginess lurking in the sustain. For that reason, I wouldn't necessarily go to this ride if you're into exploring every nuance in your cymbals. But if you're interested in a very dark ride sound with minimal sustain and a strong stick attack, either of these could do the trick.

### Trash In Your Crash

The Byzance Extra Dry thin crashes come in 16" and 18" sizes. Both cymbals feature the same unfinished look as the rides on top, with a traditional lathing on the bottom. These cymbals are very soft and thin, to the point where you can easily bend them in your hands.

When struck on the edge, the Extra Dry thin crashes explode with a complex, trashy accent, and then immediately drop to a short, dark sustain. In fact, the decay was so quick that I wasn't able to create a continuous stream of sound by crash-riding them. Each stroke had a distinct attack.

Due to this ultra-dry character, I also discovered that the 18" Extra Dry thin crash could double as a low- or mid-volume jazz ride. It has a cool, Tony Williams-type vibe to it. The stick definition is clear enough to handle fast swing patterns, while push crashes draw out a spray of color that quickly dissipates. Our Web editor even commented that he'd love to try a 20" version of the Extra Dry thin crash as a ride on jazz gigs.



## Rodney Holmes 22" Byzance Spectrum Ride

This unique-looking cymbal, which was designed for versatile jazz/rock/fusion drummer Rodney Holmes, is said to have "a classic elegant sound combined with an aggressive clear projection." When compared to the Extra Dry rides, this cymbal is equally as dark and low-pitched, with a similar dry stick sound. But there's considerably more spread. The timbre is also more even and less complex than that of the Extra Dries. The bell is very musical, making it blend well with the rest of the cymbal. And you can build up a loud, dark wash by crashing with the shoulder of your stick. I tested the Spectrum at several loud gigs with my rock band as well as in a subtle jazz setting, and it performed great in both. So if you need a cymbal that can cover a wide range of styles, or if you have an affinity for dark jazz tones but need something that can cut through on louder gigs, I'd recommend checking this one out.

### Chick, Click, Groove

The 14" Extra Dry medium hi-hats fall right in line with the dry, dark characteristics of the rest of the series. Both cymbals have the same underside-lathing pattern as the crashes. The top cymbal is very thin, while the bottom cymbal is very heavy. The closed stick sound of these hats is very defined, low-pitched, and dry. And there was a distinct difference in timbre between the light, Jabo Starks-type sound that was achieved with tip strokes on the top cymbal and the chunkier sound of shoulder strikes. The foot "chick" is also dark without sounding weak. Like the crashes, half-open strokes don't give off the sustained sound of other types of hi-hats. Instead, each note has a distinct attack and short, trashy sustain. This quality kept me from playing a lot of sloshy Bonham-type beats, but it did inspire me to explore grooves that capitalized on the cymbals' unique sound.

### THE NUMBERS

Byzance Extra Dry	
14" Hi-hats . . . . .	\$592
16" Thin crash . . . . .	\$378
18" Thin crash . . . . .	\$458
20" Medium ride . . . . .	\$530
22" Medium ride . . . . .	\$646

Byzance Dark	
22" Spectrum Ride . . . . .	\$646
<a href="http://www.meinlcymbals.com">www.meinlcymbals.com</a>	

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

# Psycho City Drums

## >> More Than Just A Pretty Face

by Chap Ostrander



### KEY NOTES

- Great custom paint job
- Hand finished and tuned
- High-quality fit and finish

**W**hen drummer Tony Sieracki found himself disappointed with a set of store-bought drums from a major manufacturer, he decided that he could do better. He founded Psycho City drums with a single goal: to produce hand-made custom drums fitted with premium heads and offered at a moderate price. That's a lofty and noble goal. Let's see if he's achieved it.

### Specs 101

The drums we were sent for review featured 100% maple shells with no reinforcement hoops. Each shell came with a double 45° bearing edge set two plies inside of the outer edge—a position that Tony Sieracki believes produces optimum sound. The snare bed on the snare drum was hand-cut.

The small, teardrop-shaped lugs on the drums were powder-coated in black. And I mean *serious* powder coating, not the kind that chips off when you look at it. Each lug was attached to the shell with two screws. The 2.3-mm steel rims on the snare and toms came finished in Smoked Black Chrome. Aquarian heads are Tony's choice, but customers can specify any brand.

The 6x14 10-ply snare drum featured a Dunnett strainer that rotates to throw off in any direction. Twenty-strand snares are standard. The most interesting feature of the snare is the placement of the lugs. In what Psycho City calls a 50% offset placement, the lugs for the batter head are set between the

lugs for the bottom head. The snare batter was an Aquarian Coated with Power Dot, with the dot on the underside of the head. The bottom head was a Classic Clear Snare Side model.

The 10x12 6-ply rack tom included Psycho City's D.S.S. Support System suspension mount, which was also finished in Black Chrome. The round chrome mounting bracket on the rack tom matches the brackets used for the floor tom legs. The 16x16 and 18x18 (!) floor toms featured 8-ply shells. All of the toms came with Aquarian



Performance II 2-ply batter heads and Classic Clear 1-ply bottom heads.

The 18x22 8-ply bass drum came with 2"-deep hoops that made it look even more massive than it was. (More about that in a moment.) The drum had an Aquarian Super Kick II on the batter side and a Black Gloss head with an offset microphone hole for the front. There was no mount on the bass drum for the rack tom; that tom must be flown separately.

While I was working with the drums it occurred to me that the extra-deep bass drum hoops might cause a performance

problem. With the bass drum pedal and beater sitting half an inch farther away from the head than on most bass drums, you might have difficulty achieving a familiar beater throw and overall pedal feel. I didn't encounter such a problem, and, frankly, most modern pedals provide the adjustments needed to deal with this situation. However, anyone who did have a problem could contact Tony Sieracki, and he'd make alterations to that person's hoop. That's one of the advantages of working with a small custom drum builder.

### A Hot Look

The most striking aspect of the Psycho City drums was their painted finish, called Blue Devils Fire. It starts off as multiple layers of blue, marbled with black added for depth. Then Psycho City's artists airbrush on the flames, with contrasting color accents. Those accents were so subtle that I thought for a while that they were using color-change paint. The green shading around the flames seemed to fade in and out depending on where I was viewing the kit. The final touch is the addition of eight coats of clear lacquer containing metallic sparkles. The effect definitely deepens the image.

When you think of flames on a paint job, it usually refers to the retro look of an old hot rod, with flames on the side. Not here. The

flames on this finish are, in a word, fabulous. If you look at the drums from any distance, you might think they were literally on fire. This is most evident on the bass drum and floor toms, since they provide a fairly large "canvas" on which to view the colors. The flames seem to emanate from the edges of the drums, while the middle of the shells display the blue and greens. Tony Sieracki told me that this was one reason for the 2" hoops on the bass drum. The flames are painted onto the hoops as well as the shells, giving the flames more room. Meanwhile, the shallower snare drum seems almost totally engulfed in flames.

### A Big Sound

Ahh, but do these drums sound as good as they look? The answer is a resounding *yes*. The drums are built big and beefy so that they can stand up to any punishment while producing excellent acoustic performance.

The bass drum sounded low, solid, and *very* punchy. I could hear the impact of the beater and at the same time feel the force of the low frequencies. The Aquarian heads did a good job of controlling the drum's ring, so no additional muffling was required. Changing heads would result in more or less ring, depending on what you want. The drum itself offers plenty of potential.

The same was true of the floor toms. They sounded full, while clearly projecting the articulation I put into playing them. The 16x16 was nice and deep, while the 18x18 was ridiculously low. You don't see 18x18 toms much anymore, and this one produced an explosion of low end, like an avalanche of sound. It could very easily double as a killer small bass drum.

The rack tom had great tone for its size—round and full, complementing the floor toms. The toms could be tuned higher than I took them, but my feeling was that this was a big kit made for loud, powerful playing.

The snare drum was, quite simply, a monster. Its power and projection were well balanced with the rest of the kit, and it was responsive at all volume levels. The Aquarian batter head with the dot underneath gave the sound lots of life, and was not in any way restrictive. (I'm usually leery of dotted heads, but I'm learning.)

### Conclusion

Psycho City Drums is obviously devoted to quality and customer service. They strive to produce the best drums using the best materials that they can, at prices that most players can afford. Tony Sieracki not only builds the drums, he also (as he puts it) "beats them soundly" before sending them out. He inspects and tunes them prior to shipping, and he stands behind all his work.

The bottom line is, these are drums with Tony's heart and soul in them. Psycho City's Web site shows only the tip of the iceberg. You work with Tony until you get what you want. Check out these drums before he realizes what he's doing.

### THE NUMBERS

Psycho City custom kit, as reviewed .....\$3,800

(Shell pack includes an 18x22 bass drum, a 10x12 rack tom with suspension mount and tom arm, 16x16 and 18x18 floor toms with legs, and a 6x14 snare drum. No pedals or stands are included.)

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

Go to [www.moderndrummer.com](http://www.moderndrummer.com) for a chance to win your own Psycho City custom snare drum!

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



Acoustic Lights can give drums a colorful look on a darkened stage.

# Acoustic Lights And DrumLights Systems

## >> Bright Ideas For Rhythmic Illumination

by Mike Haid

### KEY NOTES

- Acoustic Lights are simple, inexpensive, and effective
- DrumLights systems offer multiple programming options
- DrumLights light strips add bulk when mounted on drums

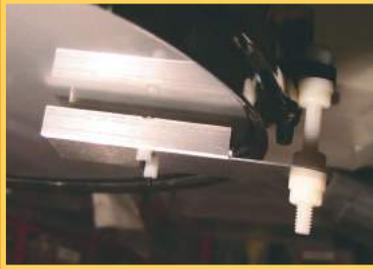
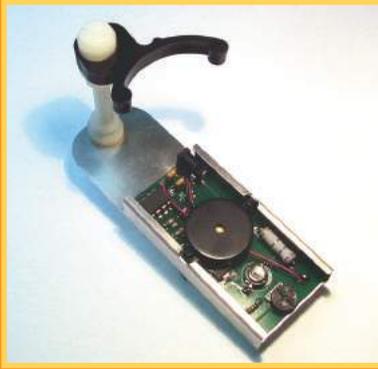
**N**ot getting the visibility you feel you deserve? Spent big bucks on a gorgeous drumkit only to be stuck at the back of the stage in the dark? Take heart. There are brighter days ahead for drummers who seek the spotlight. How about wrapping your drums with dazzling lights that will react to your every beat, or having a different color light explode from under each drum with every stroke of your vicious groove?

Typically, in a large venue or arena show setting, an AV company handles stage lighting, supplying plenty of illumination for the drummer to be seen—and highlighted, when necessary. But what about smaller gigs, like clubs, wedding receptions, and showcase venues, which rarely provide adequate lighting to really feature the drummer?

Now, with the help of a couple of innovative lighting products specifically designed for drummers, you have the power to create a light show to accent the most important instrument on stage: the drumkit! Let's take a look on the bright (and dark) sides of these two drum-lighting systems.

### Acoustic Lights

Acoustic Lights offers individual Luxeon III LED light sensors that can be mounted under your snare drum, toms, and cymbals—and, with a little extra ingenuity, inside the bass drum.



Acoustic Light sensors can be attached above or below a drum, as well as underneath cymbals for a reflective effect.



They're inconspicuous, with thin wiring that's easily hidden and plugs directly into the sensor. The main power supply connects up to four lights, with the wires from each sensor connected directly to the power supply.

Acoustic Lights come in red, blue, green, amber, and white. The rated life expectancy for each LED is about 100,000 hours of full-time use, with an impressively intense light output. The light units are small (1½" wide, 4" long, less than ½" deep), and they're easily mounted. They attach under the drum, as close to the resonant head as possible, using a plastic clip that easily snaps into place between a tension rod and the drumshell. On cymbals, you remove the plastic mounting clip and slip the aluminum sleeve of the sensor over the cymbal stand.

A small adjustable thumb wheel sets the sensitivity of the light to trigger at the strike of the drum or cymbal. The sensitivity can be set quite precisely in order to avoid false triggering from surrounding sound sources. The only downside I found with this type of lighting system was that, because the light shines up through the drum, the drummer gets the bulk of the light in his or her face, while the audience gets the reflection of the light coming from inside the shell. The best scenario would be to use these lights with transparent or translucent acrylic shells, so that the light can shine through the entire shell.

Acoustic Lights has not perfected a bass drum mounted light yet. But the overall concept is strong, and the pricing is within easy reach of most drummers. With a few more innovations and upgraded material designs, this system would have the potential to make the drumming experience a dynamic attraction, and an affordable way to increase your visibility on stage.

### DrumLights

DrumLights offers a more sophisticated—and more expensive—lighting system that includes wireless LED light strips with MIDI programming capabilities and USB-programmed lighting. This system is designed to set up a complete pre-programmed light show from a laptop computer or MIDI triggering device.

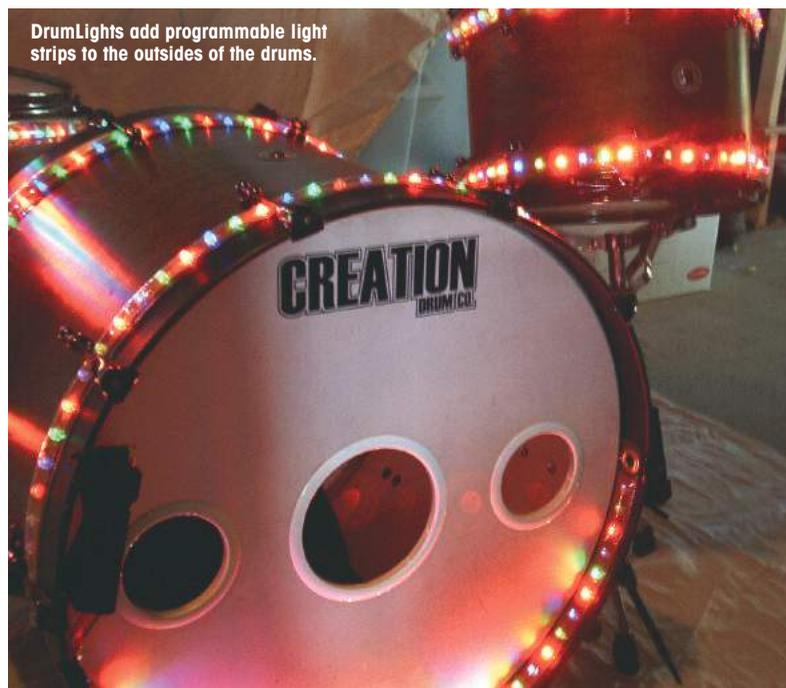
There are two lighting options with DrumLights. The first is rope lighting that connects to an eight-outlet box and is MIDI



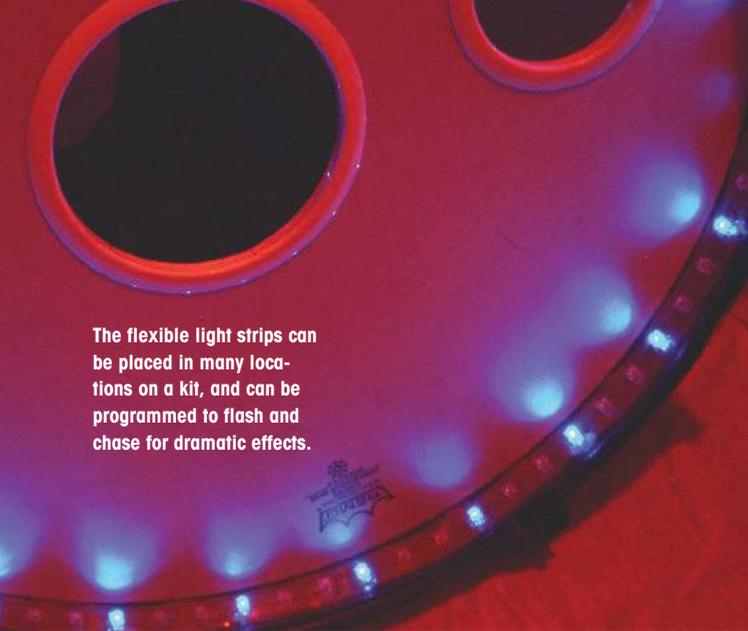
DrumLight strips are operated by wireless or USB controllers.

and wireless controllable. I found the rope lighting to be bulky, limited in length, and not well suited for drumset applications. The thick white cables from the rope lights to the outlet box aren't easily disguised, and they proved a bit difficult to reach and attach to the drums. Plus, the only color option is white.

The second—and highly recommended—option features a 38"-long flexible wireless multi-color LED light strip with a built-in wireless control module. The LED strips looked very cool when



DrumLights add programmable light strips to the outsides of the drums.



The flexible light strips can be placed in many locations on a kit, and can be programmed to flash and chase for dramatic effects.

flashing on the drumkit, and they were fairly easy to set up, program, and operate. I placed two strips around each drum, covering the top and bottom lugs. Much to the annoyance of my band's lead vocalist, programming the light strips to react to my every beat really turned the audience's heads toward the drumkit! The digital sensitivity control in the module worked very well, allowing me to fine-tune the triggering intensity with absolutely zero crosstalk or false triggering between drums.

It does take a bit of finagling to mount these strips onto a drum.

First, you have to attach a thin stainless-steel mounting plate to the drum by placing it between the drum hoop and the tension rod. This might be a problem for drummers who are particular about the tuning of their drums, as the tension of the rod will determine how firmly the mount is secured to the drum. Since this metal plate is the conductor of the triggering signal, the plate needs to be attached firmly.

The next consideration is that the flexible light strip itself will be wrapped around the shell of the drum. The metal mounting plate hangs down from the top hoop/tension rod contact point (or rises up from the bottom one) and over the lug casing. The control module slides into the mounting plate and is suspended from the drumshell. The light strip is over 1 1/2" inches wide and the controller is over 2" wide. So if you're particular about the look and sound of your kit, you may have a hard time dealing with this bulky, resonance-dampening, and unattractive light strip hanging from your shells. But don't worry too much. The tiny yet intense lights (thirty-six bulbs in each strip) are encased in a flexible plastic sleeve that shouldn't damage your shells. The far end of the strip can be secured around a tension rod with a hook-and-loop fastener strip (provided). Also, keep in mind that when employed, these multi-colored LED lights are going to draw major attention to your kit.

Many cool multi-colored lighting patterns (such as chasing and flashing) can be programmed into these strips. And they're velocity sensitive, adding yet another dimension. What's even cooler is that you can set up a master/slave setting on your entire kit to have each light strip (slave) trigger the same pattern (and intensity) from a single

# Quick Looks

## STANDFIRM STRAPS

by Rick Van Horn

It's easy to mark the position of legs and spurs on your drum rug with a marker or with small pieces of tape. Unfortunately, such marks do nothing to prevent those legs and spurs from moving out of position. StandFirm Straps do.

The inspiration for StandFirm Straps came when R&B drum star Teddy Campbell asked drum tech (and StandFirm designer) Jake Voelz to secure the legs of his hi-hat, cymbal, and snare stands with gaffer's tape to keep them from moving while he played. It worked, but it looked sloppy. Jake started thinking about a neater and more efficient way to accomplish the same result.

What Jake came up with are holding devices that combine high-quality 1/8"-thick leather straps with hook-and-loop fastener strips. The fastener strips securely grip almost any low-pile rug, while the upper straps wrap completely around stand feet and bass drum spurs. This effectively "ties down" those feet and spurs so they can't move.

The Bass Spur Strap works in the same way as the Foot Strap design. But since a bass drum is more likely to slide under impact than any other part of the kit, the Bass Spur Strap has a larger surface area. This allows it to grip more of the rug for added security. A hole in the leather accommodates the spike of the spur.

A particularly nice feature of the StandFirm Straps is that they open up and lay virtually flat when not in use. So they can remain attached to your rug for transport without adding bulk when the rug is rolled up. They're not likely to shift or come off during transport, but marking their position on the rug with a marker would be prudent, just in case.

If you happen to prefer playing on a hard surface—for home studio purposes, perhaps, or on your own wood-topped gigging riser—you can still use the StandFirm Straps. Just glue and/or screw opposing hook & loop



Foot Straps in the open position



A Foot Strap wrapped around a stand foot



The Bass Spur Strap employs a larger gripping area

fastener strips to the surface, for the StandFirm strips to attach to. You'll get the reflectivity of the hard surface, with no risk of slipping.

Bass Spur Straps list for \$29.95 per pair; Foot Straps list for \$14.95 each. They're available directly from StandFirm, at [www.standfirm.info](http://www.standfirm.info).

If you can't stand the  
**heat...**



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Premier are turning up the heat with the all new Cabria Series. Three stunning new ranges that will change the drumming world forever. Cabria XPK, Cabria APK and Cabria PK, each loaded with awesome new features at prices never seen before. Coming soon to a dealer near you, the new Cabria Series....it's what you've been waiting for.

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premier-percussion.com



DrumLights light strips are visible when not illuminated, and are somewhat bulky.

## THE NUMBERS

### ACOUSTIC LIGHTS

- Acoustic Light and sensor .....\$35  
(Available in red, green, blue, amber, and white.)
  - 5-Volt regulated power supply .....\$35  
(Includes four 10'-long connector cables)
- [www.acousticlights.com](http://www.acousticlights.com)

### DRUMLIGHTS

- Basic lighting kit .....\$359.95  
(Includes four basic light strips)

- Wireless lighting kit .....\$661.95  
(Includes four light strips, four wireless modules, a wireless USB unit and battery, a ShowPlayer software CD, USB cable and drivers, and a wall-mounted 9-volt power supply.)

- Wireless MIDI lighting kit .....\$697.95  
(Includes four light strips and batteries, four wireless modules, a wireless MIDI unit and battery, a ShowPlayer software CD, and a wall-mounted 9-volt power supply.)

- Basic light strip .....\$99.95
  - Wireless module .....\$59.95
  - Wireless USB .....\$79.95
  - Wireless DMX-512 module .....\$80.00
  - Wireless MIDI .....\$119.95
  - Wireless 8-way outlet .....\$149.95
- [www.drumlights.com](http://www.drumlights.com)

(master) programmed light strip! And, don't forget, you can also pre-program an entire light show from a wireless MIDI device or wireless USB connection from a computer. You simply load the DrumLight software into your PC (it's not made for Mac yet) and you're ready to light up your kit with endless lighting pattern options.

The wireless DrumLight system is a visually exciting and high-tech lighting

package for drummers. Though it isn't cheap, it's relatively affordable when you consider the many setup and programming configurations it offers. Just be prepared for the extra baggage of the light strips attached to your drums. If you can live with that, you're in for brighter days as a more visually attractive part of the stage show.



## FIDOCK

### 6 1/2 x 14 TASMANIAN BLACKWOOD



#### HOW'S IT SOUND?

Australian builder Stephan Fidock's handcrafted stave-constructed snares are some of the fullest-sounding drums to come on the scene in recent years. While the company offers several exotic-shell drums, including a gorgeous 6 1/2 x 14 bubinga, for this month's review we decided to focus on their most unusual: a 6 1/2 x 14 Tasmanian blackwood with matching wood hoops. Stephan suggested that we try out the drum at a fairly high tuning (Drum Dial settings of 90 on top and 85 on bottom, to be exact). With the heads that tight, the drum had a powerful popping tone with warm, even, and controlled overtones. There was plenty of depth in the sound, too. The first thing I thought of when I heard the drum tuned this way was the lively snare tone of Japanese super drummer Akira Jimbo.

For a more classic fat, studio snare tone, I loosened the batter head a few turns. This brought out more of the overtones, but they remained even and controlled. So no muffling was necessary. The body of the stroke also became very punchy and wide—perfect for mid-tempo singer/songwriter-type tunes. Without any muffling, Lower tensions weren't quite as pleasing, but with such strong sounds at medium to high tunings, I don't think you'll find yourself wanting anything more.

Thick matching wood hoops sit low and extend the drum's diameter by 1", which can prevent it from fitting into some snare stands.

All Fidock snares come with quality Evans heads, Puresound snare wires, and a Trick GS007 throw-off.

#### WHAT'S IT COST? \$1,350

(Price Will Vary With Currency Exchange Fluctuations)

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

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



Alex Van Halen



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# M-Audio Pulsar II And Solaris Condenser Mics

## Affordable Mics With Professional Power

by Michael Dawson

**M**-Audio, one of the leading manufacturers of computer-based musical equipment, has released several affordable condenser microphones geared toward project studio owners. Two of those are the pencil-type Pulsar II and the large-diaphragm Solaris.

The spec sheets on both mics state that they feature evaporated gold diaphragms and have a frequency range of 20 Hz to 20 kHz with +/- 1 dB of tolerance across the entire range. Each mic also has a switchable 10-dB pad (which is necessary when recording loud instruments like drums) and an optional high-pass filter to prevent low-end build-up. The Pulsar's low-frequency roll-off begins at 80 Hz, while the Solaris's extends up to 125 Hz.

The Solaris, which comes in an aluminum case and includes a stand-mount shock absorber, is a great all-purpose mic that can be used in a variety of settings. It can be set to one of several polar patterns—cardioid, omni, figure-8—making it ideal for close miking (cardioid), overall room sounds (omni), or in situations where you want to record from the front and back of the mic (figure-8). We tested a pair of the Solarises in three ways: to close-mic toms, as general room mics during a band rehearsal, and as overheads.

On the toms, the mics captured a very natural sound. The tone was warm, round, and pure, without a lot of false coloring. The only tricky part of this application was getting the mics into position, since they are pretty large and weigh almost 1 1/2 pounds.

As room mics, the Solarises again performed very well. They captured a fairly true representation of how things sounded in the room (which can be good or bad depending on the room). All of my bandmates were impressed by how much detail the mic picked up when placed in the center of our practice space. We had the same results when using two Solarises as overheads in our office studio: a clean, dynamic, and true representation of what was going on. However, again the large size and considerable weight of these mics made positioning a little difficult, since they can cause tripod stands to tip over.

A better choice for overhead recording is the Pulsar II pencil-type condenser. This mic, which is also available as a matched pair, performed much like the Solaris, only in a much smaller

The large-diaphragm Solaris features multiple polar patterns (cardioid, omni, figure-8), making it a great all-around studio mic for drums, percussion, overheads, or room ambience.



The Pulsar II pencil condensers are available as a matched pair (with an included mounting bracket), making them ideal for stereo recordings.

package. To test them, we attached a pair of Pulsar IIs to the included mounting bracket, set them up in an X-Y configuration (with the capsules nearly touching and aimed at the ride cymbal and crash), and placed them about 6' high. The results were fairly clean. All of the frequencies were represented evenly, so when used in conjunction with a bass drum mic (to get more attack and low-end punch), the Pulsars captured a decent all-around drum sound. You can also turn on the high-pass filter if you want to focus them more on the high-end of your cymbals.

In my humble opinion, you can't go wrong by adding these microphones to your home-studio setup. Sure, there are other mics that might give you more detail and a warmer timbre. But you're not likely to find much that compares at such a reasonable price point.

### VITAL STATS

#### Solaris

Price: \$349.95 (MSRP)

Size/Weight: 8 1/4" x 3" x 2", 1.4 lbs.

Polarity: Cardioid/Omni/Figure-8

#### Pulsar II

Price: single—\$199.95, matched pair—\$399.95 (MSRP)

Polarity: Cardioid

[www.m-audio.com](http://www.m-audio.com)

# Zoom H2 Handy Recorder

## Portable Digital Recording And More

by Michael Dawson

**A**s a self-professed gadget freak, I've anxiously awaited for someone to come up with a digital recording device that was as portable and powerful as my beloved mini-disk recorder, but that would also allow me to transfer files directly to my laptop. Enter the Zoom H2 Handy Recorder.

The Zoom H2 is a simple, easy-to-use recorder that's ideal for drummers looking to document everything from live shows, to private lessons, to random everyday sounds. The unit comes with a 512 MB SD memory card, but it can handle cards of up to 4 GB in size. You also have several record modes to choose from, including multiple MP3 settings (for extended recording times) and high-fidelity WAV formats (for CD-quality tracks). There are also several compression, limiter, and mic gain options to help prevent loud bursts from causing distortion.

When it comes time to record, you can work in several different modes. The H2 has four internal mics, two in the front in a 90-degree X-Y pattern and two in the rear in a wider 120-degree X-Y pattern. For standard stereo recordings, you can choose to record with just the front or rear mics. You can also use all four mics for two-channel front/back recordings, or you can split the mics into four channels to record as surround-sound.

We tested the H2 in several settings, including a very loud club date with a rock band, a medium-volume jazz gig, and in our in-house recording studio. We also spoke with NYC engineer Butch Jones, who recently used the H2 to record various street noises for an upcoming BBC documentary. In each of these situations, the H2 excelled beyond any of our expectations.

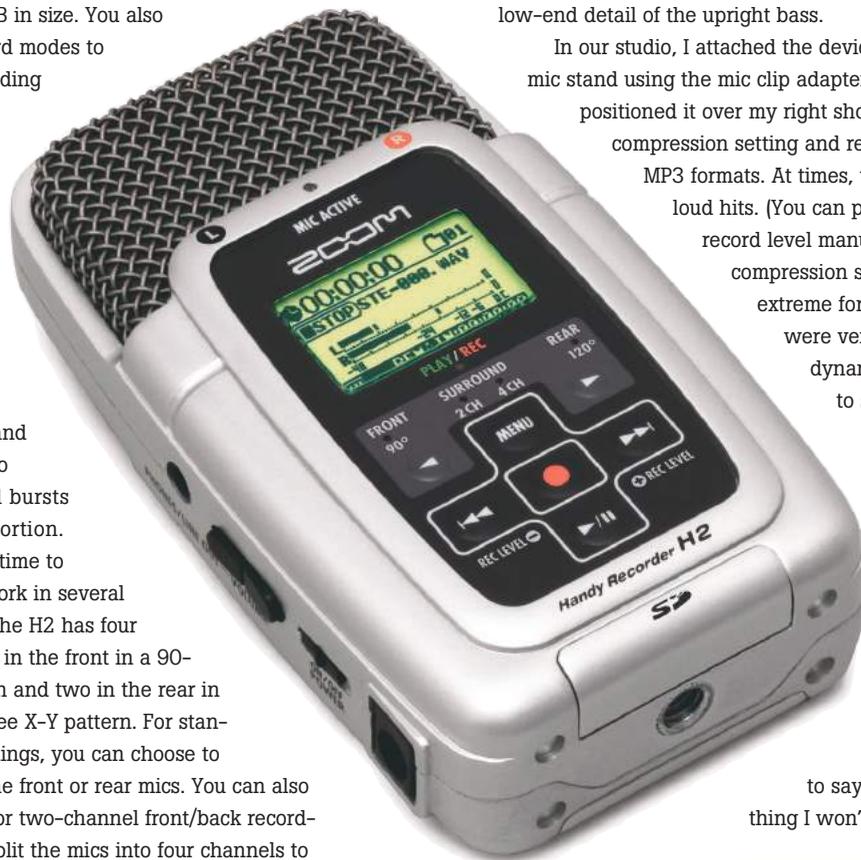
For the rock gig, I recorded in two-channel MP3 mode with the internal limiter set to "Concert." I had an audience member in the

back of the room hold the recorder in her shirt pocket. Surprisingly, the unit picked up the entire nuance of our set without distorting during loud sections.

At the jazz gig, the H2 was placed on a table in front of the stage using the included desktop stand. No compression was used. The WAV recordings that this test produced were very impressive. The entire frequency spectrum was clearly represented, including the extreme high-end of the cymbals and the low-end detail of the upright bass.

In our studio, I attached the device to a mic stand using the mic clip adapter, and

positioned it over my right shoulder. I chose the drum compression setting and recorded as both WAV and MP3 formats. At times, the unit peaked during very loud hits. (You can prevent this by adjusting the record level manually.) And this particular compression setting was a little too extreme for my tastes. But the tracks were very clean, realistic, and dynamic. In fact, when compared to some of the multi-track recordings we've made in our studio, the H2 sounded almost as good. And when you factor in that it took no more than two minutes to get the H2 set up and ready to record—as compared to the ten to fifteen minutes it takes to wire up our multi-track studio—it's safe to say that this little guy is something I won't be leaving home without.



### VITAL STATS

**List Price:** \$334.99

**Storage:** 512 MB SD card (included), accommodates up to 4 GB cards

**Accessories:** Desktop stand, mic clip adapter, windscreen, ear buds, USB cable, AC adapter, stereo Y cable

**Size/Weight:** 2 1/2" x 4 1/3" x 1 1/4", 1/4 lbs.

**Additional Features:** internal metronome and chromatic/guitar tuner settings.

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



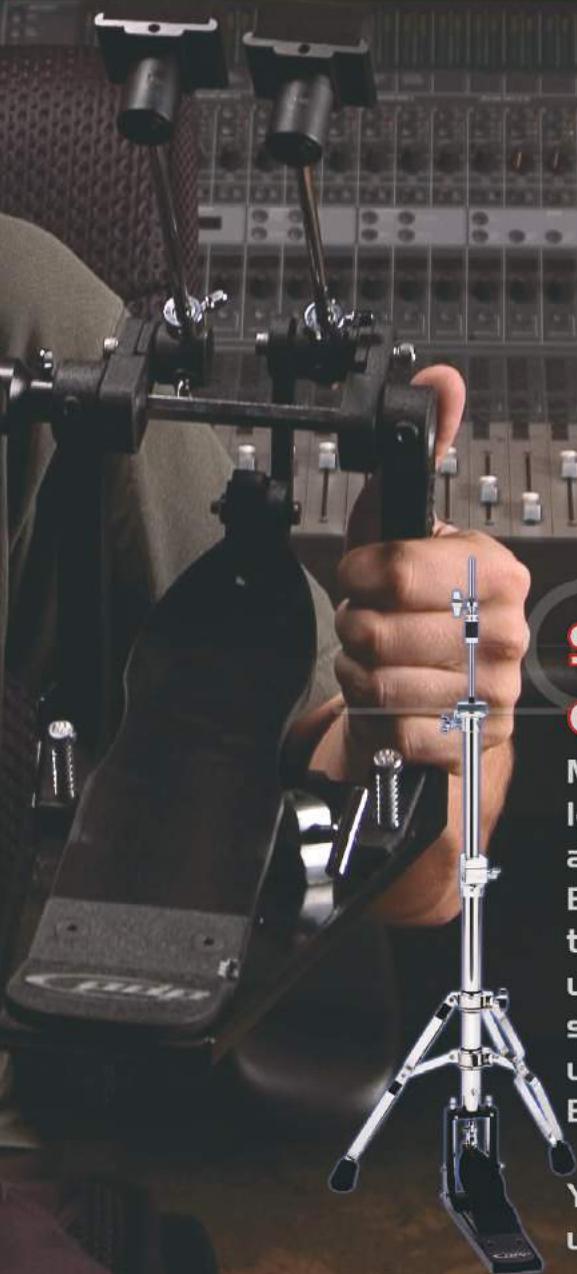


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MARCO MINNEMANN'S

# STUDIO SECRET WEAPON



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Marco Minnemann's playing technique is nothing less than a surgical strike—lightning fast, deliberate and dead-on. His weapon of choice, the direct-drive B.O.A. Pedal System with groundbreaking FlexTech™ technology. The double pedal tracks every stroke with precision accuracy, and the direct-pull hi-hat is smooth and efficient. Advanced professional features, unmatched innovation and killer feel. Shouldn't the B.O.A. Pedal System be your secret weapon too?

Your mission is to check it out online for yourself:  
[www.pacificdrums.com](http://www.pacificdrums.com)

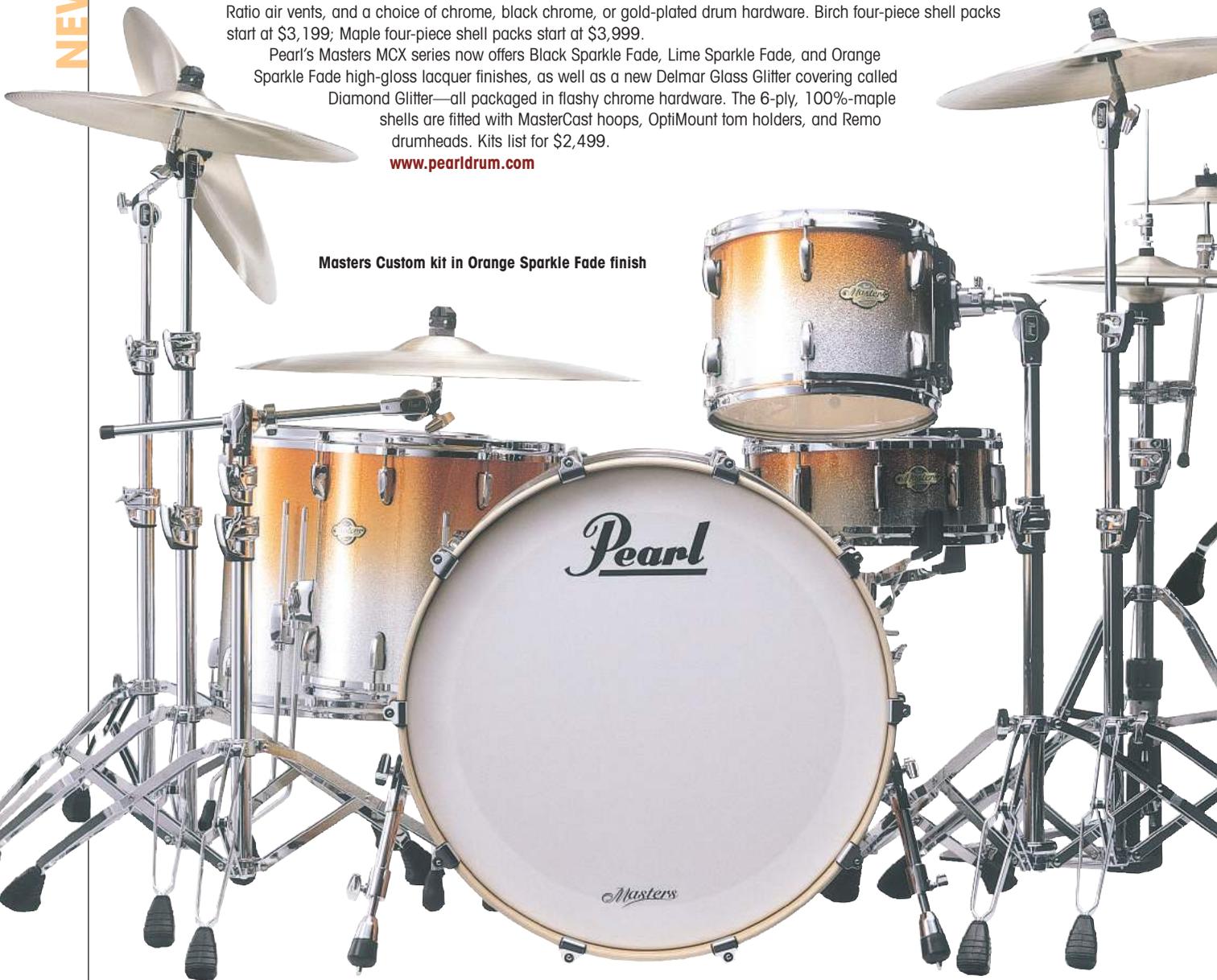
**>>NEW FEATURES FOR PEARL MASTERS SERIES**

New colors for Pearl 100% Maple and 100% Birch Masters Premium kits include Black Pearl, Red Pearl, and Purple Metallic. Masters Premium drums come in a choice of 6-ply or 4-ply shells with reinforcement rings. Additional features include MasterCast die-cast hoops, stainless-steel tension rods, Remo clear Ambassador tom bafflers, Golden Ratio air vents, and a choice of chrome, black chrome, or gold-plated drum hardware. Birch four-piece shell packs start at \$3,199; Maple four-piece shell packs start at \$3,999.

Pearl's Masters MCX series now offers Black Sparkle Fade, Lime Sparkle Fade, and Orange Sparkle Fade high-gloss lacquer finishes, as well as a new Delmar Glass Glitter covering called Diamond Glitter—all packaged in flashy chrome hardware. The 6-ply, 100%-maple shells are fitted with MasterCast hoops, OptiMount tom holders, and Remo drumheads. Kits list for \$2,499.

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

Masters Custom kit in Orange Sparkle Fade finish

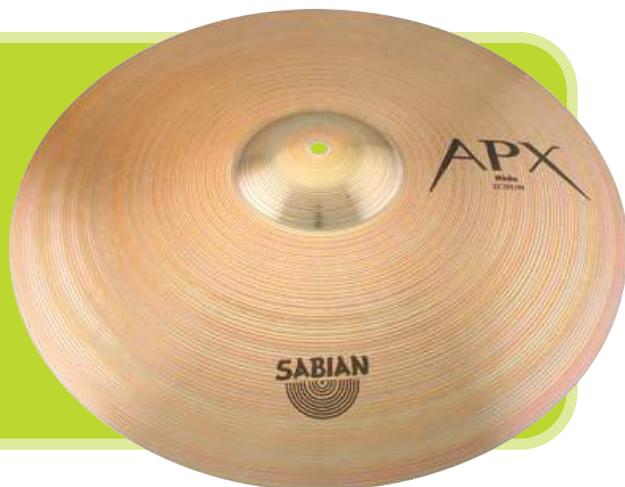


**>>SABIAN APX CYMBALS**

Sabian's new APX series features a "high-decibel design" that delivers a super-bright, intensely loud, robust, and focused response with extreme cutting power." The cymbals are said to be ideal for cutting through the high-powered output of hard rock and heavy metal bands, without having to be hit hard themselves. This intensity is created using new production processes that also result in a unique appearance for APX cymbals.

The line includes ride, splash, crash, hat, and Chinese models, as well as O-Zone crashes, rock-heavy Solid models for the most intense responses, and "Sonically Matched" pre-packs.

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



Masters Premium kit in Black Pearl finish

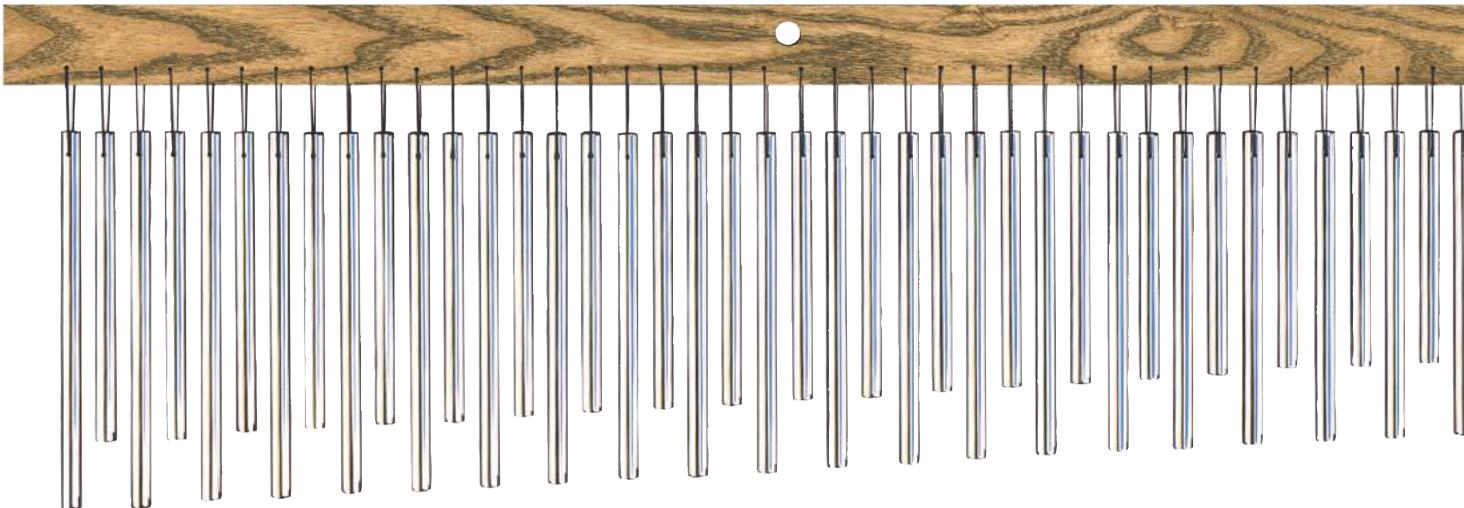


## >> TREWORKS CHORUS EFFECT CHIME

With a unique tuning and extended range (over 29" long), the Chorus Effect chime from TreeWorks creates extra-long sweeps said to be unusually full-sounding due to the chorus-effect tuning. The  $\frac{3}{8}$ "-thick aluminum/

titanium bars are hand-tied with 50 lb. braided cord for durability. The mantle is solid Tennessee hardwood with a hand-rubbed finish. List price is \$250.

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





## >>NEW PAISTE TWENTY SERIES MODELS

Paiste's Twenty series utilizes blanks of traditionally cast B20 bronze obtained from its Turkish partner Murat Diril, which they then treat and refine in their Swiss factory using time-honored hammering and lathing techniques. New models in the series include a 21" ride, 17", 19", and 20" crashes, 12" and 15" hi-hats, 8" and 12" splashes, and a 20" China.

Lighter models include 20" and 22" Light rides, 16", 17", and 18" thin crashes, 14" Light hats, 8", 10", and 12" Mini Chinas, and 14", 16", and 18" thin Chinas.

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

## >>SONOR EXTREME FORCE KIT

Sonor's new affordable eXtreme Force kit is offered in two configurations. The eXtreme Force 20 six-piece kit features a 20" bass drum and includes a free 8" rack tom. The eXtreme Force 22 six-piece kit features a 22" bass drum and includes a free 14" floor tom. Two free cymbal boom stands are available via Sonor's "Sonic Boom" redemption program, with downloadable coupons at [www.hohnerusa.com](http://www.hohnerusa.com).

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

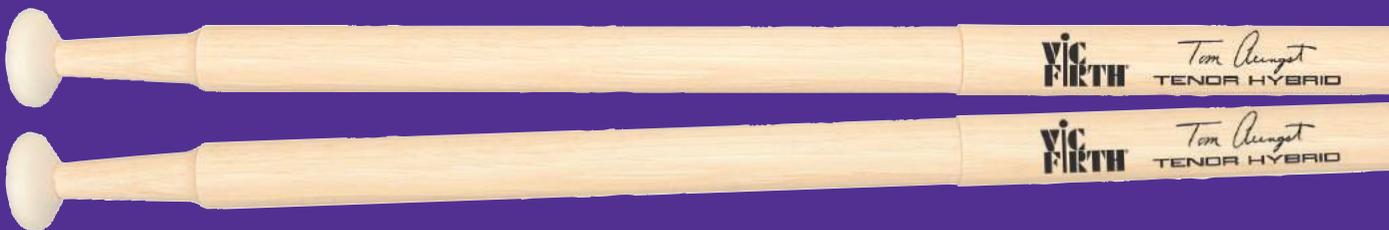


## >>NEW COLOR AND CONFIGURATION FOR MAPEX M BIRCH KITS

A new Hermosa Fade transparent lacquer finish has been added to Mapex's M Birch series. Drums feature 6-ply, 7.2-mm shells with an exterior maple veneer to accent their high-gloss transparent lacquer finishes. The drums are also equipped with I.T.S. Isolated Tom Mount Systems, designed to extend the shell's resonance.

The M Birch line is now offered in the Studioease configuration, which includes an 18x22 bass drum, 8x10 and 9x12 rack toms, 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms, a 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 snare drum, and a 550 series hardware pack, at \$1,869.99 for burst finishes and \$1,689.99 for non-burst finishes. Any M Birch drumset purchased in 2008 will also include a free 8" or 10" tom, plus mounting hardware.

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



## >>VIC FIRTH TOM AUNGST HYBRID MARCHING Mallet/STICK

Designed for marching drummers, the Tom Aungst Hybrid blends the feel of a traditional tenor mallet with the sound of a snare stick. The handle features a "step-down" design for grip comfort and ideal stick weight. The "rimshot zone" is placed just before the pronounced taper, for excellent rebound. The Hybrid is 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ " long, .700" in diameter at the butt, and .650" in diameter at the shaft. List price is \$27.

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

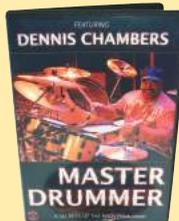
## >>GRETSCH CATALINA CLUB BLACK WIDOW MINI MOD GROOVE KIT

Gretsch's Catalina Club Mini Mod kit is a petite powerhouse that includes a 20x20 bass drum, an 8x12 rack tom, a 12x14 floor tom, and a 6x13 snare. It's finished in Satin Midnight Black lacquer embellished by a blood-red stripe overlay—the same color combination found on the back of a black widow spider. Other features include mahogany shells with 30° bearing edges and natural interior finish, black hardware with offset lugs, a mini GTS tom suspension system, and Evans G1 batter heads. List price is \$999.

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



## THE REFERENCE SHELF



### Master Drummer: Featuring Dennis Chambers

(Secrets Of The Pros)

This DVD presents an insider's look at the life of the man Carlos Santana called "a master drummer." It offers forty-five minutes of amazing drumming and great stories from Dennis Chambers, along with fantastic drum and bass jams with guest bass player Benny Rietveld (Santana, Miles Davis, Sheila E). Special features include almost two extra hours of incredible drum performances, behind-the-scenes clips,

additional drum and bass jams, and tips from Dennis. List price is \$24.95.

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



### Afro-Caribbean Grooves For Drumset

by Jean-Philippe Fanfant (Sher Music)

This book offers instruction on how to play over 100 grooves from a dozen Caribbean nations, arranged for drumset. Author Jean-Philippe Fanfant is the featured drummer on over 300 CDs, including recordings by the great Latin jazz band Sakesho. The book also

includes an enhanced CD that has audio and visual examples of Fanfant demonstrating how to play various Caribbean rhythms. List price is \$25.

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

## AND WHAT'S MORE

The KikBrik KB20 is new from **GENERATOR LLC**. Like its 14", 16", and 18" siblings, it's designed to enhance the sound of a kick drum—in this case the 20"-deep drums that have become an industry trend. The KikBrik is the first acoustically designed kick drum damper, and the new size expands its sonic advantages to nearly every drummer and recording studio. List price is \$59.

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



The Foottime laptop stand from **BILI, Inc.** is lightweight (3½ lbs.), foldable, portable, and height-adjustable (22" to 46½"), making it ideal for use on or around a drumkit. When opened, the two-piece supporting board will accommodate most laptop computers. Two adjustable elastic straps can securely hold the laptop without blocking its keyboard. An angled back support board prevents the laptop screen from flipping over. List price is \$49.

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



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To enter, visit [www.modrnmrdr.com](http://www.modrnmrdr.com) between the dates below and look for the Steve Smith Drum Legacy Contest button (one entry per email address). 2. ODDS OF WINNING DEPEND ON THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE ENTRIES RECEIVED. 3. CONTEST BEGINS April 1, 2008 AND ENDS May 31, 2008. POSTCARD ENTRIES MUST BE POSTMARKED BY May 31, 2008 AND RECEIVED BY June 5, 2008. 4. Grand Prize Drawing: Winner will be selected by random drawing on June 17, 2008. Winner will be notified by phone or email on or about June 18, 2008. 5. Employees, and their immediate families of Modern Drummer, Sonor, Zildjian, Drum Workshop, Remo, Vic Firth, Puresound, Hudson, and their affiliates are ineligible. 6. Sponsor is not responsible for lost, misdirected, and/or delayed entries. 7. Open to residents of the US and Canada, 18 years of age or older. Void in Quebec, Canada, Florida, and where prohibited by law. 8. One prize awarded per household per contest. 9. Sponsored by Modern Drummer Publications, Inc., 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009, (973) 239-4140. 10. This game subject to the complete Official Rules. For a copy of the complete Official Rules or the winner's name, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Modern Drummer Publications/Steve Smith Drum Legacy/Official Rules/Winner's List, 12 Old Bridge Rd., Cedar Grove, NJ 07009.

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Steve Smith's Drum Legacy  
new from Hudson Music



photos by: Andrew lepley



# EXTERNAL COMBUSTION

## MESHUGGAH'S

# TOMAS = HAAKE

**MESHUGGAH'S TOMAS HAAKE TALKS ABOUT THE BLISSFULLY BRUTAL *OBZEN* ALBUM AND WEIGHS IN ON DOUBLE BASS CHALLENGES, THE IMPORTANCE OF ERGONOMICS, AND MORE.**

**M**etal, and its evolution, is all about the concept of *more*. More power. More darkness. More speed. More precision. More complexity. More, more, more.

And this expansive genre, among the feistiest of musical beasts, doesn't like to sit still; it needs to push ever onward. Let's just say that if Metallica released its 1986 thrash masterpiece, *Master Of Puppets*, today—an album that was truly groundbreaking in its time—it would be greeted with reactions like, "Aw, how cute. They're trying to play fast."

Metal isn't shy about its demands on musicians. It's almost like mixing athletics, which can be quantified and ranked using scores and stats, with art, which can't; those who turn to the dark side of rock take measurable things like speed and rhythmic density and filter them through a subjective aesthetic sensibility. And in the best cases—with bands that don't skimp on the creative part—out pops something that will have you alternately banging and scratching your head, as first you let the distortion rain over you and then you try to make sense of what the devil you've just heard.

In terms of both finding more of everything that counts and supplying a feast for the ears and the mind, it's tough to top Meshuggah. The Swedish quintet's new album, *ObZen*, not only includes its most visceral music but is arguably one of the most brutally engrossing and sadistically satisfying metal LPs ever made. It's absolutely jam packed with stunning writing and superhuman execution. The riffs played by guitarists Fredrik Thordendal and Mårten Hagström and bassist Dick Lövgren are so complex and meticulous they'd make Frank Zappa blush; the words, written by drummer Tomas Haake, sound like they're ripping singer Jens Kidman's throat out as they exit his mouth; and the drums...well, the song "Bleed" calls for such punishing 32nd-note blasts of double

bass that Haake—no slouch on the kicks—spent six months preparing to record it.

That's the "more" we're talking about. Meshuggah is standing on the shoulders of past metal and prog giants and then taking a big imaginative stomp into the future of extreme music. It's conceivable that *ObZen* could have been sent back to us as a gift from the year 2018, but given its cutting-edge qualities, there's no way it could have been created much earlier than *right now*.

As for the thirty-six-year-old Haake, he surely didn't mind shedding those "Bleed" parts so extensively, since Meshuggah's previous album, 2005's *Catch Thirty-Three*, was a single-track metal epic that contained not one bar of live drumming. All percussion was programmed, using state-of-the-art samples of Haake's own Sonor kit. (The drummer initially helped prepare the samples for Toontrack's Drumkit From Hell software.) It's a remarkable achievement that fits in neatly with Meshuggah's fondness for tossing curveballs at its audience—plus Haake contributed lyrics and artwork as usual—but now it was time to start whipping the sticks around again.

Indeed, a sense of urgency is palpable on *ObZen*, Meshuggah's sixth studio LP. Haake and company warm up with a few muted jabs of a spy-type theme for all of nine seconds before they reach back and punch you in the jaw over and over for the next fifty-three minutes. It'll take a while before you know what hit you. The parts fly by fast and furious, clanging and kicking and mutating into ever more complicated versions of their original forms. Counting along becomes damn near impossible—yet Haake insists the entire album is in 4/4. Remember, the band's name is the Yiddish word for *crazy*. And the shoe fits.



**MD:** How did you get hooked on extreme and progressive music?

**Tomas:** I really didn't have a huge interest in finding new music until I was like ten years old. And then I started listening to bands like Rainbow, Black Sabbath, and Iron Maiden, which were pretty extreme back then. Looking back now, it's not extreme in any way. But especially Black Sabbath had a huge impact on me as far as a darker vibe. They definitely took it sideways from the hard rock of that day.

When I was eleven, I heard Rush and Marillion and I got hooked on those types of prog bands. Mårten [Hagström] and I grew up together from when we were like six years old, and he also got hooked on those two bands. At the time I wasn't listening to King Crimson or Yes or any of that. Where I grew up, the kind of music my buddies would listen to was more straightforward stuff like AC/DC.

**MD:** How old were you when you started to play?

**Tomas:** I got my first drumkit pretty early. When I was a kid my parents would go nuts because I would just hammer on everything all the time. For a while I would play on pillows on chairs in front of me, like a big drumset. I hammered all the dust out, and my mom would have to clean up after me all the time. So they finally bought me a silver sparkle '60s Premier kit when I was seven or eight. I didn't play much during the first few years. It wasn't until I was like twelve or thirteen that I started trying to play with other people. Mårten was actually the first guy I tried playing with, and we've been together all the way since then.

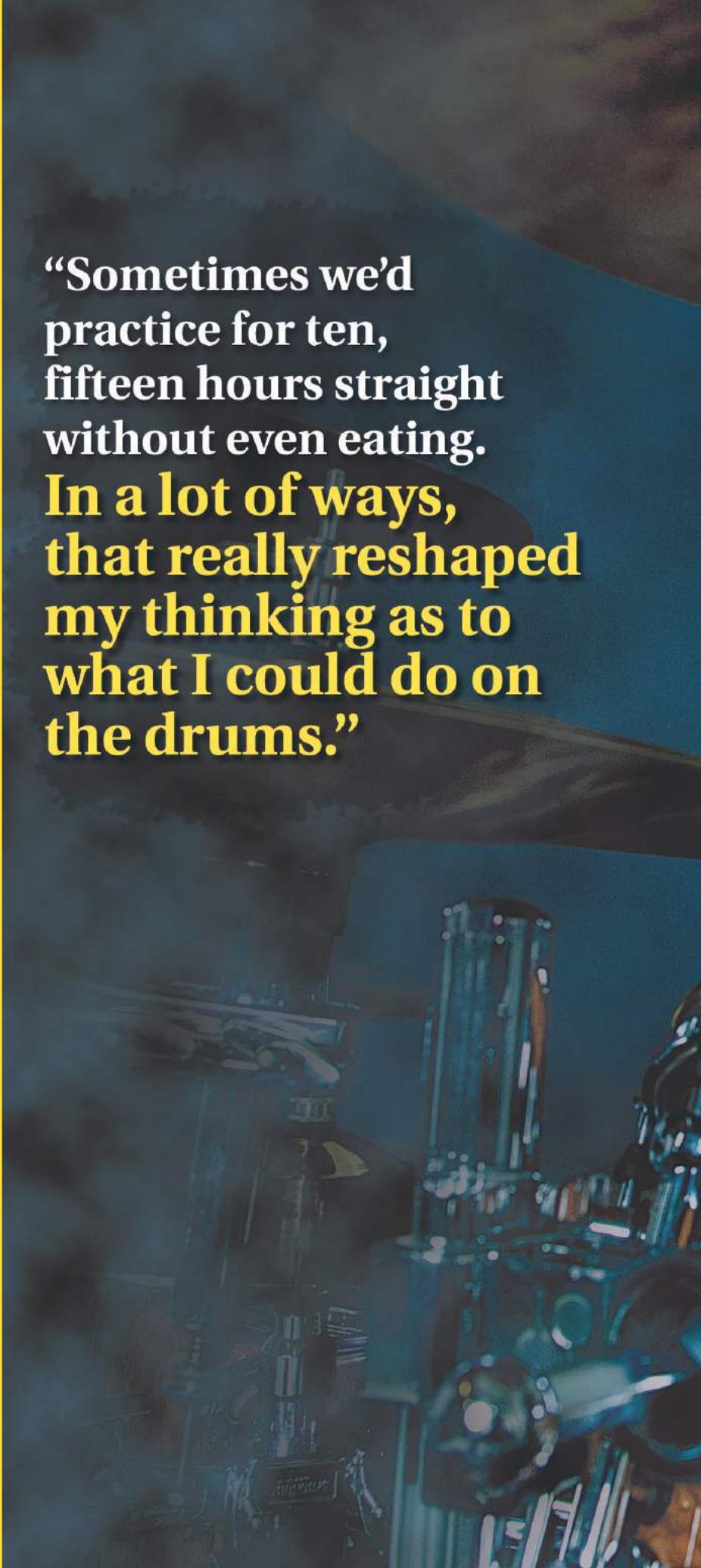
**MD:** Did you study at all?

**Tomas:** I never studied much. I think I had three runs with three different teachers. The first one was an older guy. I remember him hanging over my shoulder: "No..no..no." My first lesson was just an hour of no's. I wanted to bash the hell out of the drums. I didn't want to learn the rudiments. Today, I can read drum notes, but I never did it for any real purpose in my own playing. I'd have to sit down and really figure it out before even attempting to play it, because I couldn't read at a fast enough pace.

**MD:** Do you ever write things out now?

**Tomas:** It's all by ear. I never really write anything out.

**MD:** Did you eventually discover that you had an ability to memorize complicated



**“Sometimes we’d practice for ten, fifteen hours straight without even eating. In a lot of ways, that really reshaped my thinking as to what I could do on the drums.”**





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**Heads:** Evans MX Gold snare batter with Hazy 300 snare-side (tight tension both sides, no muffling), clear G2s on tops of toms with clear G1s underneath (medium tension, bottom head higher than top), clear EMAD 2 on bass drum batters with black EMAD Resonants on front (batter tuned low, front medium, pillows for muffling)

**Cases:** XL Speciality Protecitor

**Sticks:** Vic Firth Tomas Haake signature model (hickory with wood tip)

things and to play odd times?

**Tomas:** Yeah, absolutely. Since Må rten and I both listened to the same styles of music, the stuff we tried to write in our adolescent years was like a mishmash of those bands. We played a lot of odd time signatures, heavily inspired by Rush.

I was the first of us two guys to move about an hour's drive up north and join Meshuggah, which had already started. That was more about playing around a 4/4 beat, which was a totally new way of approaching music for me. It wasn't odd time signatures anymore but more odd groupings and permutations, which over the years have gotten a lot more advanced.

I had a hard time early on. The first year with Meshuggah, when I was eighteen to nineteen, was a really inspiring and a really difficult year. If I was to stay in the band, I really had to catch up with those guys and try my best to grasp what they were doing and play it in a proper way. So it was both a great learning experience and also a year filled with a lot of anxiety and a lot of rehearsing. Sometimes we'd practice for ten, fifteen hours straight without even

eating. In a lot of ways, that first year or two really reshaped my thinking as to what I could do on the drums.

**MD:** Do you have practice techniques, like slowing things down, to help you learn such complex material?

**Tomas:** It depends whether it's stuff that I've written myself. With a lot of our music, whoever writes the song writes the drum parts as well. So I write maybe ten percent of the drum parts on a given album. On ObZen maybe I've written fifteen, twenty percent at the most. If one of the guitarists wrote the song and the drum parts, I usually do slow them down.

Over the last bunch of years, we always write on the computer using Cubase. So if there's a big movement over thirty-two bars, I can take two or four bars and cycle them, at whatever tempo I want. I have to do that for some stuff just to figure out what's going on. But most of the time I can hear it by ear and I don't have to slow it down. But especially with the ObZen album, I have to practice a lot to nail those parts, no doubt about it. By far this was the toughest album to learn and to practice.

## TOMAS ON WARMING UP

Over the last few years I've started warming up, in the sense that I do whatever it takes to actually feel *warm* when I go up on stage. It's not so much about playing on a practice kit or something like that. I don't need to do a lot when it's a very hot place, but it can be a problem when you play outdoor festivals in late summer and even your dressing room is outdoors. Then you do whatever you have to do, even if it's jumping where you stand or some kind of workout to get your blood flowing. It really hurts when you go up and your hands are cold. Every snare hit for the first couple tracks just transfers from your fingers up into your spine. That's not a healthy way to do it.

**MD:** The music sounds like Meshuggah collectively decided to raise the stakes.

**Tomas:** That's our goal with each album. Catch Thirty-Three was a completely different project for us for the very reasons that we decided pretty early on to use programmed drums and also because we wrote it together with all of us sitting around one computer.

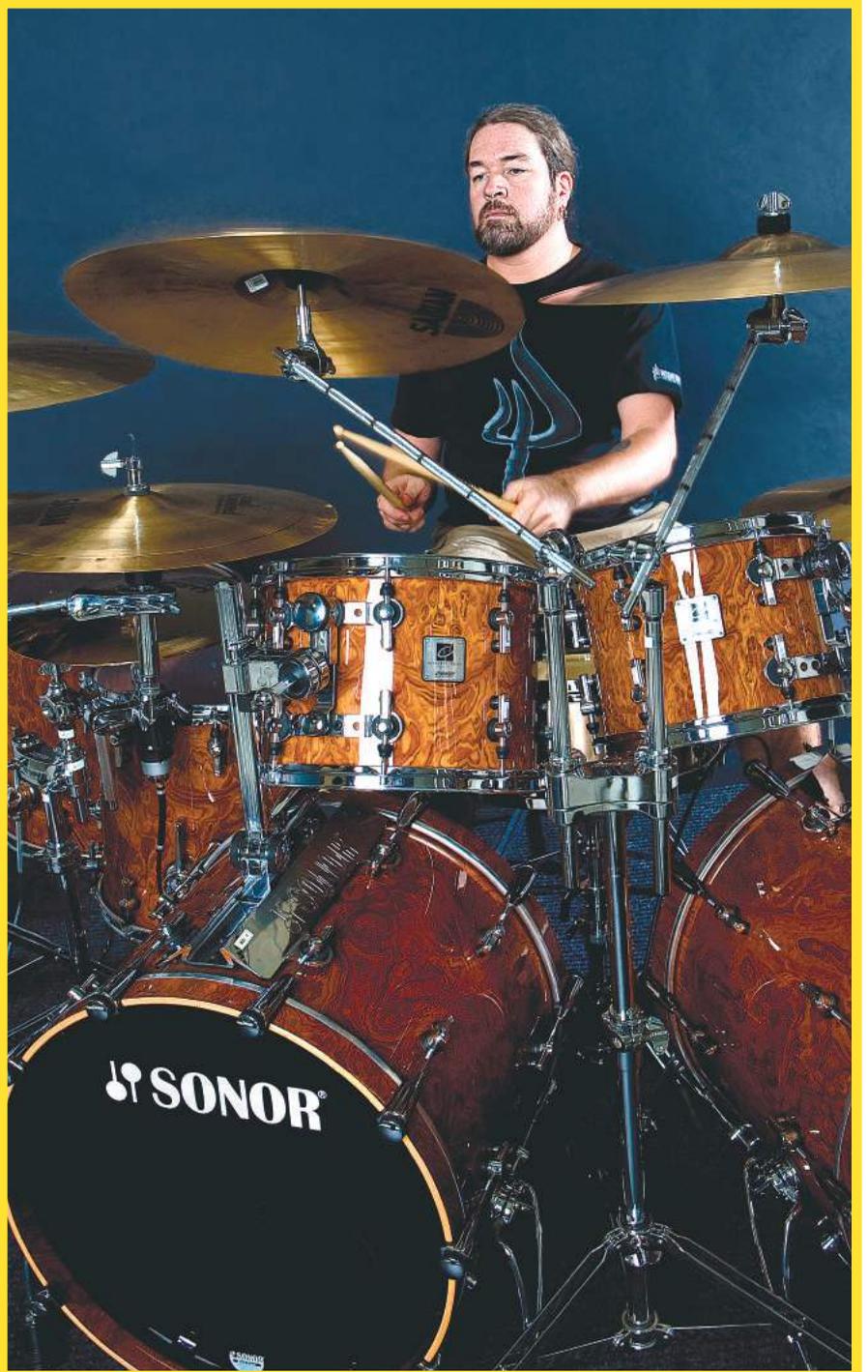
With each album we try to challenge ourselves. We usually don't put up too many guidelines overall. The only thing we discussed with this album was that we were not going to do another Catch Thirty-Three—another forty-seven-minute, one-track piece—and we wanted to get back to writing more live-type material. We definitely wanted to be more direct and not as introverted, if you will.

**MD:** When others write your parts, do you often find yourself changing them?

**Tomas:** What I do is add fills, and the tiny hits here and there, because they don't usually program a lot of fills. I also have a tendency to play the accents even more than how it's written—I play a lot more with my left arm as far as syncopation and accents. And I play more cymbals with my left than they program. But apart from that I don't really change the patterns unless one of the guys doesn't know how to do the drums for a certain part. Then I'll come in and help him write that one part of one track. There are seven or eight parts over the whole latest album where I did that.

**MD:** How long did you spend in the studio making ObZen?

**Tomas:** It took more or less six months for us



to record the album. We changed a few riffs and a couple drum parts, but all in all the music was written beforehand. So it took us quite a long time to complete this album.

**MD:** Did you rehearse the songs as a band and then go in and play them?

**Tomas:** No, actually not. That's one of those things that we want to change. Over the last few albums, we haven't really been prepared to go into the studio, which means for this album I sat and rehearsed all the stuff listening to prerecorded guitars. Using Cubase I can play along with the drums, and once I know the stuff well enough I can turn off the

drums and just play with the click track. And of course I can mute or un-mute the guitars and all the stuff as I go.

I've just gotten used to playing by myself once I start recording. I actually don't have anything except the click track when we start tracking the drums. I only hear me. [laughs] I could have guitars on, but they would be so low in comparison to the drums and the click that it doesn't really make any sense. It's kind of boring, as you can probably understand, but at the same time it allows me to really hear what I do. Of course, it does mean that I have to be prepared enough so I can

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## TOMAS HAAKE

actually hear or feel all of the other parts when I play.

**MD:** You're using scratch guitar tracks at that point, right?

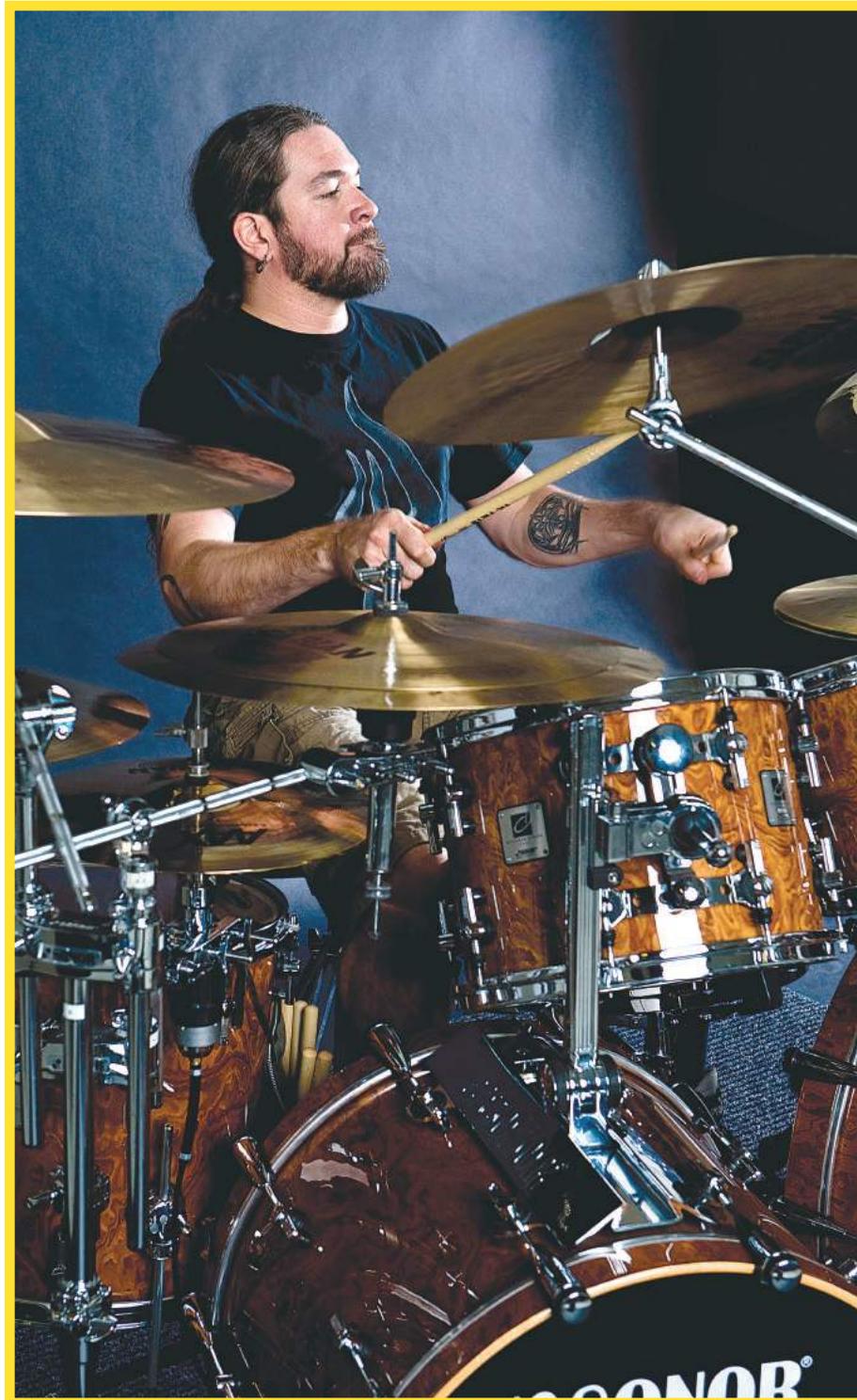
**Tomas:** Oh, yeah, absolutely.

**MD:** What sounds do you like to use as a click?

**Tomas:** Over the years I've had horrendous click tracks—the typical really strong, knock-your-head-out click. But for this one we programmed the clicks with percussive stuff, so

every 1 and 3 would be a stronger note, maybe on a cowbell, and 16th notes would play along in the background. It would be more of a swinging percussion beat instead of just a TAK, duk, duk, duk. That would just drive me nuts. To have more of a beat to play along to is really helpful.

We don't write albums every year and I don't have any side projects, so with Catch Thirty-Three as the previous album it's been





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### ARTIST

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Meshuggah

### ALBUM

ObZen  
I [EP]  
Chaosphere  
Nothing  
Destroy Erase Improve  
Contradictions Collapse  
None



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Queens Of The Stone Age  
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Mats/Morgan  
Mastodon  
Tomahawk  
Rush  
Scarve  
King Crimson  
Don Caballero  
The Mars Volta  
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Chick Corea Electric Band  
Dillinger Escape Plan  
Metallica  
Metal Church  
John Scofield Trio  
Queensrÿche  
Marillion  
Rainbow

### ALBUM

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The New Black  
Songs For The Deaf  
Organic Hallucinosi  
Trends And Other Diseases  
Leviathan  
Mit Gas  
Moving Pictures  
Irradiant  
Discipline  
What Burns Never Returns  
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Morgan Ågren  
Brann Dailor  
John Stanier  
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Damon Che  
Jon Theodore  
Nick Mason  
Dave Weckl  
Chris Pennie  
Lars Ulrich  
Kirk Arrington  
Bill Stewart  
Scott Rockenfield  
Ian Mosley  
Cozy Powell

## TOMAS HAAKE

like three years since I last recorded anything on drums. Apart from when I practice for an album, I never rehearse with a click track. So I'm still not a drummer who's really used to playing with a click. But I feel we do need a click—it's a good pace keeper. A lot of the stuff is really hard to play on guitar, which means that if I strayed over the course of a song and by the end I played 10 bpm more than at the beginning, it would be impossible to play on guitar. So I have to use a click track to maintain a steady pace, but at the same time it's years between each time I use it.

**MD:** The drums on ObZen are so clear and great sounding. Did you spend more time getting sounds or learning new studio techniques?

**Tomas:** Overall, in every aspect, we did spend a lot more time on this album than we have in the past. The drums themselves—oh, man, it's a bit of a cluster as far as how we got the sound to where it is. We did record the drums with microphones, but we also used trigger mics on the snare and all the toms. We put those on separate tracks, and later we exchanged them with stuff we had sampled earlier, which is basically the same kit—in this case the Sonor Designer kit I've had for a few years.

There's a bunch of reasons for that. First of all, where we recorded this album, the room didn't sound that good as far as bringing out

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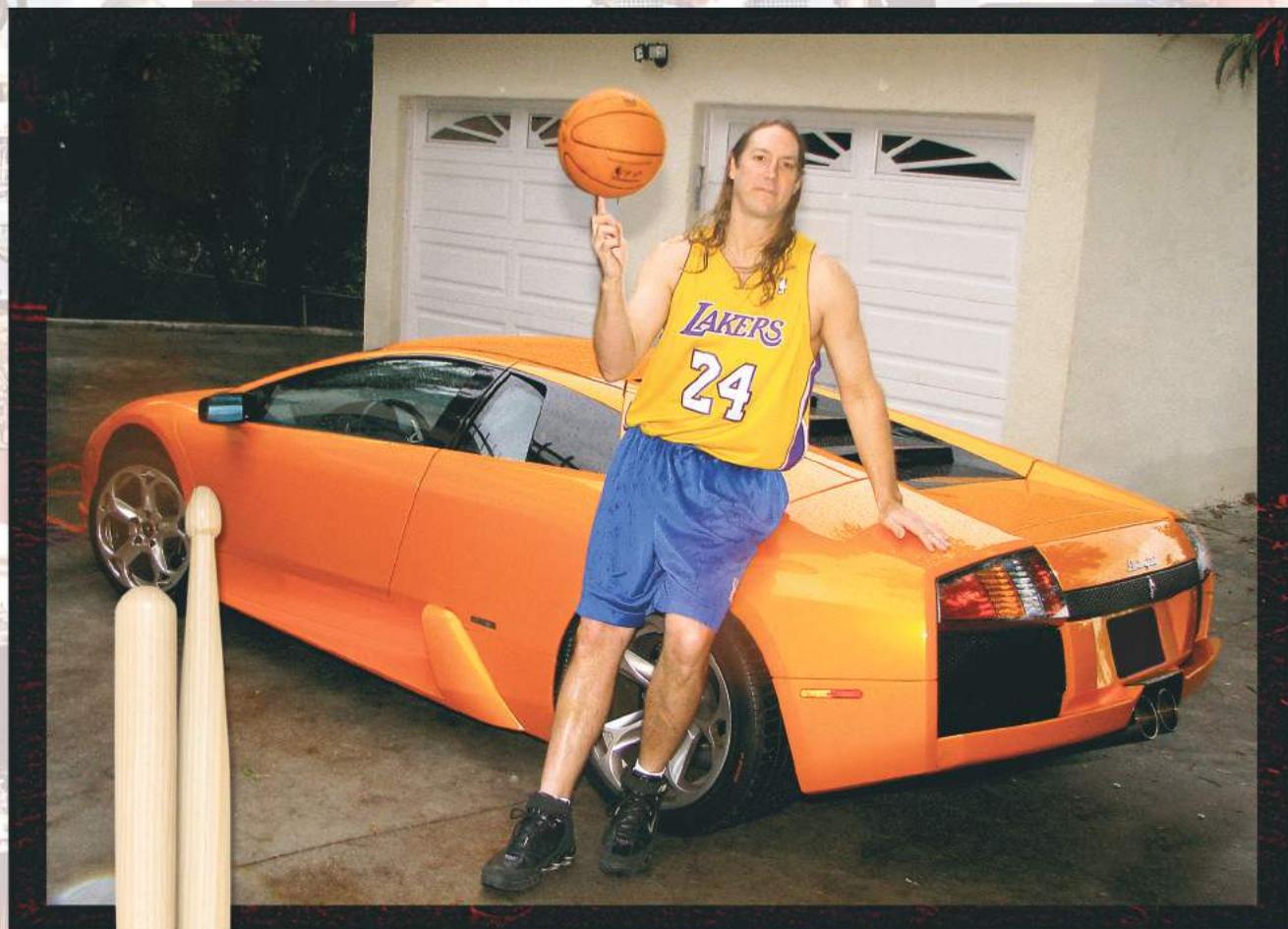
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## TOMAS HAAKE

the natural sound of the drums. So using pre-sampled drums helped in getting more alive-sounding drums. Also, if you want to go with just microphones, as a lot of bands do, you have the tweaking issue: When you try to increase the treble for the snare, for example, all of a sudden the hi-hat creeps in there like crazy. All those issues are gone when you use samples, and you have a lot more control with each and every drum.

So you don't actually hear a lot of the original drum sound on the album. It's still there, but basically in the overhead mics and in the ambient or the distant mics. And the distant mics are also blended with sampled sounds. We've done a lot of tweaking to get it to sound the way it does.

**MD:** When you're learning a part, do you analyze it, or does that come later?

**Tomas:** To some extent I do analyze it. Most of our stuff, and everything on this album, is in 4/4. Of course, we play around 4/4 with permutations that go on for like sixteen or thirty-two bars or longer. It's odd groupings over a 4/4 beat. To be able to play it with a certain amount of flow, I really need to feel the 1, 2, 3, 4 throughout, no matter what I'm doing.

So in that sense I do sometimes have to analyze stuff but not listen too much to the actual riff and all the accents—at least not initially, when I'm learning something. It's about feeling

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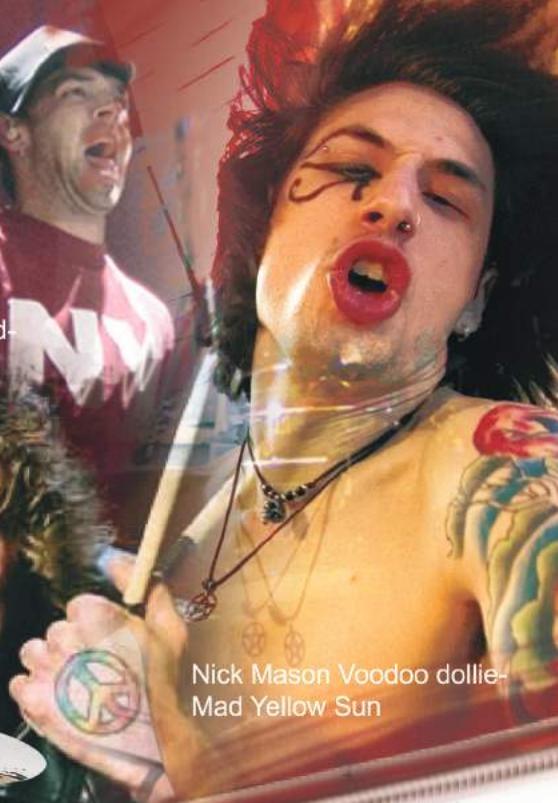
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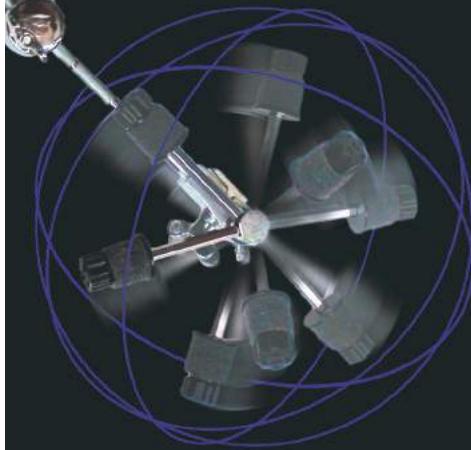
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## TOMAS HAAKE

the very 4/4 beat. For a lot of the tracks, whether I play a hi-hat or a ride—actually, I scrapped the ride altogether, so that's a lie—but if I play a hi-hat or crash or China, my right hand usually plays the straight quarter note regardless of what my feet and snare hand are doing.

And if I'm not pummeling away on the double kick, I immediately go over to the hi-

would have occurred to me that every part of every tune on *ObZen* is in 4/4.

**Tomas:** That's not too weird. For us, of course, it's obvious. We're in the process all along, but for people listening to it, it's not always easy to hear. I mean, you could make it into something else if you wanted to. You could say, Yeah, but this is a cycle of thirteen over sixteen, and then it repeats. But usually

## HEAVY METAL WORDSMITH

**Tomas Haake** is Meshuggah's primary lyricist, and he penned all the words on the band's latest release, *ObZen*. "I know where I got that," the drummer says. "It was of course from Neil Peart of Rush that I recognized, Wow, this is a drummer writing the lyrics for the band. That got me started, even though I didn't use it until years later. But I had an open mind—it doesn't necessarily have to be the vocalist writing the lyrics." Let's read more of Haake's words on words.

**MD:** Have you been bilingual for most of your life?

**Tomas:** The English language kind of came easy to me for some reason. But if I look back to the lyrics I wrote in the mid-'90s, I've gone through significant change and bettered myself in a lot of ways, I think, as far as the language and even grammar issues go. If you read lyrics from back then, there are quite a few places where the actual grammar is wrong. So I've been working on it, and I get better the more time I spend with it.

**MD:** Does "ObZen" mean anything specific?

**Tomas:** Not really. It's just a play on words of "obscene." The cover has a person sitting in the typical lotus position from the Buddhist religion, but he's covered in blood. It's kind of gruesome. [laughs] There's nothing religious about it—Zen is used only to make a strong metaphor out of the play on words, and the lyrics kind of tie into that.

**MD:** You seem to favor using suggestive imagery over making overt statements or creating narratives.

**Tomas:** Absolutely. I've always been a lot more intrigued by lyrics when I don't understand immediately what they mean and they're more written in metaphors, so I prefer not to be too direct.

**MD:** Do you usually write the words soon after the music is composed?

**Tomas:** No, that only happens once in a while. I get these bursts where I can sit for like a week straight and write a bunch of lyrics. But we don't usually even figure out how the lyrics should go with a certain track until after the drums and guitars are recorded. That's kind of a shame—I'd prefer to do it earlier because that would give Jens a lot more time to learn the stuff before he's supposed to record it.

Figuring out how the lyrics should go with any given track is another interesting aspect of rhythm. It's not just going on a whim—"Go in there and sing 'em!"—because there are so many accents in the music that we really have to figure out where the accents come in the words, how many syllables we need for a part, and what words to use. So a lot of the lyrics are rewritten to a certain extent when we come to that point. You try your best to keep the flow and the intention of the lyrics, and that's usually not a problem. But with each album we spend about twice as much time on figuring out and recording the vocals as we do on anything else. It's a painstaking task, but we feel it's very important.

hat with my left foot, and I usually play 8th notes throughout. Sometimes I play that all through the track because there's no double bass. It also helps me maintain a certain flow and a steadier beat. A lot of times you don't even hear it, because the little chick sound doesn't really reach through. But the 8th-note hi-hat playing is a very important aspect for me, and it intimately goes together with the 4/4 drumbeat.

**MD:** This may sound ignorant, but it never

the right hand is still playing in 4/4. So actually I have to learn it bar by bar in a sense.

**MD:** When and why did you get rid of your ride cymbal?

**Tomas:** I scrapped it before I started practicing for this album, but I brought it back when we did some shows last summer. It's basically a matter of: How much do I actually use it, and do I have to use it? Even when we play stuff from older albums, it's only three or four parts in our whole set that were written for a

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# TOMAS HAAKE

ride, and I could just as easily play those parts on any other cymbal.

So it's a matter of convenience—and ergonomics, actually. A 21" or a 22" ride really does take up a lot of space, and scrapping it meant I could take a couple of the big crashes that I ride on and move 'em in more. Over the last few years, my right shoulder has been giving me a bit of grief, and I came to the conclusion that I'd been playing too much straight out to the side. For years I played even beyond that point, more behind me. And that's not a very healthy position to have your arm in, especially if you're riding a crash for minutes at a time. So now I don't have to reach back that far.

Another change I made recently for that very reason is I scrapped the 10" tom, which I've used just occasionally in a fill, so I could move the 12" and the 14". As opposed to having both of them sitting on my right kick, I put the 12" on the left kick and the 14" on the right kick, in the traditional hard-rock manner, if you will. That meant I could bring stuff in even further, like my right-hand hi-hat and the China. I did that pretty much along with the ride-scrapping thingy.

**MD:** That should help you play this stuff into a ripe old age.

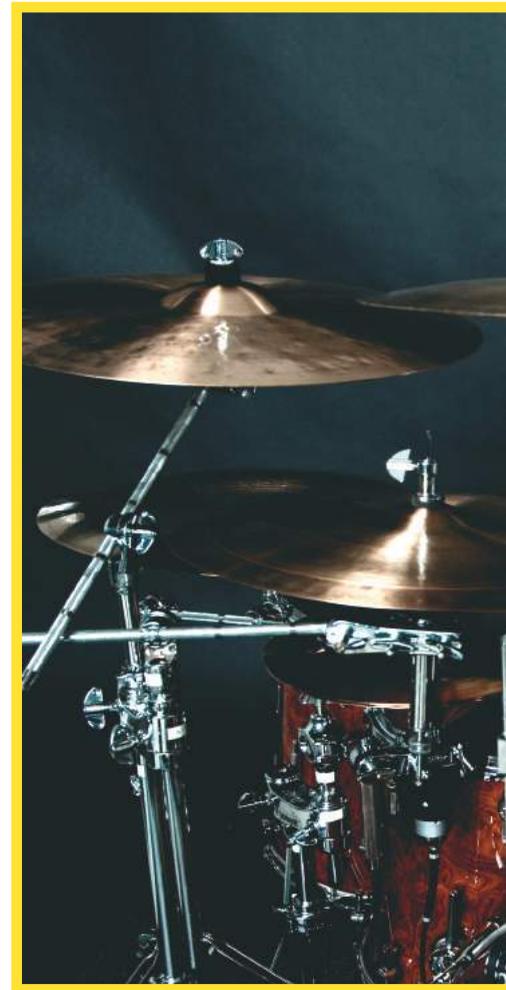
**Tomas:** Yeah, you really have to consider those things. It's boring to think about, and a lot of drummers would rather use their money for a brand-new cymbal instead of putting it into something ergonomic like a real good throne with a backrest, or whatever. But those little things really do help, because you can get serious injuries.

**MD:** Were there any songs on this record that presented particular challenges to your endurance?

**Tomas:** The one that really put the stamina to the test—not so much as far as cardio goes but for the front side of my lower legs, with a lot of double bass—would be "Bleed." The bass drum work is pretty relentless. As far as practicing and how much time I spent on each track before recording, that one was just ridiculous. I probably spent six months just learning it—alongside the other tracks, of course, but most of the other tracks came a lot easier. I had never done those fast bursts or that type of playing at all, so I really had to work on that one.

**MD:** Would you gradually build up to playing the whole track?

**Tomas:** Yeah. I'd start by playing the beginning part, and I would play longer and longer into the track. Of course, it wasn't just a



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Jim Weider Band, Red Magma

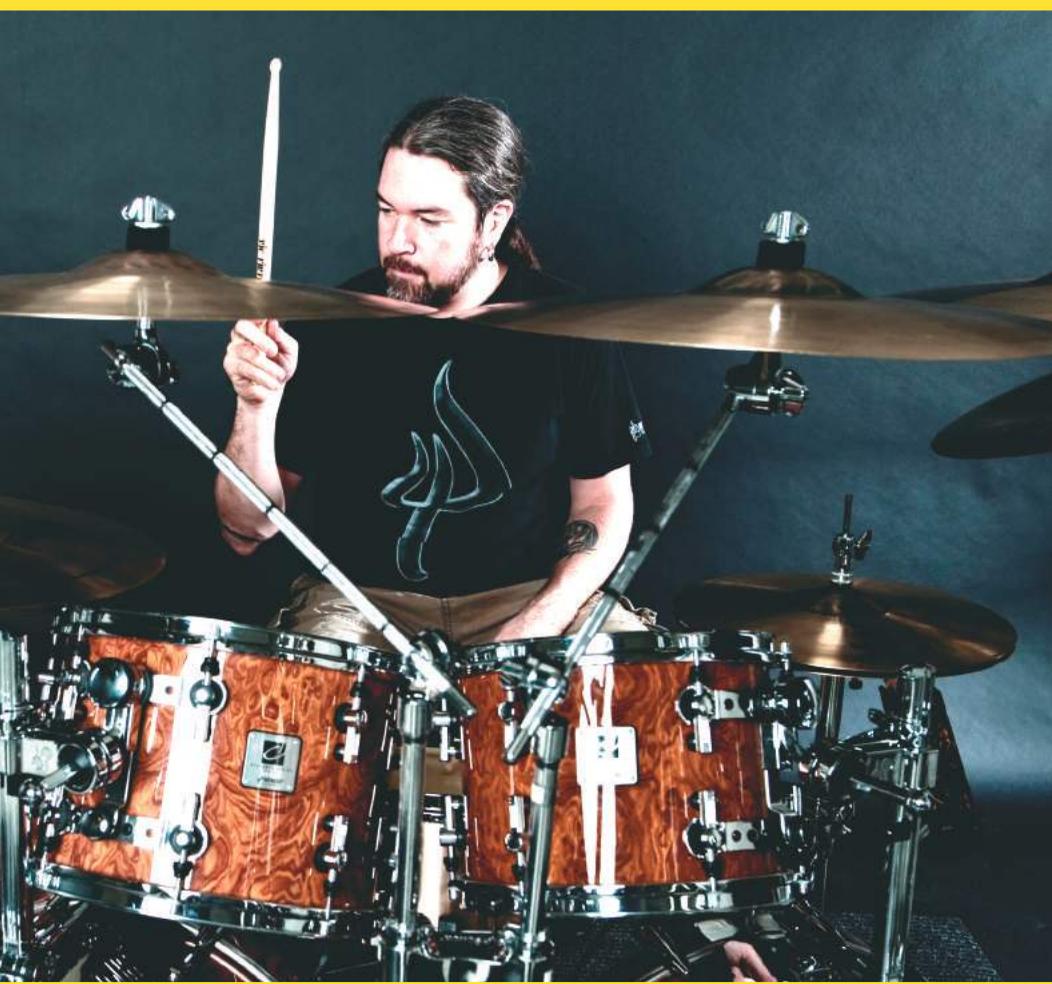


**DANGO**  
Amber Pacific



**ZAC FARRO**  
Paramore





matter of stamina and working out my legs to get them to a certain point. It was also a matter of learning the part. Until the verse is over, it's the same pattern over and over. Then it starts evolving and it's cut up into smaller chunks where you have a 32nd-note burst and then 16th notes between those. After a while it just gets totally ridiculous, where that pattern is really long, and it's really difficult to get it into your system and feel it all the way through. So a lot of the time was spent on that aspect of things as well.

**MD:** You must look forward to the few sections that give you relief.

**Tomas:** I do! [laughs]

**MD:** A different kind of double bass technique is required for a tune like "Pravus," which requires very steady, even 16th notes. Have you been playing double bass for most of the time you've been drumming?

**Tomas:** Yeah. I got my first double pedal pretty early on, when I was, I think, fourteen. It was around that time when Bay Area thrash-bands like Metallica, Metal Church, and



**JASON BITTNER**  
Shadows Fall



**AARON GILLESPIE**  
Underoath



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## TOMAS HAAKE

Slayer—came around. I was on my parents constantly to buy me a double pedal. Remember the old Pearl, where the left-side beater was actually bent into a different shape to be able to reach the center of the kick because they hadn't really figured out how to make 'em? I had one of those before I got my first double bass kit.

While you're mentioning "Pravus," I always try as much as I can to skip the bass drum when I hit the snare. There's a risk of flammimg between the snare and the kick, which doesn't sound too great, and it's also a matter of having the snare be as prominent and strong as possible. When you play the kick at the same time, it has a tendency to mud up the snare a bit. It's a thing with "Pravus" that you may or may not hear, but it's not just straight 16th notes on the kicks—it's all these gaps. So that one did take quite a lot of rehearsing too.

**MD:** The kick notes are just so smooth throughout.

**Tomas:** Yeah, that one is in a tempo where it's kind of easy to play a very steady beat. As most drummers know, especially drummers that play along with click tracks, you have certain tempos that are just not comfortable. The title track on ObZen is 170 bpm, which is a really weird tempo for me. I have a gap between around 160 and 180. Above that, it's fine, and below and up to 160, it's fine, but 170 is really awkward. So I actually had to practice more at getting comfortable at 170 bpm than at playing the actual parts. If I were to play that without a click, even if I had a 170-bpm count-in, I would probably go up to 180 right away, which is a lot more comfortable.

**MD:** Is there any spontaneity in the recording of your parts?

**Tomas:** There's spontaneity as far as fills go, but as far as the parts, no, not really. Most of the parts are written in the most rigid sense that you have to try to do it exactly how it was written.

**MD:** But your fills are at least somewhat improvised?

**Tomas:** Yeah, absolutely. For the first track, for example, which is more of a straight-ahead thrash-metal homage to where we come from, those fills are whatever comes to mind in the transition from one part to another. But on "Electric Red" there's a really long fill toward the end that is definitely written. It's one of the longest fills I've ever done on an album. I had to figure out how to live with the riff and at the same

time really fill it with 32nd notes and still make it interesting. So a few fills on the album were written and orchestrated.

**MD:** Do you fall out of shape between sessions and tours? Do you practice a lot by yourself?

**Tomas:** I don't really have a practice routine worth the name. I wish I did. I do fall out of shape in between touring and making an album, and sometimes I stay off the kit for months on end. I actually had a gap just a few years ago where I didn't really even hold a pair of sticks for like nine months. That's not a very good thing, but at the same time I have to really want to play. For a few years back in the early to mid '90s I pushed myself to play whether I wanted to or not, but I learned that I didn't go anywhere.

When I have those gaps, I lose a lot of the "tiny muscles," if you will, that people don't really think of if you're on the kit all the time. And you lose a lot of the stamina, of course. Prior to touring, like right now, for example, I start to walk a lot and I try to work out in different ways. And I do play some drums.

**MD:** With a tour beginning in a few months, is the next step learning to play the ObZen stuff live as a band?

**Tomas:** Yeah, we start rehearsing the new stuff. For the next tour we'll be opening for Ministry in the States, and we only have a forty-five-minute set, so we'll probably just play two tracks from the new album, three at most. There are so many tracks from the past that the fans really want to hear.

**MD:** How long is your normal headlining set?

**Tomas:** Usually an hour-ten or an hour-fifteen. With music that's really in your face the whole time, when I go to a concert like that I don't want to hear that band for two hours. You're usually pretty full when you've reached an hour-ten as far as how much you can actually take in.

**MD:** You've only recently finished ObZen, but do you have any idea of what might be next for Meshuggah after touring?

**Tomas:** I really don't have much of a clue. But there were a few tracks and a bunch of ideas that didn't end up on this album. We just couldn't get them to work in the time frame. They would probably sound quite different—those tracks were a bit sideways going, even from this material. But if we can just pick up where we left off, then those tracks will probably be real amazing too, I think.

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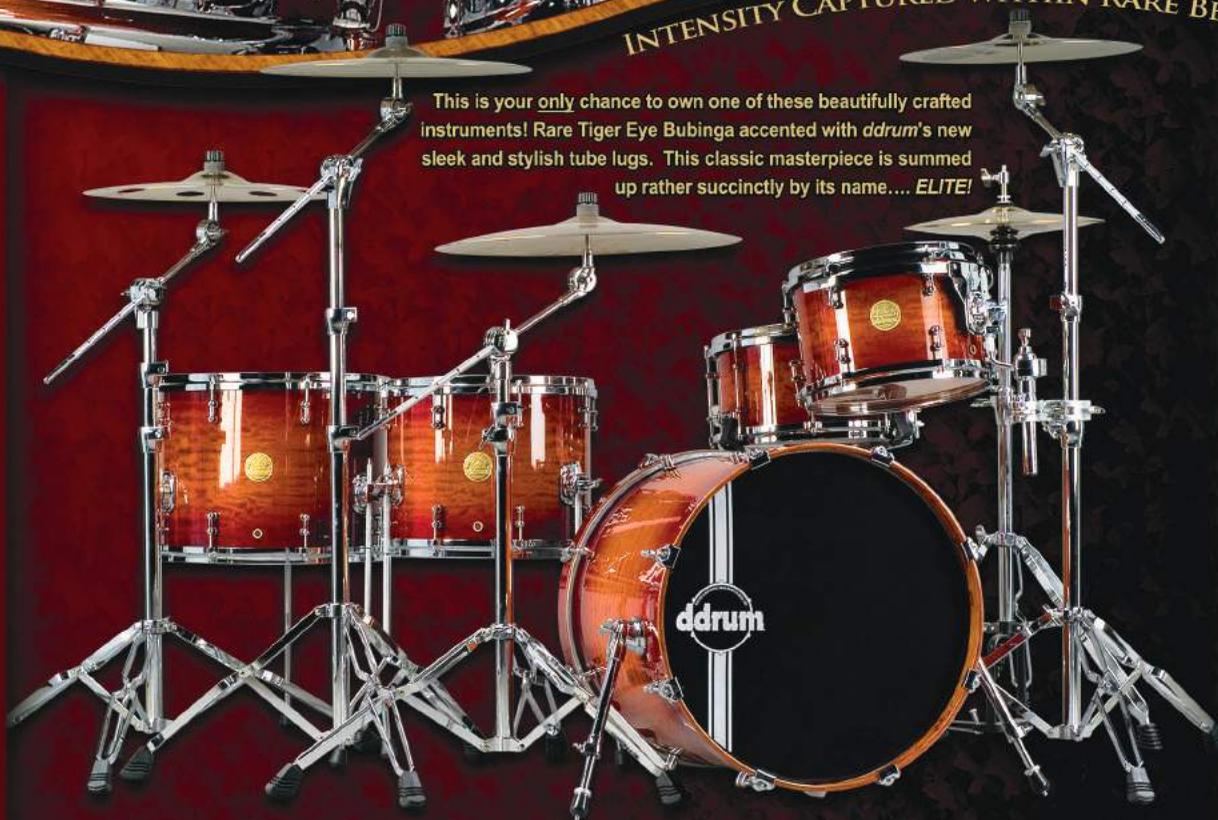
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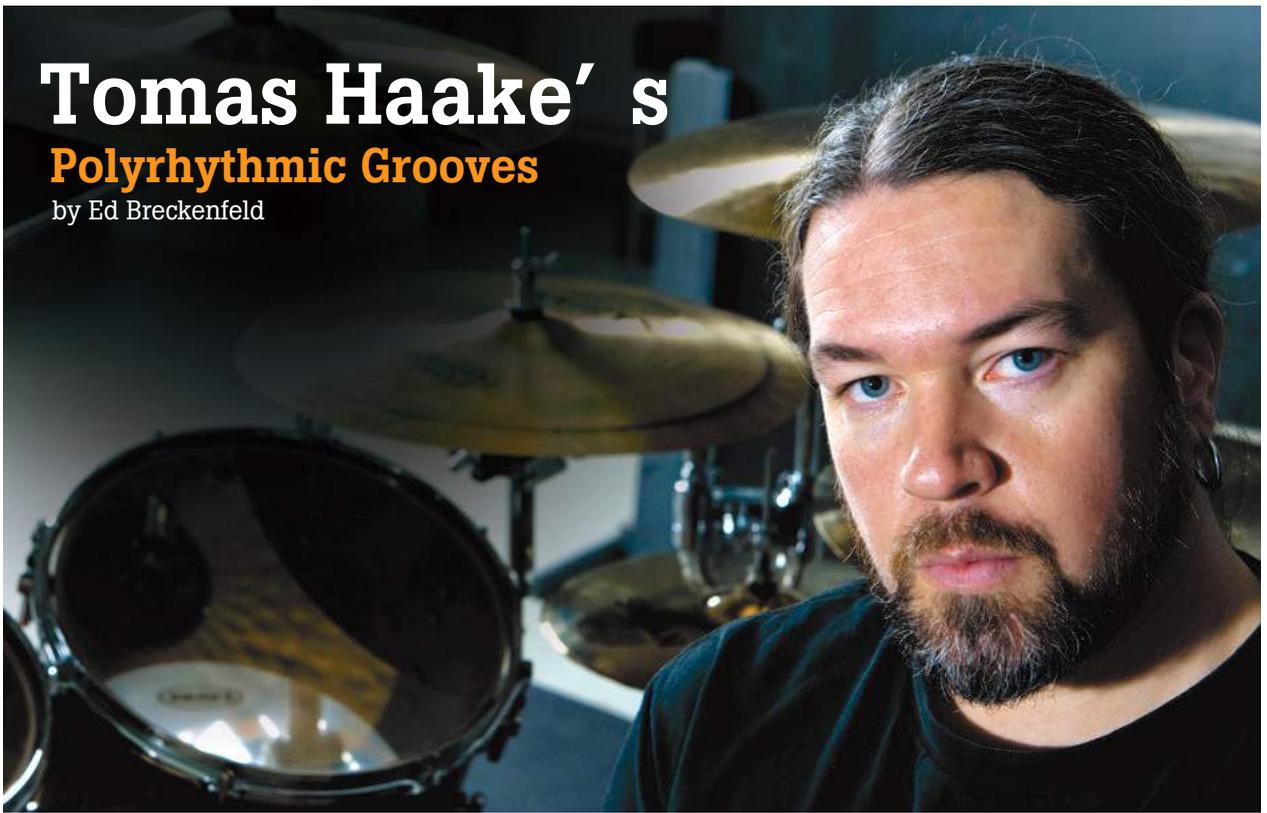


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# Tomas Haake's Polyrhythmic Grooves

by Ed Breckenfeld



**MUSIC KEY**

C.C.1 C.C.2

H.H. X X

S.D. ● ●

B.D.1 ● ●

B.D.2 ● ●

**O**f all the approaches to odd-time drumming, Tomas Haake's work with math-metal wizards Meshuggah is one of the most fascinating and difficult to grasp.

Instead of simply designing odd-time beats to match odd-time riffs, or playing straightforward 4/4 beats under complex time changes, Haake pulls off both at the same time. To understand what he's doing, let's take a look at some of his grooves from Meshuggah's new album, *obZen*.

### "Electric Red"

Our first example is from the outro of this track. Bass and guitars are playing a syncopated riff in 9/8, which Haake matches note-for-note with his kick drum. He's playing quarter notes (with occasional extra accents) on his crash, which causes the cymbal pattern to switch between downbeats and offbeats from measure to measure. Tomas also plants a snare hit on every fourth cymbal note. This causes the snare to move forward one beat in each successive measure. The result is a repeating eight-measure cycle. (5:01)

1

You can also look at the previous pattern in 4/4. Example 2

is the same section as in Example 1, only written in 4/4 instead of 9/8. It takes nine measures of 4/4 to match the eight measures of 9/8.

In 4/4, the cymbal and snare play on the downbeats, while the syncopated kick pattern is delayed one 8th note in each measure in order to match up with the nine-beat guitar riff. As a result, Haake is playing in two time signatures at once—his hands are in 4/4, while his feet are in 9/8.

2

### “Bleed”

The verse of this track contains a nineteen-beat guitar/bass riff. Once again, Tomas matches his kick pattern to the riff while playing in 4/4 with his hands. To make it easier to follow, we’ve divided the nineteen-beat pattern into groupings of 7/8, 5/8, and 7/8. This phrase takes six measures (twice through the nineteen-beat riff) for the cymbal to return to downbeats at the start of the pattern. The snare takes many more measures to return to its original position. (0:36)

Here’s the same sequence (with a couple of extra notes) written in 4/4. Notice how difficult it is to pick out the repeating kick pattern when it’s written this way. (The pattern starts over every nineteen 8th notes). The arrows indicate where the bass drum pattern repeats.

### “Lethargica”

Here’s another intricate polyrhythm, this time featuring flashy double bass work. The pattern is a cluster of two 32nd notes and two 16th notes, which takes up the space of three 16th notes. Haake opens this song by repeating this riff on his double kicks against a half-time hand pattern. It takes three measures for the pattern to complete its cycle. (0:00)

### “obZen”

This track features a seventeen-beat repeating riff, which Tomas again mirrors on his kick drums under a 4/4 snare and cymbal pattern. In the sixteen-bar sequence in Example 6, notice how the bass drum pattern repeats one beat later in each four-bar phrase. (0:00)

### “Pravus”

Here’s an example of Tomas using a more conventional approach to odd-time playing. This tune opens with a twenty-three-note guitar riff, which I’ve divided into 5/8, 6/8, and 7/8. Haake picks up the accents in the riff with snare/crashes as he drives the groove with his double kick pattern. Though not as complex as the previous examples, the changing accents in this groove make the track sound very compelling. (0:00)



You can contact **Ed Breckenfeld** through his Web site, [www.edbreckenfeld.com](http://www.edbreckenfeld.com).



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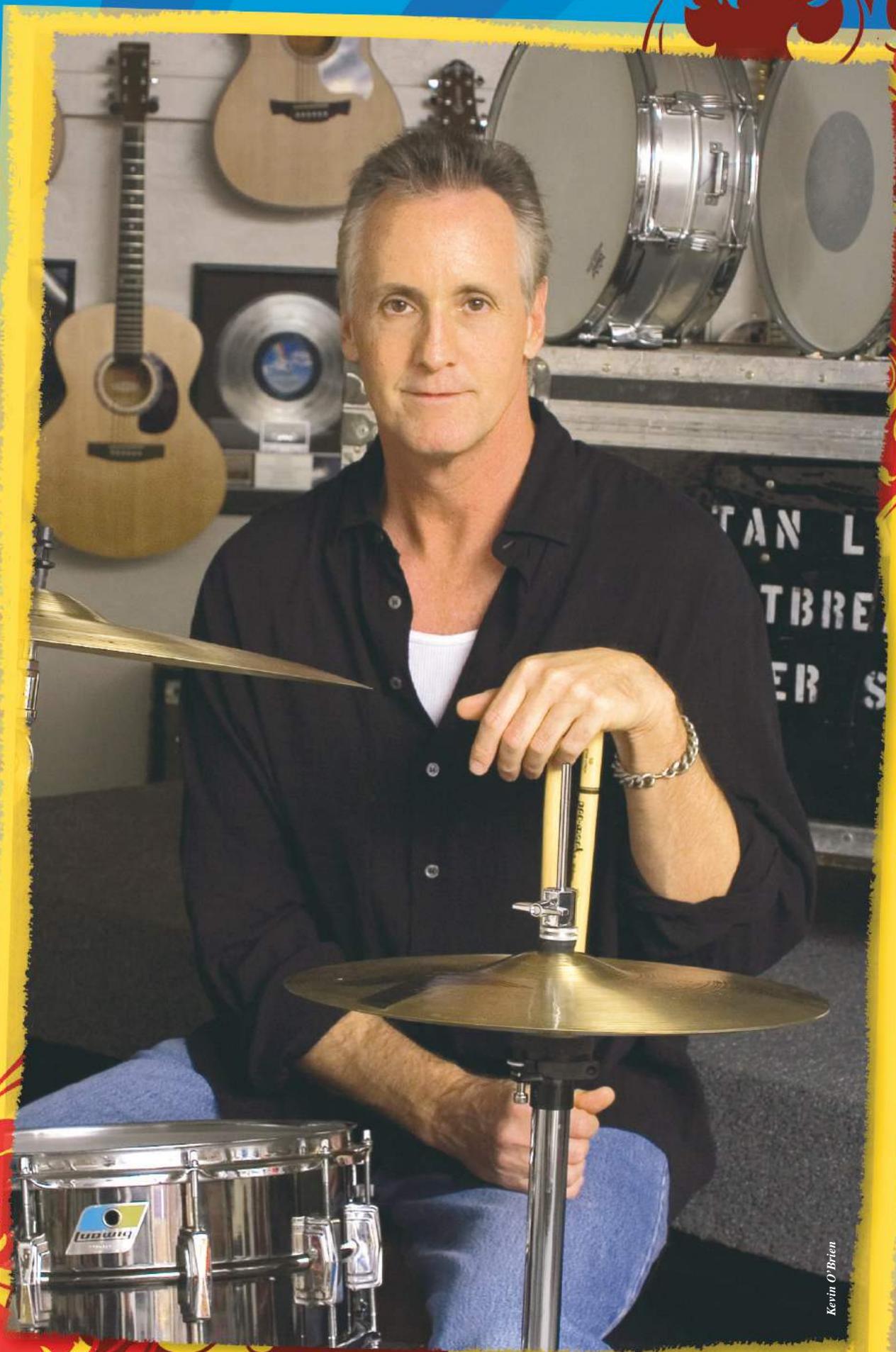
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# STAN LYNCH

by Patrick Berkery

**W**hen Tom Petty was asked to describe original Heartbreakers drummer Stan Lynch in the 2005 book *Conversations With Tom*, the bandleader responded with, "Stan. Now there's a book in itself."

Any book about the fifty-two-year-old Lynch would surely be an entertaining, fairly hilarious read. The Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame drummer-turned-successful songwriter/producer (for Don Henley, The Eagles, The Mavericks, Ringo Starr, and Tim McGraw, among others) and tree farmer (a gig he describes as part Zen, part holding on for dear life, and not unlike playing with Bob Dylan) is an opinionated, intelligent guy who doesn't mince words or sugarcoat memories.



Kevin O'Brien

**F**or now, though, this feature on one of rock's most tasteful timekeepers—a true player of “the song”—will do, for there's plenty to discuss with Lynch.

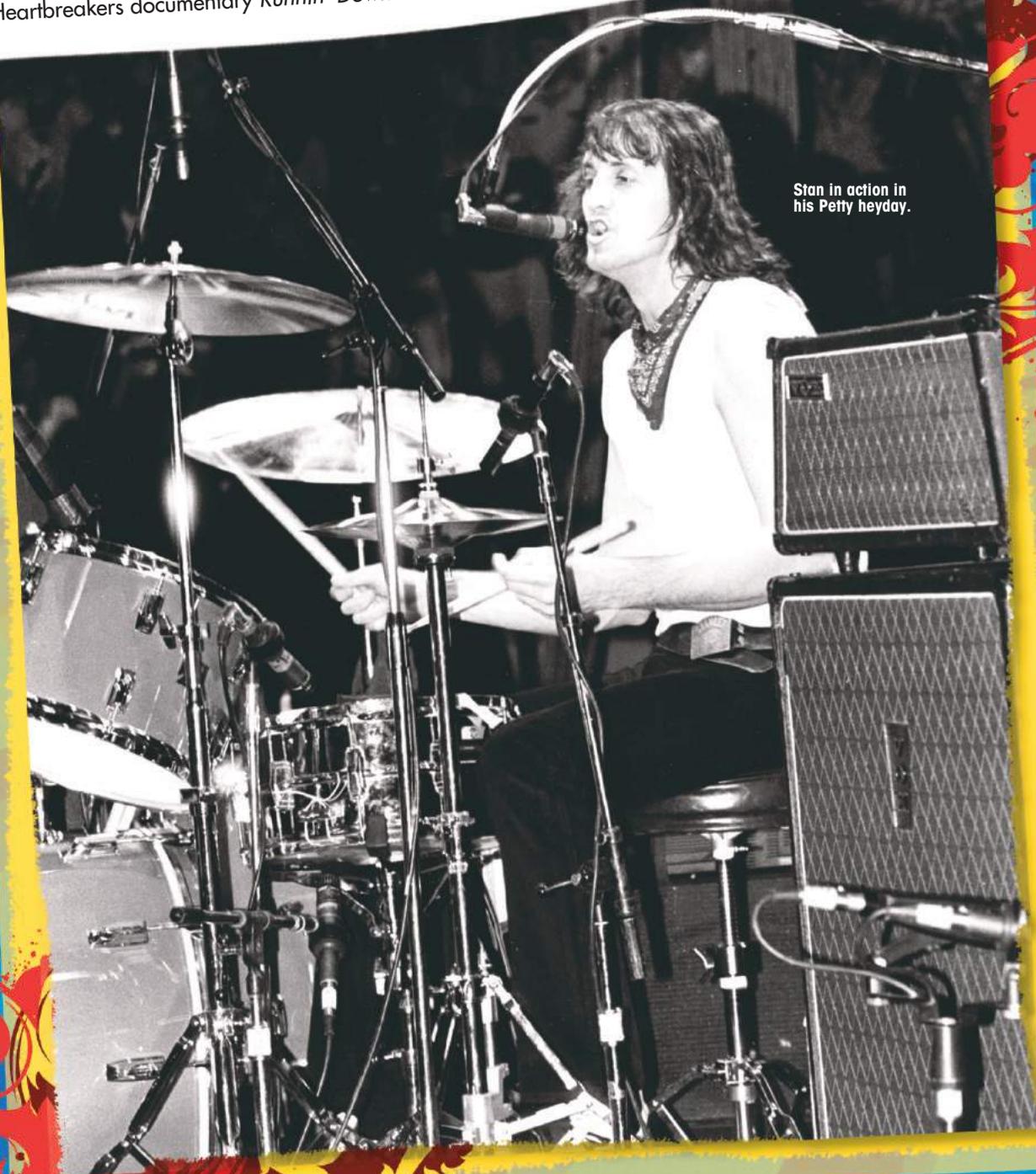
Such as Lynch's understated work on those Petty classics. Oh, my my, oh, hell yes, did Lynch serve those songs well. Just think of “Breakdown”'s slinky pulse, the graceful fills that usher in the heavenly chorus in “Here Comes My Girl,” or the swamp-funk groove of his 1993 Heartbreakers swan song “Mary Jane's Last Dance.”

There's also the matter of last year's Peter Bogdanovich-directed Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers documentary *Runnin' Down A Dream*.

In the warts-and-all film, Lynch's multi-faceted role as steady drummer/class clown/cheerleader/ball breaker/whipping boy was discussed at some length, though his side of the story was represented mostly through older interviews.

“I didn't talk to the Bogdanovich people,” Lynch says. “I just couldn't. It's like a part of my life I've actually...I won't say forgotten, because I actually still dream about it. It comes up in weird ways. But I really had to let go of it or else I would walk around constantly trying to tell people who I used to be.”

“This is the first time I'm talking about it in any depth.”



Stan in action in his Petty heyday.

**MD:** People love the economy of your playing with The Heartbreakers, and how well you served those songs. That was a fairly enlightened style to have at a relatively

to absorb. So when we went to cut the first demos with Benmont [Tench, Heartbreakers keyboardist], I think I was fairly armed.

**MD:** How was it going from a heavy blues

cally, which was surprising, given that Tom had already worked with guys like Jim Gordon, Leon Russell, and Duck Dunn. The Heartbreakers were more country rock, and I

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**“I thought God put me on this earth to play in that band. And it wasn’t until they told me I wasn’t that guy that I believed it.”**

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young age. You were twenty when The Heartbreakers formed.

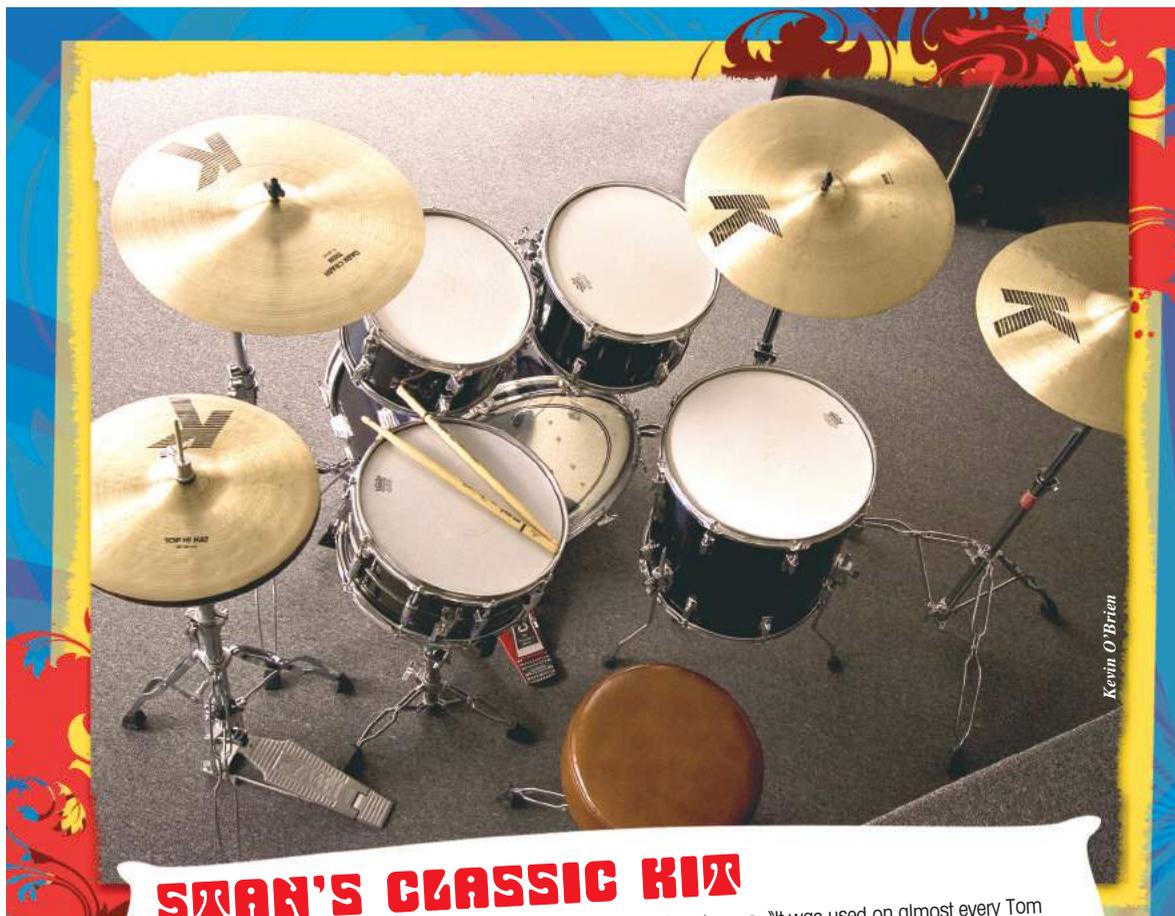
**Stan:** I had a great teacher, Gene Bardo, who kept me on the pad for two years. He really helped me hone my control and my rudiments. I was gigging pretty heavily during high school, working the bars, and my bands had recorded a little bit. So I was learning from the recordings. I got to hear how crummy I was playing. I could pick out my problems a little better. There was a huge discrepancy between what I thought I was doing and what was actually being recorded.

Then when I got to LA, I was working with this great heavy blues band from Texas called Slip Of The Wrist. Their original drummer had played with Stevie Ray Vaughan back in Texas, so that was the lineage. They taught me to really dig in on the hi-hats and snare. They taught me about shuffling. And at my age, that was a lot

situation to Tom’s vibe, which was more song-based?

**Stan:** It seemed a little lightweight, stylisti-

wanted it to fall in a different place. I wanted to be Mott The Hoople. I wanted it to sound big and meaty. And I think they wanted a



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“It features a 14x24 kick, 8x12 and 9x13 rack toms, and a 16x16 floor tom. As for the snare drums, at that time I used a 6½x14 Ludwig Black Beauty, 5x14 and 6½x14 Ludwig Supraphonics, and a 5x14 Ludwig Acrolite. Not shown, but included with this kit, were 6x6, 8x8, and 10x14 tom-toms.”

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## STAN LYNCH

pocket that probably was a little more Americana. But that's where it worked. Maybe I was bullish enough to bring something out of them. God knows why that worked. [laughs] In some ways I was probably the exact wrong guy for the band, but the exact right guy.

**MD:** You created such smooth pockets on those early songs, but there were always interesting subtleties like the hi-hat kicks and tom hits on the "&" of 1 in "Breakdown," and the 16th-note hi-hat part in the bridge of "American Girl."

**Stan:** So much of that stuff was instinct and accident—a little bit of both. From the day I was in the band, I thought, "I'm either saving their asses or I'm killing them." I wasn't ever sure, and I don't think they were ever sure. But when it was right, it was right.

**MD:** The Heartbreakers worked with a unique mix of producers over the years. How was it working with an established guy like Denny Cordell [Leon Russell, Joe Cocker, Procol Harum] so early on?

**Stan:** He taught me a lot, sometimes in very abstract ways. I was still young and I didn't really understand what he meant by "groove" and "feel." I remember asking Denny, "What does that mean, can you quantify that?" So he tells me he's taking me to a Bob Marley & The Wailers gig, and he flips me the keys to his Ferrari. As we're driving, he's making me haul ass, and he says, "Stanley, driving a Ferrari fast, that's what a groove feels like." At the gig, Marley had the place hypnotized. Someone's passing a joint through the balcony and Denny says, "That's what a feel is." He was just being helpful in his very '70s way. Saying, "These are the things that feel incredibly good, that can't be duplicated. You'll know it when you know it." Sure enough, we went back to the studio and we got two tracks that night. I was so vibed.

**MD:** Did he offer more specific advice?

**Stan:** Oh, yeah. Again, in his own way. I remember having a really hard time once on some track. I was playing way too much, trying way too hard. So Denny, in that perfect English accent, he blows a big cloud of smoke and says, "Stan, if you leave all that shit behind and just play the groove, they'll always misinterpret

you as tasteful." That was brilliant. [laughs]

Denny had that ability as a producer to make you want to do great things. He'd show you great things and go, "That's what you should do." And you would. Instinctively, you'd go, "Hell, if they can do it, I can do it. Or I'll do a version of it." That's what great producers do. They take you there without lecturing you. They don't scare you. He made me believe I was exactly the right guy.

**MD:** That seems pretty much the opposite of your relationship with Jimmy Iovine.

**Stan:** In Jimmy's defense, he was under a lot of pressure. He was hired as a hit producer to make hits. He wasn't there to listen to my opinion. In retrospect, I can see that. At the time, I thought, "Man, you're just a drag, you can't help me." I would ask him about a bass drum pattern: "Should it be four-on-the-floor? Anything you'd like me to try?" And he would just wave me off. His quote was, "I don't know, Stan, it's just a million miles away." Again, he was hired to make hits. So, really, the only guy he had to deal with was Tom. I was way down



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**“I’m a guy who always wanted to be in a band. And when it all went away, I was lost. I sat down at the drums and didn’t know whether to cry or barf.”**

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the food chain as far as Jimmy was concerned. On the list of fifty things, I was fifty-one.

**MD:** By all accounts, a lot of very draining work went into those Iovine records, especially *Damn The Torpedoes*.

**Stan:** It was harder than it needed to be. We never did pre-production. So I’d hear the song acoustically, and then I’d get a shot at it.

Didn’t even get five minutes to work something up.

**MD:** Wouldn’t you do a run-through with the full band?

**Stan:** Barely. It’d be like, “Eh, let’s just go.” Nobody ever talked about it. It was never a demonstrative bunch. [laughs] There was never a great deal of joy about tracking drums. I had



Kevin O'Brien

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## STAN LYNCH

to overcome it, like, "God, I kind of like drums. Drums are kind of cool." And it was like, "Well, they kind of get in the way of the music." That was actually a quote from someone, one day. I was like, "Wow, I don't hear that." And if my part wasn't working, there was always the threat from Tom of, "Well, I'd rather just do it acoustically anyway, and the drums just get in the way, blah, blah, blah." That's how they were treated.

**MD:** There was also the threat—which was carried out during Torpedoes and Hard Promises—of replacing you with another drummer. Even though, ultimately, your tracks were the keepers, I imagine that had to do a number on your confidence.

**Stan:** Subconsciously, it probably drove me insane. I really don't know what it did. Maybe I was too young to realize how heavy a situation it was. The simplest way to put it, I guess, is that I thought they were idiots for wanting to try someone else. The kindest thing I could say was "help yourselves." Whenever there was the discussion about bringing in somebody else, I was like, "How would an outsider know what to do or how to put that kind of love into it?"

My belief was that there was no other guy that could do this better. Later, it made perfect sense because I just wasn't digging it. Back then, you couldn't have found a more loyal servant to the music. I really lived and breathed that band. I thought God put me on this earth to play in that band. And it wasn't until they told me I wasn't that guy that I believed it.

**MD:** Given the band's success up to that point, did you feel you must have been doing something right?

**Stan:** Really, all I cared about was blowing my bandmates' minds. I was their younger brother. All I wanted was for them to go, "That part is so cool!" I just wanted it to be amazing. And, really, it was. Those records...they just sound so good, the drums, the songs. That was the first time we worked with a really brilliant engineer, Shelly Yakus.

**MD:** Right. You really credit him with helping you shape that classic drum sound.

**Stan:** He invented it right in front of me. He gives me credit, but I didn't even know where we were going. Shelly was pushing me to crazy places. On the first two records, there were maybe three mics on the kit.

Shelly had it looking like a press conference. [laughs] He built this kit for me that was big and tuned really deep, with Pinstripe heads on the toms and a black dot snare head. No ring, no rebound, it was detuned to where the lugs were almost rattling. I really had to develop a new technique to play the damn thing. I played with the butt-end of a 2B on the snare, using traditional grip, which is actually pretty tricky to do.

**MD:** After Damn The Torpedoes exploded, everything changed for Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers. They began headlining arenas around the world, and for the first time, faced the challenge of following up a huge record. They were suddenly in-demand in other ways, too. Individually, they were tapped as session players and songwriters. As a group, they backed up Stevie Nicks and Bob Dylan. Over time, new faces entered the picture—producers Dave Stewart and Jeff Lynne, new bassist Howie Epstein—yet old tensions remained. When you followed-up Torpedoes with Hard Promises, Iovine was back producing, and your bassist, Ron Blair, was being replaced by Duck Dunn on some tracks.



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## STAN LYNCH



**Stan:** Yeah, Duck came in on "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around," which was ours but got bartered away by Jimmy to Stevie Nicks, and "A Woman In Love (It's Not Me)." And I was catching shit from lovine at the time, "We're gonna bring in this guy, we're gonna bring in that guy," so I was probably feeling pretty uncomfortable.

**MD:** Were you leery of a seasoned outsider com-

ing in, or jazzed because it was Duck Dunn?

**Stan:** I thought it was cool, but it was intimidating. Like, "What if he turns around after five minutes and says, 'I can't play with this guy'?" But there wasn't too much time to dwell on that, because we went right to work on "Stop Draggin' ." We listened to the demo, and it was a real static Linn drum machine part—boom/



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## STAN LYNCH

bap/boom-boom/bap—the whole way through, no stops. Everybody shakes their head, Duck probably made a little bar chart, and we sit down to play. And right as they were saying, “We’re rolling,” I asked Duck about the kick pattern and he said, “Do what you feel, man, I’m all over you.”

We kick into the song, and instead of coming in with a beat from the top like on the demo, I’m going in with a build, climbing big, and I had Duck’s attention immediately. That first take was a little clumsy, people are hitting bum notes and I’m thrashing through trying to

make the stops happen. People were looking at me like I’m on angel dust. [laughs]

Then on the second take, I threw the Whitman’s Sampler at them: played the first verse one way to see how it felt, second verse, another way, then sprung something else on them in the bridge. We get through the take, nobody looks up, and Duck gives me that look like, “Don’t put your sticks down, don’t breathe, don’t fart...”

**MD:** Did that feel like a stamp of approval?

**Stan:** Oh, yeah, my day was made. I played with Duck Dunn, I didn’t care what happened.

Then Iovine immediately says, “It’s too fast.” Tom says, “No, it’s too slow.” So they get into it, and Duck says, “Let’s just go hear it.” So they push play and there are a few guitar clams, but it’s going by like a freight train. By the end of the thing nobody says a word, there’s this uncomfortable silence. Then Duck says, “Y’all don’t like that?” All of a sudden, Jimmy goes, “That’s great, that’s amazing.” And Tom goes, “Yeah, I think that’ll work.”

**MD:** The kick drum patterns and bass parts in “Stop Draggin’” and “A Woman In Love” create a very natural push-pull feel.

**Stan:** Completely unlike the drum parts on the demos, which Tom would get so married to. It was a burnout to try and play “beat the Linn machine,” or sound like the Linn. When the Linn machine came in, everything took on this air of perfection. Man, I just thought that was stale. And once that became the high water mark of what a drummer could do, I re-learned to play my drums again, to cop that feel. I was cool with that theory on certain tracks. But I didn’t want to go back and play the old shit like that.

**MD:** Was the main groove on “Don’t Come Around Here No More” a Linn machine?

**Stan:** I think that was an Oberheim drum machine, oddly enough. I was just working tambourines and gongs at the top. At the end where it goes berserk, they punched me in playing the kit over the drum machine. That song was a great exercise in having to adapt. To Tom’s credit, he was always on the move, always hunting for something. Just when you got comfortable, he changed all the rules.

**MD:** What was it like working with The Eurythmics’ Dave Stewart on that track, and on the Southern Accents album? He seemed like an odd choice for producer at the time.

**Stan:** I have really fond memories of working with Dave. Just a really energetic, crazy guy that liked taking chances. He was very enthusiastic about things and a great cheerleader. Really a fun, trippy guy.

**MD:** And he brought you in to play on The Eurythmics track with Aretha Franklin, “Sisters Are Doin’ It For Themselves.”

**Stan:** Yeah, which was a really smoking track.

**MD:** You were starting to do some more session work during the mid-’80s, as was the whole band. Was there concern about whoring out the Heartbreakers sound?

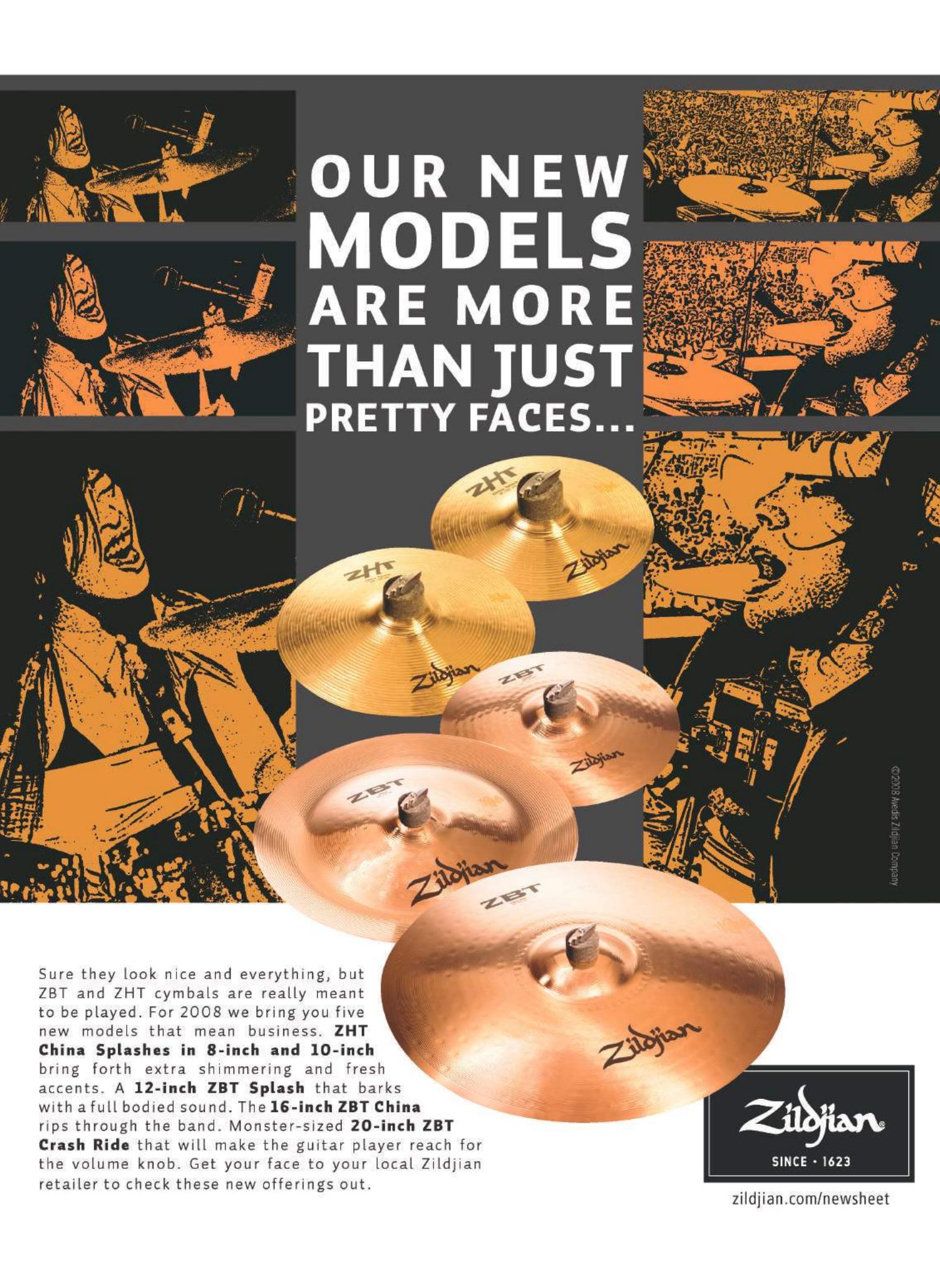
**Stan:** No one ever said as much. But there’d be the weird thing where I’d be off doing a session date and I’d get a call from management,

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## STAN LYNCH

"Tom needs you to come in tomorrow to work on some new stuff." Or when I told him I was going to go on tour with T-Bone Burnett, he'd say, "Why do you want to go back and play clubs?" That sort of thing.

**MD:** Then you turn around and The Heartbreakers become Bob Dylan's band for two years.

**Stan:** Yeah, that was the last time I ever got to play jazz. [laughs] It was awesome. We were really flying by the seat of our pants every night. He'd turn around and say, "What song do you want to play?" I'd go, "How about 'Lay Lady Lay'?" He'd nod, turn away, then turn back around and say,

"What key?" He was so free and so kind, and so loose. And his rhythm guitar playing—man, if you couldn't get on that, you had a problem. He is such an underrated guitar player. I'd just get his guitar and vocal in my monitor and I just loved it.

Bob is freaky, man. He's wonderful—all over the place, but always in time. And he's got a wonderful, authentic, crusty, beautiful stroke that you just have to play to. I keep waiting for him to call and say, "Stan, my drummer's taking a powder, you want to do something?" [laughs]

**MD:** There's a great clip from that tour of "Knockin' On Heaven's Door," where as the

band is building up into the verse, Bob puts his arm out and at once you all quiet down and lay back.

**Stan:** I had to watch Bob constantly. But I'm an old-school drummer, so I was always watching Tom. It changed night to night, verse to verse. Lots of thirteen-bar blues on that gig. [laughs] He could go five minutes before coming in with the vocal, or he could start singing before he started playing. I never knew. That's where you really learn to play the song. And that song doesn't have to be the same every time.

**MD:** As the '80s turned to the '90s, you became disillusioned with new material, new producers, and a new way of doing things within The Heartbreakers. Though musically speaking, you left the band on an extremely high note: "Mary Jane's Last Dance." Looking back, does it feel as if you went out on top?

**Stan:** Well, it just wasn't the greatest experience. I was told by the co-producer, George Drakoulis, when I walked in—before I'd even heard the song—what it was supposed to sound like, which was pretty stiff. They wanted the drum fills from "Gimme Shelter": blap-bum, blap-bum, blap-bum, blap-bum. Killer fill, but not for this. And in my mind, I'm telling him, "I don't know who you are. I'm not aware of your cred." So I went in the other direction.

I was actually starting to listen to a little hip-hop back then, and I think it rubbed off on that groove. I cut that track really quickly—second take, I think—and it felt really good. Then I just put my sticks down and that was that. I never saw them again. I remember talking to Tom about that record later. I was so hurt because I said, "Man I was really pleased to see we got a monster hit that kicked ass." His exact response was, "Yeah, we got away with it." I was like, "Dude, I didn't get away with anything. I went in and spanked the shit out of that groove." That wasn't right.

**MD:** That's one of the biggest hits The Heartbreakers ever had, so something must've been working.

**Stan:** Yeah, it only helped the Greatest Hits sell a subtle ten or twelve million, that's all.

**MD:** What was your state of mind when you finally got the call that you were fired from the band?

**Stan:** Tom had basically told me I wasn't the right drummer for him anymore. He decided

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## STAN LYNCH

whatever I was doing he wasn't digging. So I wanted to put the drums down. I was feeling very insecure about them. I felt like, perhaps, I'd made all the noise I could. And I'm a guy that always wanted to be in a band. And when the set lists and all that stuff went away, I was really lost. I sat down at the drums and I didn't know whether to cry or barf.

I had a kit in my house, and I had to take it away. I just couldn't look at it. I had to take all the mementos from the band out of my house, everything. I had to forget all that. It was almost like in Men In Black. I had to hit myself in the face with one of those lights; when you wake up, you won't remember you were ever in a band. You're a guy who wants to write songs now.

**MD:** And it was Don Henley who helped you on that path, right?

**Stan:** Absolutely. I had gotten the phone call signifying one part of my life was over. Within twenty-four hours, I was talking to Don and he



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## STAN LYNCH

said, "Man, what are you doing?" I said, "I'm probably losing it, I don't know." He said, "When The Eagles broke up, I was thirty-three. I know what you're feeling, so get on a plane." So I did. I pretty much showed up at his door the next day, and he said, "Welcome to the next chapter." Fortunately he had things for me to do, and songs to write, and it was an amazing year.

During that transitional year ['94], I got a lot of my songs recorded. I had a little 16-track studio at my house in Florida. I put it in flight cases, moved it to California, set it up in Don's barn, and just went to work. I just sat in that damn barn and wrote, with him and without him. Don kicked down a big door for me and said, "Run on through."

**MD:** As a producer, what do you look for in a drum track?

**Stan:** I look for the drummer to just hypnotize me, intoxicate me. That can be any old way. Mick Fleetwood could hypnotize me with a bass drum and a cowbell. Dennis Chambers could hypnotize me with every weapon he's got. Gregg Bissonette could hypnotize me just by sitting down. Usually I say, "Play it two times, then come in and listen with me. If you

and I look at each other funny at the same time, we know something went wrong. Or, if we both look at each other with that stupid grin, we'll know it's going really good."

**MD:** Most never get near the kind of success you had in the first phase of your career, let alone the second...

**Stan:** But I'm really not one for dwelling on it; I'm not an awards guy. This is where my dad is so great. "Hey dad, they're putting us in the Rock And Hall Of Fame." He says, "Well, you know your career is pretty well over then." When I co-wrote the number-one song for Tim McGraw a couple years back ["Back When"], I called my dad every week. "Dad, we're number four." When it was number two he said, "This never happens, asshole." When it went to number one, he said, "Quit while you're ahead. Don't ever write another song again. Walk away." [laughs]

**MD:** What comes to mind when you look back on those nineteen years with The Heartbreakers?

**Stan:** I think my timing was good. I couldn't be the new guy now. I can see that. Benmont's a bro. I talk to him with great regularity, and I'm really proud that he's been

able to maintain that next chapter and do all that. But I know when I hear him talk, I couldn't do it. I wouldn't know how to do it and still be me. I'm glad I did my nineteen years when I did them, because I couldn't have done these last ones. I would have been more neurotic.

I'm pissed at myself for not having done a more graceful exit with the fans. I really felt so much love and energy from them. Standing there in some of those halls...shit, man, it's not like they were booing me. [laughs] That's my "regret."

**MD:** Do you talk to Tom with any kind of regularity?

**Stan:** No. We had a very nice talk at the Hall Of Fame rehearsal in 2002. And I loved it. But there were a lot of things I wanted to say, and we just couldn't seem to connect. And as a writer, after being out of the band, I realize how good his songs are. I took a lot of those songs for granted when we were kids, because they just kept flying out of the woodwork. How did I know? He sure made it look easy. But I've tried it, and it's damn hard!



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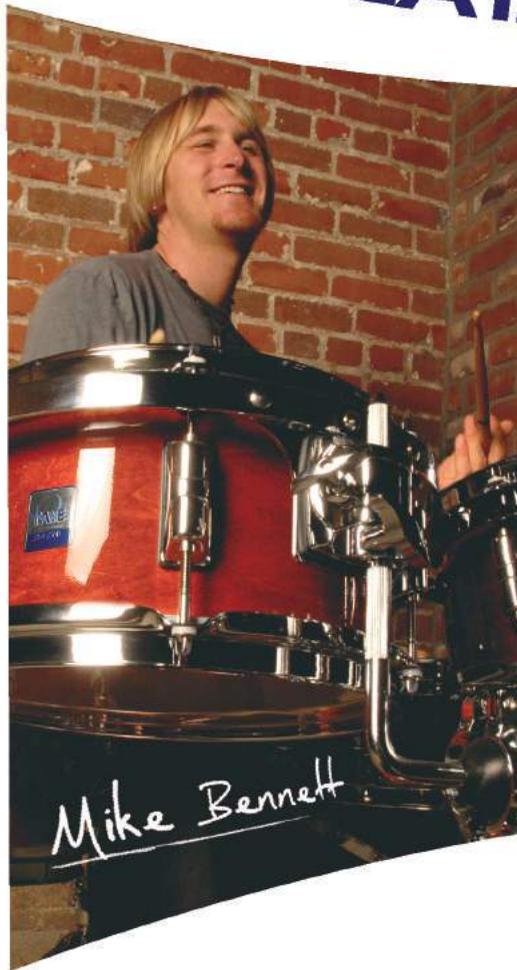
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# JEFF SIPE

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**Jam bands.** What was not so long ago a somewhat obscure and underground post-Woodstock, hippie-based improvisational rock genre led by the likes of The Grateful Dead, The Allman Brothers, and Phish, has blossomed into a popular subculture, highly embraced by a large, multi-generational audience. These tuned-in listeners seek artists who break the shackles of the mundane, shallow, neatly packaged, and compartmentalized pop music culture.

The genre has become so popular, in fact, that *Modern Drummer* has created a jam band category in its annual Readers Poll ballot. Artists as diverse as The Dave Matthews Band, John Scofield, Phil Lesh (Grateful Dead), Jack Johnson, Trey Anastasio (Phish), Widespread Panic, Galactic, Medeski Martin & Wood, Robert Randolph, The North Mississippi All-Stars, and Steve Kimock are but a few of the many improvisational artists that fill this festival-style genre.

Veteran journeyman of improvisational drumming Jeff Sipe (a.k.a. Apt. Q258) has been deeply rooted in the core of the jam band scene for many years. Sipe's first encounter with complex improvisation happened at age eighteen, when he attended Boston's Berklee School Of Music in the late '70s. It was there that he honed his chops and formed the fusion band Winter with fellow student and now legendary Zappa guitarist Steve Vai. Sipe was actually with Vai when he called Zappa for his audition.

Sipe moved to Atlanta in 1983 and was "Hampnotized" into the improv-rock genre by the legendary Atlanta-based godfather of improvisational music, Col. Bruce Hampton. Hampton and Sipe formed the highly acclaimed Aquarium Rescue Unit with bass whiz Oteil Burbridge (Allman Brothers) and guitar great Jimmy Herring (The Dead, Widespread Panic). ARU developed a unique blend of bluegrass, rock, Latin, blues, and jazz fusion, and were instrumental in launching the H.O.R.D.E. tour with other jam-band-related acts including Phish, Spin Doctors, Blues Traveler, Bela Fleck & The Flecktones, and Widespread Panic.

Sipe's success with ARU catapulted him into the Atlanta improv-rock scene during the '90s, which led to relationships with Allman Brothers guitar god Derek Trucks, Widespread Panic, and Memphis guitar master Shawn Lane. The drummer left ARU in 1994 and joined the critically acclaimed trio of Shawn Lane/Jonas Hellborg/Jeff Sipe, which took him deeper into the improv-drumming universe.

When Sipe's notable run with Hellborg and Lane ended, he hit the road for four years with Colorado's bluegrass-based Leftover Salmon, another successful jam band that had toured with ARU. He also did a short double-drumming stint with Rod Morgenstein on a Jazz Is Dead tour.

Sipe's next step forward was touring with his friend Derek Trucks' wife, Susan Tedeschi. A year later, he got the call from The Black Crowes to replace drummer Steve Gorman on their world tour. But Sipe's big break quickly came to a screeching halt when Gorman decided, at the last minute, to re-join the band.

All was not lost for Sipe, who shortly thereafter received a call from Grateful Dead bassist Phil Lesh to tour in place of drummer John Molo, who was on the road with John Fogerty. This was a major break for Sipe, who was now working with a founding member from the mother of all jam bands.

On the Lesh tour, Sipe reconnected with an old friend, Phish guitarist/vocalist Trey Anastasio. This reunion led to Sipe's next road gig, with Anastasio's solo band. Next up for Sipe came the call from current jam band favorite guitarist/vocalist Keller Williams. This gig brought Sipe full circle with his ARU roots, as Williams' music also combines bluegrass, folk, alternative, reggae, electronica/dance, jazz, funk, and more. Sipe played on Williams' most recent release, *Dream*, along with John Scofield, Victor Wooten, and Bela Fleck.

2007 was an amazing year for Sipe for another reason. He may have reached the apex of his drumming career by joining forces with guitar genius Alex Machacek and bass virtuoso Matthew Garrison to record the brilliant *Improvisation* ([www.abstractlogix.com](http://www.abstractlogix.com)). This improvisational tour-de-force of bold and dynamic musical drumming creations places Sipe in a

new league with the modern-day electric jazz pioneers.

Abstract Logix founder Souvik Dutta assembled the trio of stellar players for his fusion label. Never having performed together, the trio gathered in Sipe's home state of North Carolina. To get acquainted, they performed an improv gig in Raleigh the night before the recording sessions. After several hours of technical problems in the studio, the trio only had four or five hours left to record. "We improvised everything except a couple of ideas that Alex brought to the table," says Sipe. "There was no discussion about what we were going to play. When we needed a fast tune, I launched into a groove and they jumped right on board to create a melodic and harmonic structure." From there, Machacek and Garrison returned home and rearranged, overdubbed, and added textures and colors to the improv tracks to create the final mix.

Sipe cites Peter Erskine as an inspiration to his jazz drumming concepts in terms of note placement, fluidity, and dynamics. He also acknowledges Vinnie Colaiuta and Terry Bozzio, especially their work with Frank Zappa, as being very influential in his concepts of metric modulation and rhythmic poetry. Tunes like "There's A New Sheriff In Town" and "Gem 1" are masterful improvisational drumming tracks that will undoubtedly help bring Sipe's name into the forefront as one of today's most innovative and dynamic improvisational drumming greats.

Let's go deeper into the musical mind of Jeff Sipe, one of today's true masters of the jam.



"THE WORD 'JAM' MEANS A LOT TO ME. IT MEANS WHAT MILES DAVIS AND ALL THE HEAVY JAZZ CATS HAVE BEEN DOING FOR YEARS."

**MD:** Let's start at the beginning. What did you learn from your time at Berklee?

**Jeff:** It was a major awakening for me, coming out of the practice room into the real world. I had developed lots of licks, but my time was suffering because I practiced more patterns and variations than I did grooves and beats. That became very apparent as I began to audition for bands that were looking for simple drum parts. There was a big difference in what was called for and what I really wanted to play.

I learned that there was just as much art to recording simple drum parts as there was to soloing. I'm always working on that aspect of my playing. Working with bluegrass musicians has really helped my time as well. They have a different sense of time. There's a real commitment to the backbeat. So I had to go back and get to know the metronome. Now I have a great practice routine with the metronome that really works for me. [See sidebar.]

**MD:** Describe your initial experience with Col. Bruce Hampton and your indoctrination into the Atlanta improvisational music scene with Aquarium Rescue Unit.

**Jeff:** In the beginning, ARU was more about the performing arts and crazy antics on stage. Eventually, Matt Mundy [mandolin] joined the band, and the music began to take on a more serious role. Bruce had a gentle way of putting up a mirror in front of you that allowed you to see yourself inside a musical framework, where you could either react and evolve or stay where you are musically. That band was the biggest catalyst in the evolution of my

improvisational playing, in my early years.

ARU eventually had an opportunity to open for the Athens, Georgia-based group Widespread Panic. That was my first real introduction into the hippie jam band scene. From there, I left ARU and did a short coast-to-coast tour with guitarist Derek Trucks and bassist Todd Smallie.

**MD:** Eventually you ended up in the great trio with guitarist Shawn Lane and bassist Jonas Hellborg.

**Jeff:** Yes, that was another amazing improv group. Our goal each night was to try and play a whole night of completely improvised music. Towards the end of our time together we were able to do that in a very musical way.

**MD:** Your next gig was with Leftover Salmon?

**Jeff:** Yeah. They're a great bluegrass-based group that I've recently been touring with again, off and on. It's a lot of burning, up-tempo bluegrass music. Sometimes they'll do thirty-minute medleys of that stuff. I've always tried to approach it from a bebop sensibility, with 2 and 4 on the hat and jazz triplets or straight quarters on the ride. This gig really helped fine-tune my chops, because we were on the road over two hundred days a year, with lengthy soundchecks and lots of practice time.

**MD:** Around that time you toured with Jazz Is Dead. What was it like double drumming with Rod Morgenstein on that tour?

**Jeff:** I love double drumming. We did a drum solo where we played four bars of time and then Rod played a two-bar solo and I would answer with a two-bar solo. We would repeat

that format while dividing the solo in half until we divided it all the way down to where we were trading 16th notes. That was tricky!

I also did some cool double drumming with a great drummer named Jim White, who is known as Apt. Q259. He has a great understanding of double drumming with a yin-yang approach for each drummer to complement one another. Inexperienced drummers will usually try and mimic the other drummer, creating a louder version of the same thing, but usually not as tight, with a lot of flams in the groove.

I like to approach double drumming the way Chris Parker and Steve Gadd did in Stuff, which is where one person plays high, tight

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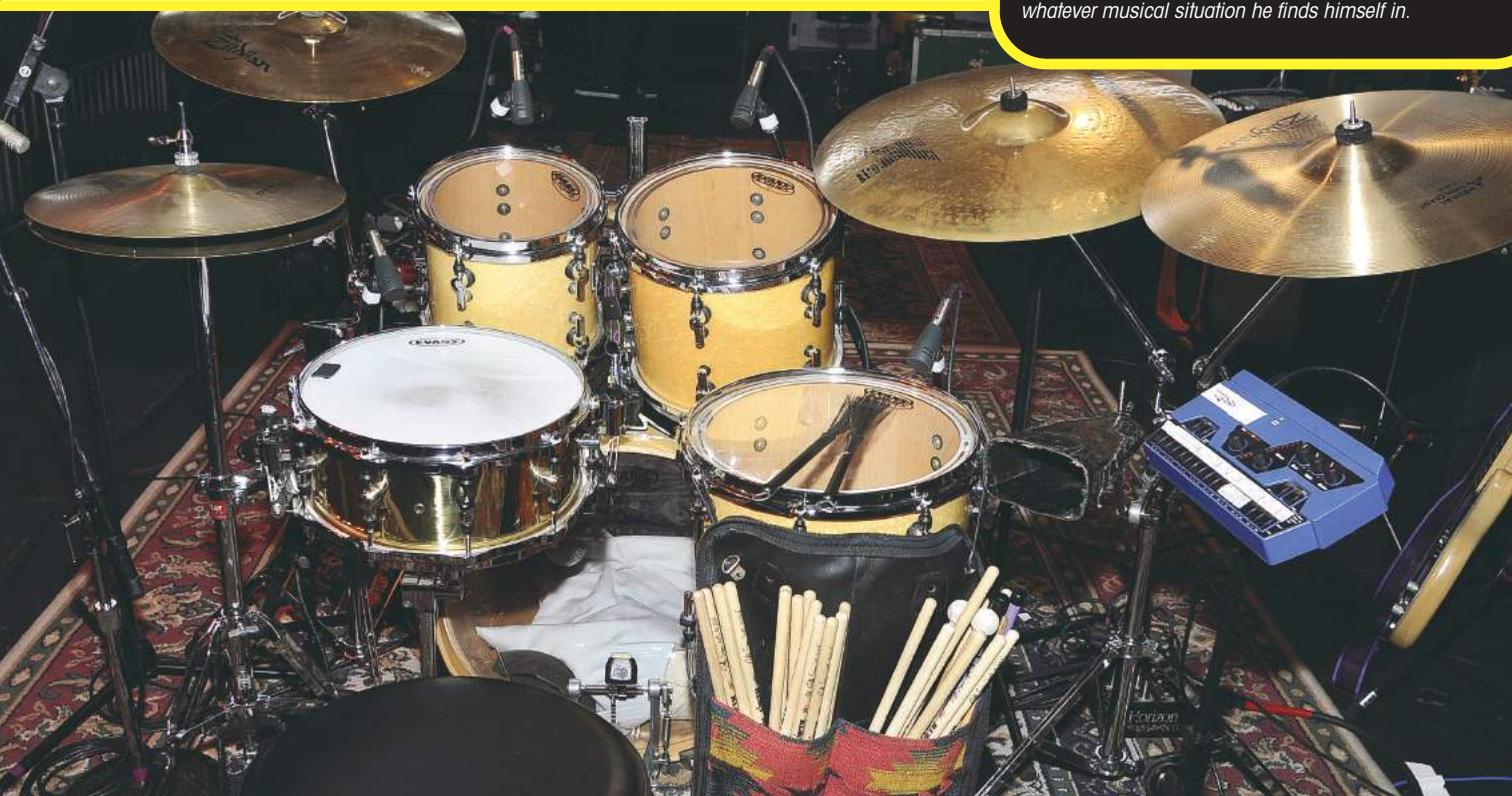
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**Heads:** Evans

**Sticks:** Vic Firth Apt. Q258 5A and 5B models

*This kit shown in the photo is different from the one described here. Jeff varies his setup to suit whatever musical situation he finds himself in.*



sounds, while the other plays low, open sounds on the kit. It worked well and it never sounded like two drummers. It always sounded like one ultra-funky drummer.

In *Jazz Is Dead*, I let Rod have the lead role and I just tried to complement his playing. He's such a strong player, and I have a lot of respect for him. Ultimately, with two drum-

mers, the goal is to represent the entire sonic spectrum of the drumkit without getting in each other's way. I think the yin-yang method works best.

**MD:** Where did you go from there?

**Jeff:** My next gig was with Susan Tedeschi, who is Derek Trucks' wife. That was a fun gig because it was mostly blues, which was differ-

ent music from what I'd been playing. That lasted a year, until she took some time off to have her second child. Then came the call from The Black Crowes.

**MD:** What happened?

**Jeff:** I auditioned for the band and got the gig. But the night before rehearsals began, Steve Gorman called to say that he had decided to

## JEFF SIPE'S TIME, TEACHING, AND WARM-UP TECHNIQUES

The thing that's helped my playing the most over the past few years is working with a metronome in a way that's helped me focus on time and groove. I turn on the metronome and mentally move the click to different parts of the beat, other than on beat 1. I'll hear the click as the second, third, or fourth 16th note of the beat, or any partial of any note grouping other than the 1. This forces you to become responsible to always know where 1 is. For instance, if you're playing a triplet, mentally move the click to the second or third beat of the triplet.

I realized that by practicing with a metronome and simply using the click as the 1, it was becoming a time crutch. It was dictating the time to me and I was reacting to the metronomic time. With my new method, I was dictating the time to the metronome and having it react to *my* time. It becomes a fun and challenging game. But most of all, it's really helped to focus my time.

As a teacher, I usually offer more inspiration than advice. I always suggest to my students to listen harder and think about applying different concepts. If they do that, they'll end up teaching themselves. My first question to a student is, "What do you want to accomplish?"

The first thing that's revealed when I hear a student play is their intention. The next thing I listen for is accuracy. Most players, from beginner to pro level, have a tendency to rush the beat. Great time is all about understanding the true space between two notes. Once you discover that and focus on it, the time feels so much more comfortable. These are the first things that I make my students aware of as they begin to work with a metronome.

A practice routine that's been ideal for me is to start with motion studies for twenty minutes, in sort of a Tai Chi approach. First, stand in front of a mirror and turn sideways so you can watch your body motions. Next, slow your pulse down by taking slow, deep breaths and relaxing your shoul-

ders. Then hold your arms out at an imaginary plane around your naval area with drumsticks in hand. Slowly lift your wrist as though you're a puppet with a string attached to your wrist. Then do the same, with imaginary string from the middle knuckle, until your stick is pointing straight up. Then lower your wrist and lift your forearm to a right angle. Then lower the imaginary knuckle string. Do this slowly and look at the bead of the stick while you're breathing and holding it still. Try to relax the nerves to the point where you eliminate the shaking at the bead of the stick. Then, as you raise and lower each stick, focus on the different muscle groups and try to relax them to eliminate any nervous shaking.

Think of your arm as a garden hose. When you shake a garden hose, the water flows out in a smooth wave. The point of these exercises is to get the Chi to flow. When I do this for twenty minutes and then sit down at the kit, I'm totally warmed-up and I feel like I've already been playing for three hours.

Also, as you're doing these exercises, set the metronome at about 40 bpm and subdivide, in your head, various groupings of notes. So as you're doing these Tai Chi-type exercises, you're also practicing subdividing notes in your head. By the time you hit the kit, you're flying!

Once I'm on the kit, I work on the metronomic displacement that I discussed earlier. I usually start with feeling the click on two, like a two-beat, then I move to triplets, and continue modulating notes up to twelve and then back down again to two. So the pulse always remains the same, but the rate within the note groupings increases and then decreases. I do this first with single strokes and then once I complete the two to twelve modulations, I start over using double strokes.

So once my body is relaxed, the Chi is flowing, and my mind is focused on the modulations, I am totally in the zone. Whatever my mind can imagine from that point is wide open for experimentation.



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do the tour. It was a bit disappointing because I had really crammed hard to learn almost sixty songs for the tour. But they treated me well and I was compensated for my time. And I ended up getting the call from Phil Lesh to tour with him.

**MD:** What was it like getting to play with one of the founders of The Grateful Dead? You had

finally become a veteran of the jam band scene.

**Jeff:** Yes, Phil gave me my diploma. [laughs] And what a great experience! All the hippie-jam bands that I had ever worked with had finally led me to the granddaddy of all jam bands. The overall framework of the material was set, but getting from song to song was

totally improvised and unpredictable. We might play a twenty-minute outro of a tune before launching into the next song. Or we'd play an intro that was fifteen minutes long before we started the actual arrangement. It was more structured when we played behind singers Ryan Adams and Joan Osborne.

I'll never forget Phil pulling me aside on the last tour and saying, "Man, you've got to play more drums and less cymbals. My high-end hearing was a gift to Jerry Garcia! I can't hear the cymbals, so if you're not playing drums, I don't know you're there."

**MD:** Did you get the Trey Anastasio gig from his involvement in the Phil Lesh tour?

**Jeff:** Yeah, Trey and I reunited during that tour. We were jamming at a soundcheck and it just felt so cool. We were just playing textures and colors for about fifteen minutes, no beats or grooves. It was fresh and spontaneous. Trey called me to sub for Raymond Weber, and then after the tour he asked me to stay on with the band. Lately, I've been working with Keller Williams & The WMDs.

**MD:** What's Keller's gig all about?

**Jeff:** It's a great, low-pressure gig. We don't take it too seriously. We do a couple of rehearsals and then go out and play. We only play a handful of shows a year, because Keller stays busy as a solo artist.

I've noticed that the younger kids enjoy Keller more doing his one-man-band show, while an older audience comes out to see the band. I get to play a lot of punk grooves with Keller, with a Porno For Pyros vibe—really slamming, in-your-face grooves. It's important for



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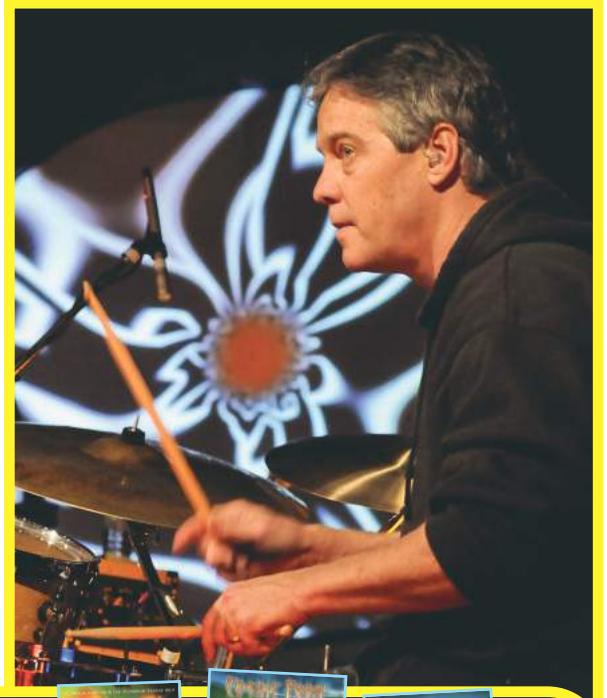
## JEFF SIPE

me to always have this type of diversity in my playing, to help keep me fresh and creative.

**MD:** What was the recording process like for Keller's CD, Dream, on the tracks with John Scofield, Victor Wooten, and Bela Fleck?

**Jeff:** I was sent the tracks to layer my parts on. So, unfortunately, I didn't get to go into the studio and record live with those great players. It was a bit frustrating, because I had to play on top of bass and rhythm guitar tracks without knowing what the rest of the song was going to sound like. I learned a lot about recording this way.

When I listen back to the



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Hellborg/Lane  
Jonas Hellborg  
Hellborg/Lane  
Jeff Sipe  
Jeff Sipe  
Jeff Sipe  
Susan Tedeschi  
Susan Tedeschi  
Rob Wasserman/Craig Erickson/T Lavitz/Jeff Sipe  
Grease Factor  
Grease Factor  
Leftover Salmon  
Drew Emmitt  
Jeff Coffin  
Jeff Sipe/Jeff Coffin  
Project Z  
Project Z  
Alex Machacek/Matthew Garrison/Jeff Sipe

### ALBUM

Col. Bruce Hampton & The Aquarium Rescue Unit  
Mirror Of Embarrassment  
In A Perfect World  
Temporal Analogues Of Paradise  
Time Is The Enemy  
Zenhouse  
Personae  
Timeless  
Art Of The Jam  
Jeff Sipe & The Apartment Projects Live, Vol. 1  
Wait For Me  
Live From Austin, TX  
Cosmic Farm  
Off The Cuff  
Grease Factor  
The Nashville Sessions  
Long Road  
Bloom  
Duets  
Project Z  
Lincoln Memorial  
Improvisation

final mix, I feel I could have played a little stronger to make this kind of music more interesting. I feel like my tracks are a little flat, in that respect, and I could have spiced them up a bit. When you're recording to the bed rhythm tracks, you have to be able to imagine the whole picture from a volume, intensity, and musical standpoint. This was a great learning experience.

**MD:** As a veteran of the genre, what's your take on the whole jam band scene?

**Jeff:** Sometimes I feel that the whole "jam band" label is a convenient way to package

the music, put festivals together, and sell it to a particular cultural environment. But the word "jam" means a lot to me. It means what Miles Davis and all the heavy jazz cats have been doing for years. It means what all the international tribal cultures have been doing for generations. It's grown out of the musical necessity for improvisation and exploration. It's on a parallel with the exploratory jazz spirit, but not as scientific. The jam band scene attracts people interested in hearing music as an expressive journey explored by creative artists.

Barry Kerch of Shinedown

Photo by Neil Zlozower



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## JEFF SIPE

**MD:** For a drummer interested in learning to play this genre of music, what are the most important elements to jam band drumming?

**Jeff:** The biggest element is transition from section to section, or idea to idea. So much of the jam band music consists of musicians following each other like a school of fish. The musicians are instinctively following each other and moving collectively. The drummer always has the choice to follow or lead. That's the drummer's main priority.

When you jam long enough with other musicians, you start to realize where things naturally want to go, and the music will really create itself. If you surrender to what needs to be played in the next measure, the music will write itself. So there's a fine line between following, leading, and letting the music dictate the journey. All three are necessary to create and complete the journey. You've got to have the humility to realize that the music is much greater than you.

The other aspect to jam band drumming that's very popular is the tribal, hypnotic, droning style of playing: very simple with not a lot of complexity to the rhythm. But there also seems to be a growing audience that's intrigued by the mystery of the more cerebral rhythms that stem from the jazz world. For people who are interested and intrigued by mystery, and delighted by the truth, the fine arts hold more romance and fascination.

**MD:** I feel that your drumming on the Machacek, Garrison, Sipe Trio recording, *Improvisation*, is the most spiritual and deeply musical of your career. Can you describe the drum break that you created on the track "There's A New Sheriff In Town"?

**Jeff:** I was thinking of the recordings Alex Machacek did with Terry Bozzio and the way they changed the rate on every pulse, where they played groups of three, eleven, and five in a 4/4 context. The concept of rate change within the pulse really fascinates me. It's like rhythmic poetry, and I wanted to explore that aspect of my drumming with Alex because he is a master of that concept.

Alex and Matt had both finished their solos and started into this section with long, sustaining open chords. That seemed like the perfect opportunity for me to explore a Zappa-esque, "Black Page" type of rhythmic concept.

**MD:** What's happening for you currently and in the near future?

**Jeff:** Jeff Coffin [Bela Fleck & The Flecktones' saxophonist] and I have recorded a duet album that will be released in 2008. I also recently recorded an album in Nashville with man-

dolinist/vocalist Drew Emmitt from Leftover Salmon that includes a host of amazing musicians.

In early 2008, I'll be recording with my original bandmates from ARU, Jimmy Herring and Oteil Burbridge, along with Derek Trucks and some special guests. I also have a trio of excellent musicians, featuring the amazing guitarist Mike Seal, that I work with at home in Ashville, North Carolina, and another trio in Atlanta with keyboardist Ike Stubblefield and guitarist Grant Green Jr.

I have two amazing kids and a wonderful

wife who understands me and allows me to do my art. I count my blessings and say my prayers every day. I've never really plotted out my career. I've always found myself drifting in and out of things. All flowers bloom and decay, but some have actually bloomed twice for me. I'm really enjoying a more mature relationship with people and friends I've known for many years. And I'm constantly trying to push my drumming to a higher musical and spiritual level.



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THE WEIRD, WACKY, AND WONDERFUL

PERCUSSIVE WORLD OF THE

**BLUE MAN GROUP**

by Waleed Rashidi



Jenny Clack

**T**he Blue Man Group isn't your typical percussion ensemble. In fact, they aren't your typical group of musicians in the classic sense, as they're more of an art machine—it's physical, it's visual, and best of all, it's entertaining. From three men painted in blue at the front of the stage, interacting with the audience while pounding on the most unusual percussion instruments on the planet, to the backing band of string players and drummers providing the sonic backdrop, a Blue Man Group show isn't just something that's worth checking out—it's something that needs to be experienced.

Todd Perlmutter has been one of the few people deputized with assembling and producing this theatrical musical concept, which began two decades ago in New York City by founders (and original Blue Men) Phil Stanton, Chris Wink, and Matt Goldman. Though he's been with the company for just over eleven years, Perlmutter has already seen the single show grow into an international phenomenon that finds nine performances each day at venues across the globe and in a variety of other settings.

The company's Tokyo-based show is its newest production and is featured in a sit-down theater made exclusively for The Blue

Man Group. The four-piece backing band features two drummers and two string players—plus the three Blue Man percussionists. "It's pretty insane, as the Japanese people are going nuts for this," Perlmutter says. "Right from the very beginning in New York, there were so many Japanese tourists coming to see the show that we knew it would eventually get over to Japan."

But getting *anywhere* involves much more than your typical musical theater performance. "It's a very weird show," Perlmutter admits. "It doesn't fit the standard format for how you open a show. The running costs are pretty high—there are a lot of consumables."

It also took a while for The Blue Man Group to find the right partners to make their show in Japan happen—and that includes casting the right musicians. Perlmutter says he auditioned a few hundred musicians, yet only four were cast for the show. Still, such a ratio wasn't exclusive to the Tokyo show. "The odds are pretty similar everywhere; you get about one musician who's right for Blue Man for every hundred that show up," he admits. "I've done this in Germany, Holland, and London, and it's the same in the States too; we're doing about one percent."



### Want To Turn Blue?

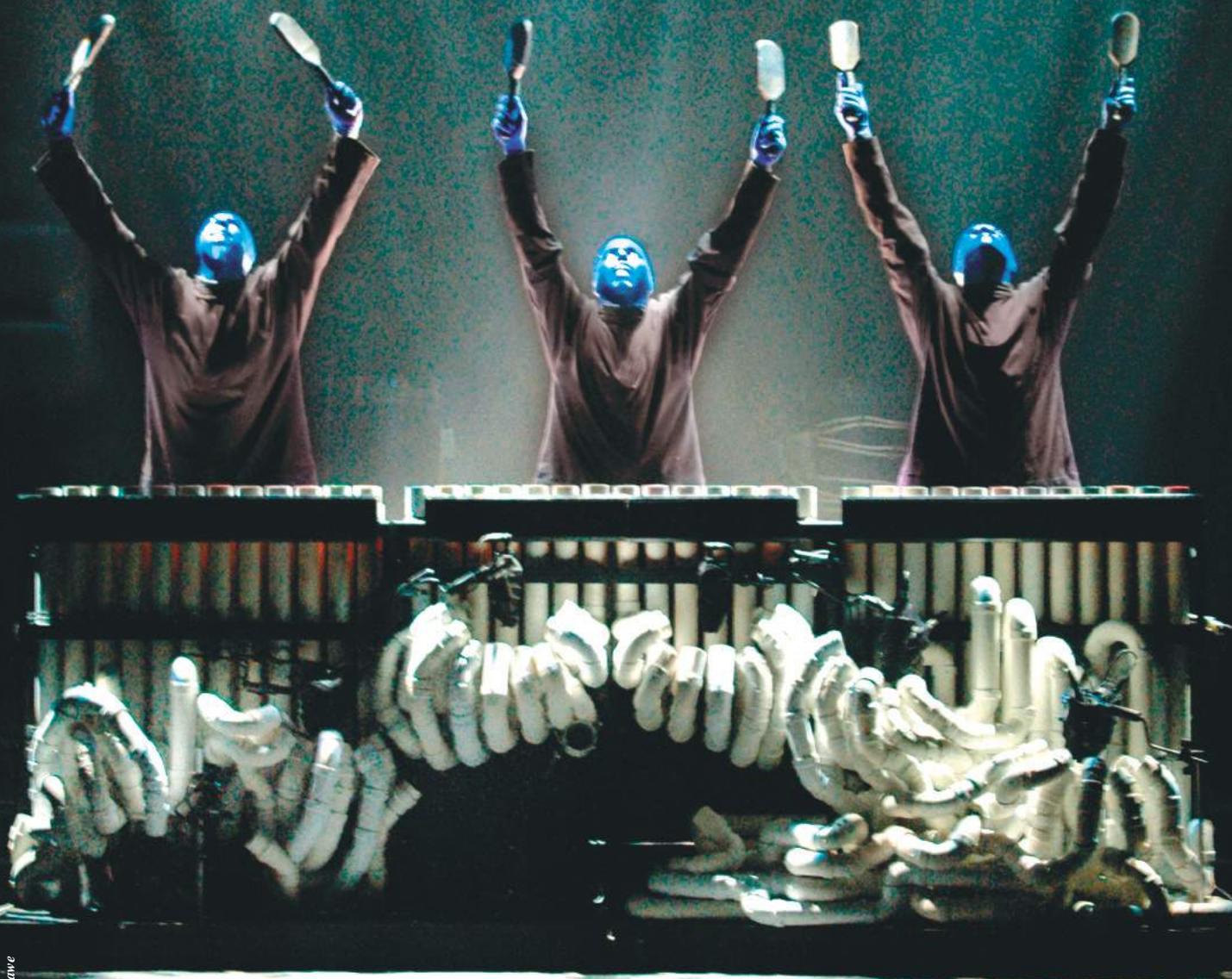
The criteria for becoming an actual Blue Man include meeting a certain height requirement, plus having skill in a couple of different areas. "It's hard to find Blue Men, because either they're drummers that can act, or actors that can learn to drum," Perlmutter says, noting that

a few current Blue Men hail from drumline experience. "We have every combination in the company. Some people have the seeds of being able to play, and then the sheer work load will turn them into excellent drummers. Some guys come in as smoking drummers and have to do the same kind of work, but in terms of learning how

to act. I don't know which is harder."

With approximately a hundred musicians in the Blue Man company, including sixty to seventy actual Blue Men, the outfit is able to be selective about who gets the coveted available slots. "Drumming-wise, it's an impressive talent pool," says Perlmutter. "I'm kind of amazed.

**"DRUMMING-WISE, IT'S AN AMAZING TALENT POOL. THOSE GUYS HAVE BEEN PLAYING TOGETHER FOR YEARS, AND THEIR GROUP DRUMMING ABILITIES ARE UNBELIEVABLE."**



The guys that play in Vegas—they have four drummers per show—have been playing together for years, and their group drumming abilities are unbelievable. We've done recording sessions with those guys, and they can do anything."

They also have to do anything just about anywhere—in indoor theaters, outdoor arenas, or inside recording studios. In fact, The Blue Man Group has had many experiences outside of its typical theater settings, including performing on various television dates and outdoors at events like the Coachella Music And Arts Festival in 2003, which featured an early version ("The Complex") of the band's current rock-based tour, titled "How To Be A Megastar 2.1." "That show, because it's like a rock show, can be done outdoors, indoors, or in any large venue," Perlmutter says.

### Drumming Requirements

Of course, The Blue Man Group show wasn't always this ubiquitous or versatile. The show started in 1988, and Perlmutter was the first drummer to set up camp outside of Manhattan, as the founding drummer of the Boston show. And though he had to audition to get his place, the hiring process has changed significantly throughout the years.

"We have formulas and many different people involved," he says. "The first part of the audition involves playing the simplest rock 'n' roll beat song from the show. I play it—it's really short, like a minute—and then I have the auditioners play it. It's the easiest and simplest thing, just to see if they can cover this simple part to make music."

Next Perlmutter looks for whether or not potential candidates can shed their independence—a characteristic that's often the opposite of a drumset player's education. "In Blue Man drumming, there's a lot of 8th notes being played with the two feet at the same time," he says. "Believe it or not, that can be a strange thing for a lot of drummers because it's very uncomfortable. I've seen some amazing players be thrown off by it. It's about balance, having both limbs in the air at the same time."

After that, Perlmutter often has the drummers perform more complex patterns along with other drummers. "Because there's a lot of group drumming involved," he



The Blue Man "drumline" in action

Happy Yoshida

says, "there's a thing we ask auditioners to do where one guy will play the floor tom with his hands as a kick pattern and another guy will play the hi-hat and snare pattern. The two players need to sound like one drummer. And that's another thing that has shown to be a challenge for some auditioners. It sounds easy, but making it groove is a challenge. You have to be able to adapt. Our drum parts are really out there and bizarre. You have to start from square one with your approach to the drumset in The Blue Man Group."

### Those Bizarre Instruments

The Blue Man Group's unique stage instrumentation is another intriguing element of the show. Though the backing band performs on fairly conventional instrumentation, the Blue Men are often found working with incredible musical creations. "We have a creative depart-

ment in New York, and there's a shop in Brooklyn where there are guys who help create and design all kinds of instruments," says Perlmutter. "Some of these instruments are made of plumbing material.

"When we worked on a soundtrack," he continues, "we had the shop make six full percussion stations out of metal materials, some created, some found, but all new instruments. Each station had ten to twelve percussion instruments on it." Perlmutter adds that they've even created instruments for specific one-off gigs.

### Learning The Show

As for creating new music, Perlmutter says the show was originally passed down orally ("Kind of like a ghost story," he laughs), but it's best when it's shown to the musicians. Therefore videos for the music in the show are made for the musicians to learn from. And new Blue Man music isn't just composed for the stage shows, as it's also made for videos, commercials, albums, and other appearances.

The music often requires some specific demands. "There's a new piece in the show in Japan," Perlmutter says, "and because it had to back up the action happening on stage, it had to create tension. It had to be quiet enough so that you could hear the voiceover that was happening, but it had to be dynamic and build from beginning to end."

Perlmutter admits that recording the instruments can be a challenge, even in The Blue Man Group's specially designed studio. (They had to



Happy Yoshida

create their own recording studio because some of their instruments were too big to fit in a regular one.) In addition, the materials the instruments have been made out of have proven to be, at times, unreliable. For instance, the first tubulum, a long cylindrical tube that is struck, was merely a cardboard carpet roller. However, this was eventually replaced with larger PVC tubing with rubberized reeds. "It's hard to get them loud enough, especially over the sound of acoustic drums, so they keep making improvements to make them louder, and that's helpful."

More recently, The Blue Man Group has found an ally in Tama, who have supplied the outfit with conventional drums. "We have such a gigantic drum need," says Perlmutter. "When the tour goes out, we need eighty drums, and Tama has really stepped up and partnered with us. They were interested in what we were doing. And we were like, finally, we'll get a partner who'll understand our massive needs."

"For instance," Perlmutter continues, "the Vegas show at The Venetian has specific acoustic needs. Tama sent a dozen snare drums for us to try out so we could pick just the right model. They've been very cool and understanding."



Happy Yoshida

#### Do You Have The Guts?

Performing each night to audiences ranging from children to their grandparents, it's important for Perlmutter to ensure that the Blue Man Group finds the right musicians with the right characteristics. "The guys that turn out to be right for the Blue Man Group are the ones who

are able to roll with things," he insists, "especially when something new is thrown at them, which happens all the time. They just have to go for it. I often refer to it as having guts. These guys are fearless."



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# The Classic Grooves Of Stevie Wonder

by Ed Breckenfeld



**MUSIC KEY**

open	O	R.C.	C.C.
H.H.	○	Belt	*
T.T.	●		
S.D.	○		
F.T.	○		
B.D.	○		
H.H.	○	ghost	rim-
w/foot	○	note	click

**D**uring Stevie Wonder's peak years as a recording artist, it seemed as if he could do no wrong. Between 1972 and 1976 he released some of the greatest R&B albums of all time, much of which he created with little help from other musicians.

A brilliant multi-instrumentalist, Stevie's drumming represents just one fraction of his immense talent. Compared to his songwriting, singing, keyboard and harmonica playing, and musical innovations, his drumming is often overlooked. This month we pay tribute to one of America's finest musicians by putting the spotlight directly on his percussive abilities. Here are some of his best drum grooves from throughout his recording career.

## Music Of My Mind (1972) "Love Having You Around"

Stevie Wonder had a great early career in the '60s as a child star at Motown, where he learned the art of making records from the label's legendary musicians and producers. This album marked his artistic coming of age. With the exception of a few solos by guest musicians, the entire album was written, produced, and performed by Stevie. In this opening funk track, check out how he returns to 8th notes on the hi-hat halfway through the second bar. (3:33)

1

♩ = 107

## "Seems So Long"

This half-time ballad is even more jazz-flavored. The interplay between Stevie's ride cymbal, hi-hat, and bass drum reveals impressive coordination and technique. (1:17)

2

♩ = 114

## Talking Book (1972)

### "You Are The Sunshine Of My Life"

Talking Book was Stevie's commercial breakthrough. Its release signaled the beginning of a five-year stretch of success that made him one of the most dominant artists of the era. This tune became a pop standard. It begins as a gentle love song before erupting with an energy provided mostly by Wonder's drumming. Notice the ride cymbal/kick drum interplay in this chorus beat. (2:12)

3

♩ = 135

## "Superstition"

Here's one of the coolest drum intros of all time. The infectious feel of this groove comes directly from the swing in Stevie's hi-hat work. (0:00)

4

♩ = 97

Three staves of musical notation showing a drum break. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns with accents and ghost notes, typical of Stevie Wonder's style.

At the end of the song's first chorus, Stevie plays the following drum break, which perfectly encapsulates his unique combination of strong technique and uninhibited style. (1:13)

5

Two staves of musical notation for a drum break. It features a 4/4 time signature and includes triplets and various rhythmic patterns with accents.

### Innervisions (1973) "Too High"

Stevie's follow-up to Talking Book, Innervisions, is another leap forward with a strong turn towards social commentary. The album opens with this great funk groove. Check out the double-stroke/ghost-note combinations in his hi-hat triplets. (0:02)

6

One staff of musical notation for a drum break. It shows a 4/4 time signature with triplets and double strokes on the hi-hat.

### "Living For The City"

Here's Wonder's 3/4 drum solo that occurs just before the famous breakdown in this song. The repeating triplet ruffs provide a rhythmic theme as well as the perfect jump-off point into each lick. (3:55)

7

Three staves of musical notation for a 3/4 drum solo. It features repeating triplet ruffs and various rhythmic patterns.

### "Higher Ground"

The opening shuffle groove for this hit accompanies Stevie's wah-wah clavinet riff. Note how he doubles the bass drum with the hi-hat. (0:06)

8

One staff of musical notation for a drum break. It shows a 4/4 time signature with triplets and double strokes.

Two staves of musical notation for a drum break. It features a 4/4 time signature with triplets and various rhythmic patterns.

### Fulfillingness' First Finale (1974) "It Ain't No Use"

Wonder's next album continued to deliver hits. In the ending chorus of this track, Stevie pulls off some great ride cymbal work with bell accents while moving his snare off of the usual backbeats. (3:08)

9

Two staves of musical notation for a drum break. It shows a 4/4 time signature with triplets and various rhythmic patterns.

### Songs In The Key Of Life (1976) "Knocks Me Off My Feet"

For the album that many fans feel is his greatest achievement, Stevie employed a full band of musicians for some important tracks. (Drummer Raymond Pounds drums on "Sir Duke" and "I Wish.") However, Wonder's unique drumming graces much of the album. On this song, his playful 16th-note cymbal pattern sounds like it was placed on the bell of the hi-hat. In bar 2, note the two offbeat open hi-hats over a straight bass drum part. (0:09)

10

Two staves of musical notation for a drum break. It shows a 4/4 time signature with triplets and various rhythmic patterns.

In the final chorus groove, Stevie's bass drum and syncopated hi-hat patterns reveal another tricky coordination move. (2:43)

11

One staff of musical notation for a drum break. It shows a 4/4 time signature with triplets and various rhythmic patterns.

### "Summer Soft"

At the end of this track, Stevie is jamming full-out, with multiple fills and funky grooves performed in his inimitable style. (3:23)

12

Two staves of musical notation for a drum break. It shows a 4/4 time signature with triplets and various rhythmic patterns.



You can contact **Ed Breckenfeld** through his Web site, [www.edbreckenfeld.com](http://www.edbreckenfeld.com).



# The Boppers

## Classic Solos From Three Jazz Giants

by Dave Miele

**S**ome of the most valuable jazz lessons can be found on CD and mp3. There you'll find classic examples from all of the masters who created the vocabulary of the music.

The solos that are transcribed in this article were played by three of the most important drummers of the bebop/hardbop era: Philly Joe Jones, Max Roach, and Art Blakey. If you're serious about being a jazz drummer, check out these guys. Grab a copy of the recordings, play along, and begin to assimilate some of their signature licks and patterns into your own ideas.

### Philly Joe Jones—"Workout"

From Hank Mobley's *Workout*

Our first transcription is the first thirty-two bars of Philly Joe's solo on the title cut of tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley's classic Blue Note release *Workout*. This hard-swinging, up-tempo solo features the drummer's trademark rudimental approach and selective use of the bass drum. It's a technically demanding solo, so begin by learning it at a slow tempo.



1

$\text{♩} = 135$

5

9

13

17

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

21

25

29

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

The musical score is written on a single staff in 4/4 time. It begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 135. The score is divided into measures, with bar numbers 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, and 29 indicated at the start of their respective lines. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and accents. Some measures contain triplets, indicated by a '3' above the notes. Rudimental patterns are written below the staff in some measures, such as 'R L L R R L R L L R R L' under measures 17-20 and 29-32. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat signs.

## Max Roach—"Decision"

From Sonny Rollins' Vol. 1

Our next transcription features the master Max Roach soloing with brushes. Roach makes extensive use of the rhythmic motif of the tune's melody—the first two notes of an 8th-note triplet—in bars 2, 9, and 15–16. During sections of the solo, Max maintains a legato feel with brush sweeps, indicated by a wavy line under the rhythms. The hi-hat closes on beats 2 and 4, and the bass drum feathers throughout, unless otherwise notated.



2

Musical notation for Max Roach's drum solo, starting at bar 2. The notation is on a single staff with a 4/4 time signature and a tempo marking of quarter note = 106. The solo consists of several lines of music, primarily using eighth-note triplets. Wavy lines under the notes indicate brush sweeps. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns and triplet markings. The solo ends at bar 25.

5

9

13

17

21

25

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# Art Blakey—"Wail March"

From Sonny Rollins' Vol. II

Our final transcription is taken from hard bop pioneer Art Blakey's solo in tenor sax giant Sonny Rollins' sixteen-bar tune "Wail March." Check out the march feel during the first sixteen bars. Also notice the drummer's signature triplet figures in bars 7-8 and 28-30. Blakey feathers the bass drum throughout.



3

$\text{♩} = 156$



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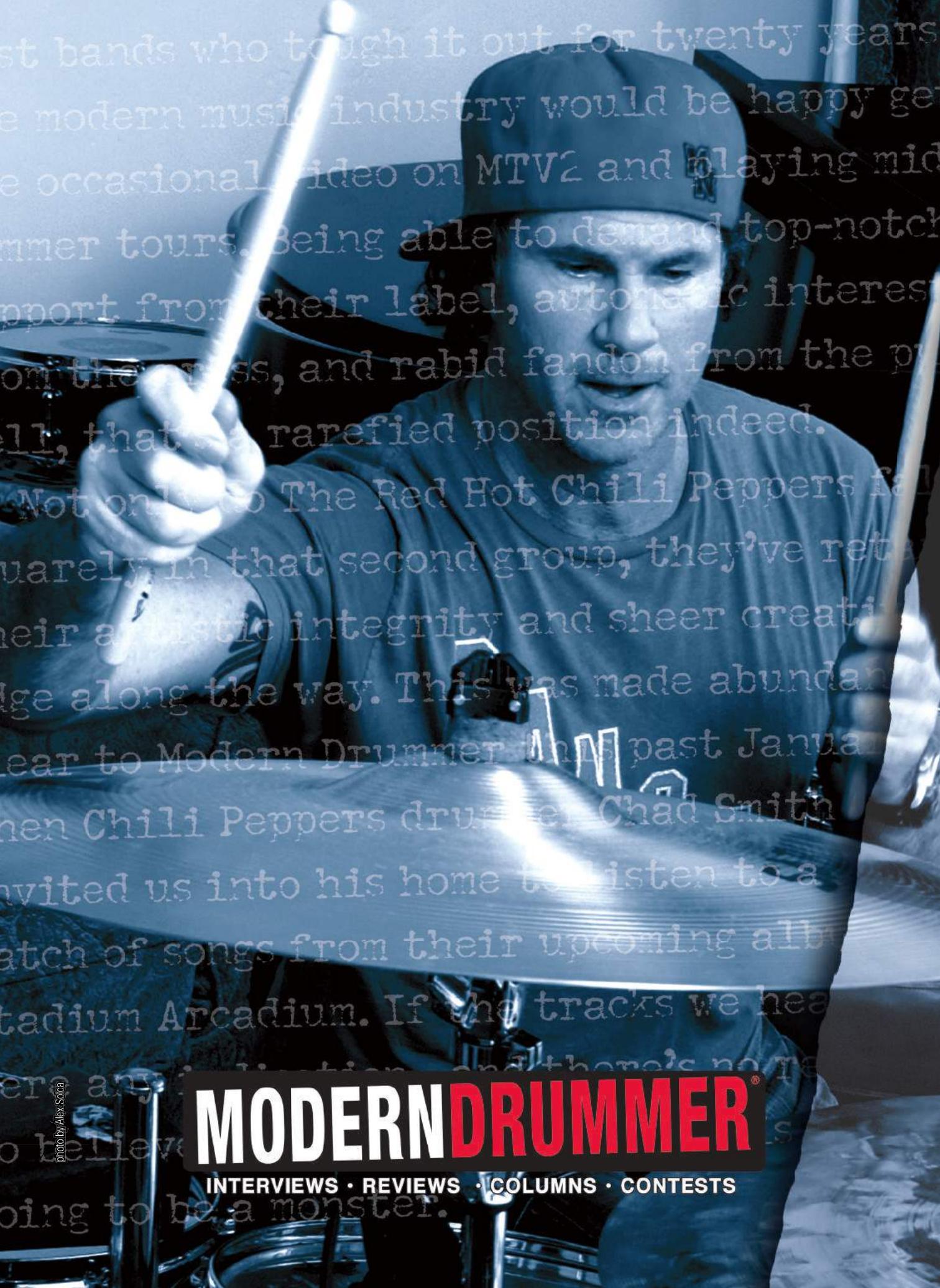


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hen Chili Peppers drummer Chad Smith  
vited us into his home to listen to a  
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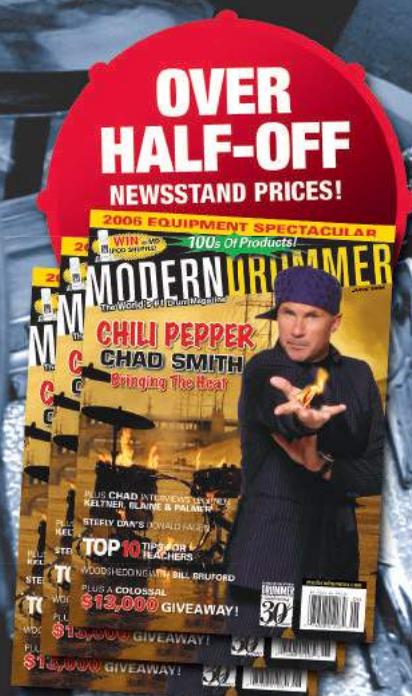
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to OWN the drums, man."

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(June 2006)

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# Develop Your Sound

## Personalize Your Playing By Studying The Masters

by Eric Novod



**T**here have been so many amazing drum grooves recorded that it's easy to get frustrated and think, "What can I possibly do that hasn't already been done?" Well, believe it or not, there are ways to incorporate influences from your favorite drummers while also developing your own voice.

Here are a few big-picture suggestions about beginning to incorporate influences in your playing without plagiarizing their exact grooves.

**1. Play along with tracks from your favorite drummers/bands.** Load up your iPod, listen to a song a few times, and then start playing along. Try to nail the grooves and fills as exactly as you can. The goal is to get into your favorite drummer's head. Also, try transcribing some licks, grooves, or fills. If you don't know how to read and write music, ask a local drum teacher for help.

**2. Play along with the same songs, but this time play "in the style of" your favorite drummers without copying them note for note.** When you practice in this manner, you're allowing yourself to incorporate your influences into your own drumming vocabulary. Go through this process with a diverse selection of drummers to give you a wide range of ideas.

### Using Transcriptions

Luckily, there are many books that can offer assistance in incorporating influences while developing your own sound. This article will concentrate on Ken Micallef and Donnie Marshall's recent release, *Classic Rock Drummers*. This book contains written musical examples and audio performances that are "in the style of" legendary drummers John Bonham, Keith Moon, Ringo Starr, Ian Paice, Mitch Mitchell, Ginger Baker, Charlie Watts, Stewart Copeland, Levon Helm, Richie Hayward, and Jeff Porcaro. So there's plenty of source material to begin developing our own ideas. Here are a few "in the style of" examples from the book.

### Ginger Baker, "White Room" –inspired R&B Groove

Although this example is based on the groove of this classic tune, it also appears on countless other Cream tracks, exposing some of Baker's unique musical tendencies. Note the use of ghost notes in measures 1–4, as well as the absence of ghost notes in measures 5–8. Also note the varying bass drum punches, the jazz/R&B swing feel, and the swooshing hi-hat sound.

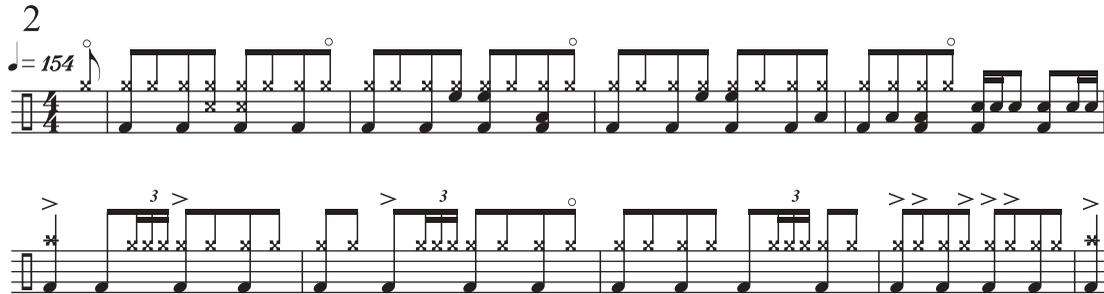
1  
♩ = 109

The musical notation shows a drum groove in 4/4 time with a tempo of 109. It consists of two staves of music. The first staff shows measures 1 through 4, and the second staff shows measures 5 through 8. The notation includes various drum symbols such as quarter notes, eighth notes, and rests, with some notes marked with 'x' to indicate ghost notes. The groove is characterized by a steady hi-hat pattern and varying bass drum punches.

## Stewart Copeland, "Four-On-The-Floor" Independence Groove

This four-on-the-floor groove can be heard on countless Police tracks, incorporating a reggae/ska feel, punk-rock energy, and jazz/funk independence. Note the melodic rimclicks and tom attacks in the first four measures (along with the open hi-hat in measures 1, 2, and 4). Also check out the signature 16th-note triplets on the hi-hat in measures 5–8. Copeland's unique approach to the drums borrowed many elements from different genres, making him the ultimate example of a drummer incorporating influences in order to develop a personal style.

2



## Keith Moon, Crash Cymbal-Based Triplet Groove

This groove captures many elements of Keith Moon's drumming—such as his blinding technical ability and innate musicality—that made him one of rock's all-time greats. Notice how the bass drum constantly changes in measures 1–5 and then shifts to 8th notes for the fill in measure 6. While most drummers would vary the bass drum during fills, Moon adds power by playing a steady bass drum part. Also notice the quarter note-based (but often changing) crash cymbal throughout the groove, the consistent snare accents on 2 and 4 (along with ghost-note embellishments), and the signature tom triplets in the middle of the groove (measures 3–5).

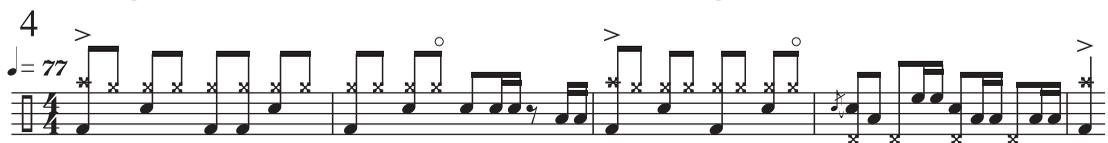
3



## Ringo Starr, Simple Execution And Beat Placement

There is so much to learn from this relatively simple Ringo-style groove and his perfectly placed tom fills. Note the classic R&B-inspired fill in measure 2. Also notice how the hi-hat foot is incorporated into the fill in measure 4.

4



## Jeff Porcaro, Classic Porcaro Shuffle

Jeff Porcaro often said that his "Rosanna" beat (from pop-rock band Toto's classic album IV) was the result of a combination of two of his favorite grooves: "Babylon Sisters" from Steely Dan's Aja (featuring Bernard Purdie on drums) and "Fool In The Rain" from Led Zeppelin's In Through The Out Door (with John Bonham on drums). This is another example of a drum icon creating a unique, personal groove by incorporating ideas from some of his favorite drummers.

Our final example is based on the slightly different shuffle that Porcaro played on "Black Friday" (Steely Dan) and "Lido Shuffle" (Boz Scaggs). Notice how the bass drum, snare, and hi-hat interlock within the triplets. Have fun!

5



# Jazz 101

## The Swing Feel And Triplet Independence, Part 3

by Dr. Sherrie Maricle

**MUSIC KEY**

**F**or our final installment on jazz independence and the swing feel, we're going to focus on orchestrating each note of the triplet on a different instrument (snare, bass drum, and hi-hat) while keeping a steady jazz ride pattern.

This level of coordinated independence represents the final building block to a solid contemporary jazz foundation. Once you've completed this section, you will be able to use any limb, or combination of limbs, within a jazz groove without losing the swing.

### Orchestrating Triplets

Examples 1–6 orchestrate each note of the triplet within a sequential pattern. Use flowing body movements to help develop muscle memory that will allow you to feel how these patterns connect physically and musically.

Example 7 alternates between each of the previous six patterns.

You can also include your ride cymbal as a component of the sequence, which will create a four-against-three hemiola. In Example 8, the triplet is divided between all four limbs. This type of pattern works well within an ongoing beat or as a fill. You can begin this pattern on any instrument and move sequentially.

## Putting It All Together

Examples 9–11 will test the depth of your feel, comprehension, and coordination by combining patterns from all previous sections. I've added rests to some of these exercises. After all, silence is an important part of music too!

The image displays three musical exercises, labeled 9, 10, and 11, arranged vertically. Each exercise is written on two staves of music in 4/4 time. Exercise 9 consists of two staves of music, each containing four measures. The first staff has a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a quarter note, an eighth note, and a quarter note. The second staff has a quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, and a triplet of eighth notes. Exercise 10 also consists of two staves of music, each containing four measures. The first staff has a quarter note, a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter note, and a quarter note. The second staff has a quarter note, a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter note, and a quarter note. Exercise 11 consists of two staves of music, each containing four measures. The first staff has a quarter note, a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter note, and a quarter note. The second staff has a quarter note, a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter note, and a quarter note.

You should experiment by composing original exercises using the patterns from all previous sections. I suggest that you write them down to create your own book of practice material. If you're apprehensive about composing, you can begin by creating short patterns (perhaps two beats long). Then decide on how many beats, rests, or measures you'd like to include before each repetition. Each pattern in these articles can repeat as written, or you can transpose them to start on a different beat (or upbeat) each time through.

## Conclusion

The exercises in these articles are just a starting point for developing a contemporary jazz sound and feel. Your goal as a drummer is to make the music feel good. You do this by responding to your bandmates in a spontaneous, creative, and musical fashion while laying down a solid, seamless groove. To improve your ability to improvise, you must seek out opportunities to perform (in school, professionally, or at jam sessions), actively listen to different jazz styles, transcribe rhythmic patterns, take lessons, ask for feedback from friends and professionals, and imitate your favorite players. Remember: You cannot innovate until you imitate and assimilate.

Finally, it's important to design a practice routine that's relevant to your musical goals. When you know what you're trying to achieve, it's easier to stay motivated. And when you're motivated, you'll be more likely to integrate what you practice into your musical consciousness.



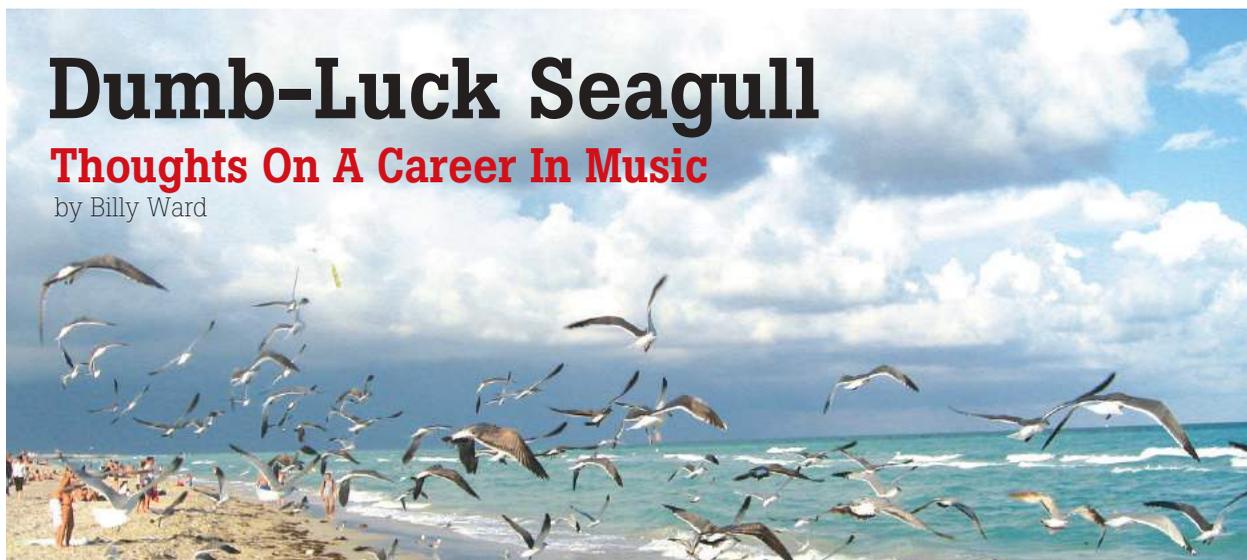
New York City drummer **Sherrie Maricle** is the leader of the acclaimed DIVA big band and the Five Play jazz quintet. For more info, log on to [www.divajazz.com](http://www.divajazz.com).



# Dumb-Luck Seagull

## Thoughts On A Career In Music

by Billy Ward



**I** recently attended an international art show in Miami Beach as a guest of my artist wife. Since I'm not an artist, I spent most of my time relaxing at the beach. But I couldn't help but notice the intensity of the tens of thousands of art dealers, art collectors, and artists as they, to varying degrees, freaked out about their livelihoods.

The dealers seemed to be worrying about whether they would sell enough at the show to meet the stupidly high expenses of appearing there. The collectors were no doubt hoping that the millions of dollars they planned to spend would get them a significant piece of art. And most interestingly, there were many artists in attendance, whose work *wasn't* being shown, yet who came to the show in hopes of learning the secret handshake: to get that lucky break and fulfill their lifetime dream of being an accepted artist. These observations made me think of the NAMM show, the large annual music trade show where a similar intensity exists for manufacturers and some musicians, all hoping to take one step forward in their careers.

*It's so odd to be on a beach in the middle of winter. The seagulls are gently flying around, seemingly sharing their turf over the sea (for fish to eat) and the beach (for human scraps of food). Yet these gulls aren't as annoying as they can be in other places I've been to, such as a lobster restaurant in a bay in Maine, where the gulls seem to know of no other technique to survive than to wait for the picnic table to be left by a family so they can then swoop in and get those French fries. No, these seagulls are mellow.*

Back at the art show, I noticed artists outside the main convention center who were handing out postcards of their work to anyone who would take them. People entering seemed to think the card might be something about the show. When they discovered they'd been duped, I noticed them registering disgust and tossing the card away. This is obviously *not* the way to get that gallery contract. This makes me think of all those CDs I've given to complete strangers at NAMM. Has any one of them paid off for

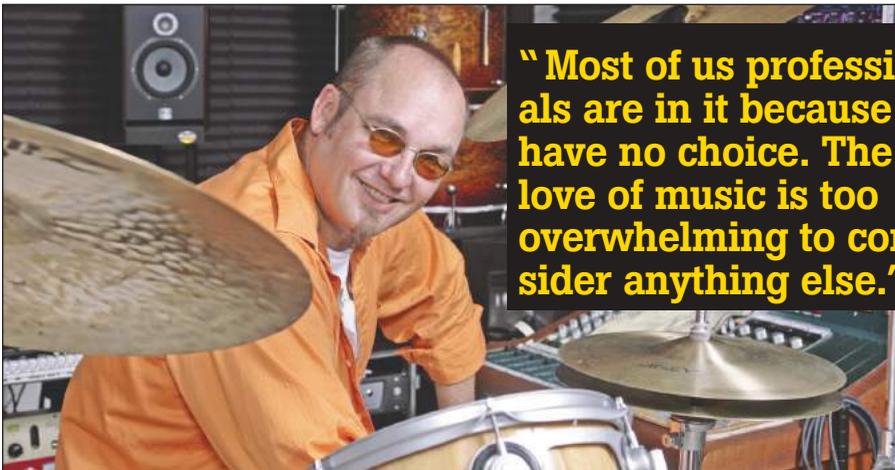
me? I now wonder...

Here's a story about one artist who attended this art show at his own expense. Let's call him Richard. His art wasn't on display, but he was hoping to get to know the right people to get his work shown. You could say he's trying to get a "record deal." Richard has drive and a sense of purpose. He's taken positive steps to be ready for a break. He has sacrificed and moved from his hometown to where the scene is. He personally knows those who are more directly involved in his style of art—or at least they're familiar with his face. He has quite a few friends who are artists as well, and some of them have careers that are far ahead of his, while he has other pals who are not quite up to his level. Richard has learned how to hang with the pals that are ahead of him without having them feel odd about his current station in the art world. The bottom line is, he knows the ropes on proper behavior in different settings.

For example, Richard knows not to expect to have any conversations during this art convention with the dealers that he knows from his art-based city. He realizes that they only want to speak to collectors. So Richard walks through the booths and simply nods with a smile; demonstrating that he is discreet, trustworthy, and mature. Those are qualities that galleries would hope for in a "perfect artist." The one thing Richard has in spades is faith in his maturity as an artist. He *knows* his work is good art because it sells and his artist friends all love it—and they would never lie about something as holy as art.

*Whoa! Suddenly one seagull is being chased by twenty others. This is now the third time I've seen this within two days. Is it some religious ritual? They are clearly very organized.*

Richard got a lucky break! Well, honestly, this doesn't really qualify as a break. Mostly, breaks happen in one's imagination, or in the movies, but this *is* a moment of possibility—and maybe even a wonderful opportunity. While Richard was waiting for a bus, a man came out to wait with him. After chatting for ten minutes and still waiting, they decided to split a cab together. Inside the taxi, it came out that this new contact was an important art dealer—a *very* important art dealer.



**"Most of us professionals are in it because we have no choice. The love of music is too overwhelming to consider anything else."**

impression can ruin it for you in an entire city. My artist friend Richard learned how to hang with the cats—both above and below him. In the end, his being a truly sensitive young man is what might be responsible for his latest achievement. His success might have been lost without these interaction skills. How are *your* personal skills?

Of course, your playing must be great—*really* great. One of my favorite things I ever heard John Good [of DW Drums] say is, "I will never tell you my drums are great. That's the kind of thing that only *others* can say about my work." As a drummer, you might want to take the same tack. (Ahem. .tactful. .cough, cough!)

Richard now has the dealer's promise to look at his Web site. In fact, the dealer left Richard with the impression that the timing was perfect, as he was currently looking for new artwork. Flying high as a kite, Richard sees some blue sky after so much darkness. As explained to me: "Many times, getting them simply to *look* at your work is the hardest thing to do."

*Oh, now I get it! The one gull has a fish in its mouth and the others want their share. Surely, they've all been flying around and watching the ground and water for food just as intently as that seagull. One seagull asks himself, "Why didn't I get that fish? I'm at least as talented as that dumb-lucky seagull."*

After attending so many NAMM shows, I've observed both the new instrument manufacturers hoping to make a foothold in the business and the aspiring drummers who wish for that break in the clouds, that juicy fish. How many young drummers wish to be endorsed and thus be recognized as "a cat"? Sadly, this is a well-known fact within band management companies, and it's why you might be surprised to know how little payment some sidemen receive. You see, there really are hordes of drummers out there vying for work.

I think you can combat this scenario by having unique skills with lots of flexibility in musical style. You want to be a cat? Move to where the cats live. Get as close to them as you can—but remember that one bad

If you don't have lots of people loving your work. .well. .maybe it's not that lovable. Too many young drummers are way too easy on themselves. They believe they don't need to master many styles of music. Listen up: Music is a melting pot of influences, and it's the subtle shadings that make all the difference. You need to own a *ton* of styles and nuance.

Your success hinges upon the quality of your work. But your nature and behavior as a person is also very important. And to be blunt, if you're even wondering about going into the music business, then you should be aware that most of your competitors never gave it a second thought. Most of us professionals are in it because we have no choice. The love of music is too overwhelming to consider doing anything else.

It is love that propels curiosity, which then leads to knowledge in the arts. My artist friend Richard loves art so much, all he wanted in that taxi ride was to speak about it with another lover of art, and that simple true thing has driven him towards future success. Richard and that seagull I mentioned are following their love. Here's hoping that you—and I—can become that dumb-luck seagull and catch a nice juicy fish!

**Billy Ward** is an in-demand session drummer and clinician. He's worked with Carly Simon, B.B. King, Robbie Robertson, Ace Frehley, John Patitucci, and Joan Osborne, among many others. His book, *Inside Out: Exploring The Mental Aspects Of Drumming*, is published by Modern Drummer Publications. His new DVD, *Voices In My Head*, is just out. Billy can be reached through his Web site, [www.billyward.com](http://www.billyward.com).



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# 12 Steps To Better Practicing

## How To Make Each Moment Count

by Mat Marucci

**T**here's a quotation regarding the importance of practice that's attributed to concert pianist Vladimir Horowitz. It goes, "If I miss one day, I know it. If I miss two days, my wife knows it. If I miss three days, my audience knows it."

The hours we put into practicing drum technique are very important in terms of improving and maintaining our playing skills. Unfortunately, in many cases the time spent behind the drums isn't put to the best use. For example, many drummers don't really practice new ideas or exercises. Instead, they play what they know. This can be great for polishing existing techniques, but no progress is being made. Then there's the old debate of quality versus quantity. My feeling is that if a drummer's focus is right, more can be accomplished in thirty minutes than in two hours of unfocused practice time.

The essence of a practice session should be musicality while striving for perfection and improvement. Let's take a look at each of these elements.

**Perfection.** Every technique should be executed as close to perfectly as possible. This includes hand positions, sticking, stick height, wrist movements, and touch. Practicing these things incorrectly will only lead to the development of improper technique.

**Improvement.** Each practice session should challenge you to accomplish something never previously done. This could be a new rudiment, a piece of music, or an exercise. It could also be a new tempo for an old exercise—not necessarily faster, just different. With this in mind, old exercise books can be great resources for new improvement opportunities.

**Musicality.** The purpose of playing any instrument is to play music. Consequently, music should be kept foremost in mind when practicing. Even a new rudiment or technical exercise should be thought of in terms of how it can be applied to music.

first year or so of study. Students looking toward—or already in—a college music major will likely need to practice from two to four hours per day. Career-minded young professionals might go as long as eight hours per day.

As steady gigs and other responsibilities increase, practice time will likely start to decrease, according to whatever the individual's personal needs and schedule will allow. But whatever the circumstances, some practice routine should be continued throughout one's professional life.

A word about the length of practice sessions: Protracted periods of drumming can cause carpal tunnel syndrome and lower back problems. To avoid these problems, medical experts recommend resting for five minutes out of each half hour. So make it twenty-five minutes on and five minutes off, throughout your overall practice period.

### The Twelve Steps

Here are twelve ways to make your practice sessions more productive—and more enjoyable. We all enjoy what we're doing much more when we can see improvement.

**1. Watch your hand position.** This is the number-one problem I've found with students, from beginner to advanced. No matter what grip you use—matched, traditional, or both—always make sure that your hands are in the correct position when practicing. These positions are used for a reason, and your development will be limited if you don't use them correctly. On the other hand, if you do practice them correctly, your playing will become cleaner and faster.

**2. Sticking.** Keep in mind the phrase, "one stick up, one stick down," and practice that way. You'll always have a stick in position to make a stroke either from the high ("up") position or from the low ("down") position. Concentration on sticking will help your hand technique flow much more smoothly.

**3. Stick height.** This is different from "sticking" in that it refers to how high you bring the sticks off the playing surface.

**There's no sense in putting in time and hard work if you don't go for perfection.**

### Practice Time

The amount of time necessary for practicing will vary from individual to individual. A beginner might practice thirty minutes to an hour each day, progressing to two hours after the

Whether you work from a full 90° position, a 45° angle, or anything in between, it's important that both sticks return to the same height after the downstroke. Most of us are not ambidextrous, and we tend to favor our strong hand, bringing it to a

higher position than that of the weak hand. This means one stick is traveling a longer distance to reach the drum whenever a stroke is made. Now, if one stick is traveling 8" and the other only 5", the stick that's farther away has to move faster in order to reach the drum in the same time interval as the closer stick. In addition, rebounds will be weaker with the closer stick.

Are your single-stroke and long rolls uneven? Stick height is probably at least part of the reason, along with hand position and sticking. Concentrate on these three elements and you'll see a vast improvement in your technique.

**4. Play off the drum.** Unless they've learned this technique somewhere along the way, most drummers—especially heavy hitters—play "into" the drum instead of "off of" it. When making your stroke, think "up," and bring the stick away from the head immediately after striking it. (Use the natural rebound of the stick to help accomplish this.) Some teachers describe this as "pulling the sound out of the drum." The shorter the time the stick is on the drumhead, the more resonant and responsive the drum will be. Thus you get a cleaner and fuller drum tone along with increased stick speed.

**5. Learn and practice the rudiments.** You don't have to be a rudimental champ to be a successful and musical drummer. But the rudiments are the alphabet with which a full drumming vocabulary is created, and having that vocabulary will be a definite plus for you. If you only study one rudiment per week, you'll have learned all twenty-six traditional rudiments in exactly six months—an accomplishment you'll feel good about.

**6. Work with a metronome.** Contrary to some opinions, working with a metronome will not make your playing stiff. What it will do is improve your time and meter—which are critical to drumming success. Use it at all different speeds, including the slowest ones. If and when you start to play live gigs with sweetening tracks or studio sessions with click tracks, you'll be grateful for the time you spent with your humble metronome.

**7. Keep the practicing habit.** We all know that occasionally time is at a premium and a full practice session is impossible. But even on those days you should do something—if only a ten- or twenty-minute keep-in-shape drill or warm-up routine.

**8. Vary your practice routine.** This is especially helpful when practice time is limited. Sometimes it's better to look at your overall practice regimen on a weekly basis rather than daily. On one day, spend the majority of the time on your hands. Spend another day on independence, another on reading, and another on rudiments. Be sure to spend some time creating new ideas, as well as "just playing." Some teachers suggest you do that at the end of your practice session. I've found it works better to do it at the beginning, to help get you warmed up and ready to focus on what you planned to work on that day. Just don't get so wrapped up in playing that you use up your available time.

**9. In regard to sticks:** You should generally use the same stick to practice with that you use to perform with. But it can be beneficial to spend a few minutes a week with heavier or lighter sticks to give your hand and wrist muscles a change. This can improve strength and reflexes.

**10. Study both grips.** If you generally play traditional grip, spend some time playing matched, and vice-versa. Each one has definite advantages. Traditional offers finger dexterity and flexibility of the

weak hand. Matched grip offers additional power and reach options. Neither is right or wrong; it's merely a matter of what works best for your playing applications. Have both at your disposal.

**11. Keep challenging yourself.** Never be satisfied. Be working on something new—a rudiment, a book, a rhythm—at all times. Once that's accomplished, move on to something else.

**12. Strive for perfection.** There's no sense in putting in time and hard work if you don't go for perfection. Just be your own toughest critic and evaluate your progress accurately. Don't be too easy on yourself...but don't sell yourself short, either.

## Final Words

Let me close by saying that all of the tips above relate only to practicing. When you're at a rehearsal or on a gig, don't think about them. Concentrate on the music and on feeling relaxed and comfortable. If you use the practice tips diligently, you'll find that they'll creep into your playing without your realizing it. As a result, you'll see a vast improvement in your overall drumming in a few short months.



**Mat Marucci** is a performer, author, educator, and clinician. His performing credits include jazz greats Jimmy Smith, Kenny Burrell, and Pharoah Sanders. He's made eight recordings as a leader and dozens as a sideman. Mat teaches at American River College and The Jazzschool (both in California), and he is the author of several books on drumming for Lewis Music and Mel Bay Publications.



# Warble While You Whack

## Practical Advice For The Singing Drummer

by John E. Citrone

**T**hink of singing drummers, and two immediately come to mind: Phil Collins with Genesis, and Don Henley with The Eagles. Both spent years singing from behind the kit before stepping out as lead vocalists. Levon Helm remained seated behind the drums while singing The Band's rootsy songs, Jellyfish's Andy Sturmer sang lead at center stage while standing behind a stripped-down kit, and even Beatle Ringo Starr and Monkee Mickey Dolenz piped up now and again from their thrones.

For any drummer, singing while playing presents a host of obstacles, from coordination and memorization issues to logistical problems involving extra equipment. Whether you're considering adding occasional background support or are tasked with cranking out lead vocals for four sets a night, a little planning and a lot of practice will make singing while playing a breeze. This article offers advice to help novice singing drummers get started, as well as tips to help experienced players navigate more complex vocal/drum arrangements.

### Basic Gear

The essentials for any singer are a microphone, a mic stand, a mic cable, and some sort of monitoring system. A music stand might also be necessary to hold lyric sheets. Whether the club provides this equipment or you have your own, be sure to figure the time necessary to set it up into your pre-show schedule.

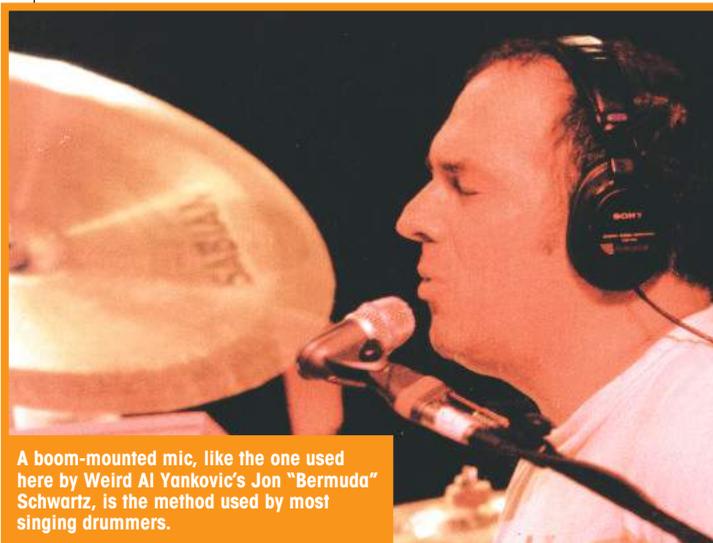
I won't go into specific microphone choices here. There are dozens of fine vocal mics on the market, in a wide price range. Do some research online, talk to singers you know about their mics, and determine which mic will best suit your needs and your budget.

### Setting Up

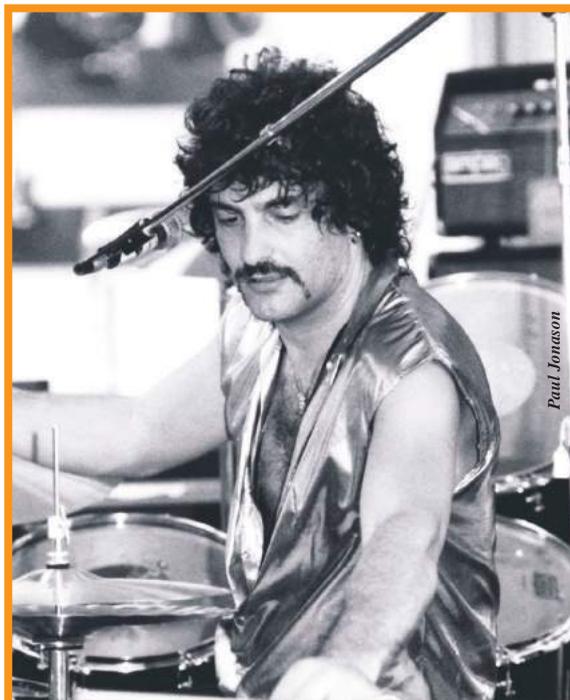
On an already crowded stage, the additional equipment required by a singing drummer could pose positioning problems—not only for that drummer, but also for other players. Though you might occasionally feel like whacking the lead guitarist in the back of the head with your mic stand, actually doing it at a show (even if by mistake) is probably not a good idea. So great care should be taken with respect to your personal space and that of your bandmates when you're setting up.

### Boom Mic Stands

A boom mic stand is the most versatile method of positioning a microphone for singing while allowing clearance for swinging drumsticks. Extending the stand to its highest point and bringing the boom arm down at an acute angle makes it easy

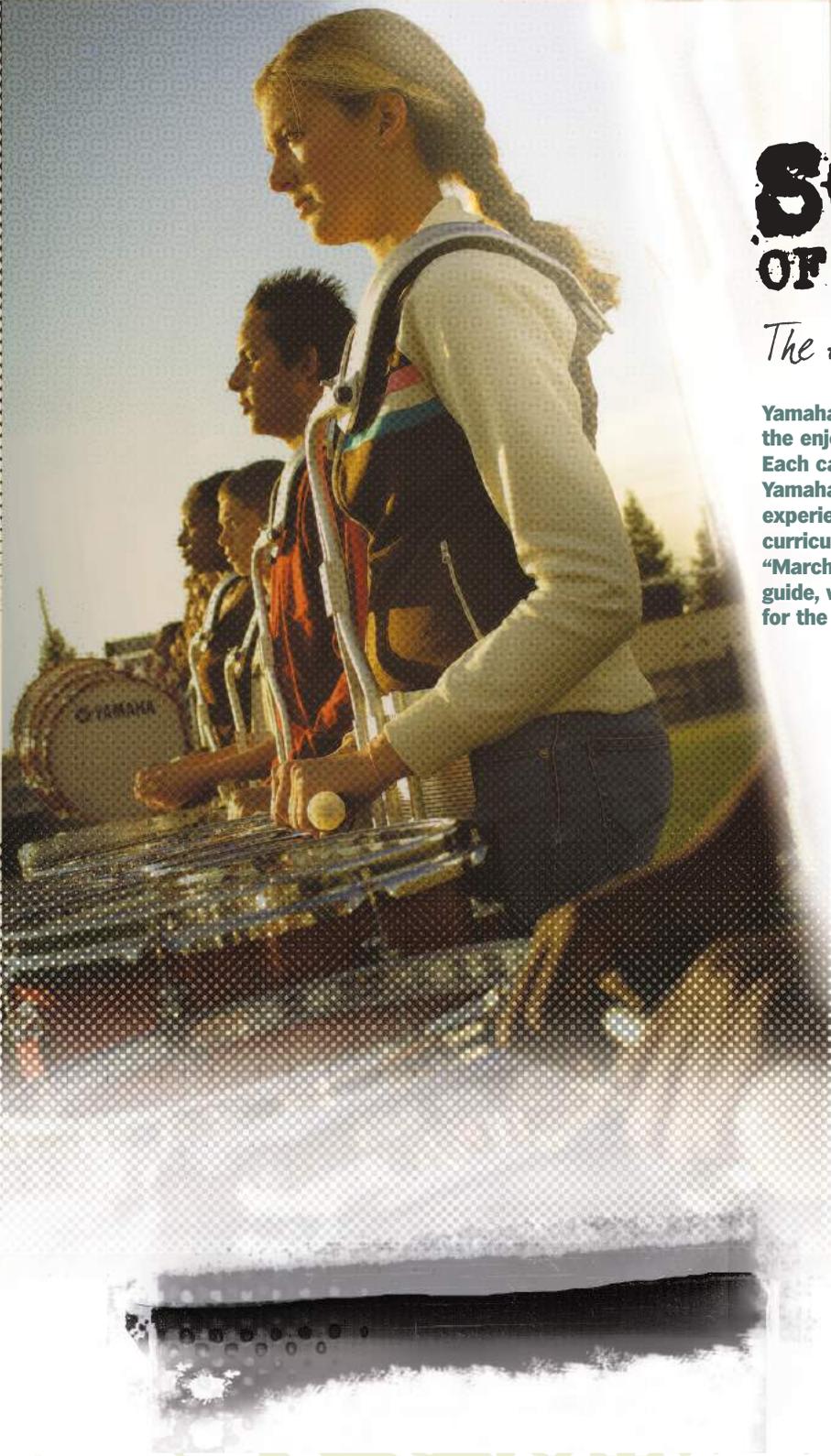


A boom-mounted mic, like the one used here by Weir Al Yankovic's Jon "Bermuda" Schwartz, is the method used by most singing drummers.



Paul Jonason

Carmine Appice has used a boom mic for years. He sets the boom at a steep angle to provide "air space" in which to move around the kit.



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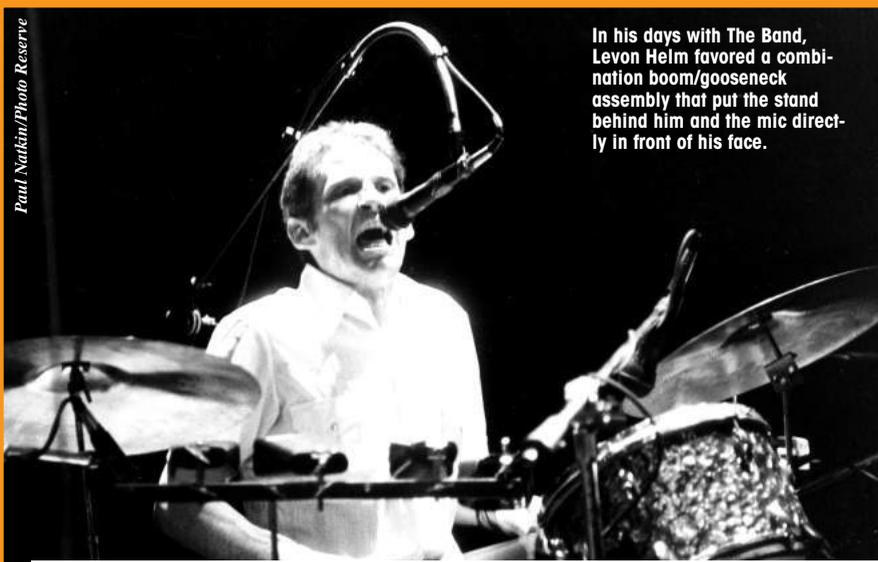
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## DRUMMING & SINGING

Paul Natkin/Photo Reserve



In his days with The Band, Levon Helm favored a combination boom/gooseneck assembly that put the stand behind him and the mic directly in front of his face.

with a gooseneck to increase positioning flexibility. A popular option, if stage space allows, is to put the stand directly behind the drummer, with the weighted end of the boom extending straight back, and the front (with the gooseneck) extending over the drummer's head to put the microphone in front of his or her mouth.

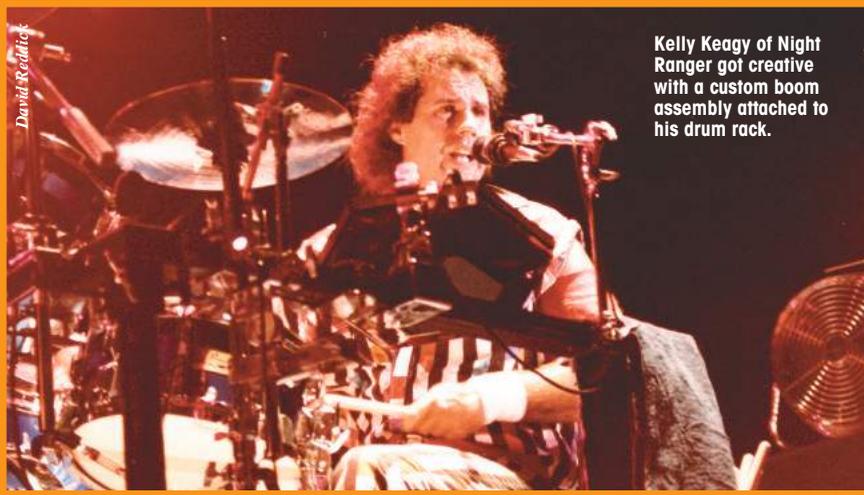
Some drummers—especially those with large setups—take this option a step further. They employ full-sized studio booms, which combine very heavy triangular bases with vertical pipes that put a 6'-long boom up over 6' high. Attached to the end of the boom is a gooseneck that drops down vertically with the microphone attached. These stands can sit completely outside the kit, with only the gooseneck and the microphone in front of the seated drummer. It's a somewhat massive assembly, but it keeps the playing space around the drummer completely free.

### Headset Microphones

Headset microphones eliminate the need for a mic stand altogether, and thus eliminate any interference with movement around the kit. From a drumming standpoint, this is the ultimate convenience. From a singing standpoint, they also remedy virtually all feedback problems by keeping the mic element close to the wearer's mouth. Of course, this proximity takes a little getting used to in terms of "mic technique," since you can't simply back away from the mic when hitting loud notes (or sneezing, for that matter).

Some headset mics have small diaphragms

David Reddick



Kelly Keagy of Night Ranger got creative with a custom boom assembly attached to his drum rack.

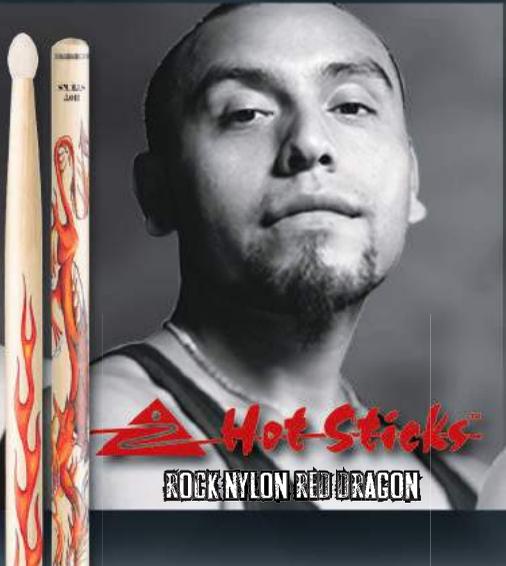
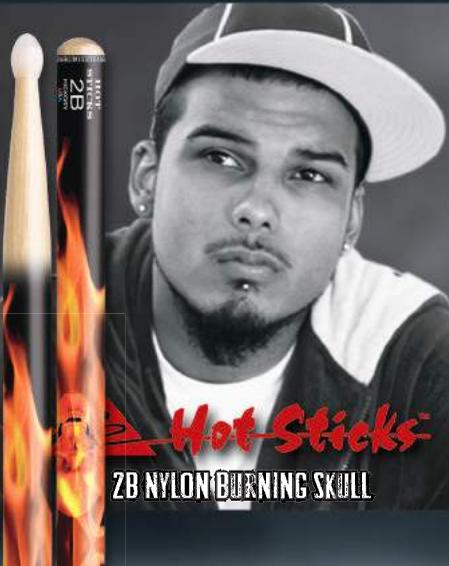
to rotate the microphone out of the stick path when not singing, while keeping it within reach for quick retrieval. Just be careful not to

push the mic within feedback range of the monitor.

Some drummers combine a boom stand

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that can't reproduce lower frequencies as well as larger dynamic vocal mics do, although this can sometimes be compensated for by EQ. They can also be more sensitive to overdriving and resulting distortion. Finally, professional-quality headset mics can be fairly expensive, running between \$200 and \$400.

### Monitor Systems

When it comes to monitoring, in-ear systems are ideal. But these, too, can be prohibitively expensive, ranging from \$200 to \$1,000. More common are side-fill or monitor wedges, which are bulky and cumbersome, and can introduce feedback if the mic is incorrectly positioned.

Whichever system you employ, it's important to achieve a comfortable balance of

### Getting It Right

Singing well is difficult enough without the added duty of using all four limbs to drive the band rhythmically. If you've never sung before, it might be smart to get some basic vocal training. Pitch accuracy, tone and breath control, proper posture, relaxation, and creating an emotional connection with the audience are all of utmost importance.

Once you feel comfortable singing without sticks in your hands, head into the rehearsal room, sit at your kit and play a basic backbeat pattern. Pick a song with a simple melody and structure, and start singing along with the beat. The idea is to concentrate on singing the notes accurately and in time while still playing with feel. Play softly at first, so you can hear your-

But with patience and practice, it became second-nature. Same objective here.

### Bring In The Band

Once you feel you can play with feeling and solid time while singing an entire song, get the band together and rehearse under performance conditions, at full volume. The introduction of a microphone can be daunting, and you'll probably need to make adjustments to your drumming movements in order to avoid whacking the mic or chipping a tooth on its windscreen.

When you're playing at high volume and with high energy, you'll lose air more quickly. This is where proper singing and playing technique are essential in order to maintain full lungs and relaxed muscles. Proper posture helps keep the oxygen flowing. Consider

## There's a big difference between singing and playing "Louie Louie" and singing and playing Frank Zappa's "Inca Roads."

vocals and stage instruments in your monitor. This means either submixing your monitor yourself (which requires a mixer and a bit of complex patching) or communicating clearly with the monitor-mix engineer. Learn that person's name and favorite drink as soon as possible after you arrive at the gig, and make him or her your new best friend.

self. If you have the confidence, try singing and playing along to a song you're familiar with, in order to lessen the degree of difficulty.

Don't worry if you feel awkward and a little robotic. Remember the first time you tried to play a complex beat or polyrhythmic configuration? It seemed impossible.

incorporating a simple vocal warm-up exercise when readying your hands before a performance. For example, repeat a major scale, each time moving the root up a half step while playing successive paradiddles.

You might want to start by singing background parts or doubling the lead vocalist. Pitch accuracy is crucial when singing har

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The advertisement features three panels, each with a portrait of a musician and a pair of Hot Sticks drumsticks. The first panel shows a woman wearing a beanie, with leopard-print drumsticks labeled '5B WOOD LEOPARD'. The second panel shows a man in a cowboy hat, with black and white flame-patterned drumsticks labeled '5B NYLON BLACK FLAME'. The third panel shows a young man, with wood-grain drumsticks labeled 'ROCKWOOD SUPER BAD'. Each panel includes the 'Hot Sticks' logo and the product name.



A headset mic, like this one worn by Mötley Crüe's Tommy Lee, maximizes convenience, but takes a little getting used to in terms of mic technique.

or incorporating more complex arrangements into your practice regimen. There's a big difference between singing and playing "Louie Louie" and singing and playing Frank Zappa's "Inca Roads."

For more experienced drummer/singers, try this exercise. Play a song you know well that's in 4/4. While singing, switch the groove beneath the vocal line to another time signature, switch from straight to swing, or displace an 8th note and keep playing. The possibilities are endless—and endlessly frustrating. But your independence will improve, as will your ability to sing over the most complex passages.

### Making It Real

When you're singing in front of an

audience, it's important to connect with them visually as well as emotionally and musically. If your sightline to parts of the crowd is blocked by cymbals, toms, or even other bandmembers, lower or eliminate cymbals, or rotate your kit a quarter turn (putting the hi-hat side toward the audience). This could make all the difference.

If you're singing lead from behind the kit, you'll also be responsible for keeping the audience entertained between songs, which can be a chore and leaves little time to take a breather. Maintaining a rapport with the audience is crucial, and you can't do this convincingly if you're exhausted. So pace yourself. Pass a few songs to other singing members of the band throughout the set. And remember, proper posture combined with playing and singing technique will help you maintain high energy levels and get you through multiple sets over many gigs per week.

As you become more comfortable, try singing lead on a few songs

The style of music you're playing could also affect your performance. If you're on a lounge gig crooning bossas all evening, you'll probably have physical energy to spare. On the other hand, if you're shredding an hour-long death metal set and screaming over blast beats, count on being fatigued both physically and mentally.

### The Song Remains The Same

In pop music, it's all about the song—and therefore all about the singer. As a vocalist—especially a lead vocalist—you carry a heavy load. Showmanship is as important as your sound, if not more so. Add to that the demands of drumming, and you've got your work cut out for you. But practice and fieldwork will get you there. The more you play and sing, and the more an audience sees and hears you, the easier your job will become.

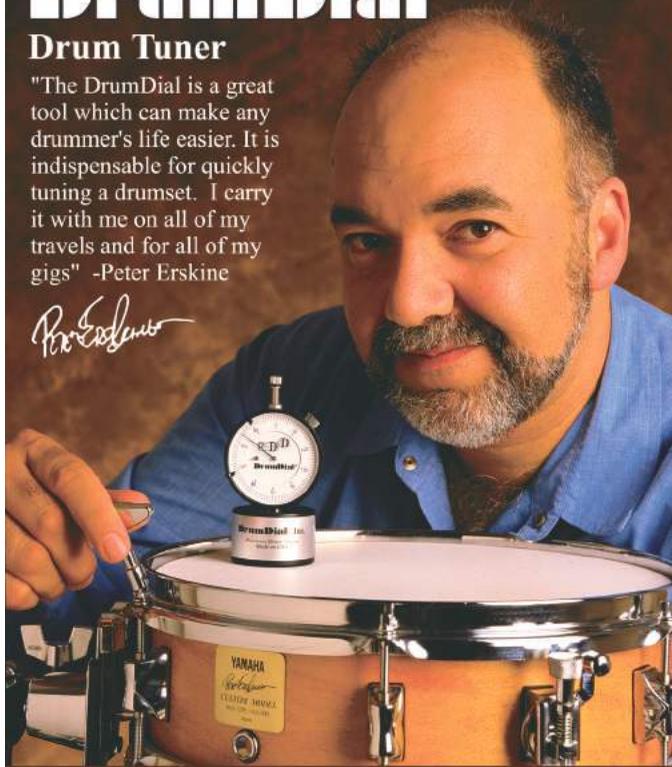


**John E. Citrone** has sung with and played drums for St. Petersburg, Florida-based Frank Zappa tribute band Bogus Pomp for the past nine years. He also records and tours with Sickroom Records instrumental indie band Greenness.

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*Peter Erskine*



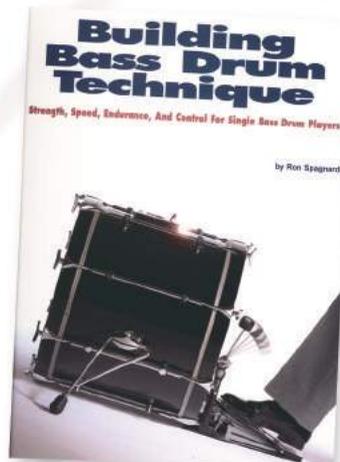
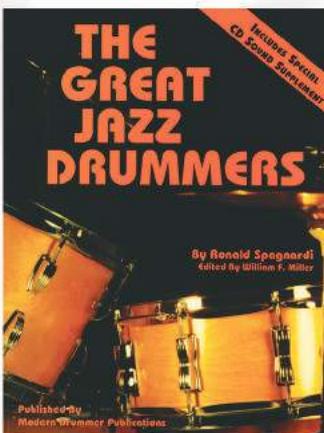
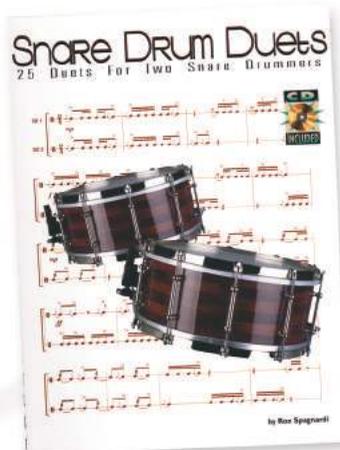
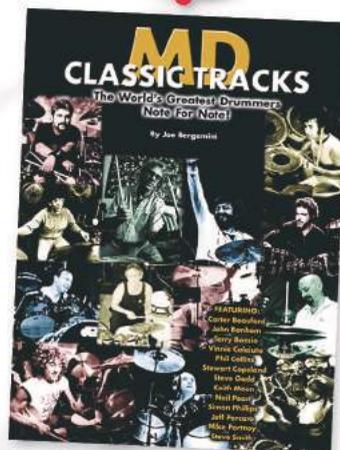
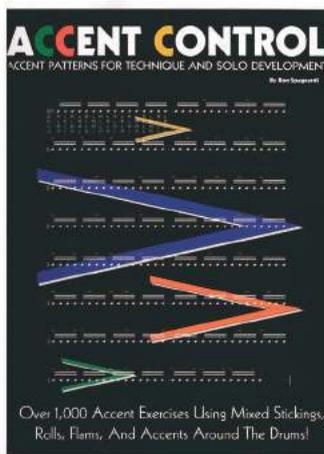
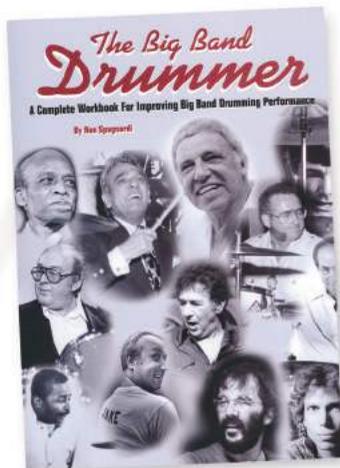
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# Building A Successful Teaching Practice

## Part 5: Evaluation

by Robert P. Smith

**L**ife is full of judgment calls. From "What shoes should I wear?" to "Which house should I buy?" we're constantly making large and small decisions that influence our lives. If we stopped to deeply analyze every one of these decisions, we'd be paralyzed. However, some decisions merit such analysis—like buying a house or a car. My feeling is that the decision on where to begin when instructing a new student falls into the latter category.

We teachers love getting new students. Not only for the financial gain, but also because we see a new student as an empty glass waiting to be filled by our knowledge of drumming. We feel empowered by the opportunity to turn this student into the next great drumming phenom. But before we do that we need to evaluate the student in order to determine what is best for him or her.

### To Begin At The Beginning...

Let's start with a brand-new student who's never played before. Easy: Just take it from the top. Start by explaining basic music terminology: What a measure and a barline are, what a time signature is, and a basic rundown of all the notes and rests.

You might not realize it, but your evaluation process has already begun. How quickly is the student picking up this new information? Now show him how to hold the sticks and play simple quarter notes on the snare drum—slowly. Is this easy or difficult for him? Does he demonstrate a feel for how the stick bounces, or does he crush it into the drumhead like he was trying to squash a bug? These small tests will give you an idea of how you should progress with this student...whether there's a natural feel for drumming there, or whether you'll need to move slowly and give less work in the beginning.

There's nothing wrong with starting slowly. I've seen students who initially had trouble just holding the sticks go on to become great players. It takes patience on your part to stick to your program and not give up on these slow-starters. You need to evaluate a student's ability to learn, not just to play drums. Armed with that evaluation, you can design a program especially tailored to help that student reach his goals.

### A Work In Progress

It can be trickier to evaluate a student who comes to you after already taking some lessons elsewhere. There will be certain expectations, and maybe even some ego added in. With such students I break my evaluation up into three parts: reading, technique, and coordination.

I begin semi-experienced students with reading whole notes, half notes, and quarter notes (and their accompanying rests) in 4/4 time. Upon passing that, we move to 8th notes and rests, then 16ths, and so on. Throughout the process I make the students count out loud, to determine whether they really understand how the notes function and how to count them. Wherever there's the slightest hesitation, I make that the starting point for my instruction.



Illustration by Jeff Harry

Next I have the students play a double-stroke roll from slow to fast. Here I'm looking for the individual components of good technique: wrists, fingers, and arms. Do they use their wrists more, or do they switch to their fingers too early? Are they using their arms to get faster? Do they understand how to utilize stick rebound, or are they picking up the sticks? A simple double-stroke roll can reveal a lot.

Next comes an evaluation of coordination on the drumset. I ask for a simple rock beat. Is the timing right? Are there any hesitations? Then I ask for a one- or two-bar drum fill to evaluate if the students can get out of and back into a beat without timing issues. If this proves successful, we move to other beats, like jazz swing and samba.

The real problem with students of this type comes when they've taken lessons for a while and feel that they know what they're doing, but the evaluation shows otherwise. They might have significant gaps in their education, which, unfortunately, it falls to you to point out. You need to be completely honest about this. Don't hold back for fear that you'll lose a student. Nine times out of ten you'll earn deeper respect

from the student (eventually) for your honest evaluation.

Even if you feel that a student wasted his or her time with another teacher, don't bad-mouth that other teacher. This takes away from your own professionalism. You need to be diplomatic and positive in everything, regardless of the situation. Rely on your own good reputation to build your practice; don't try to exploit someone else's bad reputation.

### The Natural

We frequently hear of drummers who have "natural talent." Don't be sucked into this illusory concept and change the way you work. Although certain students may seem to pick up things faster than others do, make sure you're still evaluating their skills, not their "natural talent." Fundamentals are learned, they're not inherent.

If a student does show the ability to play things that others struggle with, just go with it and speed up the program you work from. Be careful not to skip anything because you think the student will handle it easily. Test him or her to make sure, and then move on.

As it's been said, hard work will beat out natural talent every time.

### An Ongoing Process

The evaluation of a student never really ends. It's a constant process that takes place at every lesson. Our expectations and aspirations for a student need to be tempered with objective evaluation. We cannot allow ourselves to be pulled away from the two basic questions: "What can the student do?" and "What does the student need?" Only by accurately answering those questions can we give each student the guidance and instruction he or she requires.

**Rob Smith** is a graduate of Temple University in Jazz Performance. He maintains a successful private teaching practice in the Philadelphia area. He also performs in various jazz groups and big bands, records commercial jingles, and works with such artists as St. Alborne, Mike Montrey, and The Helots. You can contact Rob at [jabondo@msn.com](mailto:jabondo@msn.com).



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# Beauty On A Budget

## Creating A One-Of-A-Kind Kit For Under \$175

Story and photos by Mark LaFleur



This shot compares the original Pearl Export black covered finish to Mark's custom stain job.

**W**hat drummers don't occasionally look at their beat-up, old drumkit and wish for something new? We all lust for stunning, elegant drums that are made of some rare, exotic, foreign wood, or that feature a striking custom paint job. But such beauty rarely comes cheap.

### How It Began

I was the owner of a black, five-piece Pearl Export series kit. Twelve years ago it was my prized possession. Over the years I'd found the right combination of heads to get a sound I liked out of the bass and toms, and I'd upgraded the original metal snare to one of Pearl's custom wood options.

Unfortunately, while my drums sounded fine, dozens of moves in and out of a cramped Honda Civic, combined with months in a cold, damp basement and hours inside my car baking under the Southern California sun had warped and scarred the drums' thin plastic covering. In addition, after twelve years I couldn't help being bored with the kit and wanting to upgrade to something higher-end and more visually stunning.

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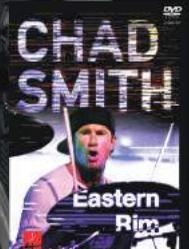
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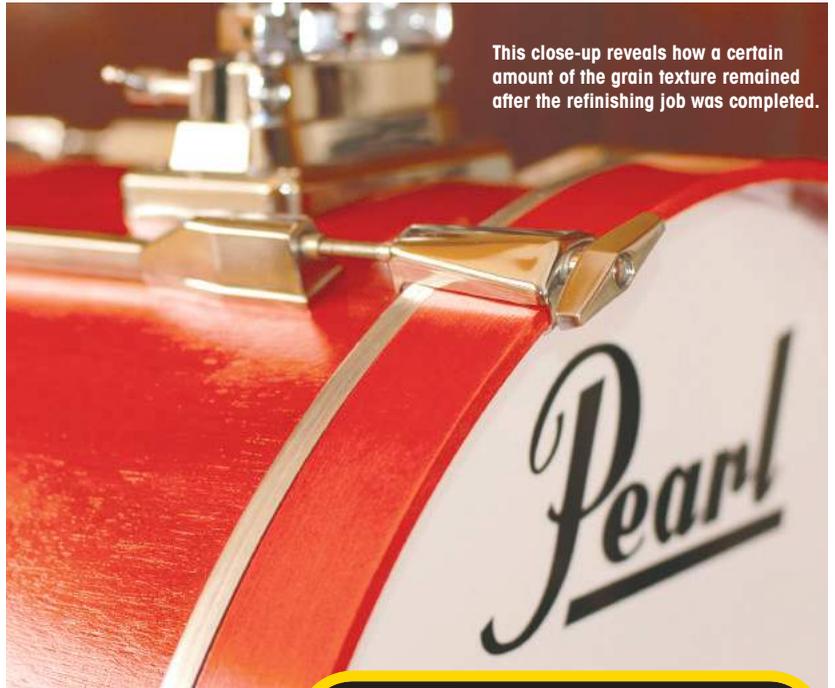
Check out Chad's new DVD release "Eastern Rims"

Pearl

## SHOP TALK



Mark took pains to sand and smooth down the grain of the uncovered shells.



This close-up reveals how a certain amount of the grain texture remained after the refinishing job was completed.

Unfortunately, I didn't have the money to get the sort of kit I dreamed of. I thought I'd either have to wait for the miracle of winning the lottery, or for the equally miraculous signing of my band, in order to add some zeros to my bank account. But late one evening I was struck by a moment of inspiration.

### A Viable Alternative

I took the hoops and heads off of my smallest tom, and examined the wood inside. It looked good. The next thing I knew I had removed every nut, bolt, and piece of hardware from all of the drums. I carefully peeled off the weathered, plastic covering, revealing the wood below. I used a hairdryer to heat the glue in order to prevent the covering from pulling chunks of wood away with it as it came off the shells.

To be honest, the wood used in my Export kit (like most other entry-level drumkits) wasn't meant to be displayed—which is why the kit came covered in the first place. The grain wasn't the prettiest, and the hues of the laminated woods didn't match. But there was potential in these shells, and the chrome scattered on my floor had a classy, retro look that I'd never appreciated while it was fixed against a black, plastic backdrop. The boxy chrome lugs connected by thin runners reminded me of the trim on 1970s American luxury

cars. So it seemed to me that my drum hardware needed to be complemented by a color that harked back to the bold, over-the-top sex appeal that those cars oozed from every inch of their polished metal and wood.

### The Process Begins

The next day I slowly peeled away the leftover glue on the surface of the drumshells, with my bare hands being the most effective tool. I sanded the shells with course, 80-grit sandpaper, and then smoothed the surfaces out with fine-grit 220 sandpaper.

After cleaning off the sanding dust, I applied two coats of Mandarin Orange water-based wood stain by Minwax. The next day I got up early and applied five coats of Minwax's water-based clear semi-gloss Polycrylic. In each case I simply followed the directions on the can and let each coat bake in the sun. I patiently waited another twenty-four hours for the clear coat to fully harden, during which I cleaned and polished the many pieces of hardware.

### Final Touches

To complete the job, I bought unfinished wood bass drum hoops, which I sanded, stained, and clear-coated to match the drum. To distance myself from any hint of a Halloween theme, I replaced the black front

### COST BREAKDOWN

1 quart Minwax Mandarin Orange stain . . .	\$13
1 quart Minwax Polycrylic . . . . .	\$13
Foam brushes . . . . .	\$.8
Latex gloves . . . . .	\$.3
Painter's mask . . . . .	\$.4
Sandpaper . . . . .	\$10
22" Pearl white logo bass drum head . . . .	\$50
22" unfinished bass drum hoops (2) . . . .	\$70
<b>Grand total . . . . .</b>	<b>\$171</b>

bass drum head with a classier, white Pearl logo head.

The finished kit really gets a lot of attention. And besides their unique look, the drums actually sound better! Exports are notoriously loud drums. The layers of stain and Polycrylic I applied took the volume down a notch while giving the drums a purer and more refined overall tone.

I couldn't be more pleased with my choice to restore my old drums over buying new ones. I have a head-turning new drumkit that cost me less than \$175, and I can honestly say that it's the only one like it in the world.

**Mark LaFleur** is a veteran drummer currently playing the Los Angeles club scene with a band called Vandelay Industries. He can be reached at [marklafleur2004@yahoo.com](mailto:marklafleur2004@yahoo.com).



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# JENS HANNEMANN'S

## COMPLICATED DRUMMING TECHNIQUE

Just when you think you've seen it all, a virtuoso drummer appears on the scene with a seemingly indestructible talent. German born Jens Hannemann is a master clinician and creative bon vivant whose DVD, *Complicated Drumming Technique* (Drag City), raises the bar on the drummer as rudimental spectacle.

Though his résumé is rather brief, Hannemann has asked to play with famous jazz, rock, and metal groups. Unfortunately, those artists have not yet returned his calls. Unfazed, Hannemann recorded a solo album, *Synchronology*, and with the help of Blue Man Group, designed *Complicated Drumming Technique* to be "the most valuable half hour you will spend this year." The DVD covers every aspect of advanced technique, offering a solution to those who count themselves among the "rhythm illiterate."

"I have asked to play with great artists like Lenny Kravitz, Peter Dinklage, and The Pat Metheny Group," Hannemann

says. "You've heard of me through them. I am the most respected drummer because of my rudiments and my complicated technique. Those artists I mentioned have not called me back, they say I don't listen when I play. I think they're wrong. I am really good at listening; I am one of the greatest session drummers ever."

*Complicated Drumming Technique* includes transcriptions (ranging from pedestrian to unfathomable) as well as lessons on polyrhythms, "stick work," foot technique (on four bass drums), and "most importantly, how to dominate a jam session."

Jens Hannemann is the alter ego of *Saturday Night Live* comic Fred Armisen, an accomplished drummer who has played and recorded with the Chicago franchise of Blue Man Group and punk-flavored bands Trenchmouth and Les Savy Fav. Like Andy Kaufman taking the realm of satire a step too far, Armisen presents Hannemann as the world's greatest drumming clinician—who doesn't have a clue.

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# JENS HANNEMANN

**MD:** Jens, did you finally play with Metallica? It would be great to hear your interpretation of "Master Of Puppets."

**Jens:** I would have added more cymbals, embellishments, bells. I would have added two snare drums, a triggered rack tom with an orchestra behind it, and more low rack toms and 16th notes. Sixteenth notes are an incredible addition to music, always. Even The Beatles' "Yesterday" could have used more 16th notes on the drums.

**MD:** Was your instructional DVD inspired by drummers like Thomas Lang and Jojo Mayer?

**Jens:** Those are inspirations, along with nature and relaxation DVDs. It's a combination of education, entertainment, and musical knowledge. I have a DVD about the rain-forest and frogs and lizards that means a lot to me.

**MD:** Is the serenity sweatshirt you wear in the DVD meant to impart a message?

**Jens:** Every time I wear a T-shirt I want it to

remind people to relax and enjoy life.

Always relax your buttocks, your thighs, your abdomen. Drummers must always relax the buttocks. I don't think Chad Smith of The Red Hot Chili Peppers relaxes himself enough. His buttocks are too tight.

**MD:** Why use four bass drums?

**Jens:** If you ask any audience member of any age, they'll always comment on the amount of bass drum. Ask yourself that. The way you like the show the most is by the amount of bass drum. My hope is that someday I will have as many as twenty bass drums to play with a band.

**MD:** In your seven-minute solo recorded at the Tampa School of Music, your expressions are very joyous. What were you thinking about?

**Jens:** I think about the relationship between the sun and Saturn and the moon and Pro-Mark drumsticks, which I promote—and my cymbals and Drum Workshop hardware.

**MD:** You use two of everything: two snares,

two hi-hats—why two hi-hats?

**Jens:** Ask yourself, how great would The Rolling Stones be if they had two hi-hats? I have two drum stools, two vehicles to transport my gear, and two cases for each drum. A case in a case.

**MD:** Jeff Porcaro recorded two hi-hats on Boz Scaggs' "Lowdown," so you might be on to something. You're carrying on a tradition.

**Jens:** I'm making it better, I am improving it. Jeff Porcaro has to learn a lot about drumming. He knows this. He knows that I am a better drummer. He knows. I challenge him to a hi-hat concert.

**MD:** You know, Jeff Porcaro passed away.

**Jens:** I challenge him!

**MD:** Like many German drummers, you're a very complicated player with an analytical mind.

**Jens:** Music should be MORE complicated. It should be complex and difficult. Music is not for enjoyment! It's for complication.

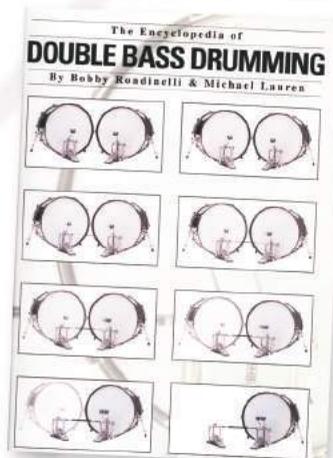
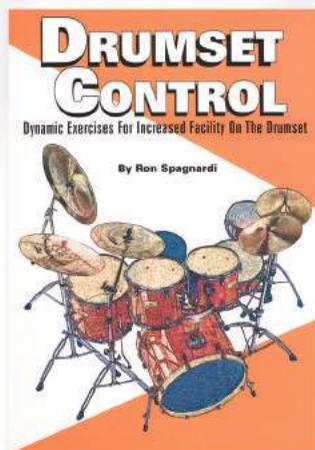
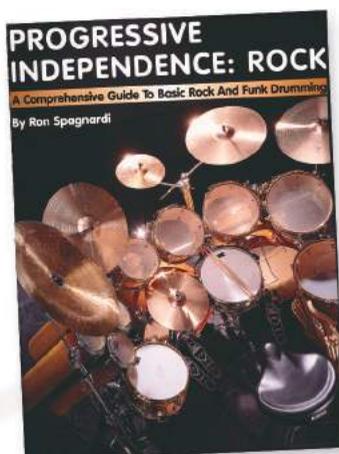
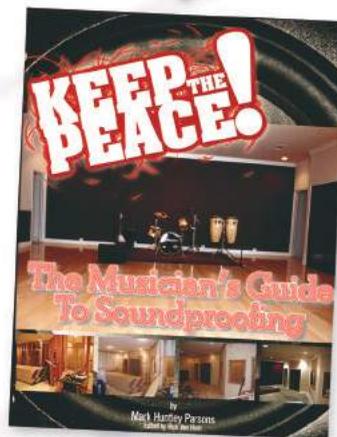
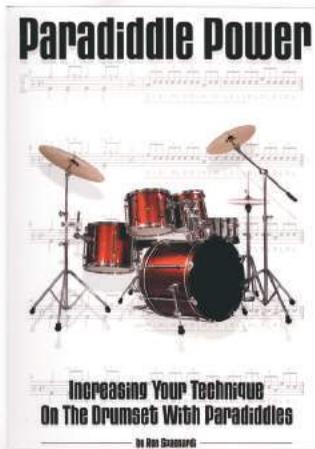
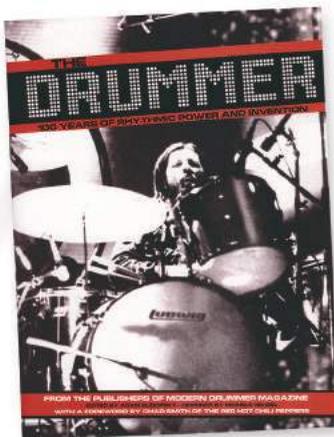
**MD:** You displace the beat in "Fluid

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### The Drummer

Covering a century of drumming, from the founding fathers of jazz and rock to today's athletic soloists, this book is the first to tell the complete tale of drumming's master players. Hard cover, full color, with completely new text.

### Paradiddle Power by Ron Spagnardi

Paradiddle Power, a unique study that offers many new applications of single, double, and triple paradiddles, is designed to increase technique, speed, fluidity, and creativity around the drumset.

### Keep the Peace! by Mark Parsons

Recommended for drummers, percussionists, other types of musicians, and bands, Keep The Peace! provides practical suggestions for creating a soundproof place to practice.

### Progressive Independence: Rock by Ron Spagnardi

This book is designed to help rock drummers achieve the 4-way independence needed to play patterns on the snare and bass drums, in combination with standard hi-hat/cymbal rhythms, while the hi-hat foot plays quarter or 8th notes.

### Drumset Control by Ron Spagnardi

Dynamic and challenging patterns to increase speed and control on the drumset, Drumset Control contains a series of progressive exercises from basic triplet patterns and 16th notes to 16th-note triplets and 32nd notes.

### The Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming

Includes hundreds of warm-up, beat, and fill exercises, plus lists of important double bass recordings and players with setup photos. Written by Bobby Rondinelli (Black Sabbath) and Mike Lauren.

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## JENS HANNEMANN

Engine." What tips can you give regarding displacement?

**Jens:** Whenever you hear a quarter note in your brain, turn it into a 22nd note. A 22nd is a type of note that is a comparison between an inch and a millimeter. When you hear that in your head, count it as a quarter-note triplet. Then use it as a rest, then add two more quarter notes to it, and six 8th notes. Divide that by the one, and use that as an implied note on the ride cymbal. Once you have an implied note, add a whole note, then subtract all the quarter notes.

**MD:** That's an advanced way of looking at rhythm.

**Jens:** All notes are implied. ALL NOTES ARE IMPLIED!

**MD:** In the breakdown section of "Fluid Engine," you say that the hands are at 32 bpm, while the feet are at 220 bpm. How do you explain that difference?

**Jens:** It's divided unto itself. You don't understand because you don't have the right kind of brain for this kind of drumming. In between each measure there are always thirty-two beats. But we always skip over it in rock 'n' roll, jazz, and classical music. My drumming style includes all of these thirty-two notes. You should know this! What do you think they do in India? What do you think Beethoven did?

**MD:** Can you offer tips for counting odd meters? Your song, "Just In Time," is supposedly in 23/9.

**Jens:** Always count out loud, record when you're counting, and play it back. Okay? You and every drummer should be his own conductor!

**MD:** How is that a tip for counting odd meters?

**Jens:** How is that not a tip? I've tried to teach teenagers this method but they don't always return for a second lesson. They don't understand. They say I don't make any sense. That is very American; they like everything simple.

**MD:** Also in the breakdown, you state that the foot pattern is the same as the hand pattern, only played a measure later. How is that possible?

**Jens:** Well, you have to divide your brain into different parts of your muscles, okay? There are four things going on, you need to exercise your thighs and ankles more. I have exercised my internal organs, my trachea, and the bones in my back.



## FRED ON JENS

**Fred Armisen:** Hey, how did the interview go with Jens? I know he sounds pigheaded but he really is a nice guy.

**MD:** Is it harder to play goof drums with the band, as on the DVD, than serious drums? You, or Jens, are very flexible with your interpretation of time, and it sounds pretty good, even with the humor element.

**Fred:** It's easy for me because I don't think I'm a very good timekeeper anyway. I'm joking, but at the same time I'm not a very good metronome. I loved playing the drums, but I went into comedy because it was something I'm more naturally attracted to. I was more in love with being in a famous band than with drumming.

**MD:** Is there a connection between comedy and drumming?

**Fred:** My theory is that drummers want attention. They pick this instrument that is loud and big, and I think comedians want the same thing—just a theory. It's "look at me." I could be wrong, but that's what it

is for me.

**MD:** Do you find instructional drumming DVDs humorous?

**Fred:** I am obsessed with the Marco Minnemann DVD. I have Steve Smith and Terry Bozzio discs too. Drum DVDs have their own style of music that defies categorization. It's not fusion, rock, or jazz. It's drum DVD music. Only drummers listen to it. I respect that art form, and that these artists created their own market. And why not?

**MD:** So why make fun of drummers who put their advanced technique on display?

**Fred:** I couldn't help it. I just thought I had to make one. It was irresistible. I want Jens to do clinics. It would be up to the listener to think whether it's a joke or not. I just enjoy it too much.

**MD:** How will you top this for *Complicated Drumming Technique, Volume II*?

**Fred:** More kick drum.

**MD:** Are you playing stylized or literal Polynesian rhythms in "Polynesian Nightmare"?

**Jens:** I call those "atlohuakheans," which means they are authentic but also made up. I am often like a child, not a grown-up. I'm a child playing in a playground. When you

see a child playing with clay, I am like that.

Okay, it's been a pleasure for you to talk to me. I know you really learned a lot. Keep practicing. I know you have a book out. Send it and I will make corrections.



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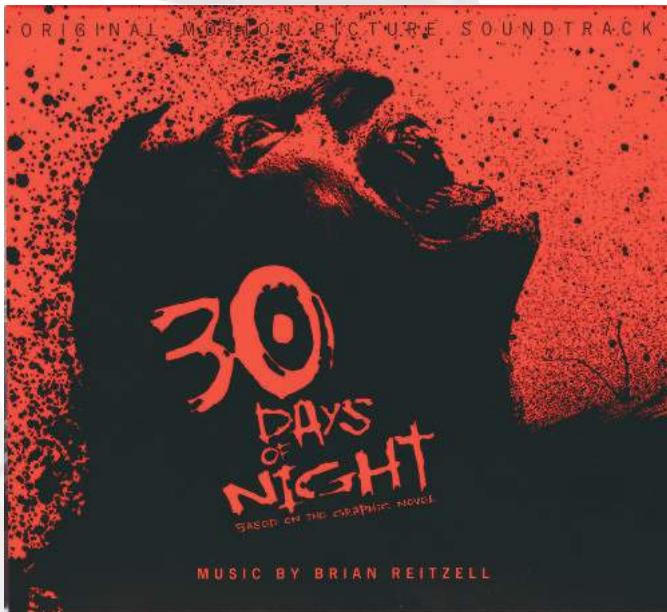
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# RECORDINGS

## Ratings Scale

- ★★★★★ Classic
- ★★★★☆ Excellent
- ★★★☆☆ Good
- ★★☆☆☆ Fair
- ★☆☆☆☆ Poor

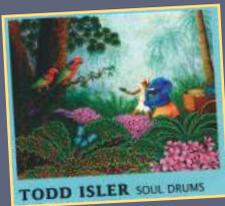


### BRIAN REITZELL 30 DAYS OF NIGHT

★★★★★

There are three reasons nobody else could make sounds as uniquely cool as the abstract, ultra-dynamic music on the soundtrack to David Slade's horror film *30 Days Of Night*. First, no one else owns a studio quite like composer/performer **BRIAN REITZELL's** sonic laboratory, with its nearly overwhelming mix of vintage-analog and cutting-edge digital equipment. Second, Brian's record collection: As the preferred music producer for Sofia Coppola (*The Virgin Suicides*, *Lost In Translation*, *Marie Antoinette*), Reitzell gets to flex his muscles as a walking music encyclopedia—tastefully, always tastefully—and expert *applier* of sound. Most importantly, though, *30 Days Of Night* represents the drummer's major coming out as a composer who has combined his unique skills and his adherence to Brian Eno's "studio as an instrument" concept to awesome effect. This is quintessential movie music; it brilliantly furthers the on-screen action without calling attention to itself, yet when listened to out of context can knock you out of your seat with fear and wonder. Oh yeah, and the wildly effected percussion will blow your mind. **Adam Budofsky**

## TAKING THE REINS



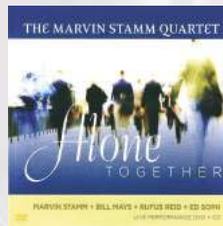
### TODD ISLER SOUL DRUMS

Alternating between kit and an array of exotic hand drums, **TODD ISLER** brings rich color to his quartet's organic sound. He's got a knack for blending Indian, African, and Brazilian rhythms into a seamless, supple jazz whole. And the multi-tracked percussion interludes are a sonic delight. (Takadimi Tunes) **Jeff Potter**



### NAT TOWNSLEY TRIO THE BIG IDEA

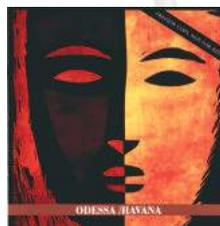
Groove-meister and MD Festival alum **NAT TOWNSLEY** (Zawinul Syndicate) puts his well-honed chops on full display on this funky 2007 live set. The organ/bass/drums instrumentation lets Townsley fly with sidestick breakdowns, wild solos (remarkable singles), and an innate sense of pocket playing and comping. Dig the crisp drum sound as well. (cdbaby.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



### THE MARVIN STAMM QUARTET ALONE TOGETHER

★★★★★

Trumpeter Stamm sports a massive discography as jazz sideman and studio ace, but he's in fullest flower when fronting his own group. Drummer **ED SOPH**, also a widely recorded veteran, continues his longtime alliance with Stamm, driving the quartet heard in this live straight-ahead set featuring bass great **Rufus Reid** and pianist **Bill Mays**. Sounding a soulful, rich tone, Stamm solos thoughtfully with effortless swing. Soph is, in sum, exquisitely musical. Showing strong command, he swings with grace and urges soloists to unexpected places. It's a finely matched foursome. Included is a bonus DVD of the same concert. (Jazzed Media) **Jeff Potter**



### DAVID BUCHBINDER ODESSA/HAVANA

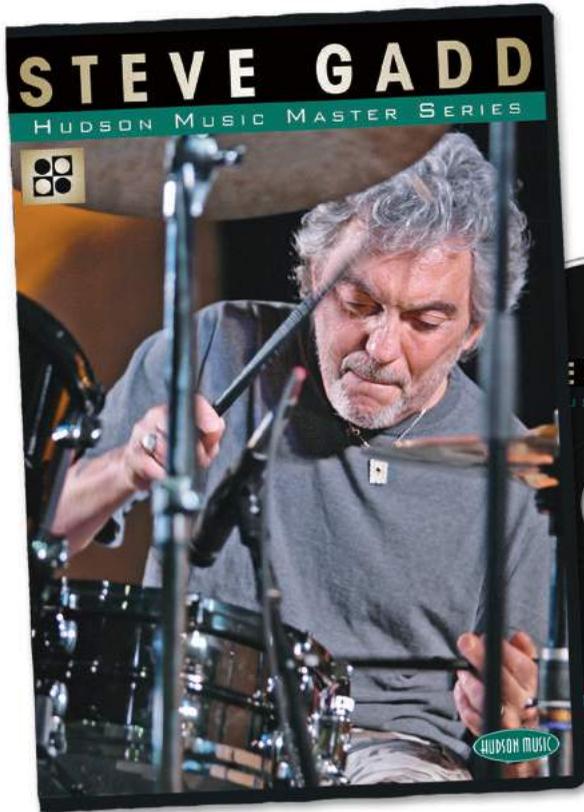
★★★★★

Consider the glut of gimmicky world music couplings: fiddle a jig over 6/8 drums and—*voilà!*—"Afro-Celtic." All too often, the notes fit yet halves remain icily divided like spliced postcards. But trumpeter **Buchbinder** and pianist partner **Hilario Durán** get it winningly right. Fusing Jewish and Cuban elements under a jazz roof, this ensemble nails the elusive organic oneness. Sure, there's modal licks and montuno, but it's the intersection of spirit and sonority that works so brilliantly. Drummers **MARK KELSO** and **DAFNIS PRIETO** deliver charged, inspired grabber grooves, but their masterstroke is musical open-mindedness, creating a soulful rhythmic handshake. (Tzadik) **Jeff Potter**

# The Master Series.

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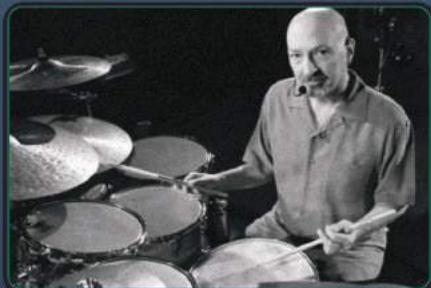
The new "Master Series" from Hudson Music showcases drumming legends and contemporary players in an intimate master class setting. The series' first release features Steve Gadd and was filmed on location in New York City during the 2006 "Mission from Gadd" tour. This DVD offers an unprecedented view of a modern drumming icon at the peak of his career as Steve reveals his approach to the drums and music through an open question-and-answer format and includes:

- Demonstration and discussion of many of the signature drum tracks Steve created including "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover", "Aja", "Nite Sprite", and "Late in the Evening".
- Steve's classic, self-accompanied brush solo on "Bye, Bye Blackbird" as well as his rudimental tour de force, "Crazy Army"
- The application of rudiments to the drumset, playing to a click-track, odd-times, shuffles and soloing in a musical context.
- Bonus footage including a 20-minute Steve Gadd documentary from the 2003 American Drummers Achievement Award ceremony plus a Steve Gadd-Giovanni Hidalgo rehearsal and duet from the 1997 Modern Drummer Festival.

Watch for future "Master Series" releases featuring Antonio Sanchez, Jason Bittner and John Blackwell.

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### Sneek Peek

*Steve Smith's "Drum Legacy"*

An advance look at Steve Smith's upcoming "Drum Legacy" DVD featuring tributes to jazz drumming icons Tony Williams, Art Blakey, Max Roach, Elvin Jones and Philly Joe Jones.



### Wood Shed

*Gavin Harrison's "Rhythmic Visions"*

Porcupine Tree's award-winning drummer shows how drummers can use a variety of new methods to manipulate time and create interesting drum patterns in contemporary playing situations.



### Video Clip

*"Master Series: Steve Gadd"*

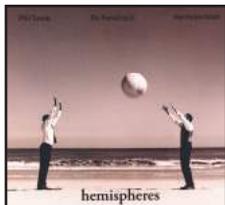
View a sample of Gadd's inspired and inspiring new Master Series DVD featuring an explanation and demonstration of some of the stickings from his legendary drum solo on "Aja".



## THEE SILVER MT. ZION MEMORIAL ORCHESTRA & TRA-LA-LA BAND 13 BLUES FOR THIRTEEN MOONS

★★★★★

A band calling itself Thee Silver Mt. Zion Memorial Orchestra & Tra-La-La Band clearly isn't into brevity. And the four thirteen-plus-minute songs on *13 Blues For Thirteen Moons* certainly support that contention. Don't look for any Yes or ELP references here, though. Think more along the lines of The Velvet Underground meets Led Zeppelin meets The Waterboys meets Crass, and you'll get an idea of the droning, bombastic, fiddle-soaked, and emotionally charged waters this band swims in. Drummer **ERIC CRAVEN** dutifully gets his *ZoSo*-era Bonzo on across the board, representing an unshakable foundation under an engagingly evil sonic explosion. (Constellation) **Adam Budofsky**

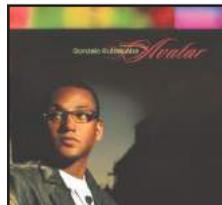


## HEMISPHERES HEMISPHERES

★★★★★

**JOEL ROSENBLATT** (drums), **Ric Fierabracci** (bass), and **Phil Turcio** (keyboards) together make up Hemispheres, a group with a contemporary take on

fusion. Their album, rounded out with numerous guests including **DAVE WECKL** on one track, is built from melody on groove. Rosenblatt establishes various feels, ranging from light funk to R&B to a laid-back take on reggae, all the while peppering the beat with accents and fills. Although the tunes might be too smooth for some, there's plenty of technique on display throughout the album, all played with a deft touch. ([www.myspace.com/hemispheresgroup](http://www.myspace.com/hemispheresgroup)) **Martin Patmos**



## GONZALO RUBALCABA AVATAR

★★★★★

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Rising young drum star **MARCUS GILMORE** can pin it on and polish it with pride. The dazzling pianist spearheads a challenging set, sharing the spotlight generously among an impressive quintet. Gilmore is astonishing, solidly tackling the demands of the jazz and Afro-Cuban multi-influences while also bringing his own voice to the table. One specialty is Gilmore's grooves informed by cutting-edge 16th-note funk, loosened up with an open, rootsy swirl resonating from classic jazz. Marvelous playing from all. Expect Gilmore's discography to explode. (Blue Note) **Jeff Potter**

## Lighting The Fuse

by Mike Haid

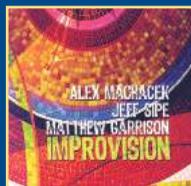
### TOM GROSE, STEVE JENKINS, ALEX MACHACEK/JEFF SIPE/MATTHEW GARRISON

On *Music For Television* multi-instrumentalist Tom Grose composes and performs an eclectic instrumental collection of imaginary TV themes complete with descriptive liner notes, all of which would make Frank Zappa proud (both musically and verbally). Drummer **SEAN O'ROURKE** impressively tackles the daunting task of interpreting these complex, fusion-esque themes, and displays top-notch mixing and mastering skills. ([www.tomgrose.com](http://www.tomgrose.com))



On *Mad Science* bassist Steve Jenkins creates seriously funky instrumental soundscapes that allow drummers **ADAM DEITCH**, **CHARLES HAYNES**, and **TONY ESCAPA** the freedom to stretch, each very musical and creative in their approach. Deitch and Haynes, in particular, possess inspiring chops, along with a great overall drum mix. ([www.stevejenkinsbass.com](http://www.stevejenkinsbass.com))

The stellar instrumental fusion trio of Alex Machacek, **JEFF SIPE**, and Matthew Garrison connects from all angles. On *Improvision*, drummer Sipe rises to new improvisational heights within these floating, soaring, diving, weaving, and stretching compositions. It's not about chops here, folks, although there are plenty, when called for. This is a spiritually connected trio, and the overall vibe is highly subliminal, extremely musical bliss. Easily, my favorite fusion release of 2007. ([www.abstractlogix.com](http://www.abstractlogix.com))



## And Furthermore...



### ORGONE THE KILLION FLOOR

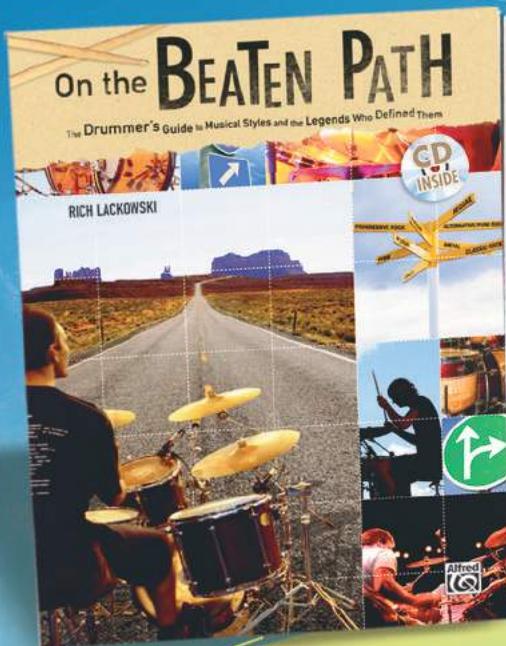
L.A.-based soul/funk outfit Orgone wears its neo '60s/Sly Stone influences proudly on *The Killion Floor*, a party record for the new millennium featuring a tight horn section and drummer **SEAN O'SHEA's** lean and mean grooves. Less is definitely more, as O'Shea's kick locks in with the bass and propels the music forward. ([www.ubiquityrecords.com](http://www.ubiquityrecords.com)) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

### THE WHIGS MISSION CONTROL

The Whigs have opened for Franz Ferdinand, The Killers, and The Futureheads, which makes sense, given their slammin'ly clear, catchy, and potent college-rock delivery. Drummer **JULIAN DORIO** is a powerful song-oriented guy who revels in finding a unique approach on each tune. The sound is big, his beats are big, and the total effect is pretty *darned* big. This is the kind of drumming radio programmers adore—and that's a good thing. (ATO) **Adam Budofsky**

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### Funkifying The Clave: Afro-Cuban Grooves for Bass and Drums

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All prices in \$US and subject to change

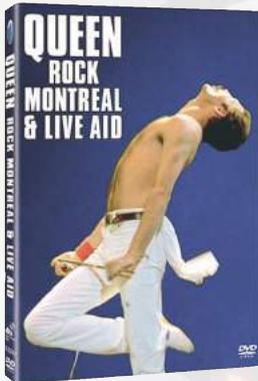
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## QUEEN ROCK MONTREAL & LIVE AID

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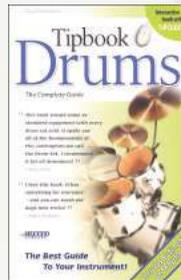


The ninety-five-minute first disc of this two-DVD set is essential viewing for any Queen devotee. Culled from two November 1981 concerts at Montreal's Forum, it captures the quartet arriving in a triumphant display of arena pyrotechnics and going on to produce musical fireworks that are hotter than any light show. **ROGER TAYLOR**, perched atop a bass drum whose front head bears a close-up of his face, rushes his first big fill but settles in beautifully with bombastic yet fluid patterns that challenge the idea of subtly being important in rock. Taylor

even holds his own next to the incredible Freddie Mercury, tearing up the toms on (a sadly abbreviated) "I'm In Love With My Car" while singing a soaring lead. The brief 1985 Live Aid performance on disc two is much less riveting—the synth-drenched "Radio Ga Ga" isn't what we'd like to remember Queen for, plus there are few shots of Taylor at work. But thanks to disc one, it hardly matters. (Eagle Vision) **Michael Parillo**

## HUGO PINKSTERBOER TIPBOOK DRUMS: THE COMPLETE GUIDE

BOOK LEVEL: ALL \$14.95



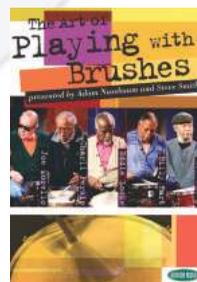
*Tipbook Drums* is a handy encyclopedia of all things drums—from information on selecting cymbals, to tips on eliminating snare buzz, a convenient glossary, and transcriptions of rudiments and off-used beats from mambo to hip-hop. Also includes "Tipcodes," which allow access to online videos further explaining key concepts. (Hal Leonard)

**Ilya Stemkovsky**

## THE ART OF PLAYING BRUSHES PRESENTED BY ADAM NUSSBAUM AND STEVE SMITH

2 DVDS/CD/BOOKLET

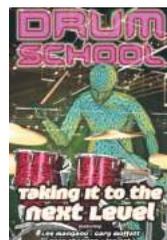
LEVEL: BEGINNER TO ADVANCED \$49.95



Hate brush instruction overloaded with twisty arrows and tangled diagrams? *Art* instead stresses "look, listen, and compare." Hosts **ADAM NUSSBAUM** and **STEVE SMITH** gathered together veteran jazz greats **JOE MORELLO**, **CHARLIE PERSIP**, **EDDIE LOCKE**, **BILLY HART**, and **BEN RILEY**. All six play brush timekeeping to the same tracks (included in a play-along CD) with delightfully varied results. Our hosts interview the players to define techniques, an excellent booklet offers history, and bonus features are heaped with extra info and archival footage. In this massive package, the seven-hours-plus of video could have benefited from some judicial editing. But the results do illuminate the DVD's assertion that brushwork is the most personal of all techniques. And squiggly arrows don't cut it. (Hudson Music) **Jeff Potter**

## DRUM SCHOOL VOLUMES 1 AND 2 BY LEE MANGANO

2 DVDS/CD LEVEL: ALL \$19.95 (VOL. 1), \$29.95 (VOL. 2)



Drum School founder Lee Mangano employs the aid of Joe Perry Project's **JOE PET** and .38 Special's **GARY MOFFATT** (among others) to run through the usual instructional fare of rudiments, independence, advanced sticking patterns, foot coordination, fusion and funk styles, soloing, electronic drums, and a whole lot more. Production values vary, but it's obvious the instructors bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the table—everything from Mangano's drum corps background to **SEAN SHANNON**'s (Pat Travers Band) rock-solid solos. From five-stroke rolls to "keeping the groove," this two-DVD/audio CD set will challenge all student levels. ([www.drumschool.net](http://www.drumschool.net))

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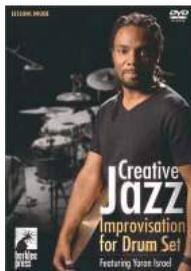
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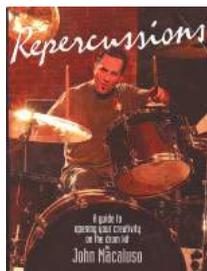
DVD LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED \$24.95



"I am continually working on getting the drumset to sing," declares Yoron Israel. Mission accomplished. Observing his graceful, colorful jazz soloing and improv is an inspiring pleasure. The in-demand sideman/leader and Berklee educator is truly a kit "composer." Before each solo and track-accompanying performance, Israel explains his concepts and how he intends to apply them. The DVD assumes viewers already have a firm grip on technique, as there's little in the way of technical breakdown. But as a portrait of a master artist expressing and clearly delivering his concepts, it's a most worthwhile watch. (berklee press) **Jeff Potter**

## REPERCUSSIONS BY JOHN MACALUSO

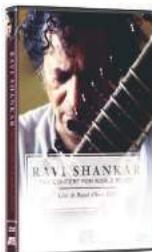
BOOK/CD LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED \$25



This indie production offers tons of user-friendly groove and fill applications in a wide variety of rock, prog metal, and jungle/drum & bass styles. Macaluso offers insightful tips on a broad spectrum of double bass patterns and ghost-note grooves as well as linear drumming and odd time signature patterns. And his keen sense of humor provides each chapter with welcome comedic relief. The well-recorded play-along CD features every written example in the book, including an over-the-top extended drum solo. This is a great study for intermediate or advanced players interested in increasing their chops in the aforementioned styles of drumming. (www.johnmacaluso.com) **Mike Haid**

## RAVI SHANKAR THE CONCERT FOR WORLD PEACE

DVD LEVEL: ALL \$24.95



Kudos to Ravi Shankar's camera operators—their sharp shooting brings you right on stage with the legendary sitarist. As Shankar warms up with a drumless *alap* passage, you can practically bend the strings along with him. When **ZAKIR HUSSAIN** enters on tabla, you're offered insight into his incredible art simply by getting a crystal-clear view of every slap and tickle of his drums. The ninety-minute DVD, filmed in London in 1993, is comprised of just

two pieces—even in the slowly unfolding world of the raga, Shankar is known for taking his time—and the nuanced interplay between Shankar, Zakir, and sarod player **Partho Sarathy** reflects an unmistakable sense of wonder and joy. The sound quality is excellent to boot. During Zakir's solo near the finale, his tabla's snap, pop, and whoosh form a mini symphony, while Shankar repeatedly tries to silence the adoring audience with a "Wait, he's not done!" gesture. (A&E) **Michael Parillo**



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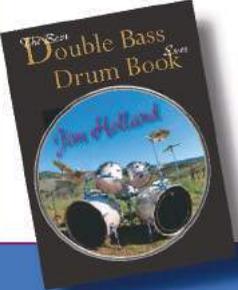


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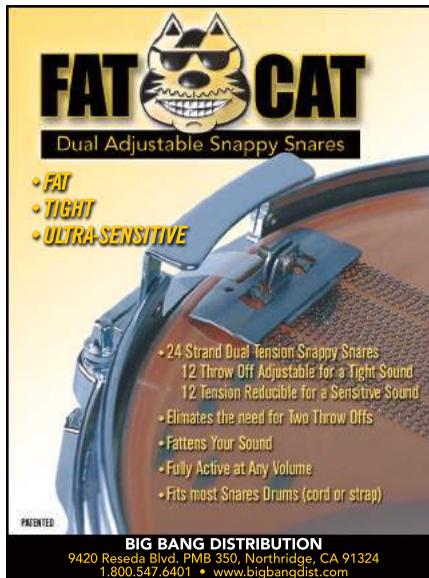
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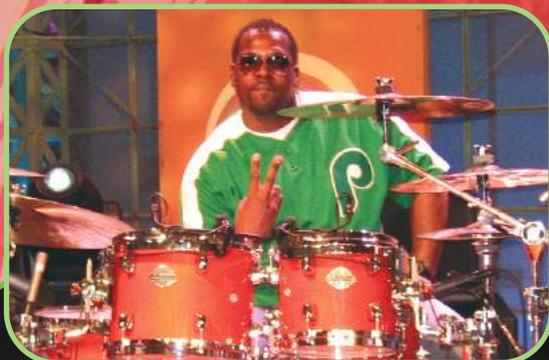
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# Spotlighting Three Touring Pros



## VERNELL "DOODER" MINCEY

Vernell "Dooder" Mincey's lifelong desire to "make a joyful noise" has led him into many Gospel, R&B, neo-soul, and jazz arenas, including his latest gig as the touring drummer for Grammy-nominated platinum-selling artist Musiq Soulchild. In support of Musiq's latest release, *Luvanmusiq*, Dooder toured throughout the US and Europe for the majority of 2007, with more dates planned throughout '08.

Dooder's deep pocket and slick skills have been employed in many other situations as well, including live performances with Gospel artists Tye Tribbett and Zie'l, R&B singers Bilal, Vivian Green, Glenn Lewis, and Donell Jones, and pop superstars Ashanti, Lauryn Hill, and Alicia Keys.

Mincey has also had the opportunity to share his gift with over 20,000 people each year during the annual east coast Gospel convention Praise Power Celebration. Through his experience at this event, Dooder has played for Bishop T.D. Jakes, Reverend Jackie McCullough, Evangelist Bynum, Bishop Clarence McClendon, Bishop Noel Jones, and many others. In addition, Vernell is the owner, producer, and A&R representative for the independent label Collabo Music Group.

**Location:** New Castle, Delaware

**Tools:** Dooder endorses ddrum drums, Aquarian heads, Sabian cymbals, Vic Firth sticks, and DW hardware

**More info:** [www.myspace.com/dodatstik](http://www.myspace.com/dodatstik)



## HENRIQUE DE ALMEIDA

Brazilian-born drummer/author/educator Henrique De Almeida is currently the owner of The Percussion Institute of Colorado, a diverse learning center for drumset, percussion, and other instruments that offers levels of instruction ranging from private lessons and clinics to full-length seminars. At the school, Henrique conducts group classes, teaches private lessons, and organizes clinics and lectures with guest artists. Two guest drummer artists in 2007 were New Orleans funk favorite Stanton Moore and jazz/fusion legend Billy Cobham.

Before relocating to the US to attend the Berklee College Of Music, Henrique toured extensively throughout South America, Central America, Europe, and the United States. He was a member of the famous bossa nova artist Francis Hime's quartet. And he recorded and toured with RCA recording artist Alceu Valença. Henrique was also a session drummer at RCA Records in Rio de Janeiro, where he performed television soundtracks for TV Globo, Brazil's largest television network.

Now a resident of Colorado Springs, De Almeida divides his time between his academic role at PIC and a busy recording and touring schedule with the United States Air Force Academy rock band, Blue Steel. He also performs regularly with Grammy-winning bassist Kim Stone (Spyro Gyra/The Rippingtons) in the fusion group Cornerstone. Two of the drummer's own recordings include 2006's *Samba Songs* and *Deux*, a duet with bassist Kirwan Brown.

As an author, Henrique released *Brazilian Rhythms For The Drumset*, a thorough book/CD package on the history and rhythms of bossa nova and samba, which is available through Carl Fischer Publishing. An upcoming instructional DVD is due for release later this year.

**Location:** Colorado Springs, Colorado

**Tools:** Henrique endorses Yamaha drums, Paiste cymbals, LP percussion, Vic Firth sticks, Evans heads, and HQ practice pads

**More info:** [www.henriquedealmeida.com](http://www.henriquedealmeida.com), [www.percussioninstitute.com](http://www.percussioninstitute.com)



## BARRY ALEXANDER II

Two years ago, Barry Alexander got an opportunity of a lifetime when fellow Minnesota musician Michael Bland (Prince, Soul Asylum) recommended the up & coming drummer for a tour with blues/rock guitar phenom Jonny Lang. Since then, Barry's been Jonny's guy, playing to packed clubs, amphitheaters, and arenas throughout the US.

In the few years before hooking up with Lang, the drummer was busy building his funk/fusion chops with artists on the Minneapolis scene and with national acts like Anthony Gomes. But before that, Barry didn't have much interest in drums, as ironic as that may seem. "I didn't start playing until after high school, when I was going to the Boys & Girls Club," says Alexander. "They had a sign posted for the Minnesota Vikings Drum Corps tryouts. I loved the Vikings, so I tried out." And from then on, Barry was hooked, doing everything he could to make up for lost time. "I used to play along to a lot

of old-school funk, like James Brown, Parliament, Average White Band, and Earth Wind & Fire," the drummer explains. Barry also cites Mint Condition front man Stokley Williams, Chris Dave, Michael Bland, Dennis Chambers, and Vinnie Colaiuta among his biggest influences.

Now that he's constantly on the road, Barry has devised a unique method to keep his chops in shape. "When I go to hotels, I'll sit in the pool with headphones, a metronome, and a pair of sticks, and I'll practice under water," says Alexander. "I started doing this to increase my speed, but it also helped with my groove. It's hard because the water slows you down. But once you keep practicing, you get used to it. Plus, it's fun!"

**Location:** Minneapolis, Minnesota

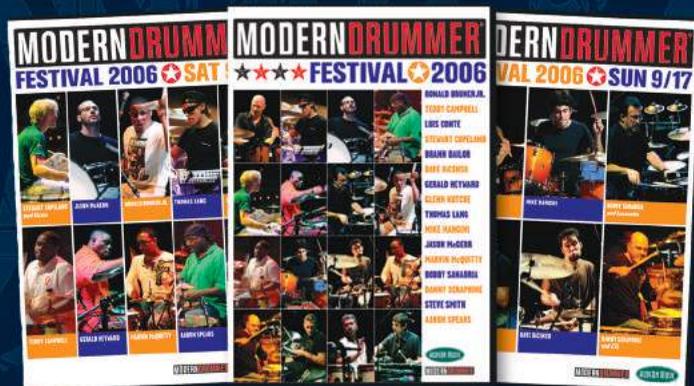
**Tools:** Barry endorses Taye drums, Zildjian cymbals, and Vater sticks

**More info:** [www.myspace.com/ntrakit1](http://www.myspace.com/ntrakit1)



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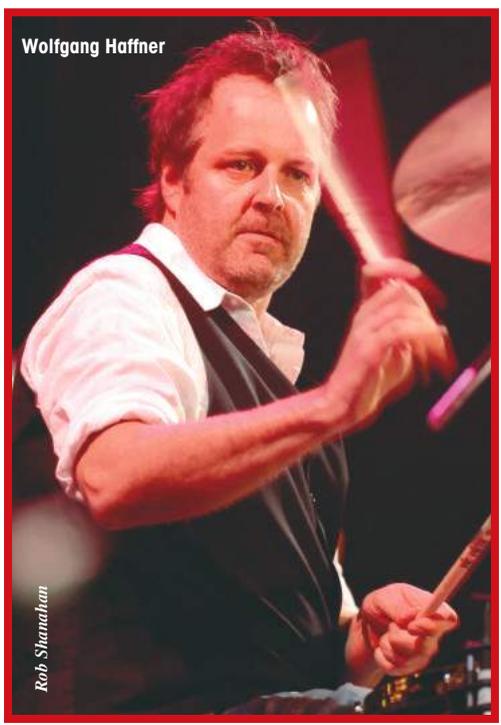
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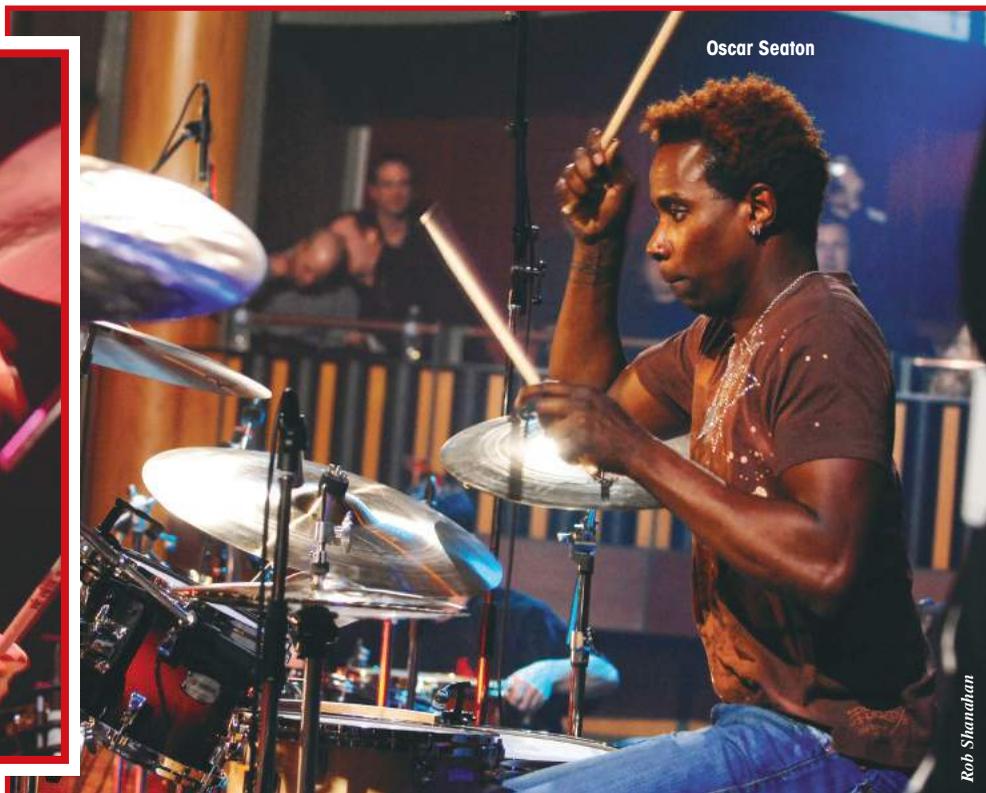
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## Yamaha Groove All Stars



Wolfgang Haffner

Rob Shanahan



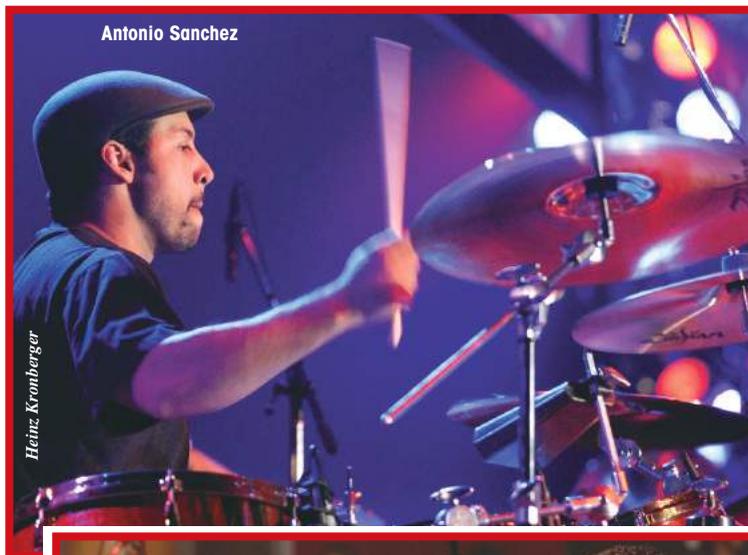
Oscar Seaton

Rob Shanahan

The 2008 edition of Yamaha's Groove All Stars event was held this past Saturday, January 19 at the Cerritos Performing Arts Center in California. The event featured top Yamaha drum endorsers playing with an all-star band that included percussionist **Ralph MacDonald**.

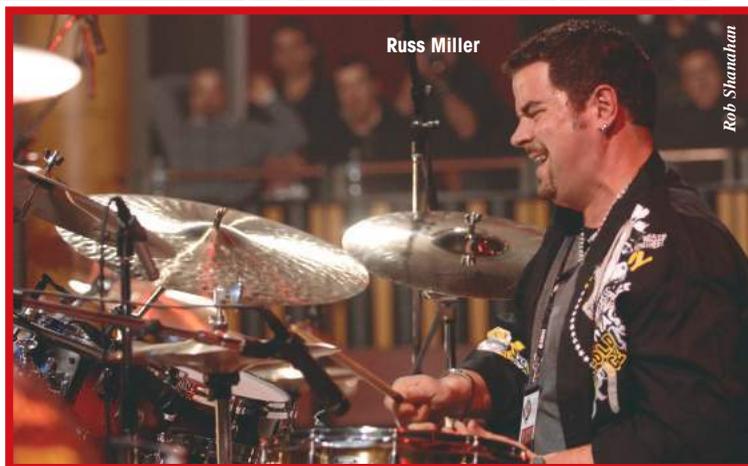
The **USC Trojan Band Drumline** opened the show with intricate and melodic rudimental pieces that wowed everyone. Emcee **Rick Marotta** then introduced **Tony Verderosa**, who played a manteca medley on a combination acoustic/electronic kit. **Shannon Larkin** followed with a slamming version of Jimi Hendrix' s "Fire." **Dave Weckl** then grooved hard on Rufus' s "Tell Me Something Good." **Dafnis Prieto** displayed amazing Latin-style independence on "16 Milverton Blvd." Studio legend **Russ Kunkel** swung "How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved By You)," which he recorded with James Taylor. German session ace **Wolfgang Haffner** played a razor-sharp version of Al Jarreau' s "Black & Blues." **Oscar Seaton** burned through Tower Of Power' s "Funkifize." **Tom Brechtlein** nailed a blues shuffle on Robben Ford' s "Talk To Your Daughter." **Jerry Marotta** gave a rootsy feel to The Band' s "Rag Mama Rag." **Michael Bland** closed the first act with a piledriving version of Led Zeppelin' s "The Ocean."

**Akira Jimbo** opened the second half of the show, using his acoustic-electronic setup to play



Antonio Sanchez

Heinz Kronberger

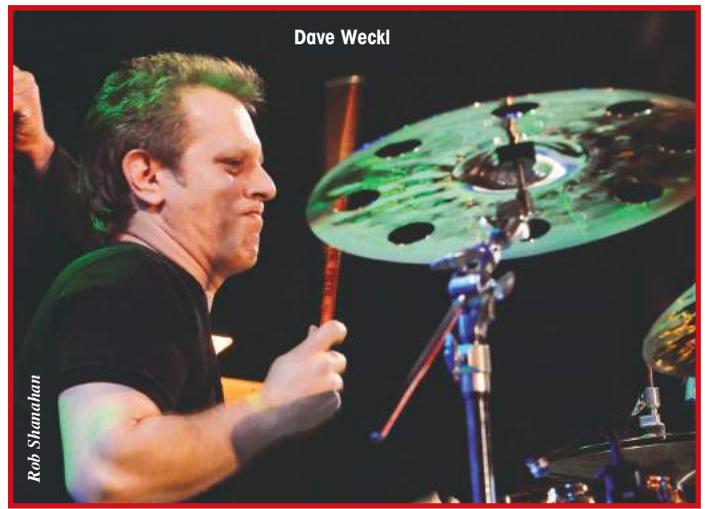


Russ Miller

Rob Shanahan

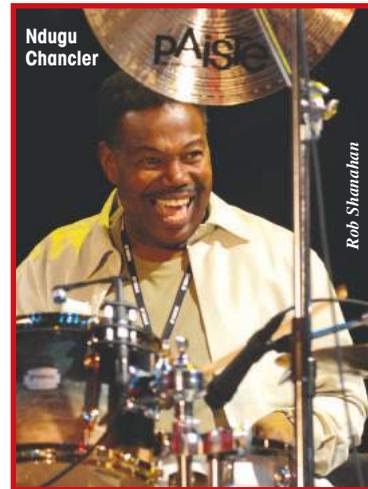
all the instruments on an Earth Wind & Fire medley. **Tommy Aldridge** then rocked the house on Thin Lizzy's "The Boys Are Back In Town." **Teddy Campbell** percolated on Stevie Wonder's "Sir Duke." **Antonio Sanchez** took a left turn from his normal jazz stylings to drive Led Zeppelin's "Good Times Bad Times." **Rick Marotta** then slowed things down with a sultry version of "You're The One That I Adore" by Bobby "Blue" Bland. **Ndugu Chancler** smiled all the way through a rock-solid rendition of Peter Gabriel's "Sledgehammer." **Russ Miller** saluted Jeff Porcaro on Toto's "Animal." **Chris Parker** got funky on The Brecker Brothers' "If You Wanna Boogie." **Gerry Brown** burned on Rufus & Chaka Khan's "Once You Get Started." And in the final drum spot, **Keith Carlock** tore it up on The Who's "Won't Get Fooled Again." All the drummers returned to take turns on the Martha & The Vandellas classic "Dancin' In The Street," which had everyone dancin' in the aisles.

The evening was coordinated by the Yamaha artist relations staff, led by Joe Testa. Co-sponsors included Beyerdynamic, Meinl, Paiste, Pro-Mark, Remo, Sabian, SKB, Zildjian, and Modern Drummer. To view additional Groove All Stars photos, go to [www.moderndrummer.com](http://www.moderndrummer.com).



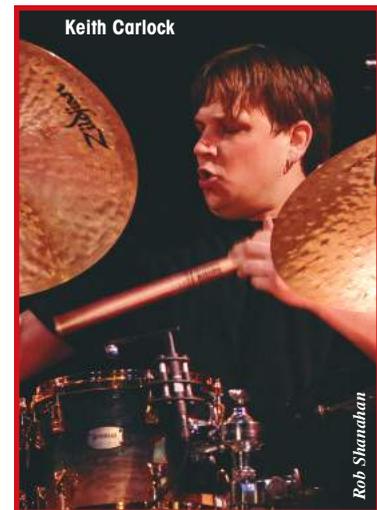
Dave Weckl

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Ndugu Chancler

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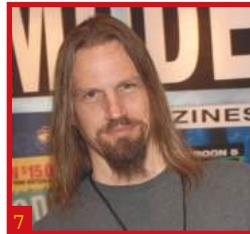
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# Faces At Namm

In addition to displaying all the newest drum gear, the annual National Association Of Music Merchants (NAMM) trade show in Anaheim is a place for noted drum artists to visit with their endorsing companies, sign autographs, and drop by the Modern Drummer booth. Here's a look at who stopped by.

Photos by Alex Solca



**Optimal Computer System Requirements**  
**PC Users:** Windows XP (Windows 2000, NT), Minimum 700 MHz Pentium 3 or greater, 512 MB RAM, 10GB free hard disk space (if copying Archive to hard disk), DVD drive. **Mac Users:** OS X 10.2 or greater, Minimum G3 700 MHz or greater, 10 GB free hard disk space, DVD drive.



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13. Rooney's Ned Brower.
14. German session ace Wolfgang Haffner.
15. Opiate For The Masses' Seven Antonopoulos.
16. Robbie Ameen, Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez, Luisito Quintero, and Giovanni Hidalgo.
17. MD associate editor Billy Amendola with son and drummer Matty Amendola.
18. Blondie's Clem Burke.
19. MD associate editor Mike Dawson and LA session drummer Robin Diaz.
20. Session drummer Randy Cooke.
21. American Idol's Teddy Campbell.
22. David Gilmour's Steve DiStanislaio.
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24. Camille Gainer and Liberty DeVitto.
25. MD managing editor Adam Budofsky and Fear Factory's Raymond Herrera.



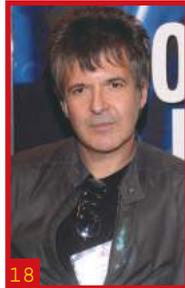
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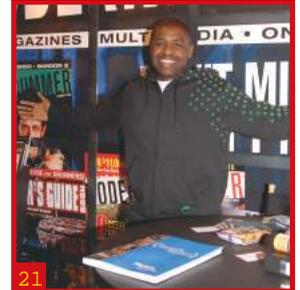
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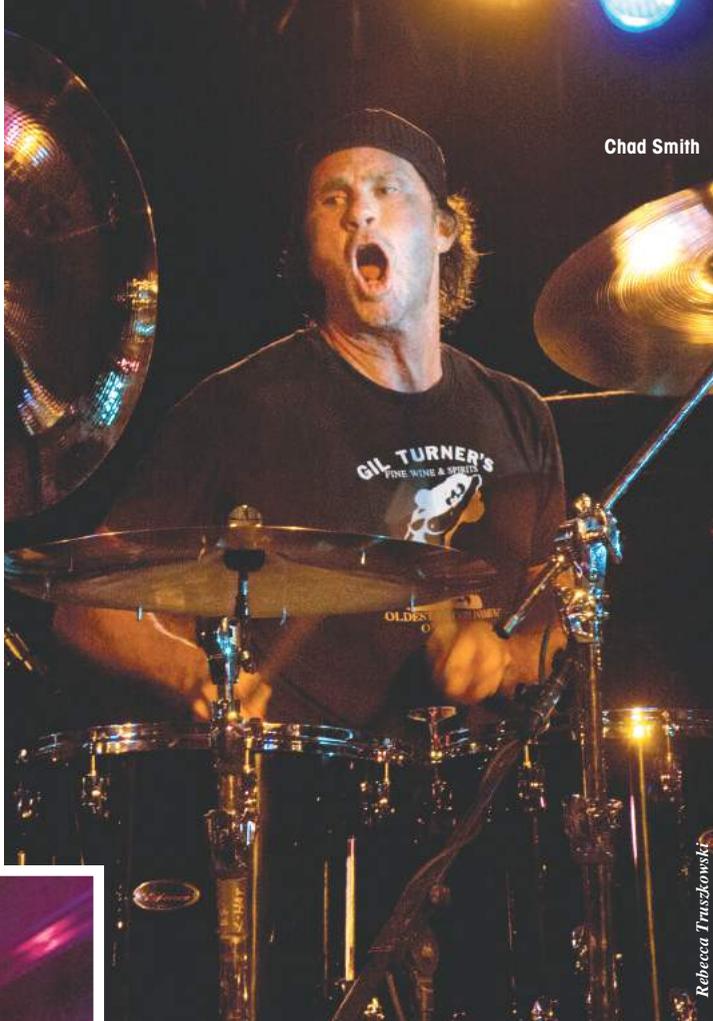
# Sabian Live!

**S**abian Live! has become a tradition among evening events at the NAMM show, and 2008 was no exception. Blending a roster of R&B, fusion, and rock artists, this year's event was held at the Sheraton hotel in Anaheim on Friday, January 18.

The evening opened with **Derico Watson** and a crack band featuring bass star Victor Wooten. After a burning set of instrumental jazz fusion, Derico surprised the audience by taking the mic for a vocal rendition of "Ain't No Sunshine When She's Gone." **Brian Frasier-Moore** then brought his band up to do a salute to jazz composers. This included tunes with guest drummer **Li'l John Roberts** and **George "Spanky" McCurdy**.

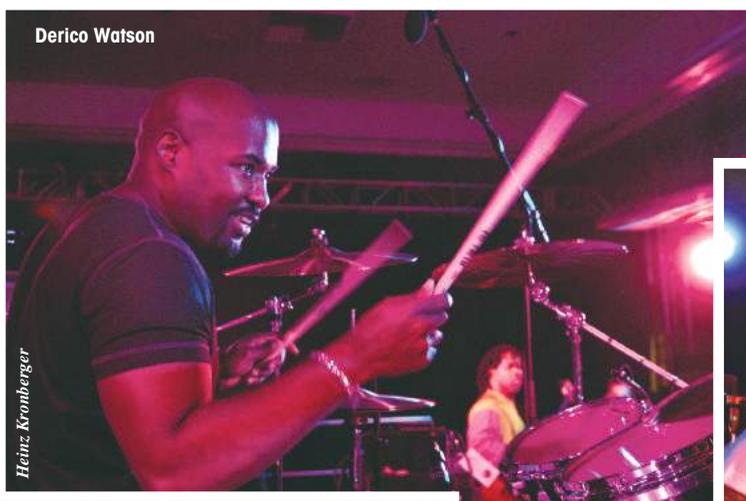
Classic power rock was well represented by former Deep Purple bassist/vocalist Glenn Hughes, ably supported by the unshakable groove of **Chad Smith**. Contemporary rock was equally on display from **Shannon Larkin** and guest drummer **Roy Mayorga**, who anchored a band that featured current and former members of Godsmack.

**Dom Famularo** emceed the event, which was supported by Audix, Evans, Gibraltar, Gretsch, Latin Percussion, Premier, Remo, Tama, Toca, Vater, and Yamaha.



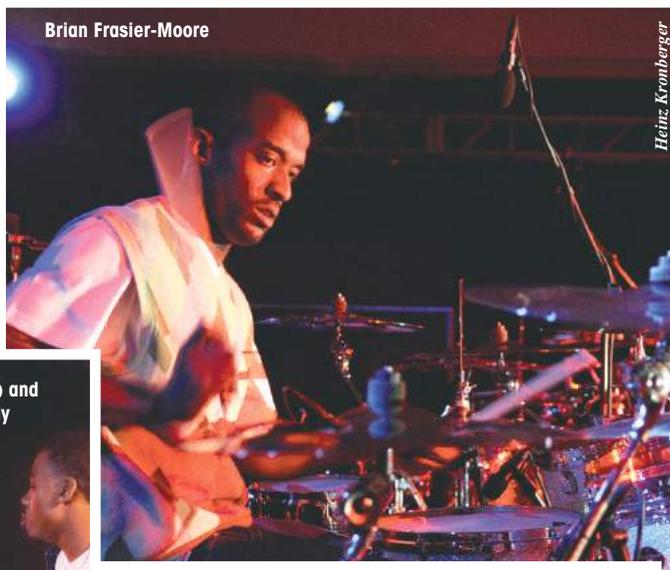
Chad Smith

Rebecca Truszkowski



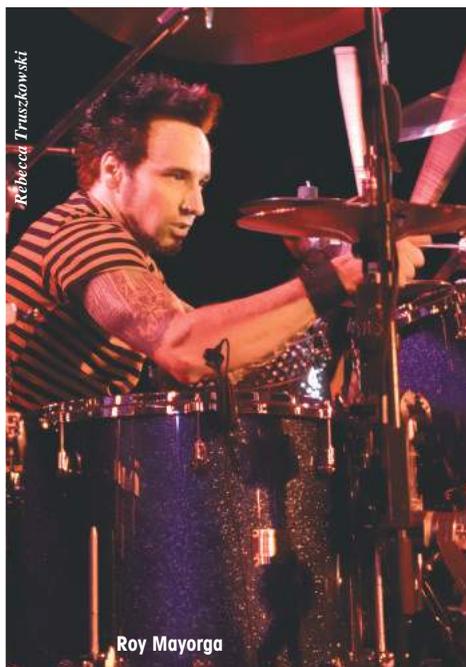
Derico Watson

Heinz Kronberger



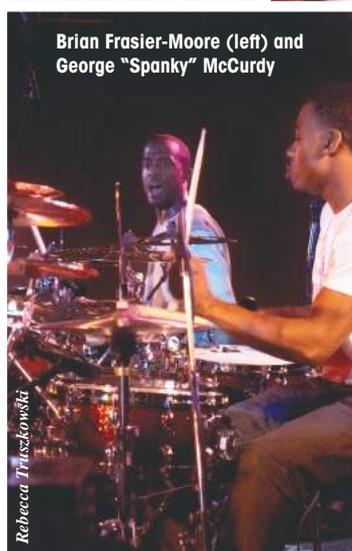
Brian Frasier-Moore

Heinz Kronberger



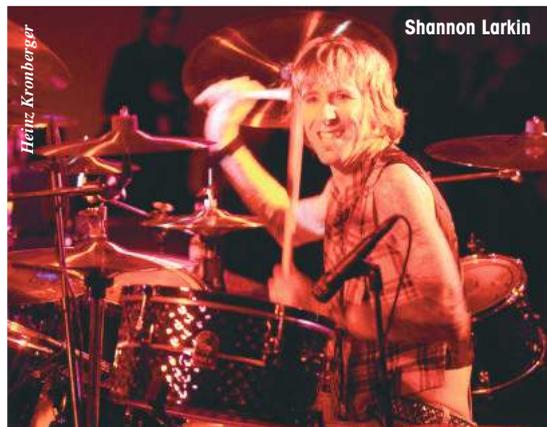
Roy Mayorga

Rebecca Truszkowski



Brian Frasier-Moore (left) and George "Spanky" McCurdy

Rebecca Truszkowski



Shannon Larkin

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## The Reading Room

Atlanta, Georgia's Curt Sanders is a professional drummer and teacher, as well as a high school band director. He specializes in teaching beginners, using a clapping system to help students improve their sight-reading skills. Curt's kit was born out of his own love for sight-reading. (He says he's sight-read every *Modern Drummer* transcription since 1983!)

The kit features a Noble & Cooley five-piece set augmented by a Peace hand-hammered copper snare, four Cannon toms, four Tama Octobans, three Remo RotoToms, a Ludwig marching timbale, and Toca congas. Cymbals include a wide variety of Zildjian models, along with a Wuhan China, an Opera gong, and an LP Ice Bell. Percussion includes a pedal-mounted LP Jam Block, a Rhythm Tech tambourine, LP and Toca cowbells, a TreeWorks bar chime, sea-shell chimes, bamboo wind chimes, an Alan Abel triangle, and assorted other goodies. The whole assembly is mounted on a Gibraltar Power drum rack.

Our only question is, If Curt likes to sight-read so much...where the heck does he put his music stand?



**Is Your Drumkit  
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Of course it is! Now how about sharing your cool creation with thousands of fellow *Modern Drummer* readers. Simply send us some photos and a brief description of your unique set, and we'll consider it for inclusion in *Kit Of The Month*. And if we do pick your pride & joy for coverage in *MD*, we'll send you a cool new MD Drum Bag/Cooler—for free! Just follow the simple directions below.

**Photo Submission:** Digital photos on disk as well as print photos may be sent to: Kit Of The Month, *Modern Drummer*, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Digital photos and descriptive text can also be emailed to [miked@moderndrummer.com](mailto:miked@moderndrummer.com). Show "Kit Of The Month" in the subject line of the message. Photos cannot be returned.



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