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**THE MARS VOLTA'S
THOMAS PRIDGEN**
INSIDE HIS AMAZING DRUMMING!



CARL PALMER
REVISITING A LEGEND

10 SUPER BAD BEATS
FROM GROOVE GOD
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WYNTON MARSALIS'S
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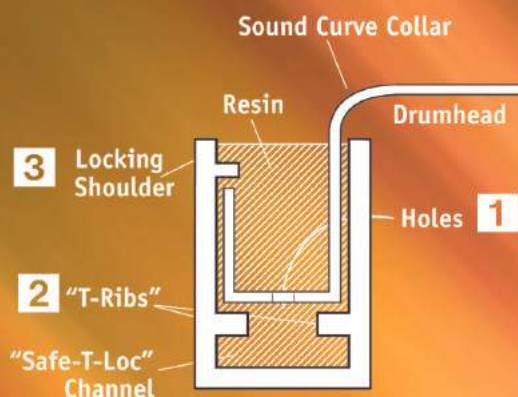
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FEATURES

52 The Mars Volta's Thomas Pridgen

Thomas Pridgen was a true musical child prodigy. All grown up now, and playing in what many say is the coolest rock band on earth, he's clearly no longer a kid. In fact, on drums, right now Thomas Pridgen is THE MAN.

66 Asia's Carl Palmer

The guy simply does not slow down. Then again, for any rock fan who's witnessed Carl Palmer's über-intense kit-work with ELP or Asia, that observation is strictly CP 101.

80 Wynton Marsalis's Ali Jackson

As the occupant of the most coveted jazz drum seat in New York City—and possibly the world—Ali Jackson must summon every ounce of his creativity, technique, and emotion.

92 Raymond Weber

For New Orleans mainstay Raymond Weber, a groove is a groove, whether he's playing with The Dirty Dozen Brass Band, Harry Connick Jr., Irma Thomas, or Trey Anastasio.



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Christopher Otazo



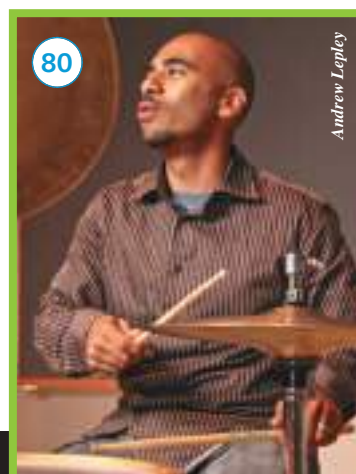
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The top Jazz/Fusion journeyman on why Steve Gadd still rules.



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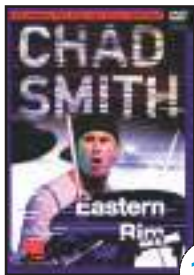
The saxophone colossus has played with all the heavy cats—Max, Philly Joe, Elvin, Tony—and in this exclusive interview, he reflects on each one's unique gifts.

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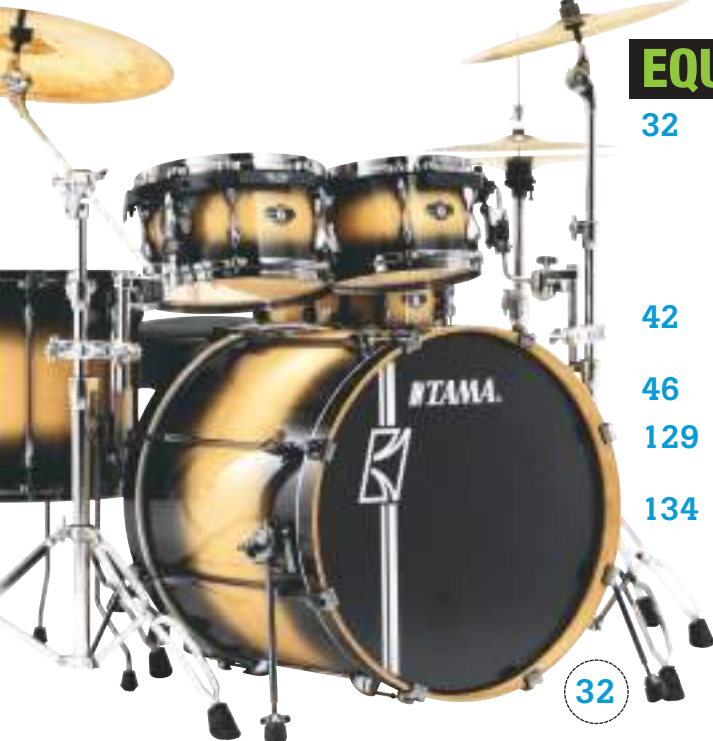
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A Star Is Born



As I write this editorial, we're super-busy in Festival mode here at the MD office. And it's all worth it! This year, as usual, we have an incredible lineup. In fact, in the previous issue of MD we featured one of this year's performers, Dafnis Prieto, on the cover; and this month we feature another—Thomas Pridgen. What's more, next issue will feature yet another Festival '08 artist, Todd Sucherman. Each of these players is world-class, so you'll definitely want to read what they have to say about their concepts—and watch them demonstrate them live!

MD readers have called Thomas Pridgen "a child prodigy," "a sick drummer who's absolutely incredible," even "the best drummer ever." At three years old, when most kids were learning to read and write, Pridgen was already impressing everyone who heard him with his amazing drumming abilities. Thomas won Guitar Center's Drum-Off when he was nine, and he was playing clubs by the time he was ten. At twelve he became the youngest drummer to be signed as an endorser by Zildjian, and he was accepted to Berklee College at fifteen—the recipient of a four-year scholarship. I guess you could say Thomas knew at an early age exactly what he was meant to do in life. These days, Thomas is bringing his heavy Gospel and R&B influence to The Mars Volta, one of the most startling and over-the-top rock groups in recent memory.

I first met Thomas when he was a very young boy. His lovely grandma Addie, who had been taking him around to various drum events, introduced me. We kept in touch over the years, and as Thomas grew older, it was increasingly obvious that great things were in store for him. Today we're incredibly excited to have Thomas play the MD Festival. Those in attendance are in for a truly unique experience.

Besides the profile on Thomas, this issue also features the legendary Carl Palmer. I can still remember the first time I heard ELP and Carl's remarkable drumming—and I can easily visualize the pictures of Carl that I had hanging on my bedroom wall.

Jump forward to the mid-'90s, and it's my young son, Matty, who has posters of his drum heroes on his wall. One of the bands Matty was especially into, and who he enthusiastically turned me on to, was Blind Melon, with drummer Glen Graham. Blind Melon recently got back together with a new vocalist and released a CD. Check out Glen's Update in this issue, as well as his MD exclusive interview at www.moderndrummer.com.

Speaking of the Web, while you're there, click around and explore our new design. And please let us know what you think by emailing me at billya@moderndrummer.com; we'd love to hear from you.

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Cindy Blackman

Thank you for the wonderful interview with Cindy Blackman in the June issue. She commands power and plays with such fervor. I can totally identify with Cindy's love of drumming. Isn't that what every little girl dreams of?

Kat Almlie

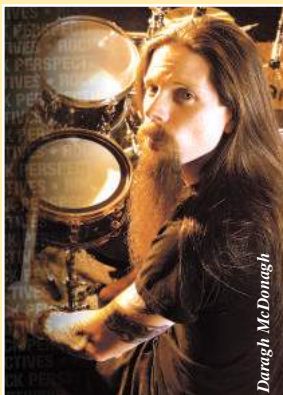
Thanks so much for the interviews with Cindy Blackman and Trevor Lawrence Jr. Both stories were insightful, enlightening, and informative. They definitely honor the history and legacy of those before them.

Theo Brown

Chris Adler's Two Cents

I am almost fifty years old, still playing and learning, and I found Chris Adler's article to be very motivating. If it did that for me, hopefully some young drummers feeling overwhelmed with talks of Swiss triplets and triple ratamacues will realize that all it takes is hard work, dedication, and lots of practice to achieve your goals. I'm looking forward to more of his two cents.

Garrett Lucht



I just finished Chris Adler's amazing column and had to put down the magazine to write this. The way Chris talks about drumming makes me feel like I'm doing things right. As I play in my metal band, I try to do what I think will sound a little different from someone else. I'm not good (I don't think), but all I can do is

practice. Chris's inspiring words help make it easier.

Wes Nyle

Travis Barker Backlash

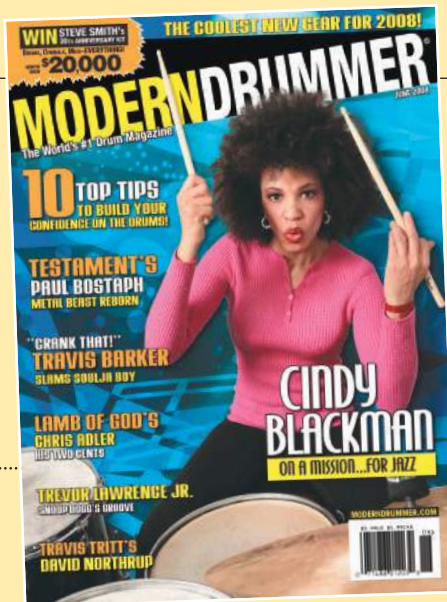
Every time I receive a new issue of Modern Drummer that has a write-up on Travis Barker I get the exact same feeling as when I get a new issue of Automobile that has a big article on a new Kia. Who cares? I thought this was a magazine dedicated to the art of drumming. To think of all the technical talent out there that's going overlooked so you guys can massage the ego of someone who's more of a personality than an artist.... Do your dedicated readers a favor and keep Travis as a spokesman in your ads, not as a benchmark in your articles.

Krist Whelan

Thanks From Readers Poll Winners

I would like to express heartfelt thanks to the readers of Modern Drummer for including me in the most recent Readers Poll. It is humbling to share this honor with the other winners in this category: Jeff Hamilton, Carl Allen, Lewis Nash, and (everyone's favorite drummer) Roy Haynes. This inspires me more than ever to play "straight ahead and strive for tone."

Peter Erskine



Being honored in the MD Readers Poll is not a thrill that ever wears off. In fact, as the years go by it feels even sweeter. I am especially proud of the "Best Recorded Performance" award, and would like to share the honor with co-producer Nick Raskulinecz and engineer Rich Chycki, whose expertise and enthusiasm had much to do with the quality of the drum performances on Snakes And Arrows.

Neil Pearl

David Northrup

Thanks for the story on David Northrup. You couldn't have found a better person in all of Nashville to write about. My first gig after moving to Nashville was subbing for Dave. I had cracked cymbals and a drumset that was on its last leg. At the end of the night, Dave gave me two new Zildjian crash cymbals. (He made it in time to play the second set.) He's a great man and a great musician. And he has a big heart.

Doug Belote



Thank you for the article on David Northrup in the June issue. It provided a critical reminder that playing drums with a band is first and foremost about accompaniment. There exists a clear difference between top-notch skill/ability/gracefulness on the drums and being "involved in drumnastics," as Dave stated.

Ted C. Smith III

DROPPED BEATS

- The review of the DVD *Los Caminos Del Cajón* that appeared in June's *Critique* contained an incorrect retail price. The DVD sells for 25 Euros, or around \$40 US.





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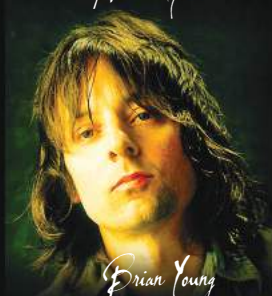
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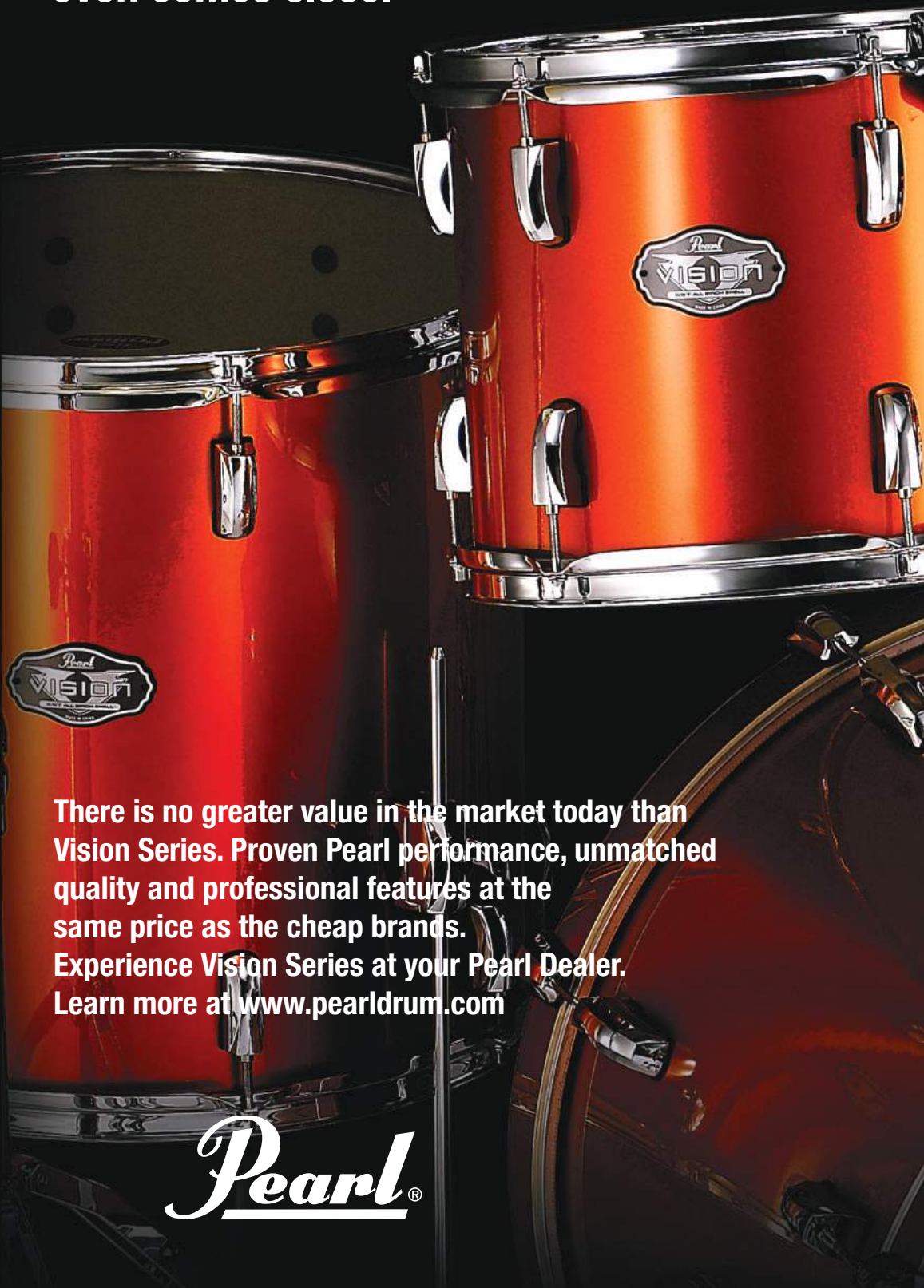
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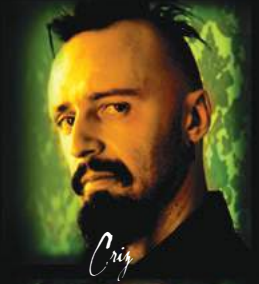
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John Scofield/Manhattan Transfer Drummer **Steve Hass** On Keeping Sharp

Let me first say that I'm a big fan of your contributions to drumming and the music of so many genres. You maintain an intense touring schedule. You can also handle a wide range of music. How do you keep up your abilities while on tour? For instance, if you're on tour with John Scofield, how do you keep your pocket drumming up? Or when you're on tour with Manhattan Transfer, how is it that you can still solo so fluently after not playing a solo for weeks at a time?

Robben Jenkins

Thank you very much for appreciating my take on drumming and music. Coincidentally, I asked the great Vinnie Colaiuta this same question years ago when he played with Chaka Kahn at the Blue Note in New York City. His answer to me was, "I don't really think about it." At the time, I didn't quite understand what he meant. Now that I'm an experienced professional, I know exactly what he was saying. If you've had the necessary listening and playing experiences, switching it up is very natural.

I've been playing the drums in many musical settings since the age of sixteen. I also have a love for all music. I listen for quality regardless of the genre. This is imperative in the realm of switching musical gears. Listening is key. Knowing the language of the style—be it Brazilian, Afro-Cuban, or rock 'n' roll—is very

important. Having this knowledge gives me the confidence I need to switch it up.

When I'm on tour with bands like Manhattan Transfer, which is a much different musical experience from playing with John Scofield, I always bring a few practice tools on the road. I love Jojo Mayer's DVD on hand technique, so I always have that handy. And I bring a practice pad and bass drum pedal to keep my physical abilities sharp. I'm not very big on practicing technique, but I do believe that in order to execute the ideas in your head, your hands and feet have to be in shape. If I'm on a gig that's all about being supportive, I try to at least keep my muscle memory in shape by working out on a pad. More importantly, though, I keep my ears and mind in shape by listening to a wide variety of music. I was recently in Asia with Manhattan Transfer for three weeks. During that time I was checking out Brazilian vocalist Marisa Monte, American singer/songwriter Sara Bareilles, The Kevin Hayes Trio, and The Afro Cuban Latin Jazz Project. This keeps my vocabulary sharp.

So the bottom line is, due to the homework I've done in the past, listening, and practicing on the road, I have the tools I need to authentically and confidently change genres.

I hope this helps!

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Styx's Todd Sucherman

Finger Protection

I notice you use sleeve-type wraps for your fingers when you play. Who makes them?

Mark Ulmer

To prevent blisters or skin irritation, I use 3M Active Strips and Active Strip tape on my fingers. Playing two-hour rock shows with mostly traditional grip can be brutal on specific areas of the digits. Maybe I'm extra-sensitive, but I've found the 3M Active strips to be amazing, as they have Lycra Spandex in the material that flexes like skin. They are water- and sweat-resistant as well, and they're available at any grocery store or pharmacy.



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QUICK BEATS

Text and photos by Joe Perry

Pat Mastelotto (King Crimson)



Place of birth: Chico, California

Hobbies/interests: Recording engineer

Favorite album: The Beatles' "White" album, Todd Rundgren's Something/Anything?, Peter Gabriel's 3

Favorite drink: Calvados, Scotch, vodka, espresso

Favorite food: Depends on what country I'm in

Favorite junk food: Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, lemon bars

Favorite movie: Spartacus, Help!, Grindhouse

Favorite TV show: Late Show with David Letterman, Cooking Channel's Mario Batali

Vehicle I drive: 1996 Nissan Pathfinder

Pets: Four dogs (Sunny, Stormy, Elvira, and Moondog)

Other instruments I play: Pro Tools and my laptop

Place I'd like to visit: India, Iceland, Ireland

Musicians I would like to work with: Jimi Hendrix, John Lennon (not in a hurry!)

Person I would like to talk to: Jesus, Keith Moon, Ian Wallace, Leonardo de Vinci

I wish I'd played drums on: Anything by Bill Withers or Al Green

Largest venue played: MTV Spring Break 1986, headlining with Mr. Mister

Most unusual item autographed: toothbrush, passport

A large advertisement for Ahead Drumsticks. The central image shows Lars Ulrich of Metallica playing drums with an intense expression. Overlaid on the image is the text "do a 180°...make the switch!" in a large, bold, stylized font. Below this, in smaller text, it says "YOU'LL SEE WHY LARS NEVER WENT BACK." The Ahead Drumsticks logo is prominently displayed on the right side, along with the website "www.AheadDrumSticks.com" and the phone number "800-547-6401". At the bottom, there is more text about the benefits of the sticks and distribution information for the US and UK. A vertical photo credit "photo credit: ROSS HALFINN PIQUE" is on the left side.

do a 180°...make the switch!

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Lars Ulrich

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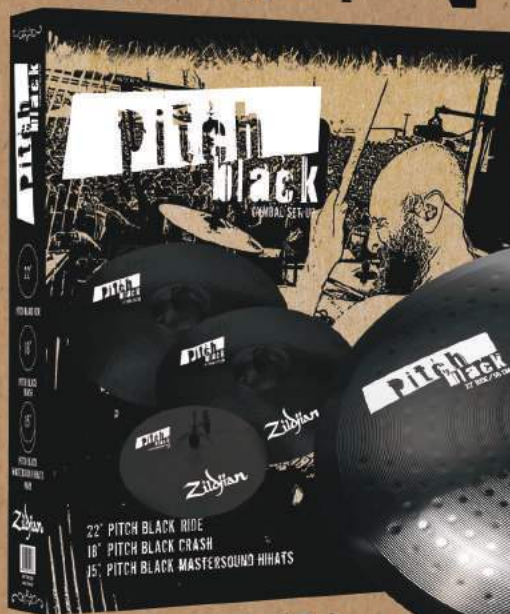


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Stone Temple Pilots' Eric KRETZ Reunited...And It Feels So Good

Rob Mazzella

Since Stone Temple Pilots disbanded five years ago, Scott Weiland (Velvet Revolver), and the DeLeo brothers Robert and Dean (Army of Anyone, among other projects) have made plenty of noise on their own. As for drummer Eric Kretz, he's been helping *others* make noise—first with Bomb Shelter, the Los Angeles recording studio he opened in 2004, then with a gig as music supervisor for *The Henry Rollins Show* on IFC, where he's recorded performances by everyone from Radiohead to Slayer.

The two gigs keep Kretz busy. So busy, in fact, that when STP needed a rehearsal spot for their reunion tour, the drummer couldn't even accommodate his own band: Bomb Shelter was booked solid. "I couldn't even use my own place," Kretz laughs when recalling the "very natural" circumstances behind the STP reunion.

"Basically, we all got to talking individually, and it felt like the right thing to do. It'd been enough time. Two years ago...well...I just wasn't excited about it then."

While Weiland and the DeLeos kept their chops sharp through steady recording and touring, drumming had taken a back seat for Kretz, as the responsibilities of his studio and becoming a first-time

father took priority. So Kretz returned to the kit—and some of his favorite records—to get back into shape rhythmically, physically, and mentally.

"Playing every day again helped," Kretz admits. "Oddly enough, I went back to what I used to do in high school. I really got back into Rush, King Crimson, and Yes—all the prog stuff—to get the brain fired up again...the different time signatures, and the art of memorizing these different parts intensely. I did that for about a month, and then we jumped into rehearsals."

With the seventy-date tour in full swing, and Kretz's previously soft hands sufficiently blistered ("Look for me backstage," he chuckles, "I'm the one with the gauze bandages all over my hands"), Kretz is already looking forward to getting back into the studio with STP, likely in late '08 or early '09.

"Having my studio made me realize—both with my playing and engineering—that there's so much more I can be doing with different treatments and layering. That gets me really excited to try some new songs."

Patrick Berkery

Paramore's Zac FARRO Getting An Early Start

After several months of constant road work, eighteen-year-old Paramore drummer Zac Farro is finally back at home relaxing. And it's a little strange for him. "I haven't felt like a normal kid in two years," he admits. "It's so weird; I'm just hanging out with my friends, doing what they're doing. It's crazy not doing music for a while."

Farro was inspired to play music at age nine, started taking drum lessons at eleven, got his first kit at twelve—and with his older brother Josh, started Paramore at thirteen. The next year, Farro hit the road and entered the studio, tracking his female-fronted pop-punk band's debut. And before he's even become a legal adult, he's already lined up radio hits, a Grammy nomination, and even a Gold record.

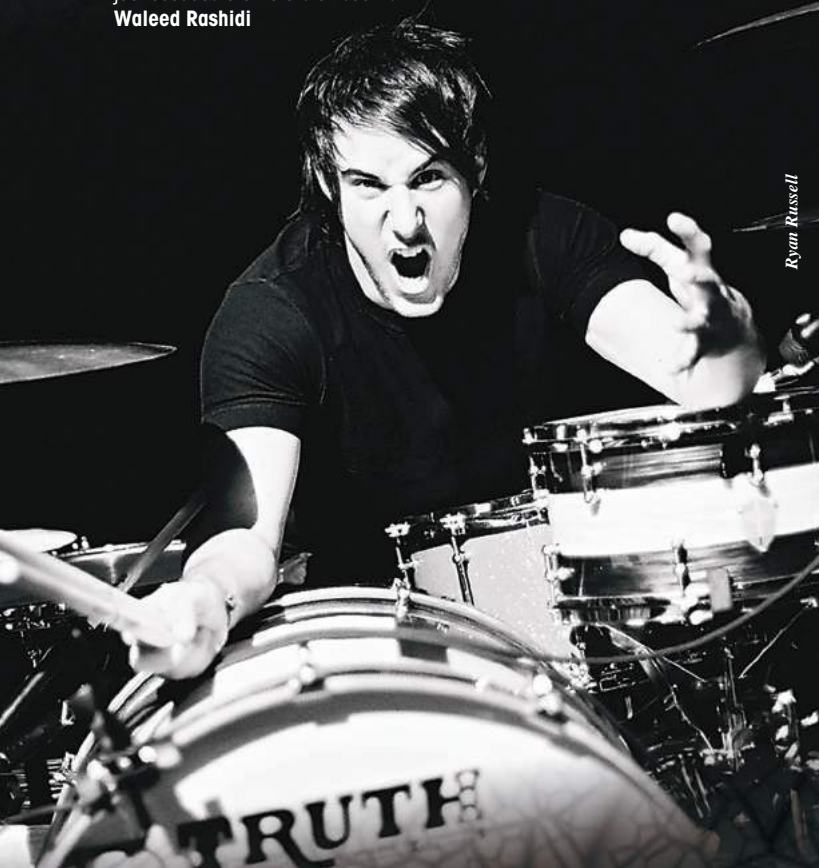
Farro was raised on Taylor Hawkins, William Goldsmith, Dave Grohl, and Aaron Gillespie as influences. "The way they just killed the drumkit, I was like, *dude*, I want to do that," he says. "Those kinds of dudes, when I heard them, I just had a connection with. They get it."

After Paramore's 2005 debut, *All We Know Is Falling*, was released, Farro exited high school and entered the tour bus (he plans to complete his schooling)—with his parents' permission, of course. "It's crazy to me, because when I was at home, sometimes my parents wouldn't even let me spend the night at a friend's house," he says. "But they'd let me go tour Europe and Japan. It's pretty funny, but I guess they really knew that I wanted to do this."

Following the success of the band's debut album, Farro entered the studio to track Paramore's next one, *Riot!*, and got a quick education in growing up behind the kit. "Producer David Bendeth really worked us," he says. "He would go in there, and if I was doing too many fills, he'd take away my drums one by one. He said, 'You need to stop playing like a sixteen-year-old and start playing like a twenty-five-year-old.' I'm seriously thankful for that advice."

Farro is an incredibly heavy hitter, and he has a professional and mature demeanor that's well beyond his young age. "Being a drummer, I feel like consistency is number one," he says. "Number two is just feeling the songs. When I see a drummer, I can feel his attack and consistency, and that's what I want people to feel when they see me, that this guy plays the drums because he loves them. So, it's one, consistency, two, feeling, and three, I don't know—just because drums are awesome!"

Waleed Rashidi



Ryan Russell

Blind Melon's Glen GRAHAM Back With Friends



It's a hard thing to lose a loved one, especially when not only is it a close friend, but also the front man and voice of your top-selling band. "It was a very difficult thing to go through," admits Blind Melon drummer Glen Graham. The band had signed to Capitol records in 1991, and by 1993 they'd gone platinum with the help of the MTV video for their smash single "No Rain." But after lead singer Shannon Hoon passed away in 1995, at the height of Blind Melon's career, Glen said he had to stop. In fact, he didn't play music for almost ten years.

"I just lost interest," the drummer admits. "It sounds kind of pathetic, I suppose, but to go from that level... To realize you were doing exactly what you wanted to do and that things were going well, and then you lose your friend...and everything else...was very difficult."

Glen eventually started playing again after a musician friend persuaded him. Glen explains, "My next door neighbor came over about four years ago and said, 'What are you doing? You're doing nothing. Let's do *something*.' So we got together and wrote and recorded some songs and called the project Meek."

In 2007, the original members of Blind Melon reunited and introduced new lead singer Travis Warren. In April of '08, the band released *For My Friends*, their first recording in thirteen years. Was it a risk? Glen says, "AC/DC is the only band I can think of that's successfully pulled off the singer switch, so we'll see. But being back in the band has been fun, and I'm glad we're doing it."

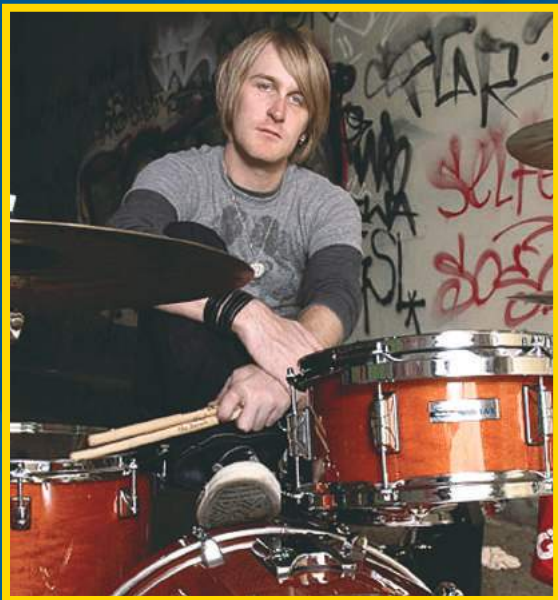
And fan response has been positive so far, judging from the reviews and live shows. "I would say ninety percent of the shows are sold out," Glen says, "and people are singing the words to at least half the songs. Some people are even singing the words to our new songs, which is kind of amazing to me."

A fan of Ludwig and Zickos acrylic drums in the past, Glen recently signed with a new drum company to get his own version of see-through tubs. "I just signed a deal with a small custom company from central California called Shine drums. They basically do wood drums, but they're making me a beautiful set of acrylic drums."

For more with Glen, check out his *MD* Web exclusive interview at www.moderndrummer.com.

Billy Amendola

Hilary Duff's Mike BENNETT With A Nod To Percussion



We weren't kidding when we featured Mike Bennett in our *On The Move* section a couple of years ago. Back then, Bennett was occupied with a host of gigs in the LA music scene. But this year's handed him the most important job of his life, as the touring drummer for actress and multi-platinum pop sensation Hilary Duff. And three key words are behind Bennett's rapid ascent onto a major-league drum riser: patience, persistence, and percussion.

The twenty-six-year-old Bennett originally landed the Duff gig a year earlier as the band's percussionist. Leaving the sticks behind for a riser full of congas and electronics, Bennett realized he was literally inches away from the coveted drum throne.

"I'd been studying percussion, doing a lot of gigs playing as a percussionist, and that all came about because I was trying to be a smarter kit player," he says. "I didn't want to learn patterns out of books, I wanted to go to percussionists and learn to make wise decisions."

Hanging with percussionists proved fruitful when Bennett was tipped off with an early-morning phone call that Duff's camp was seeking one. He frantically drove to the studio, auditioned, and nabbed the slot at the last second. Within weeks, he was

backing Duff on television appearances for *The Tonight Show*, *Ellen*, *Good Morning America*, and *The Jimmy Kimmel Show* as part of his first major tour.

Now that he's perched behind his Taye drums and Sabian cymbals, Bennett's role has expanded to merge the percussion of his former position with his current kit parts. "I realized that I should have a method to my own madness here," he says. "So I'm using a lot of the Roland gear and technology to assist me in re-creating the essential elements of the percussion chair and merging the two. There's a lot of planning. I've tried to eliminate any margin for error and keep it all under my control."

It's also within Bennett's control to bring "a little more rock 'n' roll" attitude to the gig, drawing from his '90s alternative rock scene influences. And though he already holds a music degree from the University of La Verne, Bennett admits that he's still got quite an education ahead of him. "I'm happy I'm learning all this stuff, because I want to be around for a while," he says. "It's the greatest job in the world; I love what I'm doing. I want to learn the skills so that this gig is just one of many."

Waleed Rashidi

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Chico Hamilton (jazz great): 9/21/21
Horace Arnold (educator, author): 9/25/35
Ron Bushy (Iron Butterfly): 9/23/45
Greg Errico (Sly & The Family Stone): 9/1/46
Don Brewer (Grand Funk Railroad): 9/3/48

Kenney Jones (The Faces, The Who): 9/16/48
Martin Chambers (The Pretenders): 9/4/51
Neil Peart (Rush): 9/12/52
John Tempesta (The Cult/Rob Zombie): 9/26/64
Matt Wilson (jazz great): 9/28/64

Zak Starkey (The Who): 9/13/65
Stephen Perkins (Jane's Addiction): 9/13/67
Tyler Stewart (Barenaked Ladies): 9/21/67
Brad Wilk (Rage Against The Machine): 9/5/68
John Blackwell (Justin Timberlake/Prince): 9/9/73

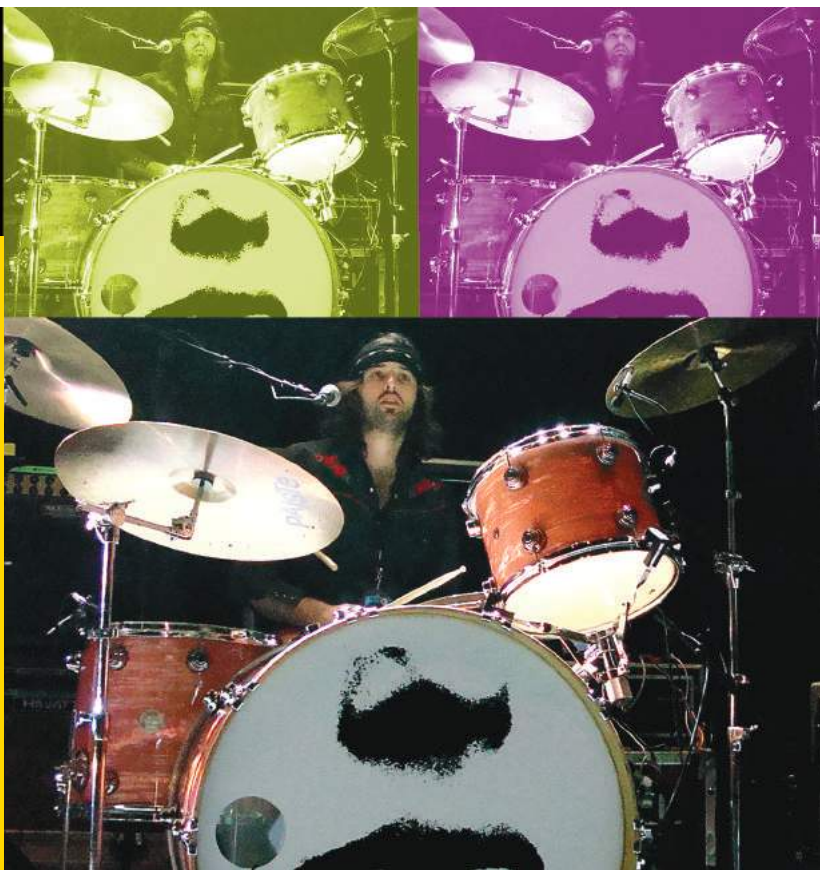
Hello Stranger's Joachim COODER On The Ry Side

For Joachim Cooder, this is a very exciting time in the life of Hello Stranger, a group he started several years ago with bandmate Juliette Commagere. They're finishing up their second record with Mike Elizondo at the helm, and they've recently completed a tour opening for The Foo Fighters. "It's been the most mind-blowing experience ever," Cooder admits. "It's definitely a dream come true, playing shows on this level. Their crowd really appreciated us."

Songwriting is a very important aspect for Joachim in Hello Stranger, and he says he's excited about the direction the album is taking. "Mike Elizondo has played bass with my dad [famed roots rock guitarist Ry Cooder], and I've always been a big fan of his. Over the years I would give him stuff that we had written. We did this song called 'Grab It!,' which I just knew he'd like. Sure enough, Mike got right back to me and said, 'Let's work on this.' We had a great time doing that song, and from there we just started making a record at his studio.

"Drumming-wise," Joachim continues, "I think it's just about being supportive of the songs and of Juliette, our singer. If you're a band with songs and a singer, it's about that. I'm not really a flashy drummer. I'm all about being steady, providing a big foundation, and supporting the dynamics of the songs."

Robyn Flans



UPDATE NEWS

Josh Freese is on Filter's first album in six years, *Anthems For The Damned*.

Otis Brown III is on The Anee Mette Iversen Quartet's *Best Of The West & Many Places*. Otis has also been performing with Esperanza Spalding.

Pete Parada is on The Offspring's new album, *Rise And Fall, Rage And Grace*.

Gerry Conway, Doane Perry, and Clive Bunker appear on a new Jethro Tull compilation DVD, *Jack In The Green, Live In Germany*.

Chris Fryer will be splitting his time between The Zac Brown Band and bassist Oteil Burbridge this year. Look for a new release from ZBB by mid summer. After a successful battle with cancer, **Chuck Fields** recently made his triumphant return to the stage with Terri Clark.

The Howard Stern Show's **Richard Christy** (formerly of Iced Earth and Death) can be seen in a drumming special, available now on Howard TV.

Chris Frantz has been making some select appearances with Tom Tom Club this summer.

Charley Drayton is touring with Paul Simon.

Josh Dion is on Lady Clown's debut, *First Lady Clown*.

Congratulations to The Band Of Heathens' **John Chipman** on being voted "Best Drummer" in the 2007-08 Austin Music Awards. John is also on the band's self-titled release.

Bandleader and percussionist **Steven Kroon's** latest is *El Mas Alla*. The CD features drummers **Vince Cherico** and **Deigo Lopez**. For more info, visit www.stevkroon.com.

Congratulations to **Mark Schulman** (Cher, Pink) and his wife, Lisa, on their recent nuptials.

Ex-Fuel drummer **Kevin Miller** is on Tantric's latest, *The End Begins*.

Vinnie Colaiuta is on Glen Campbell's latest, *Meet Glen Campbell*.

Jason Bittner is on a memorial track for guitarist Dimebag Darrell titled "Leave It Alone." All proceeds are going to *Little Kids Rock*. You can hear it at www.myspace.com/dimebtrack.

Pat Steward and **Mickey Curry** are both on Bryan Adams' latest, *11*.

Brice Williams is on Lady Antebellum's self-titled release.

Barry Kerch has been rehearsing with Shinedown for their upcoming tour. Their new CD, *Sound Of Madness*, is scheduled for release this summer.



DRUM DATES

This month's important events in drumming history

Buddy Rich was born on 9/30/17, **Elvin Jones** on 9/9/27.

Original Average White Band drummer **Robbie McIntosh** passed away on 9/23/74, **Keith Moon** on 9/7/78, **John Bonham** on 9/25/80, **Shelly Manne** on 9/26/84, and **Philly Joe Jones** in September of '85.

9/6/40: Clarinetist Sidney Bechet records *Blues In Thirds* with pianist Earl Hines and the great **Baby Dodds** on drums.

9/13/69: Future Yes drummer **Alan White** performs as part of John Lennon's Plastic Ono Band at the Toronto Rock 'N' Roll Festival.

9/17/88: Guns N' Roses (with **Steven Adler** on drums) hit the number-1 spot on the charts with their single, "Sweet Child O' Mine."



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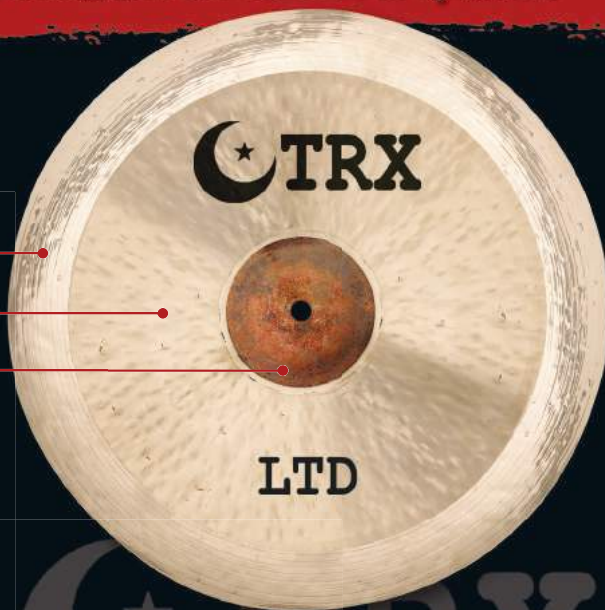
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Tapestry's "Other" Drummer

I just bought the reissue of Carole King's classic album *Tapestry*. The drummers listed in the credits are Russ Kunkel, whose work with James Taylor and Jackson Browne I'm familiar with, and Joel O'Brien, who I've never heard of. I was actually surprised to learn that it's O'Brien, not Kunkel, on the hits "I Feel The Earth Move Under My Feet" and "It's Too Late." Can you tell me more about him?

Leonard Ziffarelli

Joel "Bishop" O'Brien was born in New York City in 1943, the son of a disc jockey and an actress. He grew up playing several instruments, including piano and guitar. Initially he worked in the movie industry, as a film editor and theater manager, but found his niche as a drummer on the New York music scene. With New York band The Kingbees, featuring Danny "Kootch" Kortchmar, O'Brien released three singles on RCA.

Soon after, O'Brien and Kortchmar started a new band, The Flying Machine, with Zachary Wisner on bass and an old friend of Kortchmar, James Taylor, on guitar and vocals. The group was signed to Euphoria records, and released one single, "Night Owl," which reached #102 on the national charts.

After The Flying Machine disintegrated, O'Brien went to London to record with James Taylor. JT's music had caught the attention of The Beatles, who released the singer's hit-less solo debut on their Apple label. In 1971, after Taylor's solo career took off, Euphoria released The Flying Machine's old demos as James Taylor And The Original Flying Machine. (The demise of the band is referred to in the lyrics of Taylor's smash hit "Fire And Rain," the group being described as "in pieces on the ground.")



Joel O'Brien surrounded by some of his legendary friends. Top: Ralph Schuckett. Middle: Danny Kortchmar, Joel, James Taylor. Bottom: Carole King, Lee Sklar.



Joel during a JoMama soundcheck, possibly at Madison Square Garden

Returning to the States, O'Brien again hooked up with Kortchmar, this time in a band called JoMama, which backed up pop writer Carole King on her early solo albums, including the extraordinarily successful *Tapestry*. JoMama released two records under their own name on Atlantic, JoMama [1970] and J Is For Jump [1971]. They also acted as Taylor's backup band.

O'Brien, who had always lived life in the fast lane, moved back to the East Coast following one too many brushes with the law, settling in Woodstock, New York and playing with singer-songwriter Robbie Dupree (#6 1980 hit "Steal Away") and R&B and county bands. Later O'Brien became a full-time pianist/vocalist. He died in 2004 of liver cancer.

For more on Joel O'Brien, go to www.joel-bishop-obrien.com.

The Doctor Is In by Asif Khan, M.D.

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



Back Cramps

I've been playing drums since the third grade, and about a year and a half ago I started experiencing severe back cramping when I play. It happens every time I play now. Have you ever heard of this?

Randy Yevick

Back pain in a drummer is quite common. For someone who has been playing for decades, the cause may be quite sinister. I'm assuming you haven't consciously changed your playing posture for years, so let's explore other common causes of new-onset back pain in a drummer.

One of the most common causes of back cramping is weight gain. Even a modest weight gain of five pounds around your midsection can have devastating effects on the lower thoracic and lumbar curvatures of your spine, tensing up all the muscles along it.

Imagine the belly button of a conditioned athlete being directly over his/her feet. This is the center of gravity of the human body. Now imagine what happens to your center of gravity when your belly button begins to migrate off-center as your abdomen grows. Your center of gravity is no longer directly over your feet but has moved in front of them. The lumbar spine compensates by moving in the same direction. This movement puts great stress on the ligaments supporting your vertebrae.

My recommendations in your specific case are to try to lose any weight or abdominal girth that would affect your center of gravity. Also stretch the back properly prior to playing, make sure you're hydrated, and use a throne with a backrest. If this doesn't help, then you may need to see a doctor or physical therapist.



Dr. Asif Khan is a staff physician at Kaiser Permanente of Hawaii. He trained in internal medicine at Hahnemann University in Philadelphia, and in allergy & immunology at the Long Island College Hospital in New York. Dr. Khan is also a drummer with over twenty years of experience, currently performing with Johnny Hi-Fi (www.johnnyhi-fi.com).



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BECAUSE SOUND MATTERS

Tama

Superstar Hyper-Drive Custom Drumkit

by Mike Haid

There's a lot to like about Tama's new Superstar Hyper-Drive drumkit. In fact, the great hardware and drum shell designs on this kit are likely to trigger a trend in the market.

At first, the shell sizes may seem quirky, with a smaller-than-average-diameter snare drum, an extra-deep bass drum, and short-shell tom-toms. But the Hyper-Drive tom sizes are a dream come true for many players. Initially inspired by

pop/R&B drummer Brian Frasier-Moore (Madonna, Christina Aguilera, Janet Jackson), the short-stack tom design has been embraced by other R&B drumming greats like John Blackwell, Ronald Bruner Jr., George "Spanky" McCurdy, and Keith Harris, as well as rockers Jason Costa (All That Remains) and Chad Butler (Switchfoot).

THE STAR-CAST MOUNTING SYSTEM mounts are lightweight, and they attach directly to the drums' die-cast hoops, so there is no shell contact. Aside from its sleek design, this suspension system also allows for hassle-free head changes.

HYPER-DRIVE SHELLS are made from a combination of middle plies of birch (hard/resonant) and outer plies of basswood (softer/warm). The tom and snare shells are fairly thin (6-ply/6mm). The bass drum is a little thicker (7-ply/7mm) but is surprisingly lightweight.

Classy Construction

The bearing edges on the Superstar Custom kit were flawless. All the drums feature Sound Bridge Hi-Tension lugs.

The center of the lugs floats over the shell, acting as a bridge between the top and bottom contact points. This allows the shell to resonate freely.

Visually, the Dark Desert Burst finish (natural wood center fading to black on both sides), solid black wood hoops, and the black nickel-plated hardware give this kit an eye-catching look that suggests a much more expensive instrument than its moderate price tag reflects.

The Sharp Sound Of Short Stacks

The Hyper-Drive short toms are the most innovative feature of this kit. The depth of the rack tom shells is much shallower than that of most traditionally sized toms. This allows you to position the toms much lower without the risk of hitting the bass drum. The downside of shallow toms is that their tuning range is not quite as wide as a deeper shell would provide. If you're looking for higher tom tunings, then these toms could be perfect.

When tuning up the clear single-ply heads, the 6½x10 tom almost begins to sound like a timbale. The 7x12 tom has a deeper tone and can be tuned a little looser than the 10" without sounding too muddy. The zinc die-cast hoops help give these toms a very focused attack, while the combo of basswood and birch makes for a warm, punchy tone that's excellent for recording. However, there's not as much projection and sustain as you'd achieve with deeper-shelled drums.

Big Bottom

The lengthy 20x22 bass drum and 14x16 floor tom pack a powerful punch. Both drums have a deep, open tone and strong attack. The kick drum comes mounted with Tama's "Power Craft" clear batter head and a non-ported logo resonant head. Both heads have an internal muffling ring around the outer diameter to help tame the overtones. I found the drum to be too hollow-sounding and unfocused without a little internal muffling. To create a more balanced bass drum sound, I experimented with several tuning and muffling options. The winning combination consisted of fairly loose tuning on both heads with an 18" cushion barely touching each head. With this setup, the bass drum tone is fat and punchy with a lot of sub-sonic boom. In the studio, I found a fat punchy sound by removing the front head and muffling with a flat pillow.

Snare-Spank!

There's something special about this kit's 6x13 snare drum. With no muffling, it seemed to fit well in almost every musical context, with just the right amount of ring, depth, and tone. I was also impressed with its versatile tuning range. The 6" depth helps give this drum a more full-bodied sound, while the 13" diameter creates a tighter, higher-pitched tone. When you crank this baby up, it has



a bark that'll take your head off. When recording the drum tuned this way, it was piercing, and I had to pull it way down in the mix in order to put it at an even volume with the rest of the kit. So you can imagine how that volume will carry on a live gig.

Hardware

The Superstar Hyper-Drive kit comes with a Road Pro hardware package that includes an HS70WN snare stand, an HC72WN straight cymbal stand, an HC73BWN boom cymbal stand, an HH75W hi-hat stand, and an HP200 kick pedal. One slick new concept on the Road Pro stands is their toothless Quick-Set Tilters, which allow for infinite positioning angles. The tilters are held in position by the friction of six metal plates, rather than the toothed gears that are common on other brands' stands. For strength and exact positioning, the Quick-Sets are winners. These tilters are also used on Road Pro snare baskets. This is a sleek, sturdy package of double-braced, heavy duty, high-end hardware with smooth, easy-to-adjust pedals.

The End Result

This is one of the most impressive pro kits we've seen in the intermediate price range. It's packed with high-end features, and the superb sound speaks for itself. The innovative short tom design is something that you'll have to check out to determine if it's right for you. I love the concept, and wouldn't be surprised to see more companies jumping on the idea. The quirky sizes work well for many contemporary musical styles, and the Dark Desert Burst finish and black nickel-plated hardware is super classy. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised at the value of this setup.

THE NUMBERS

Superstar Hyper-Drive Custom five-piece drumset (with Road Pro hardware):
\$1,749.99
www.tama.com

Meinl

Mb8 Cymbals

by Russ Barbone

Meinl currently uses four different alloys for their wide selection of cymbals. Tested here is an array from their Mb8 line, which is made from B8 bronze alloy (92% copper, 8% tin).

Although other companies use B8 alloy for their low-priced entry-level lines, Meinl is positioning the Mb8 line as professional cymbals. So affordability is not the primary objective; rather, they are targeting a specific sound quality.

Clean Construction

Mb8 cymbals are cut from large sheets of alloy. Hammering marks—which are made by a computer-controlled process—are visible from on top of the cymbals. All of these cymbals have a very consistent look and feel. There aren't many variations from one cymbal to another. All of the bells are mirror finished with no lathing or hammering marks. The bells are slightly larger than what you'd normally expect for each cymbal size.

Consistent Sound

From the small 8" splash right up to the 22" ride, the Mb8 cymbals sound very consistent. They exhibit a bright, explosive attack, short- to medium-length wash, and a rapid decay of overtones.

All of these cymbals are focused in the high-frequency range, with a moderate amount of mid fre-

quencies and small amounts of low-end "dark" details. These cymbals would be most effective in a rock-oriented setting, or in a recording environment where quick decay time is necessary.

The 8" splash has a bright metallic voice with super-quick decay, making it perfect for fast accents. The 14" hi-hats, which consist of a medium-weight top cymbal and a heavy bottom, have a clean sound with a pleasant foot "chick." When played slightly open, they cut through with authority.

Both China cymbals are a blast. They have just the right amount of brash explosive attack and long overtones. I preferred the 16" model, because of its slightly higher pitch. The crashes are loud and quick. As expected, the 16" is the most high-pitched, while the 17" has a more elongated wash and a lower fundamental note. But

THE NUMBERS

Meinl Mb8 Cymbals

8" splash:	\$146
14" hi-hats:	\$456
16" China:	\$294
18" China:	\$348
16" crash:	\$294
17" crash:	\$324
20" crash:	\$406
20" ride:	\$406
22" ride:	\$480

www.meinlcymbals.com





Mb8 cymbals have a very consistent sound: quick brilliant attack, medium wash, and quick decay.

there wasn't much of a difference between them.

The 20" crash is loud, and it has a lot of "gusto." You could even use this cymbal as a crash/ride, because of its decent bell and "ping" sound. It was my least favorite of the bunch, but it's still a good cymbal. So if you need to keep your setup small and want something that can function as both a crash and a ride, this one could be worth considering.

The 20" and 22" rides are exemplary. They have a balanced amount of ping, wash, overtones, and carrying power. Both are very focused-sounding, yet brilliant and mellow at the same time.

One final note: The weight distribution of the Mb8 cymbals is excellent. I test for this by spinning the cymbals on a level stand to see if there are any irregularities that would cause them to come to rest in the same spot each time. None of these cymbals did that.

Balance Achieved

'These pedals just make sense.'

Will Calhoun - Living Colour,
Sleishman Twin Pedal artist.

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DJ Drums

Sapele And Maple Custom Kits

by Michael Dawson

Taiwanese manufacturer Wang Percussion has been building instruments for many of the biggest drum brands since its inception in 1956. In 2000, the company decided to introduce several of their own lines of drumkits under the name DJ Drums. Their latest offerings—the Sapele and Maple Custom Series—are designed to look and sound like many of the high-end kits currently on the market. Let's see how they fare.

Sapele Custom Series

African Sapele wood is claimed to have similar warm and mellow sonic qualities as mahogany. This exotic timber has a beautiful sandy red/brown grain structure that's easily visible through lacquer finishes. (Automobile manufacturer Cadillac uses this wood for the trim in their cars.) Our five-piece review set (18x22 kick, 9x12 rack tom, 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms, and 5x14 snare) features a very "high end"—looking glossy cherry burst finish. The snare and toms have die-cast rims on top and bottom, while the bass drum hoops have a dark brown finish on the outside and a natural lacquer on the inside. Each of the drums features rounded 45° bearing edges, which are designed to accentuate the shells' natural warm resonance.

The rack tom comes with a RIMS-type suspension system that mounts to the tuning rods of four of the drum's six lugs. Some of you might prefer this system, because it doesn't require addition-

al hardware to be drilled into the shell. If you change batter heads frequently, however, this mount can be a bit of a hassle, since you have to support the mount with one hand while aligning and threading the tuning rods through the mount and into the lugs with the other.

All three toms came with clear Evans Genera G1 batters and generic single-ply resonant heads. Out of the box, the toms had a sharp, unfocused, and flappy sound. The rack tom was particularly difficult to tune, especially when tensioned loosely. My initial thought was that the resonant heads were causing the problem. So I swapped them out for some high-quality single-ply versions. This made the drum sound a little more focused, but it was far from the clear, pure tone I was hoping for. Even 2-ply batters didn't do the trick. What I eventually discovered was that the bearing edges had some rough spots, small nicks, and other inconsistencies.

Rather than write off the toms as untunable without some professional edge work, I tried adding muffling rings to each drum. Talk about a difference! The muffling effectively tamed down much of the flappy and unclear overtones, leaving behind a fat, warm, and round sound. My first thought when playing the drums this way was, "Wow...what a cool '70s studio sound."

The 5x14 Sapele snare was much easier to tune than the toms. After some experimenting, we found that this drum sounded best



The wood grain of the exotic Sapele shells has a unique layered sandstone-type appearance.



The Maple Custom Series' thick wood hoops are great for organic-sounding rimshots, but they can get in the way if you're used to playing glancing sweeps across the toms.

when tuned medium-tight and higher, where it had a crisp attack with smooth, controlled overtones. It doesn't have that thick "pop" that you get with snares made from maple, birch, or other dense woods, and its snare response gets a little weak towards the rim and at low volumes. But when hit hard, this drum's open yet controlled sound was a nice complement to the muffled toms.

The 18x22 bass drum came with an Evans EMAD batter head and a single-ply resonant head with an internal muffling ring. This head combination gave the drum a lot of attack with decent low-end "boom." In a live and unmiked rock/pop setting, I'd use this drum as is. But under a microphone, you'd want to add a little extra muffling to get rid of the "boing" in the overtones.

Maple Custom Woodhoop Kit

DJ's Maple Custom Series drums are made from North American maple. Our review set—18x22 kick, 8x10 and 9x12 rack toms, 12x14 and 13x16 floor toms, and 7x14 snare—features thick, natur-

al-finished wood hoops on all of the drums.

Contrary to what we expected from a wood-hooped kit, these drums sounded much brighter and louder than the Sapeles. They are very lively and cutting, especially when played with the stock single-ply Evans heads.

Tuning the Maple Custom Series drums was much easier than it was with the Sapeles, and no muffling was required in order to achieve a fairly even tone. The rack toms produce an interesting RotoTom-like sound with a lot of attack. The larger toms have a similar snappy tone, so they blend well with the smaller drums. They just don't produce a ton of low-end frequencies.

The 18x22 Maple Custom bass drum performed much like the Sapele, with a sharp attack and moderate "boom." The basketball effect was more pronounced on this drum, so you'll need additional muffling to dial it in.

My favorite drum of both kits was the 7x14 wood-hoop Maple Custom snare. When tuned medium-tight, it produces a deep,

punchy tone with controlled overtones that complements the strong “crack” of the attack. Rim clicks on this drum also sound very dry and warm. If the look of it was toned down (the purple/red sparkle finish is a bit much for me), I could see myself using this drum in a number of situations where I need a snare that can provide high-end crackle with wide mid-range presence.

Simple, Serviceable Hardware

DJ Drums also offers a range of hardware including straight and straight/boom cymbal stands, hi-hat and bass drum pedals, snare stands, and a Gibraltar-style rack system. Their standard hardware items are on a par with the features on other company's basic lines, including toothed tilters, large wingnut adjustments, memory locks, and double-braced legs. The snare stands

have a large basket (to accommodate the company's wood hoop drums) and a large plastic basket adjustment knob. All rack toms are mounted using a common L-arm that is held in place with a ball & socket joint.

The bass drum pedals are functional, with dual-chain throws and single-spring tension. However, the hoop clamps on these pedals are a little difficult to adjust, and they can get in the way of the footboard if they aren't carefully positioned.

DJ Drums' new multi-angle cymbal holders are quite nice. Their tilters rotate 360° in one direction, while the entire head of the stand spins 360°. This allows for unlimited positioning capabilities. I really liked being able to rotate the horizontal angle of my cymbals without having to loosen the entire boom arm.

The End Result

The ultimate question when examining a newcomer in the already saturated drumset market is: Do they offer something different from what's presently available? In the case of DJ Drums' newest Custom lines, there are a few things that distinguish them. Offering wood-hoop kits is a great idea. And the mellow, subtle-sounding Sapele shell is a nice alternative to other brighter shell types. We also liked the positioning flexibility of the multi-angle cymbal stands. Now if they would just ramp up their quality control to ensure that every drum has consistent bearing edges...

THE NUMBERS

Sapele Custom Kit (with hardware):

\$2,754

Maple Custom Kit (with rack):

\$3,360

www.wangpercussion.com



CADESON | 6 1/2x14 BUBINGA WITH ABALONE INLAY

HOW'S IT SOUND?

Taiwanese company Cadeson has released three new snares worth checking out. The Master Prestige Series Sylvie Gelada “Soloist” 5 1/4x14 drum, which consists of a combination of cherry, birch, maple, and walnut plies, has a wonderfully crisp, articulate, and full tone for orchestral playing, as well as a punchy all-around “crack” for drumset applications. If you're into Chinese artwork, you might also like the company's watercolor series 5 1/2x14 3-ply maple drum with reinforcement rings. This drum features subtle hand-painted traditional Chinese landscapes and gold-plated hardware.

While we'd recommend either of those drums for just about any playing situation, Cadeson's new 6-ply bubinga snare was the one that really caught our ears. At any tuning, this drum has a lot of bite while also projecting a fat, rich tone. Super high tunings produce a quick and cutting “pop” that would be perfect for Gospel or fusion gigs. But you can also take the batter head all the way down for a chesty Don Henley-style “thump.” I used this drum at a festival gig (tuned medium with a small piece of Moon Gel for muffling) where I had to play straight-ahead pop backbeats, swampy Peter Gabriel-style grooves, and train-beat shuffles, and it felt right at home in each style.



Classic Rogers-style throw-off adds a vintage touch but is a little flimsy by today's standards.

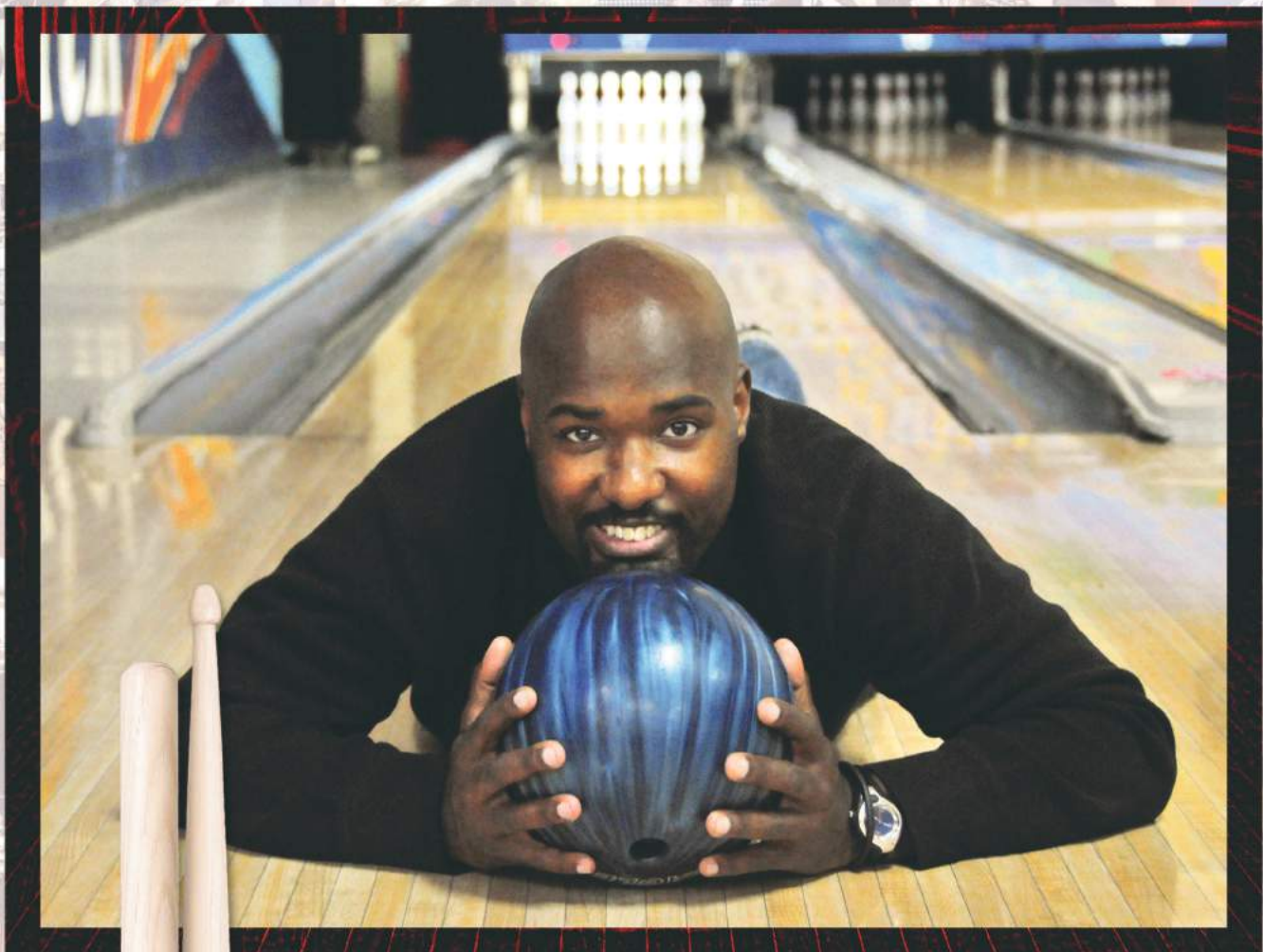
WHAT'S IT COST? \$795

www.cadesonmusic.com, www.cadesondrums.com

To hear this drum, log on to the Multi-Media page at www.moderndrummer.com.

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Vic Firth

New Drumset, Marching, And Drum Circle Signature Sticks

by Martin Patmos

There is a wide variety of sticks available for today's drummer. Everything from tried and true 5A, 5B, and 2B models to those offering variations in tip shape, shoulder length, and even construction material can be found.

Some of the most interesting stick models in recent years are those designed in conjunction with professional drummers. These players have distinctive styles and have found a need for a stick that complements their personal approaches to the drums. Vic Firth's latest Signature series models—which include drum corps and drum circle sticks—do just that, while also offering unique designs that might not otherwise have been considered. Let's take a look.

Behind The Kit

Producer, drummer, composer, and arranger Jeff Davis' SDAV signature stick reminds me of a 5B. However, its .585" diameter is slightly smaller than that of a 5B (.595"), and it has an extra $\frac{1}{4}$ " of length ($16\frac{1}{4}$ "). Although the extra length didn't do much for me, I found that this stick is nicely balanced. It wasn't too heavy or too light. And in respect to its weight, balance, and sound production, this proved to be a good all-around stick.

Joey Heredia's SJH stick is made of maple, with a .580" diameter and a length of $16\frac{3}{16}$ ". This model immediately stood out from the others due to its unusual tip design, which flares out from the shoulder taper before coming to a point. Although the balance of this design was perfect, I found the stick didn't rebound as much as I would have liked. Yet the tip allows for a good deal of cymbal shading, simply by changing the angle at which the stick hits the cymbal. This was especially noticeable on a ride cymbal.

Picking up sticks marked with "Nicko 'Boomer' McBrain" in red "Iron Maiden" font made me smile. Nicko was my first drum hero and the one who inspired me to move from orchestral drums to the set. These sticks have a .595" diameter and a length of 16". The shaft is that of a 5B, but the shoulder is heavier and the tip is bigger. These features resulted in full, deep tones on toms and a solid attack throughout the kit. They felt balanced and solid, very much like their 5B cousins, but with a little more front-end weight. If you prefer the feel of a 5B but you'd like a bit more "oomph," check these out.

Of the drumset sticks we reviewed, Vinnie Paul's SVPs were the most surprising. They're just shy of 17" in length, with a .630" diameter. The shaft looks like that of an extra-long 2B. The tip is a fat teardrop shape. Like the McBrain stick, the large tip on the SVP helped produce solid, full tones on the drums. But the extra length is what I really liked about these sticks. When I moved my fulcrum point up to a point where the stick's length was that of a standard model, the SVPs felt very comfortable and balanced. In this position, they had an almost effortless playing feel, which would be perfect for long workouts on a practice pad. I'd recommend these sticks both to heavy hitters and to those of you who hone your chops by practicing hours of rudiments and sticking patterns.

On The Field

Famed DCI caption head Tom Aungst's STATH signature stick isn't intended for drumset, but for marching tenor drums, which are single-headed toms used to play melodic patterns. Tenors are often played with mallets with hard felt or nylon tips. Aungst's unique stick deviates from traditional tom mallets in that it aims to achieve



THE NUMBERS

Vic Firth Signature Sticks

Jeff Davis (SDAV): \$15

Joey Heredia (SJH): \$15

Nicko McBrain ("Boomer" SNM): \$15

Vinnie Paul (SVP): \$15

Tom Aungst Hybrid Tenor (STATH): \$27

Arthur Hull (SAH): \$9

www.vicfirth.com

the timbre of a wooden snare stick. The model is made of wood and has a nylon tip. The grip steps down to the shaft, mimicking the rubber handle of a standard tenor mallet. The shaft remains straight before dropping down and coming to a disk-shaped hard nylon head. Well-constructed, balanced, and comfortable in the hand, these sticks are a little heavier than other tenor mallets with aluminum shafts, which makes them feel more like marching snare sticks (hence the name "Hybrid").

On toms, the Hybrids produce the sharp,

distinct attack of sticks, rather than the rounder attack of a hard felt mallets. The wood shafts allow for full-sounding rimshots, as opposed to the high-pitched "ping" of metal mallets. Overall, these sticks offer snare stick-like attack and timbre without sacrificing volume or playability.

In The Circle

Arthur Hull is one of the most well-known drum circle facilitators in the world. His signature stick has a .690" diameter,

and it's made of maple. Everything but the tip of these sticks is stained white. For a drum circle or rhythm workshop facilitator, this stick would be great because it can be seen easily in crowds, due to its size and color. On a cowbell, drumhead, rim, or ethnic drum, this stick brings out a loud, full tone, which is perfect for a drum circle leader who needs to be heard in order to demonstrate rhythms and to direct the ensemble.

QUICK LOOKS

Gibraltar

Stealth Vertical And Side Mounting Rack Systems

by Michael Dawson

If you're often compromising setup comfort in order to fit the tripods of your drum and cymbal stands around one another, then you might want to check out Gibraltar's Stealth mounting systems. These two rack-style setups include the Side Mount system, for the ride cymbal side of the kit, and the Vertical Mounting system, which holds a tom mount, snare basket, and cymbal arm on one low-profile unit.

The Stealth Side Mount system covers up to 24" of floor space. We found this to be more than enough distance to accommodate traditional ride and right-side crash cymbal placements. When using a four-piece setup, we had to turn the feet of the Side Mount counter-clockwise in order to bring the ride cymbal into a comfortable playing position. But even with this off-center placement, the system remained very sturdy. If you use a suspended floor tom, you can attach your tom mount to the system by purchasing an additional rack clamp. You can also add extra cymbal arms if you attach more clamps to the horizontal pole. Just make sure that all of the clamps are securely tightened. Since the poles are round, heavy cymbals and tom mounts can slip forward if they aren't tightened well.

The Stealth Vertical Mounting system is designed to combine your snare stand, tom mount, and crash cymbal into one piece of hardware. This unit consists of short and tall vertical posts and a curved horizontal pipe. Your snare basket attaches to the shorter side, while your tom mount goes in the taller side. If you purchase the Stealth Vertical mounting package, which comes with a snare basket and single tom mount, you can also attach a cymbal arm to the unit, since the included Gibraltar tom mount has an extra multi-clamp on it. We had no problem finding a comfortable position for our snare, tom, and crash cymbal. And it was nice to not have to worry about fitting multiple tripods in the small area to the left of the kit. Just make sure you get your setup right before you hit the stage. You won't be able to make quick last-minute adjustments to your snare/tom placement very easily once everything is locked together.

Both Stealth systems are very easy to set up and tear down. And as long as you mark your positions with tape or a permanent marker, you should be able to set up your drums quickly and consistently, and with a clean look, night after night.



Stealth Side Mounting System



Stealth Vertical Mounting System

THE NUMBERS

Stealth Side Mount Rack System: \$255
Stealth Vertical Mounting Rack System: \$240
Stealth Vertical Mounting Rack Package: \$350
www.gibraltarhardware.com



Mandala 2.0

One Pad With Out-Of-This-World Possibilities

by Michael Dawson

The Mandala 2.0 is a very peculiar instrument. At first glance, it doesn't appear to be anything more than a basic electronic drum pad. The playing surface feels pretty rigid, and it makes a considerable amount of sound when struck (similar to old Simmons pads from the '80s). There also aren't any knobs, buttons, or LCD displays to pique your curiosity. The Mandala's value is further obscured by the fact that there aren't any built-in sounds. Instead, the drum has to be used in conjunction with a computer that has the company's Virtual Brain or other VST software installed on it.

Once you get past the Mandala's somewhat primitive-looking exterior and start messing with the instrument's one-of-a-kind functions, however, you'll soon discover that this drum is capable of producing an array of sounds and textures that'll have you floating off into the fifth dimension. Before we get too deep into the sonic possibilities of the Mandala, let's examine its unique engineering.

Beneath the flat black playing surface of the Mandala sit 128 triggers configured in concentric circles. These circles are set up so that when you hit the drum in different spots across the head, different triggers fire signals to your computer. Each of these triggers also tracks up to 128 different velocities. All of these electronic messages are then sent to the Virtual Brain software to trigger samples, or to adjust the built-in effects and

MIDI controllers. As a result, you can twist and tweak individual sounds in literally thousands of different ways, depending on where and how hard you hit the pad. The triggers can also be grouped in up to seven zones, so that you can play multiple patches from one pad.


As fascinating as all this engineering is, what's really important is how it works. Thankfully, the designers at Synesthesia Corp. created a bunch of presets to help you get a feel for the crazy sounds that the Mandala is capable of producing.

When you open the Virtual Brain software, Master and Pad windows pop up. In these windows, you can optimize your setup to work best with your computer (by clicking the audio/pad setup button), and you can choose from the preset sound bank or build and save your own instruments using some of the included 159 instruments. (You can also add your own samples to the library.) The included samples range from basic keyboard synths, to guitars, to drumset/percussion, to abstract electronic sounds like Photo Can, Seismic, and Depth Charge 1.

Each zone of the Mandala can trigger its own sample. So it's possible, although a little impractical, to trigger an entire drumset (kick, snare, rack tom, floor tom, hi-hat, ride, crash) from one Mandala. When we configured the pad to play more than three samples, we had a difficult time accurately striking the desired zone. (There are no visible markings on the pad to show you where one zone ends and another begins.) However, you can connect up to five Mandala pads within one setup if you find that you need to accurately trigger many samples.

The Pad window is where you assign samples to zones. This is also where you adjust the volume, pan, pitch, and attack/hold/decay settings for each sound. Furthermore, you can tell the Mandala to apply set scale/interval patterns to each sound. For instance, you can assign a piano sound to Zone 1 (center of the pad), and tell it to play up and down a one-octave major scale as you strike that zone, starting on the note "C1."

The Pad window is also where you can access a "Control" menu, which is where you can set up various parameters within each zone (volume, pan, pitch, attack, hold, decay, and effects settings) to be controlled by either how hard or where you hit the pad, or by a sweeping low-frequency oscillator. Experimenting with these controls allows you to do some really crazy things. For example, you can make that same piano sound go up in pitch as you play closer to the outside edge of the pad, or



The Mandala 2.0 communicates with any music software that reads MIDI information.

VITAL STATS

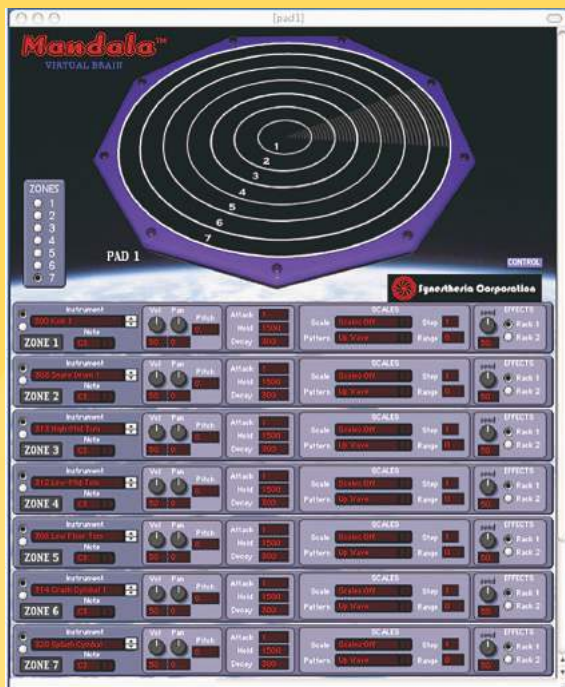
Mandala 2.0

Price: \$349

Included Software: Virtual Brain and HD Black Beauty sample libraries

Cables: 6-ft. USB (included)

www.synesthesiacorp.com



▶ The playing surface of the Mandala can be divided into seven zones to trigger multiple sounds, while strike position and velocity within those zones can control an array of parameters, such as pitch, volume, pan, and effects sends.

The Virtual Brain includes two "racks." Rack 1 contains a chain of distortion, filter bank, flanger, ring modulation, EQ, delay, and reverb. Rack 2 consists of a filter bank, flanger, EQ, and delay. All effects parameters are controllable by your strike position and velocity, or by a lower frequency oscillator.



you can change its panning as you strike harder. Both effects rack windows also offer "control" menus. So you could have a filter open as you play from the center to the edge, or you could increase delay time as you strike harder.

After testing the Mandala drum for a few weeks, we discovered a few things. First, there are far too many possibilities to explore in such a short time frame. Second, if you're only interested in triggering a few super-clean drum tones, you should look elsewhere. While there are some good drum and percussion samples in the Virtual

Brain (including the free Ludwig Black Beauty expansion library), there are simpler ways to mimic an acoustic drumkit. But what separates the Mandala from every other electronic percussion instrument is that there is no predetermined application. Instead, it's up to the user to figure out how this instrument best fits within different musical applications. I personally enjoyed experimenting with the "randomness" of some of the more abstract textural presets. Those made me think differently about what I was playing. And to me, that type of inspiration is priceless.



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>> PEARL REFERENCE LIMITED-EDITION REDLINE KITS

These limited-edition Reference drumsets feature red rubber gaskets that isolate the shells from the drum hardware. The White On White Redline shell packs include a 9x13 rack tom, 16x16 and 16x18 floor toms, and an 18x24 bass drum. A matching 20-ply, 6½x14 snare drum is also available. The Black On Black Redline shell pack (shown here) features an 8x12 rack tom, 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms, and a 20x22 bass drum. A 20-ply 5x14 snare is also available. The Black On Black shell pack lists for \$4,999, and the Black On Black 5x14 snare is \$1,059. The White On White shell pack lists for \$5,299, and the matching 6½x14 snare is \$1,159.

www.pearldrum.com



>> MEINL DELUXE STICK BAG

Meinl's synthetic leather stick bag offers spacious compartments for all types of sticks, rods, brushes, and mallets. It features clear windows for easier identification of sticks, external pockets for storing accessories, comfortable shoulder straps, and elastic cords for attaching the bag to a floor tom. List price: \$72.

www.meinlpercussion.com



>>PAISTE TWENTY SERIES 16" HI-HATS AND RUDE HATS AND CHINAS

Paiste's 16" Twenty Series Medium Light Hats are designed for players who desire a huge yet musical hi-hat sound. They feature a full and warm overall character, a dark and fiery open sound, and a soggy foot "chick."

The 14" RUDE Wild Hats are designed for more aggressive music styles. They feature a metallic and harsh character, a roar-

ing open sound, and fast attack. The 18" and 20" RUDE Novo Chinas are shaped so that the bell and downward turned edge are accessible from the same side of the cymbal. These models offer a unique combination of explosive China and crash sounds that are suited for strong accents in louder situations.

www.paiste.com



>>PEACE NEOREBEL SERIES AND EXPANDED FINISHES

Underneath the rebellious, high-fashion exterior of the Neorebel drumset lurks a five-piece power rock kit with a 16x22 bass drum, 10x12 and 11x13 mounted toms, a 16x16 floor tom, and a 5 1/2x14 snare. This kit features 9-ply mahogany shells, Peace's low-mass, low-profile Duotone lugs, and precision-crafted bearing edges. Six hardware and shell color schemes are offered.

Peace has also added three premium wraps and three new lacquered finishes to its catalog. Arctic Blue, Bronze Star, and Fuchsia wraps are now available on Elevation, Demolition, and Spectrum Series kits, while a sparkling Raspberry Sherbet in a luscious flowery shade, Lime Sorbet, and Quartz lacquer have been added to the choices for Paragon and Paragon Custom Pro Choice drums. These new lacquers have a textured finish with a rough, grainy feel.

www.peacedrums.com

Lime Sorbet



Neorebel kit with additional floor tom



>>ROLAND RMP-12 RHYTHM COACH

The RMP-12 electronic marching percussion instrument incorporates Roland's patented multi-layer mesh head technology to allow drummers to practice longer with less stress and fatigue. The 12" pad with rim triggering connects to a newly designed module with 128 different sounds and effects, including a wide variety of marching, concert, and world percussion instruments. The battery-powered RMP-12 is lightweight and portable, and can easily attach to standard marching carriers or concert snare stands.

www.rolandus.com



MOLECULES DRUMS ROAD AND ACRYLIC SERIES

The Molecules Drum Company is making a bold statement with their one-of-a-kind spherical drumsets. The drums are currently available in two lines, one made of composite shells (Road Series), and another made of acrylic.

www.moleculesdrums.com



>>SPAUN INFERNO SIGNATURE SNARE

Behemoth drummer Inferno's massive 8x14 signature snare consists of an 18-ply shell with Gunmetal Metallic finish, custom graphics, black hardware, brass lugs, and die-cast hoops. The drum features ten outer plies of maple and eight inner plies of birch.

List price: \$1,350.

www.spaundrums.com



>>TRX LTD SERIES TRIPLE-ENHANCED HI-HATS AND CRASH-RIDES

The outer edge of 18" and 20" LTD Crash-Ride cymbals features a heavily polished finish that adds more brightness and explosiveness to the crash sound, while the bell has a natural finish for increased ride definition and articulation. The main playing surface has a traditional lathed and hammered finish. On the 14" hi-hats, this three-zone approach provides a cleaner, crisper stick and foot sound, plus more volatile open and half-open effects. The cymbals are sold individually or grouped in an exclusive Crash-Ride Combo Pack, which includes all three models and a free cymbal bag.

www.trxcymbals.com



>> **SABIAN 13" VAULT FIERCE HATS**

Inspired by renowned drummer Jojo Mayer, Sabian's new Fierce Hats feature a raw, unlathed surface and jumbo hammer marks to deliver aggressive low-end clarity and a punchy, semi-dry response that projects in any style of music. Fierce Hats are crafted from B20 bronze and are quality protected by a two-year warranty.

www.sabian.com



SOFTWARE CENTRAL

FXPANSION's BFD2 is the follow-up to the company's award-winning BFD acoustic drum software. Whether used as a standalone application or as a VST, RTAS, or AU computer plug-in in a digital audio workstation, BFD2



allows users to assemble custom drumsets containing up to thirty-two instruments. Users can also tweak each sound's tuning, damping, velocity, and balance. The 55 GB sound library, recorded at London's legendary Air Lyndhurst studio, features a wide range of rare, vintage, and classic drums that were each recorded with multiple mics. In addition, BFD2 comes with a collection of high-quality circuit-modeled effects processors.

Also new from FXpansion is the Big Orchestral Marching Band (B.O.M.B.) expansion pack for BFD2. This 38 GB sound library includes concert and marching bass drums of up to 40" in diameter, snare drums struck with multiple stick types, and full sets of timpani and orchestral chimes.

www.fxansion.com

TOONTRACK MUSIC has released the second version of its popular acoustic drum software, Superior Drummer 2.0.

This new version of the program has been optimized for use with electronic drumsets. It's also been fitted with an entirely new interface featuring a drummer's perspective layout and an internal mixer featuring bussing and leakage control capabilities and built-in effects.

Dubbed the "NY studio legacy series," samples for Superior 2.0 were recorded by famed engineers Pat Thrall and Neil Dorfsman and session drummer Nir Z at legendary New York studios Hit Factory, Avatar, and Allaire.

www.toontrack.com



AND WHAT'S MORE

CENTRANCE's MicPort Pro is a portable, low-noise USB mic preamp that instantly transforms an XLR microphone into a computer-based recording device. It features 24-bit/96-kHz performance, 48V phantom power, zero latency monitoring, and input/output-level adjustment knobs. Multiple MicPort Pro units can be used for stereo and multi-track recording. List price is \$149.95.

www.centrance.com



OFF-SET Big Boy pedals are designed to produce a huge bass drum sound by having two beaters strike simultaneously. The pedal features a bearing-loaded 3 1/2 x 12 1/2 footboard, Super Shackle spring shackles, heavy-duty return springs, a double-chain drive, independently adjustable beater holders, and a reversible hard/soft beater.

www.off-set.net



The new **PROTECTION RACKET** double pedal bag includes a fully adjustable internal separator that prevents pedals from knocking together during transport, an elastic holder on the bag lid to secure the pedal drive shaft in place, and a zipped pocket for bass drum beaters, tools, and other accessories. The bag's outer fabric is manufactured using abrasion-resistant, 100% waterproof polyester that won't fade, crack, or shrink.

www.bigbangdist.com



BUCKETDRUMS' 100%-recycled plastic bucket instruments feature a unique head-mounting system. Each drum also comes with mounts that allow it to be used within any drum or percussion setup.

www.bucketdrums.com



SKB's ATA Rail Pack Utility cases are fitted with polypropylene straps and spring-loaded reverse-cinch buckles for holding drum stands and hardware securely in place when transporting. These cases feature built-in wheels and comfortable rubber over-molded handles for easy maneuvering. They also feature trigger-release latches that are approved by the TSA for airline travel.

www.skbcases.com



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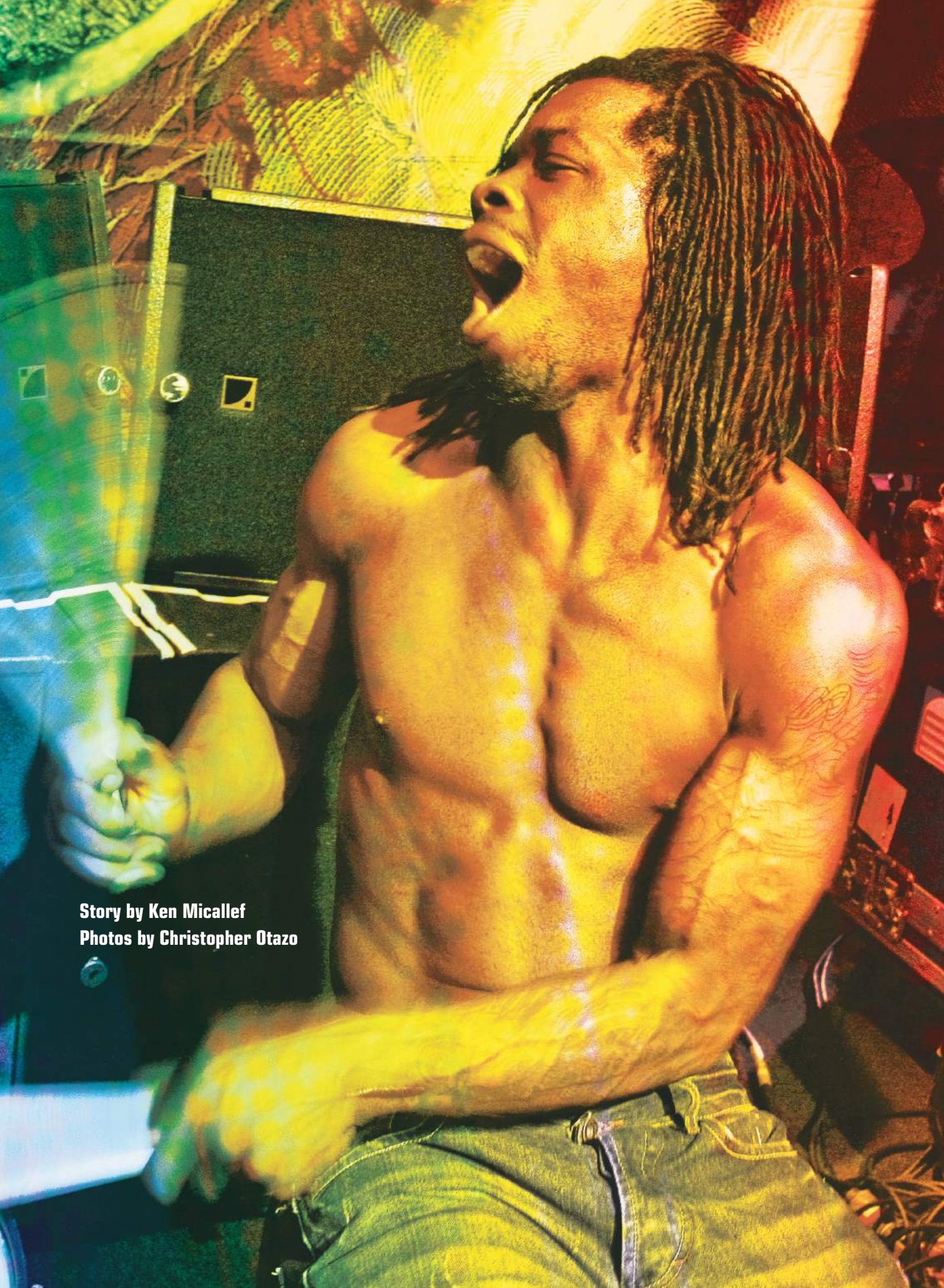
THE MARS VOLTA'S

WAX SIMULACRA

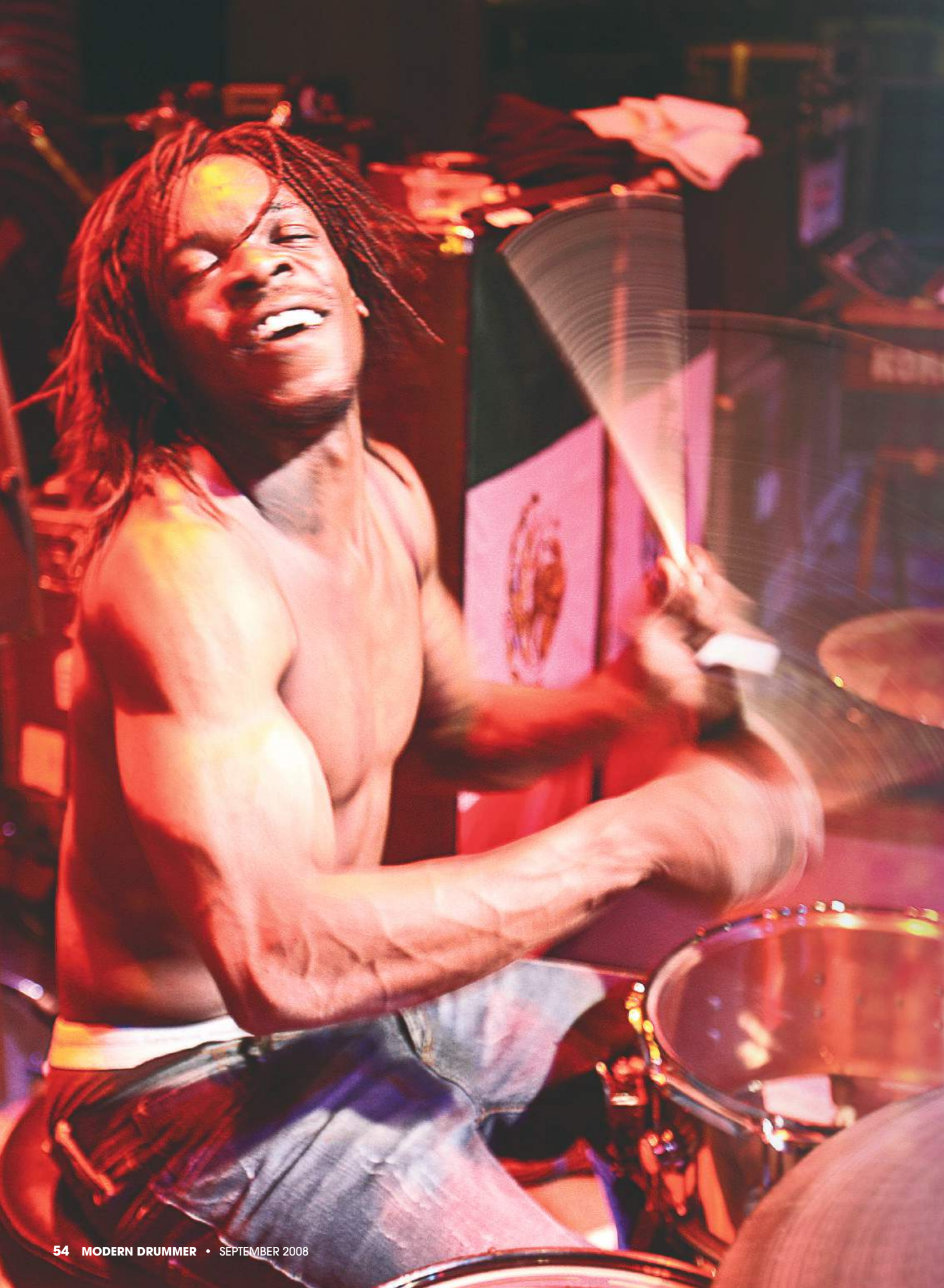
Twenty-four-year-old Thomas Pridgen unleashes the most rabid drumming in recent memory on The Mars Volta's *The Bedlam In Goliath*. Of course, the band's fans have come to expect madness and mastery from the innovative Long Beach, California group. But not even diehard Mars-heads were ready for the frenetic wall of drumming on tornado tracks like "Aberinkula," "Conjugal Burns," "Askepios," and 2008's greatest rhythmic display yet, the mind-bending, head-crushing "Wax Simulacra."

Blowing through blistering 32nd-note full-set combinations, stunning single-stroke rolls, and blazing single bass drum patterns (sounding like double bass), Pridgen maneuvers "Wax Simulacra" like a crime fighter whacking criminals in *Grand Theft Auto*. And it doesn't stop with the storm trooper intro. Once the groove is established, Pridgen seemingly continues to solo, jamming grace notes into and over a maniacal hi-hat/bass drum rhythm. A unison synth/tom roll crashes into the chorus, with yet another Pridgen assault—but somehow the groove is a mile wide and as deep as Bernard Purdie's pockets.

TURNING BEDLAM INTO BEATS



Story by Ken Micallef
Photos by Christopher Otazo



Combining fists-of-fury rhythms with punk-rock power and Santana-fried Latin grooves, The Mars Volta is sonic danger personified. The band that blows through drummers like other bands change guitar strings has found their ultimate match in Pridgen, a player who has inspired more buzz among *Modern Drummer* readers than almost anyone else working today.

Pridgen's path to Mars Volta status is an epic tale in itself, one matching his quick wits with those of guitarist/songwriter Omar Rodriguez-Lopez. "Omar asked if I wanted to come check out the band," Pridgen recalls from his home in El Cerrito, California. "We talked on the phone for a couple of hours, and then I went to Ohio to meet them. Omar invited me to a back room, where the whole band was set up. We jammed for a good thirty minutes. He then said, 'We're going to play that groove tonight in front of everybody.' [This was for a huge show in Cleveland, when the band was touring with The Red Hot Chili Peppers.] It was spur-of-the-moment, but I guess he liked the fact that I didn't care. Even now Omar throws a lot of spur-of-the-moment stuff at me. I guess I have a young enough mind to be down for the fly-by-night."

**"I WANT TO
PLAY STUFF
THAT HASN'T
BEEN PLAYED
BEFORE, STUFF
THAT WILL MAKE
PEOPLE WIG OUT."**

Joining The Mars Volta is the logical next step to greatness for a drummer who can lay claim to numerous firsts: at age nine Pridgen won the Guitar Center Drum-Off; at age ten he became the youngest drummer to ever be awarded a Zildjian endorsement; and in 1999, at age fifteen, he was the youngest musician to ever receive a full scholarship to the Berklee College of Music. Pridgen eventually recorded with trumpeter Christian Scott and guitarist Eric Gales, and he recorded Omar Rodriguez-Lopez's solo release *Calibration (Is Pushing Luck And Key Too Far)*. Perhaps most importantly, Pridgen worked with Gospel acts including The Kenoly Brothers, Martin Luther, Kirk & Joni Bovill, and The G.M.W.A. Mass Choir.

Developing both astounding technique and deep grooves under the watchful eye of his grandmother, Addie, at the Berkeley Mt. Zion AME Church Of God, Thomas Pridgen learned how to glorify God with a nod to Dennis Chambers, Tony Williams, and Vinnie Colaiuta. Drum gods beware: This young turk is about to steal your thunder and claim your throne.

MD: What did playing in the church give you that you wouldn't have learned in a rock or funk band?

Thomas: The church gave me a sense of competition. It's a friendly competition in a weird way. It taught me everything I've learned as far as technique, beats, and soloing. If you listen to most church music, there are so many different styles thrown into it. One church song might have a Gap Band intro, then go into a Latin part for the chorus, then a calypso beat for the vamp. How many styles of music have all of that? If you muted the lyrics and just listened to the music, you'd hear Herbie Hancock jams and Chick Corea breakdowns. It's all super-influenced by fusion music.

Speed & Single Strokes

MD: Regarding your technique, does your speed come from your fingers, or from using rebound—or do you play every stroke?

Thomas: I use every technique. When I began I used the finger thing, but I also started playing left-hand lead. I would practice and play left-handed at church. I would play all my ghost notes in my right hand and try to play my ride patterns in my left hand. The drums would be set up right-handed, but I would play left-handed.

MD: How did that develop your speed?

Thomas: Everything I practiced with my right hand I practiced with my left. That's the main thing. If you do that you'll even out your hands and pick up weird ghost notes. You'll end up developing even more of a different style. Look at Will Kennedy; he looks so badass on the drums playing left-handed. So not only practicing left-handed, but playing that way really got my hands in shape. And most of the stuff I play is not as fast as it looks. It's just that I'm alternating hands.

MD: In one YouTube video, you play a crossover, moving your left hand between your snare and floor tom at a blazing tempo. So strengthening your left hand has increased your overall speed?

Thomas: Yes, and you end up playing all kinds of interesting stuff. A lot of what I play, I don't even know what I'm playing.

I've studied Vinnie Colaiuta, Dennis Chambers, Tony Williams, and Elvin Jones, and I try to emulate them. My friends will sit by my drums and say, "Do your Vinnie licks" or "Do your Dennis licks." Just from trying to do that and learning all these drummer's styles and mimicking them has helped me create my style.

I don't come from where Vinnie or Dennis came from; I'm not from Pittsburgh or

Baltimore. So what I listen to and think is totally different. When I put my thing on [their styles], it's weird. It's trippy. People trip out on my ability to play odd meters, but I don't even notice when I'm playing them. I don't count 'em; I feel 'em.

MD: You play some killer single-stroke rolls on *The Bedlam In Goliath*, with great speed and sense of dynamics. You seem to play more singles than doubles.

Thomas: For singles, I listened to a lot of Will Kennedy, Dennis Chambers, and Billy Cobham. Those guys have a dynamic range with singles. They'll crescendo up with their singles to a point where it makes it a lot more powerful. I worked on that a lot, as well as being able to do it softly.

I used to go to the NAMM show and get yelled at for playing too loud. So I learned pretty quickly how to play all my stuff at low volume. If you can play something at a low volume, you can usually play it loud. And if you can play it in the middle, you can crescendo and decrescendo. A lot of people overlook dynamics. It's cool to play everything you know, but if it doesn't register in a musical realm, then it's wasted and pointless. So even when I play my stuff, I try to play it in a dynamic way.

MD: You practically solo throughout entire songs on *The Bedlam In Goliath*. When playing full-set phrases, are you thinking melodically or rhythmically?

Thomas: Often I would play straight, but Omar would say, "Play, play!" When I'm playing busy like that, most of it is usually patterns. I'll usually play a pattern straight twice, so people know what it is. Then I'll go my own way with it. When we play riffs or play through long patterns, it sounds like licks just going off. They sound like soloing, but I'm actually playing a busier, worked-out pattern.

Catching A Vibe: Chambers, Colaiuta, Bonham, Jordison

MD: You've extended *The Mars Volta*'s rhythmic language—there seems to be more funk—but you also take their music further out than ever. How did you go about applying the solo techniques of Vinnie Colaiuta and Dennis Chambers to your drumming? Did you transcribe the

solos when you were at Berklee?

Thomas: Not really. If I hear some phrasing that I love, I'll emulate it. For the most part, I'm intrigued by the vibe, the energy. I'm more tripped out from the energy of someone like Slipknot's Joey Jordison. I can play fast triplets around the drums, but the energy that dude has is not something you can just recreate.

MD: But how would you apply a Dennis Chambers vibe?

Thomas: I might be motivated to play something because of something I heard Dennis play. I don't always just copy verbatim. I've seen so much stuff that I can just copy a vibe.

There's a difference between somebody going to play jazz and somebody sounding like an actual jazz drummer. I'm more likely to steal a vibe, someone's



DRUMS FROM MARS

The following list details Pridgen's usual *Mars Volta* setup. (The listing is different from the kit shown in the photos; Thomas used a different setup on the night of our photo shoot.)

Drums: DW custom clear acrylic

- A. 7x14 snare
- B. 8x12 tom
- C. 9x13 tom
- D. 14x15 floor tom
- E. 15x16 floor tom
- F. 16x18 floor tom
- G. 20x24 bass drum

- 5. 20" A Custom crash
- 6. 19" K Custom Hybrid China
- 7. 20" Crash Of Doom

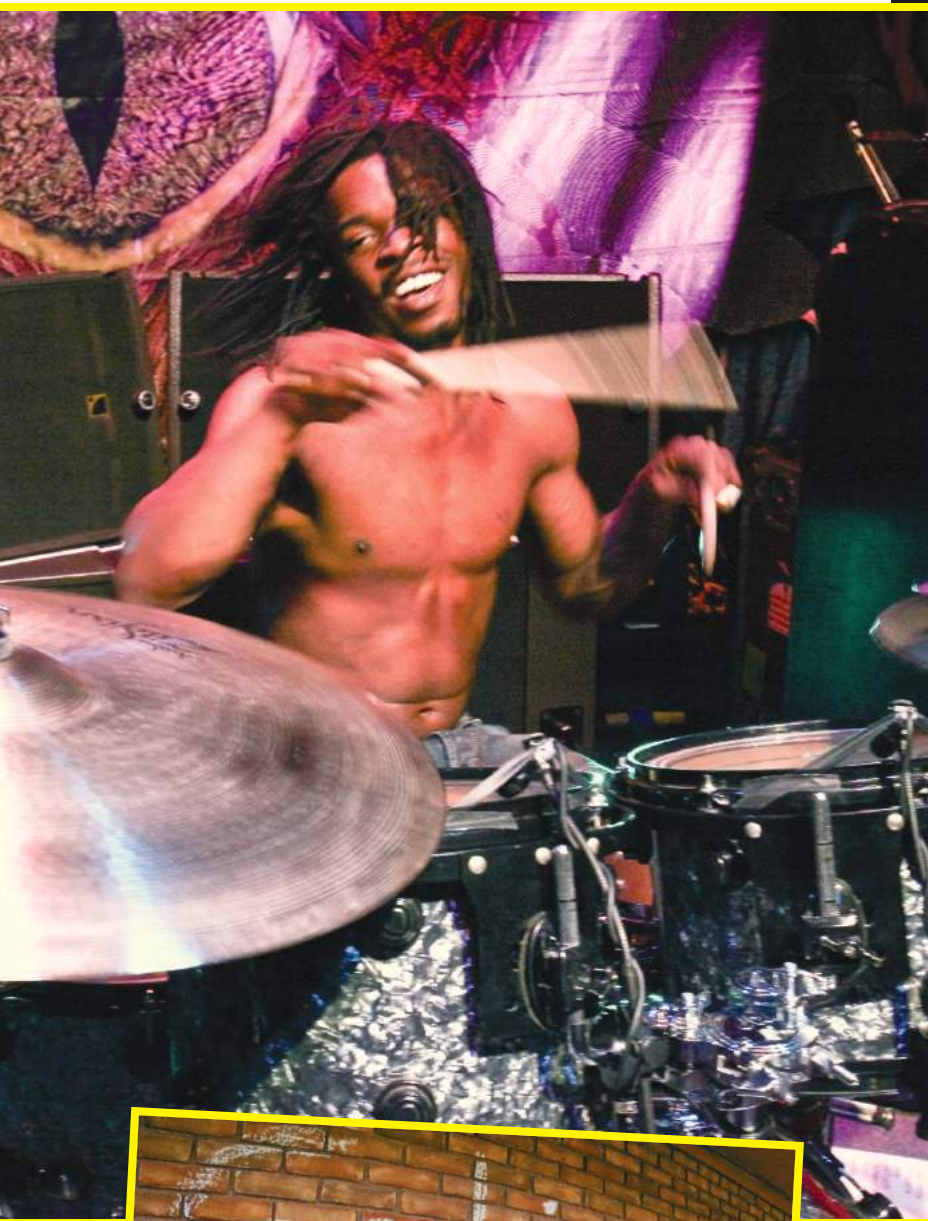
Hardware: DW 9000 series hardware and pedals

Heads: Evans G2 snare batter with Hazy 300 snare-side, clear G2s on tops of toms (or EC2 clear) with Resonant clears underneath, clear EQ3 on bass drum batter with EQ3 on front (with small hole)

Sticks: various Vater models (8A for non-rock gigs)

Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1. 15" A Custom Mastersound hi-hats
- 2. 20" A Armand ride
- 3. 24" A medium ride
- 4. 16" Oriental China (two), 8" China (three cymbals stacked)



demeanor, and the way they go about it. Even though we all play paradiddles, it's the energy in which you play them that sets you apart. Vinnie plays a lot of stuff that Tony Williams played, but the way his energy is and the way he plays it, you think of Vinnie. But with other cats, you might think, "He's doing Tony."

MD: Your bass drum chops are impres-

sive. How did you work the bass drum into your phrasing?

Thomas: By watching the Dennis Chambers videos *Serious Moves* and *In The Pocket*; everybody in church tried to play like that. I practiced *Serious Moves* when I was seven years old. That was a big video for young black drummers, before there was YouTube. Watching DCI videos and reading

TEACHING

THE LEGENDARY WALFREDO REYES SR.



A Modern Drummer Lifetime Achievement Award winner, Walfredo Reyes Sr. is one of the most renowned drummer/percussionists working today, with credits including master bassist Cachao, Chico O'Farrill, Milton Berle, and Steve Winwood. Reyes is a bonafide pioneer whose innovations include merging the drumset with hand percussion, and his teaching practice has included many up & coming drummers, including Thomas Bridgen.

"Tommy was ten years old the first time his grandmother brought him over to my house," Reyes recalls. "He was just a little kid. When they came in, the first thing I said was, 'Let's go play.' The grandmother left, Tommy sat down to play, and right away I *knew* he was going to be something else. He was a natural. Those kids you don't teach.

"I decided to play him recordings of great Cuban players. Horacio 'El Negro' Hernandez was still living in Havana at the time, but I had all of his recordings with Gonzalo Rubalcaba. I played those for Tommy and he would listen. Then he would sit on the drums and play what he had heard—right away. And I'm talking about some very difficult material. Nothing seemed hard for him.

"When Tommy first played for me, it was a combination of everything; he just blazed around the drums, including impressive double bass chops on a double pedal. His feet were incredible, he already had good touch and technique—the whole thing. I couldn't change Tommy, he was a natural-born drummer. I could only coach him.

"Tommy progressed quickly on everything I gave him—hip-hop, funk, jazz. I got him to listen to Cuban drumming, African drumming, bata drumming, and hand drumming, and he picked up a lot from that and incorporated it into his way of playing the drumset. Of all drummers, I would say he was into the Tony Williams style, a freer style of drumming. It wasn't Steve Gadd or Dave Weckl.

"For his hands, I showed Tommy combinations of percussion and drumming. I would play him Changuito and Giovanni Hidalgo, putting the conga drum in the context of the drumset. When you have that basic understanding of Cuban drumming, you can mix it. I told Tommy to mix everything, different cultures, everybody and everything. Best of all, his attitude was right. Tommy didn't think he was special. I just loved that kid.

"One day, about ten years ago, Negro and I were at the NAMM show and we heard some monstrous drumming. Negro commented, 'That must be Dennis Chambers.' But we walked around the corner, and it was Tommy.

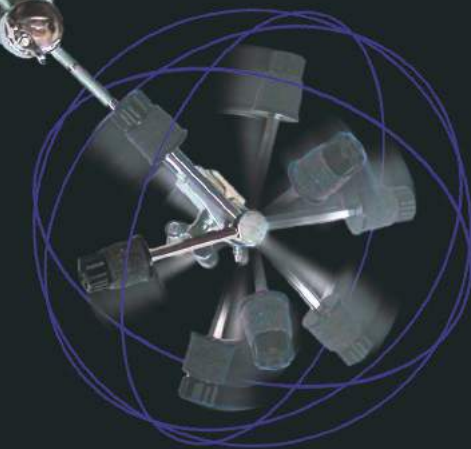
"Tommy is Tommy; whatever he has in his brain can come out on the drums."

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THOMAS PRIDGEN

Modern Drummer were also a huge part of my development. I had every Modern Drummer when I was nine, given to me by a teacher.

When I got to Berklee, I threw myself into Frank Zappa and Vinnie Colaiuta, trying to play weird-ass stuff, over-the-bar-line ideas but still in time. Within that I started experimenting with the bass drum, playing two 16th notes in a row. But instead of simply playing them in the standard way, I worked on playing them in different parts. It was something I focused on, and I got it to a point where I could play doubles around and within any spot of a measure.

MD: It's funny how something so simple to understand can sound so complex. But you do play it with great precision and power.

Thomas: Yeah, but it's just a double on the bass drum. And it does involve some independence. For instance, I'll play the beat from "Wax Simulcra," and that might seem hard for most people, but over the years I've practiced putting the bass drum all over the bar. So it's easy for me now.

The Berklee Hermit

MD: We've heard about your marathon practice sessions at Berklee. How long were they?

Thomas: Whenever I had time. Even at lunchtime—I would take my burrito to the practice room. There was nothing else there for me to do but practice. I would practice at lunch, during breaks from classes, after school—I was on the drums whenever I had a break.

I used Berklee in the way it should be used. I practiced my ass off. It was cold up there, dude, and I didn't have a car, and I definitely didn't want to walk in Boston. And I couldn't go out to clubs because I was too young.

I studied with Dave DiCenso, Francisco Mela, Kenwood Dennard, and Yoron Israel, and with John Ramsey, who had studied with Alan Dawson. They would have a "drummer of the day," devoting an hour of discussing one particular drummer, and that inspired me. They would play all of these videos of Terry Bozzio with Frank Zappa, which inspired me.

My whole life is about being inspired. So as much as I've nurtured my abilities, it's more that I've just stayed inspired. From my grandmother taking me to vintage music stores, to meeting people from DW and

Zildjian, to sitting in with Dennis Chambers...it's all inspiring.

MD: You're probably a very fast learner.

Thomas: Even now I hear people play stuff and I can immediately play it. But my thing is I want to play stuff that hasn't been played before, stuff that will make people wig out. I'd listen to Zappa's Joe's Garage, where Vinnie would do something on his hi-hats, and I'd be like, "What the heck was that?" I want to do stuff like that.

All of the drummers we respect that are talked about now, these people all have albums that, if tomorrow they weren't here, we could still listen to. A lot of the new cats are so interested in who I play for that they're missing the whole point of this music game, which is to have a library of music you've played on and that you can look back on and say, "I've gotten better." You don't know if you've gotten better by playing a tour. But you do know it when you're recording. I got frustrated recording The Bedlam In Goliath because I wanted to play stuff that was even crazier.

Songs From Mars

MD: What's the basic process for learning Mars Volta material?

Thomas: When I was learning Jon Theodore's parts, I would write down the sections. That was the hardest part. The band has twelve-minute songs, so it's impossible to write all of that stuff out. I would write out the section, bridge, and verse—but some songs have four bridges and four breakdowns. Now I can kind of figure out Omar's arrangements because I've played them, but when I first joined the band I had two weeks to learn everything.

I actually didn't listen very carefully to what Jon Theodore had played when I first learned the older material. But after we started touring, I pulled up his songs and really liked the way he played them. I'll play the songs just like him sometimes. But Jon plays totally different from me, and I find that to be a challenge.

Omar's grooves are different. They're never 2 and 4 on the kick and snare. He'll beatbox a beat, and I'll try to emulate it on the drums. We play with that back and forth a lot. For some of the tracks, the drum patterns are the result of an exact part that he has in his mind. He likes a lot of ghost notes on the snare. And sometimes I have to figure out how to put ghost notes in places that

they don't usually fit in.

MD: Does he play you the songs on guitar?

Thomas: Omar will play a groove on his guitar, and sometimes it will take me twenty minutes to even figure out what he's playing. I'm used to a grid and counting. But Omar doesn't count; he doesn't register music in the same way as anyone who comes out of music school. I just try to play the groove and come up with parts that sound good with what he's playing. People have given me transcriptions of what we've played, and I won't even know the song is in 11/4, for instance.

MD: Will Omar give specific directions regarding the beat he wants?

Thomas: He lets me do what I want; it's all trial & error. If it's working, that's great. If not, he'll give me a suggestion. But for the most part he lets me go hog wild.

MD: What was the recording process for *The Bedlam In Goliath*? Are we hearing live takes, Pro Tools edits?

Thomas: You're hearing all of the above. Some songs were played live all the way through, and some songs were cut up a little bit. The first and second songs ["Aberinkula" and "Metatron"] are two songs that were pieced together. The way Omar works is so unorthodox, explaining it is hard. Basically, he'll have an idea, then we record demos. He usually has some crazy-ass studio he wants to go to, and I start recording, basically blindfolded. I don't know what's going on until it's done.

MD: Did you record to a click?

Thomas: Yes, and it can be hard for the rest of the band if there isn't one, because I'm playing all around the beat. And if we're playing some venue that is echoey, it can be hard to know what is going on sometimes.

MD: What's been the biggest challenge of playing in *The Mars Volta*?

Thomas: Playing three-hour shows and soloing over and over again on every song has been a challenge. I have to overcome body fatigue, playing hard, playing so many long shows in a row, and playing bigger drums.

MD: Did your stamina improve simply by doing it?

Thomas: Yes. But on some nights early on, I felt like I was going to pass out, that my body was going to die. But I try to rest between shows, and I don't party too hard. And I stretch and warm up more than I used to.

I warm up by getting to the venue early and playing rudiments, first thing. I'll play them on the seats, on tables. By the time it comes to perform, I'm ready. I have the sticks in my hand and I'm going for it.

MD: Was Omar's *Calibration* record a separate project, or leftovers of *Mars Volta* tracks?

Thomas: That was a separate project, but we usually record so many projects that I don't even know what they're for. We record every time we have a break.

I've learned to trust Omar. Some people scare you to fly on the wing with them. But I just run with Omar because he is so much like me. We understand each other.

"Wax Simulacra" To "Conjugal Burns"

MD: Can you recall what you played on the beginning of "Wax Simulacra"? It sounds like you're trading fours, playing tons of ghost notes and accents.

Thomas: I'm basically just blowing. I like playing the cymbal stack on there. Omar got me into that, and Jon Theodore had one of those as well. It's in a lot of the songs, so I play a lot of stuff off of it. It's so fat and it's got a trashy sound to it.

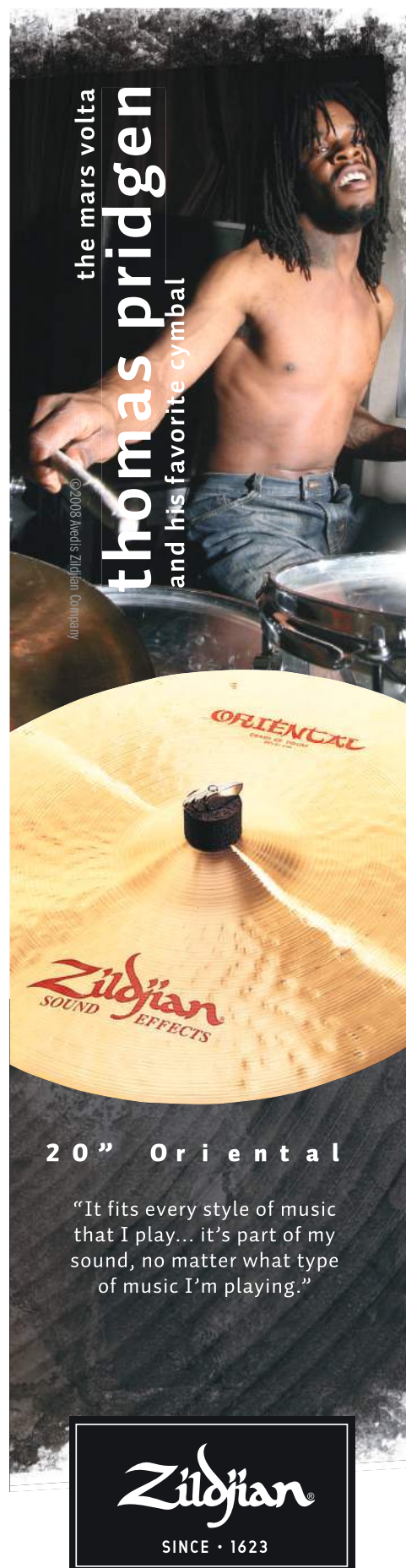
MD: In one section of "Wax Simulacra," you play a fast unison line on the toms with Omar. Did you overdub any of the fills in that song?

Thomas: No. That song was all live. The main thing that was difficult was adjusting to playing bigger drums and bigger sticks. I was used to playing these little fusion sticks, but now I have to play harder and I play bigger everything. Playing big drums and pulling off all of that drumming has been a challenge.

MD: The tempo in "Agadez" is mostly slow, but then you kick it into an up-tempo Santana-ish burn. Are you working off the bassist there?

Thomas: I love playing Latin. Walfredo Reyes is one of my best friends, and we kick it at his house all the time. I find it a challenge. I've never been to Cuba, but I love the music. Every time Omar throws out something that sounds like Latin to me, I enjoy it.

"Agadez" has a Latin-driven part, but it's backwards. With Latin you usually play where all the bass lines are on the upbeat, but in that song the snare drum is driving the pattern. It has a dancehall vibe to it, but



the mars volta
thomas priddgen
and his favorite cymbal

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Christian Scott
Michael Lee Firkins
Eric Gales
Kirk And Joni Bovill
James Cleveland & The G.M.W.A. Mass Choir
G.M.W.A. National Mass Choir
G.M.W.A. Youth Mass Choir
Martin Luther
Kenoly Brothers
Various

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Billy Cobham
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Vinnie Colaiuta
Vinnie Colaiuta
Tony Williams
Billy Cobham
Paco Sery
Joel Smith
Gary Novak
Tony Allen
Tony Allen
Tony Allen,
Ginger Baker
La Dell Abrams,
Calvin Napper

with a Latin flavor.

MD: "Askepios" sounds like one long solo.

Thomas: I was actually playing time there; it's like a waltz with a lot of drum chops. Have you ever heard Zach Hill with Hella? I could see him playing that beat. I felt a lot of him in that groove.

MD: I count seven different groove variations in "Conjugal Burns." How do you remember all those parts live?

Thomas: The only songs I have a problem playing are the songs I didn't record. The album tracks they did with Jon Theodore were longer. The songs were eight to twelve minutes. Eight-minute songs alone are difficult, especially if you mess up four minutes into one.

Mars Volta Challenges: Mental And Physical

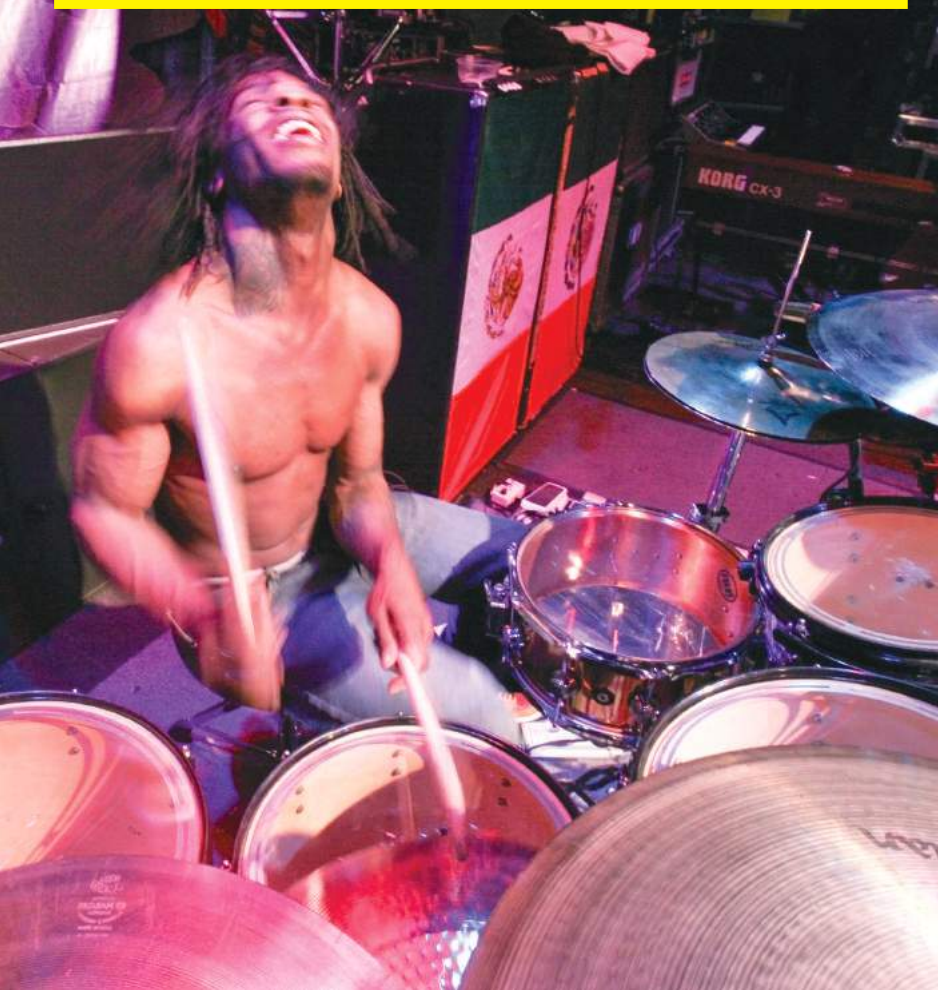
MD: The Mars Volta's music is so complex, did you ever experience any self doubt?

Thomas: I've never had self doubt about The Mars Volta. I've had self doubt with myself, though, more because I feel all this pressure. Before I was in the band, I could just play. Now I have all these drummers talking all this crazy stuff about me on the Internet. I put pressure on myself because I play solos all night and I want to play good solos. I want to live up to the hype. People don't know that I've been playing a long time and that I know all these cats. They think I'm brand-new.

MD: What best prepared you for this gig?

Thomas: Musically? Everything. But it's really a mental game to play these parts well. There have been nights when I thought about a part that was coming up and missed it—just psyching myself out. It's a mental thing to playing three hours of brutal combinations of drum rolls. I know a lot of drummers who can play their butts off, but with this band it's mental. Your mind has to understand what's going on at all times.

I think a lot about my health and staying relaxed on the drums. There are times when my arm just tightens up, where my entire arm feels like it's been bitten by a snake. I have to relax and breathe, and set up my drums in such a way that I'm not straining my body to reach everything. And learning how to sleep well on tour...that's something that no one thinks about. They just think about the playing aspect, which is only one part of it. Sleeping on a little mattress on a bus where you wake up with a stiff arm, and later you have to play three hours of brutal music? That alone will psyche you out. But no doubt, playing with The Mars Volta has made me a better musician in so many ways.



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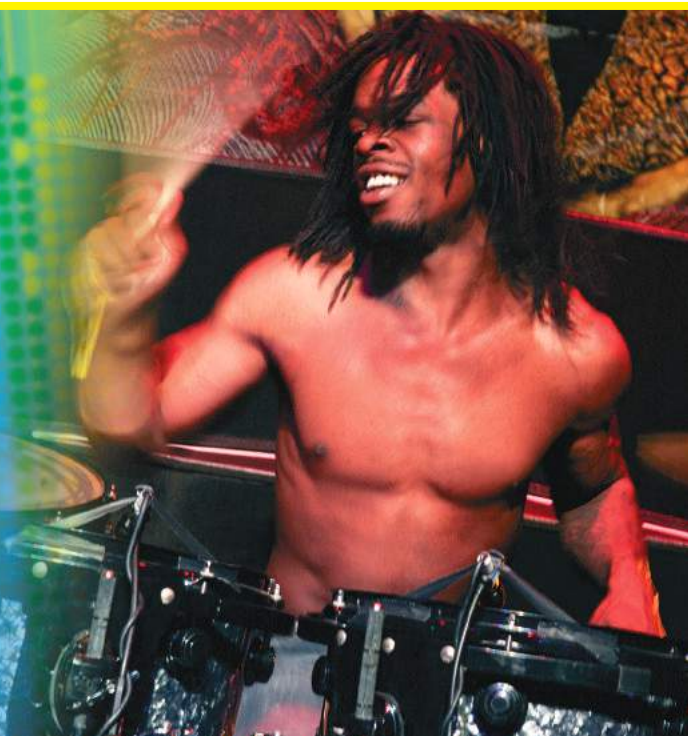
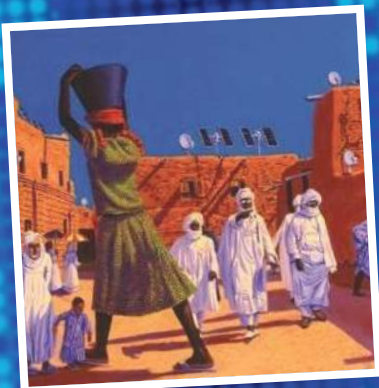


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THE BEATS OF BEDLAM IN GOLIATH

by Terry Branam



MUSIC KEY

OOD	R.C.	C.C.	China
H.H.	B.H.		
T.T.			
S.D.			
F.T.			
B.D.			
H.H.			
W. Foot			

O Add I
 T.T.

With their 2008 release, *The Bedlam in Goliath*, The Mars Volta unleashed their newest member, powerhouse drummer Thomas Pridgen. This band is known for their dark and unusual sound and their progged-out arrangements. The addition of Pridgen adds a new level of pocket and flashy Gospel-influenced licks to the group's ever-evolving persona. This recording redefines the word "fusion" for today's standards, incorporating everything from metal to eclectic world-beat rhythms to odd-meter funk grooves. This is a group to watch.

"Aberinkula"

From the very first note of the album, you can hear that Pridgen means business. On the opening cut, he cuts through the band's thick, layered sound with flurries of offbeat crashes. Note how he matches the band's rhythm on the first bar, and then answers them with contrasting rhythm on the second. We wrote the time signature in 7/8 and 9/8 to separate these parts. However, this section could also be counted in 4/4. (0:00)

$\text{♩} = 205$

"Ilyena"

Pridgen brings his funk chops to the table on the intro groove to this song. Thomas also steps on the gas and delivers some jaw-dropping fills such as this one. (2:50)

$\text{♩} = 109$

"Wax Simulacra"

The drums are in the forefront of this song. Thomas displays his amazingly quick and precise single bass chops by dropping in some riffs between the accents. Don't be intimidated by the 11/8 time signature. An easy way to feel it is to just think of 12/8 with a lost 8th note. Notice the power and clarity of the rhythms at this speed. (0:00)

$\text{♩} = 208$

[illegible]

“Goliath”

This funky groove feels slightly lopsided due to the 5/4 bar in the third measure of the phrase. Bridgen glues the rhythm together with his centered pocket. Again, check out the quick single bass ruffs. (0:01)

The first system of the musical score is for the right hand. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 155. The notation includes a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some notes beamed together. There are several accents (>) and a fermata (∞) over a note. The system ends with a double bar line.

"Agadez"

Near the middle of this song, Thomas weaves a Latin-inspired rhythm with the band' s percussionist, Marcel Rodriguez-Lopez. Pridgen plays a nice linear combination to set up the band. (3:41)

150

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

"Ouroborous"

Pridgen's groove provides a real sense of forward motion on this song. He matches vocalist Cedric Bixler-Zavala's intensity perfectly with his choice of notes and accents. (0:09)

Example 10 shows a musical notation snippet with a tempo marking of 159. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of a series of notes, some with accents, and a final note with a fermata.

The image shows a musical score for the song "The Rose Tree". It consists of two staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The second staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The music is written in a simple, folk-like style. The first staff contains four measures of music, and the second staff contains four measures of music. The music is written in a simple, folk-like style. The first staff contains four measures of music, and the second staff contains four measures of music. The music is written in a simple, folk-like style. The first staff contains four measures of music, and the second staff contains four measures of music.

“ Soothsayer”

Thomas plays a drum ' n ' bass groove inside of this Middle Eastern- sounding passage. The first four crashes here serve as a pickup to the 4/4 bar. This is where the section actually begins. Pridgen' s rhythmic vocabulary is never stifled by time signature changes. (1:00)

♩ = 160

6/4

The image displays a page of musical notation for a guitar exercise. It consists of ten staves of music, each beginning with a treble clef and a 6/4 time signature. The tempo is indicated as 160 beats per minute. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, accidentals, and dynamic markings. The first staff starts with a whole rest followed by four eighth notes, each with an accent (>) and a natural sign. The second staff begins with a whole rest, followed by a half note, a quarter rest, and a half note, with a slur over the last two notes. The third staff starts with a whole rest, followed by a half note, a quarter rest, and a half note, with a slur over the last two notes. The fourth staff begins with a whole rest, followed by a half note, a quarter rest, and a half note, with a slur over the last two notes. The fifth staff starts with a whole rest, followed by a half note, a quarter rest, and a half note, with a slur over the last two notes. The sixth staff begins with a whole rest, followed by a half note, a quarter rest, and a half note, with a slur over the last two notes. The seventh staff starts with a whole rest, followed by a half note, a quarter rest, and a half note, with a slur over the last two notes. The eighth staff begins with a whole rest, followed by a half note, a quarter rest, and a half note, with a slur over the last two notes. The ninth staff starts with a whole rest, followed by a half note, a quarter rest, and a half note, with a slur over the last two notes. The tenth staff begins with a whole rest, followed by a half note, a quarter rest, and a half note, with a slur over the last two notes.

“Conjugal Burns”

In this final example, Thomas pummels through a 6/8 figure with a 32nd-note pattern. Check out how he effortlessly whips up a killer hand/foot combination fill at the end of the phrase. (3:36)

[illegible]

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CARL PALMER

ASIA, ALPHA & ASTRA = PHOENIX

Story by Ken Micallef

As if channeling the cosmic power encompassed in the prophetic “Alpha and Omega” from the book of *Revelation*, tuneful progressive rockers Asia envisioned themselves as near deities when their albums topped the charts and sold millions in the 1980s. Forget classic rockers, these guys really *did* wield their instruments like superhuman beings, though their biggest hits — “Heat Of The Moment,” “Don’t Cry,” “The Smile Has Left Your Eyes” — mined prog rock’s occasional fondness for melodramatic balladry over fantastic instrumental displays. But with a band lineage the caliber of Asia, you could play anything (and they did), resulting in the cosmic album titles, *Asia*, *Alpha*, and *Astra*.

Drawing their ranks from the finest prog rock ensembles of the 1970s, Asia’s heroic roster — Carl Palmer (Emerson, Lake & Palmer), Steve Howe (Yes), John Wetton (King Crimson), and Geoff Downes (Yes, The Buggles) — had it all — great tunes, towering technique, men in tights. And now, twenty-five years after he recorded their last album with its original lineup, Carl Palmer returns to Asia for *Phoenix*.

“The original lineup only played together for two years as Asia,” Palmer explains from a Manhattan hotel. “We had internal, medical, and personal problems. But the first album, *Asia*, was colossal; it was number-1 for nine weeks — single and album. Out of the box Asia sold more records than ELP. But even though *Asia* sold four million, we sold less of the second one (*Alpha*, 1983), and the third (*Astra*, 1985) was half a million. I’ve actually been paid on thirty-five million ELP records. And what you’ve actually been paid for is the number that matters.”

Palmer, a legendarily energetic drummer who humorously claims to “make coffee nervous,” has maintained an incredibly busy pro schedule for almost forty years. The pace has paid off: Palmer can lay claim to have played on three British number-ones with three different bands — Arthur Brown (“Fire”), ELP (“Fanfare For The Common Man”), and Asia (“Heat Of The Moment”).

The ‘90s and ‘00s have seen Palmer striking out on his own, most recently with The Carl Palmer Band. CPB has released *Working Live, Volumes 1 and 2*, as well as *In Concert: Carl Palmer Plays The Music Of ELP*. The albums feature all the Palmer trademarks: earthquake rumbling gong cracks, blazing single-stroke rolls, fierce full-set prog rhythms, mighty crossovers, and the incredible snare drum technique that is Palmer’s calling card.

The release of The Carl Palmer Band’s *Working Live, Vol. 3* will coincide with the group’s 2009 US tour, which could conceivably bump up against an Emerson, Lake & Palmer reunion tour. Add Asia’s *Phoenix*, the ongoing Shout Factory ELP CD reissue campaign, and Palmer’s clinics for deaf and blind children in the UK, and you have a drummer near the height of his powers, clearly in tune with the past and the present.





MD: Why is Asia reuniting for a tour and new album now?

Carl: We did a twenty-fifth-anniversary tour last year. We started off in the UK, which was fantastic. Then we came to the US, and it was even better. Then we went to Japan, and the response was stupendous. It's surprising, actually. "Heat Of The Moment" was in the movie *The 40 Year Old Virgin*, and the band's poster was visible in one scene, above the electronic drums in [Steve Carell's] kitchen. The music was also in Pierce Brosnan's film *The Matador*. So it seems there is quite an awareness of Asia out there. Based on all of that, we simply decided that putting out a new album would be a great thing to do.

London is a small place; you're always bumping into people, and the four of us always kept in contact. So we re-formed on a casual basis, and now we're into our second year. I still tour with The Carl Palmer Band; we'll be touring later this year. And the Asia world tour is continuing.

MD: What do you say to those who say this is simply a cash grab?

Carl: It's not really a cash grab. Re-forming twenty-five years after we last played I think is justifiable.

MD: And you just love to do it.

Carl: We enjoy doing it. Over the last seven years my band has played ninety-seven concerts a year. I usually work five to six months a year. I can do Asia, my band, and clinics. It's lovely. Plus I don't like to be in just one thing anymore. I'm too old for that now.

Phoenix Rising

MD: Did you record *Phoenix* differently from the last Asia album you appeared on? Are you using drum loops? Triggers?

Carl: It's all live drumming. We obviously use Pro Tools extensively. We didn't go in and take a day to create the right groove, though. If the right groove was there within the first sixteen bars, then yes, we'd loop it.

Asia isn't about showing the expertise of the band-members. With The Carl Palmer Band, it's different; I want to show every firecracker I've got. *Phoenix* was really about a group sound, something that's adult and represents where we are today. For some tracks we recorded each part individually.

The record was done on a very casual basis. I would add to the tracks or come in and record as necessary. The engineer might loop it for me, or I'd add a twist to it, and then maybe loop a bit and twist it again. Technology is technology.

When I started with Asia, it was at the beginning of MTV. If I hadn't grabbed that we wouldn't have had "Heat Of The Moment," "Only Time Will Tell," and all those great videos. But in the studio, it's all real drums, no electronic drums. And if there are samples used, they're my samples. We've returned to simply recording drums really well and just playing. But we do mix in a stranger way. If you don't want it to sound like a drumset, then just mix it that way. That's the openness we need with Asia, and it works.

MD: Were any tracks recorded live with the full band present?

Carl: No. We recorded two or three musicians at a time or even one at a time. It depended on what we were doing. Once you lay down drums, that's the roadmap. Then you can plot the beginning, the chorus, the middle eight. We might play a version, redo the drums, and then perhaps work to get the right feel. Really, what we're selling here is melody. If we get it played on the radio, great. It's not about prog rock or how well

The Carl Palmer Band. It's fantastic with guitar! It's metal, it's young, it's youthful. That's where I offload all my tricks.

Asia isn't quite like that, and we all know it. We do play ELP's "Fanfare For The Common Man," "Roundabout" by Yes, The Buggles' "Video Killed The Radio Star," and King Crimson's "In The Court Of The Crimson King." We also play the whole of the first Asia album, a couple of tracks from the second, and a few tracks from the new album. You get the true history of Asia.

on the Moody Blues side of life than the pop side.

MD: But there are some progressive tracks. In "Sleeping Giant," you play a booming gong intro. It's an ethereal track, but perhaps something you might stretch out on live?

Carl: That's an interesting gong, made by Steve Hubback. We multi-tracked it a couple of times to get it to sound so good. It's wafer thin and shaped like a crest. It's weird. I don't have it here in the US

"Playing fast isn't a challenge for me anymore. The challenge is independence, keeping the brain alive, really."

we play.

MD: The prog rock fan base won't come to the shows?

Carl: They do. And that's part of the program that we play. But we're not ramming that down people's throats.

In my band, we focus on the playing. It's all instrumental. I've taken classical adaptations just the way ELP did. I'll take a piece of music by Mussorgsky—for instance, I just recorded "Pictures At An Exhibition" with

We've come from prog rock bands, but we're a successful band in our own right. And America recognized that more than the UK did. If we'd played "Roundabout" or "Fanfare" in the 1980s, they'd have said we were doing that because the new material wasn't strong enough. But when we got back together this time, we decided to play our heritage too.

MD: Ultimately, Phoenix is pop music.

Carl: Asia is definitely adult pop. It's more

because it's a handmade job. On tour I use two 26" Paiste gongs.

MD: You play a drum solo on "Parallel Worlds." When the drums enter they sound like either double bass or two floor toms. The sound between the two sources is very uniform.

Carl: It's double bass. It's my technique—it's good! I'm using Axis pedals. They're fantastic. I had a chance to do something "adlib-ish" over the top of what they were

Paul La Rata





CARL'S 2008 ASIA KIT

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- C. 10 x 14 rack tom
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- F. 16 x 22 bass drum

Cymbals: Paiste

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- 3. 20" Signature Bell ride
- 4. 20" Signature Power crash
- 5. 13" Signature Heavy hi-hats
- 6. 20" 2002 China Type
- 7. 26" gongs (not shown)

Hardware: Ludwig stands, Axis bass drum pedals, Ford throne, Ludwig temple blocks, tambourine

Heads: Remo coated Ambassador on snare batter with Ambassador snare-side, clear Emperors on tom batters with clear Ambassadors underneath, Powerstroke 3s on bass drums

Sticks: Pro-Mark Carl Palmer signature model, Dixon brushes

playing in "Parallel Worlds." I just went in and played. I told the engineer, "The first take will be the one. Trust me." I did it and that was it. It's the moment, the exciting moment that I like to capture, and you can do that with drum solos. There's a solo in "Wildest Dreams" from the first Asia album that was a first take as well.

MD: Will you solo on "Parallel Worlds" live with Asia?

Carl: No. I solo on "The Heat Goes On." It's an up-tempo rock song and the audience doesn't expect a drum solo.

MD: Also on Phoenix, "Wish I'd Known All Along" is in 7/4.

Carl: Yeah, that's a weird one. That's something Steve wrote, and it happened to fall better in seven than in eight. I've never had any problems playing in strange time signatures.

Recording Phoenix

MD: You say you recorded casually, track by track. And you can hear that in the drum tuning. In "Shadow Of A Doubt," the drums have an almost papery sound. On other tracks the toms have more tone and depth.

Carl: Well, we used the same drums, but with different people mixing. The drumset has an inherent sound—you hit one drum and everything rings around it. Engineers hate that. They like it all dead so they can control the sound. But what they don't understand is that the inherent sound of the drumset is what the drums sound like. You hit the floor tom and you hear the ride cymbal ring just a little bit. That's all part of the sound—that's it! So it's better to record the drumset as it truly is. But when we mix, we mix the drums for the track, rather than mixing the drums for the drums. And, of

course, I'm involved in the mixing.

MD: Most bands have a consistent drum sound throughout an album, whereas the sound of the kit changes on the new Asia album.

Carl: I've changed; I don't believe in that anymore with this type of music. With The Carl Palmer Band, it's full-on ring with the drums.

MD: What recording set did you use on Phoenix?

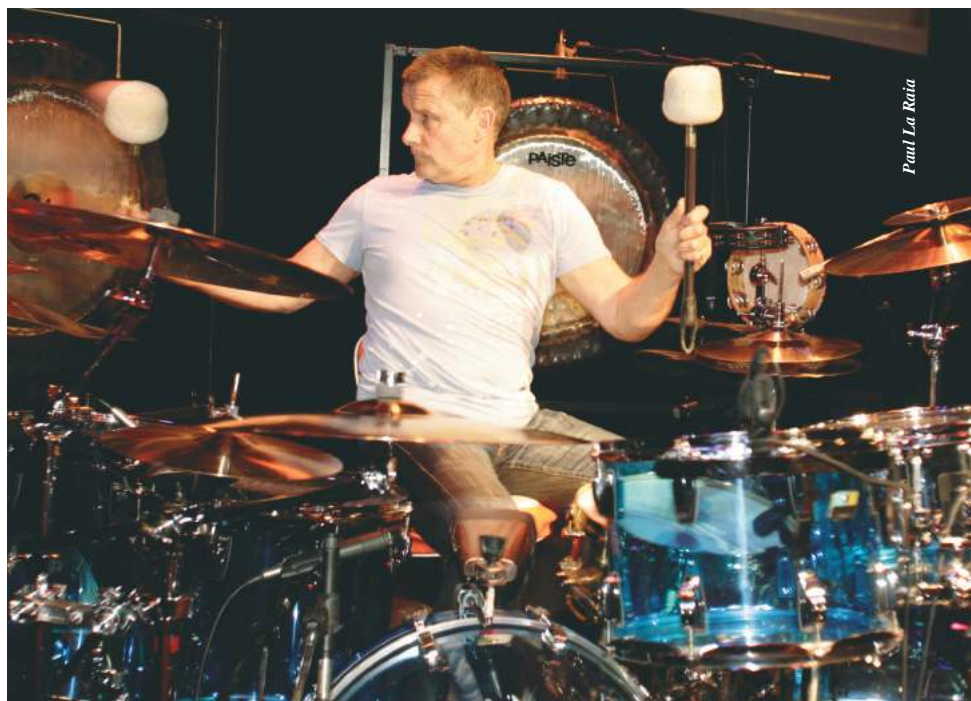
Carl: A set made for me by Brady eleven years ago. Morris Lang added all of the gold-plated fittings. It's a lovely Jarrah ply wood drumset—very, very strong wood. I use two hanging toms, two floor toms, and two bass drums.

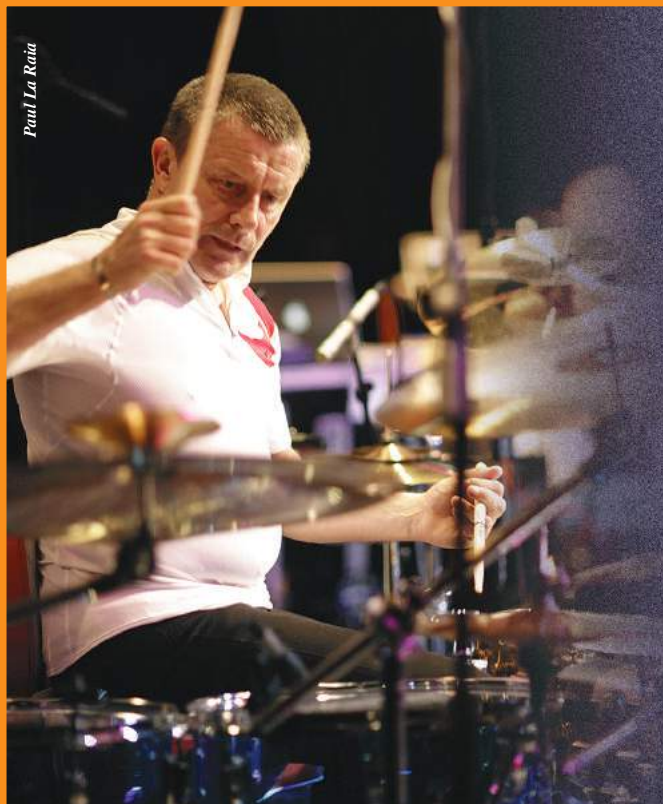
Live, I've gone back to Ludwig Vistalites, the first time in thirty-five years. I love my Brady drums; they're the best of the wood. Paiste also made a complete set for me out of their 2002 alloy. That set has two bass

drums, two floors, and two hanging toms as well. But those bass drums weigh ninety pounds! So I have the best of the metal drums, the best of the wood, and I also love the Ludwig Vistalites.

When Ludwig reissued the Vistalites, I asked if they'd be interested in my returning. They said yes, even though I use the Brady kit for my band in England and the Paiste set for teaching and drum clinics. But I use the Vistalites with Asia, especially when I'm touring in America and Japan.

MD: Why did you leave Ludwig all those





PALMER'S FINEST

"I really don't have many recordings that I'm proud of," insists Carl Palmer. This is a bit hard to believe, considering some of the incredible drumming performances he's recorded. There is one recording, however, of which he is satisfied. "I would say that the DVD *Carl Palmer Band Live In Europe* (St Clair) represents the closest I've personally gotten to truly pleasing myself. I'm happy to watch it at any time. The list that follows features some other good performances."

Artist

ELP
ELP
Carl Palmer Band
The Craig
Asia
Asia

Record

Brain Salad Surgery
Welcome Back My Friends... [live]
Working Live, Vols. 1, 2, And 3
"I Must Be Mad" (1964 single)
Asia
Phoenix

Carl's Faves

Artist

Dave Brubeck
Dave Brubeck
Buddy Rich Orchestra
Gene Krupa
Elvin Jones
Buddy Rich Orchestra
Beatles
Stravinsky
Andre Arpino

Album

Time Out
Live At Carnegie Hall
This One's For Basie
The Gene Krupa Story Soundtrack
Midnight Walk
West Side Story
Rubber Soul
Firebird Suite
Jacques Loussier Plays Bach

Drummer

Joe Morello
Joe Morello
Buddy Rich
Gene Krupa
Elvin Jones
Buddy Rich
Ringo Starr
none
none

years ago?

Carl: When they first started making Vistalite drums, I was in ELP. I played Ludwig wood drums from day one, at Madison Square Garden. But then they

made Vistalites. They were very keen on me playing them, and I was initially happy with them. But then they began making rainbow Vistalite kits, which they created by hammering the colored circles together to form

shells. Frankly, those drums weren't built well. That's when I decided to leave Ludwig and had the custom-made stainless-steel set built. But I did like the original Vistalites.

JASON BITTNER SHADOWS FALL



JASON'S FAVORITE RIDE

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MD: What is it about the Vistalite sound?

Carl: Well, to compare, the Paiste drum sound is quite ringy. The Brady Jarrah kit is not a warm sound, it's hard—though you hear the sound back a lot quicker, especially from the toms. As for the Vistalites, they have a very natural, warm sound, especially now the way Ludwig cuts the bearing edges.

I'm a drum whore; I know it. I want to have the best wood drums, the best metal drums, and the Vistalites. The Vistalites have a sound all their own. The bass drums and toms are exceptionally good, although the snare drums are a little weak for me. I use a Paiste snare drum on the kit, which is absolutely gorgeous. I love the look of the Vistalites and the whole ethos of it—it was the first big American drumset. I know, I've had more sponsorships than most people have had dinners. I've been with so many drum companies. I've been naughty. [laughs]

MD: How did you tune the Bradys in the studio with Asia?

Carl: I always tune the bottom heads slightly tighter than the tops, but it's a matter of preference. I might have one lug slightly looser on either head depending if there's a lot of over-ring. It changes a little every day,

but the format stays the same. I use clear Remo Emperor heads on the top, and clear Ambassadors on the bottom.

The Palmer Smackdown

MD: Besides being known for your fantastic hand speed, you also always get an extreme thwack with your left hand on backbeats.

It's one of your trademarks. It's like a whipping motion.

Carl: I think it is. I play traditional grip. It's all about the angle, the position, a relaxed stroke, and, of course, not overplaying the drum. And if you get the angle right, you'll crack the rimshot every time.

MD: Your hand is really low in relation to the snare drum when you play 2 and 4.

Carl: I need to keep my arm rested. I don't want it to go up high and cause me to raise my shoulder. If it's too high, you'll "offline" your body. I just put it where it is and whack it down. For the 2 and 4, it's just the arm.

I am very fortunate that I had an American teacher when I was fourteen. I was from the central Midlands in England, which are kind of like Detroit, very industrial. I used to travel from Birmingham down to London, about a hundred twenty miles. By the time I was thirteen, I had outgrown all my teachers. I

learn quickly. I come from a strong musical background: My grandfather was a professor of music at the Royal Academy, my father played, and his brother did too. So I took lessons with an American teacher, Bruce Gaylor, and he was just that much more advanced. He asked me what music I was interested in. My parents had me enrolled at the Guild Hall, Royal Academy, but I really wanted to be a rock drummer, and I liked all of the things the jazz guys did. I wanted as much information as possible. Bruce was the one who really started talking to me about angles, positioning, stroke—the stuff that's written about all the time now. But I was getting all that back in 1963.

MD: When ELP first hit the US in 1971, In Concert played a video of "Tank," your drumset feature piece, and it was a revelation. Now there are videos of ELP playing "Tarkus" on YouTube. The way you were playing back then—so fast—it sounds like bebop!

Carl: The drugs were good! No, no, we never took any drugs! We were just very serious about our musicianship.

MD: Is prog more popular in Europe than the US?

Carl: You'll laugh at this, but I'm almost employed by various Italian councils as a



CARL PALMER

prog rock musician. I fly out from Cyprus or the UK to play in Italy in June, July, and August with The Carl Palmer Band. And they just love it. This music is like the Sistine Chapel to them. Prog rock without vocals is considered art. The guitarist in my band, Shaun Baxter, and the bass player, David Marks, are both teachers, and they're fantastic players. We play a small amount of ELP material: "Tarkus," "Barbarian," "Hoedown," "Trilogy," "Tank," "Fanfare For The Common Man." And we play "Peter Gunn," "Pictures At An Exhibition," and "Carmina Burana." The Italian councils call

and we play the piazzas to twenty-five hundred people. Emerson, Lake & Palmer were huge in Italy. Classical music is huge there. And they love the crossover.

I don't have a keyboard player in the band, so I'm not duplicating what ELP did. I've used some of the adaptations, and the audiences love it because it's guitar. It's more youth-oriented and it's slightly cruder because you don't get the harmonies, but it has a certain amount of energy that I just love. My guys play their asses off too. We toured America and we will be back in '09.

Maintaining Technique: "Tank" To "Karn Evil 9"

MD: How do you maintain your trademark single-stroke roll, which you play so well on the Phoenix track "Parallel Worlds"?

Carl: It's hard to say what I do. I've had some great teachers, one of them being the man I mentioned. The things that he taught me at the time in regard to speed, I have taken much further. Those concepts have stood me in good stead.

Say you're a track runner preparing for a fifty-yard race. You actually practice running a hundred yards fast. You only want to run fifty, but you practice at a hundred. You want to build up your stamina. You'll run for two minutes as fast as you can and then drop down. That's what I do. I don't start off slow and get faster. I start off at full speed and then play as fast as I can for a brief ten seconds, whether it's doubles or single strokes. It doesn't matter. It's the philosophy behind it that matters. You start slow and build it up when you first begin playing the drums. But I've been playing a few years now, so I can be a bit naughty and bend the rules.

I jack it up to a fifteen-second hit, then come off it and relax my muscles. Then I go back and maybe the next time is twenty seconds, then thirty, then up to a minute, and then I drop back. I teach my body to turn on the heat or the speed at the drop of a hat. It's just like a track runner. The shot goes off: boom, you're off and running. So if I have to wallop it straight away, I can achieve that speed because I've trained that way.

To maintain speed, I need to increase the time that I spend going as fast as I can. I won't do that as part of my practice, although I will do it on a pad. How long I'll do it depends on what rudiment I'm playing. All the rudiments react differently. The things I don't sit and practice are single- and double-stroke rolls. I'd rather practice paradiddle combinations.

MD: I imagine you can play a paradiddle at the same speed as a single-stroke roll.

Carl: Yes, I can play paradiddles really fast. I can get three comfortable bounces out of any stroke on a stick. I can also get a very clear fourth beat. So I make the stick work quite hard. It's really to do with these bursts of excitement I work on in my general practice routine.

MD: How does your technique change with age? Are some things better, while some



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CARL PALMER

are worse?

Carl: Years ago I had to have my hands operated on because I had carpal tunnel in both. My right one was done when I was forty-seven, and then six months later my left hand went. There's a 99% success rate with carpal tunnel surgery; the doctors only reduce a small piece of skin in the lower part of your palm. It lets the ligaments breathe. It's a forty-five-minute operation.

I have small hands for a drummer. I need all of the power I can get, and I was just overpowering the drums. The internal organs tend to get bigger as you get older.

The tendons going into my wrists got bigger, which caused the problem. But now my hands are very loose, thankfully, and in very good shape.

MD: What aspect of your drumming is better now?

Carl: My feet. It's something I've focused on. I can do doubles on my bass drums, but I've been trying to get rebounds from the bass drum head itself, similar to good hand technique. It's another thing I'm working on. At this point I don't do any of the clever stuff that many of the guys do. I work mainly on doubles for the bass drums, as well as

things like single-stroke triplets.

I might spend an hour and a half just getting the pedal springs right. I don't need them really tight. When you put your foot on the bass drum pedal, you usually find that the bass drum beater isn't touching the head, it's off a little bit. I try to work out what that space is. If I adjust the spring and just rest my foot on the pedal, the pressure of my foot should make the bass drum beater hit the head. I work it so that spring is just enough tension for me. The weight of my foot takes the bass drum beater to the head evenly. Once I've got that set, I'll tighten it up just a bit.

MD: Do you warm up before gigs?

Carl: A little bit, but not a lot. I have a series of very short exercises I do. I never use gloves or plasters on my hands. I do use Surgical Spirit, which is like rubbing alcohol, but twice as strong. Surgical Spirit is used on old people when they turn them over in the hospital. It stops skin sores. Racers in boats use it so they don't get calluses. I put that on my hands before gigs.

Palmer Challenges, Palmer Changes

MD: How do you challenge yourself now as a drummer?

Carl: Challenging myself is one of the things I wish I could do more often, but it's tough because it requires time. I need clear days when I'm not thinking about anything else. When I have time, the area I like to work on is independence. I've gotten to a stage where I come up with patterns, for instance, trying to do things between my right bass drum and left hand, maybe playing a single-stroke between the two, while keeping a separate hi-hat pattern with my left foot, and something totally different with my right hand. I enjoy that kind of challenge.

Playing fast isn't a challenge for me anymore. The challenge is independence, keeping the brain alive. I also try to do some chart reading every week, just to maintain that as well. I try to read charts that I normally wouldn't look at.

MD: Are you still fencing to stay in shape?

Carl: I haven't fenced in a long time, though I am still running. Since my heart operation earlier this year, I have run and it's felt great. I think I will fence again, but I'm not interested in karate anymore. The

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CARL PALMER

hands are too slow for that. I worked very hard at it. I received my black belt, and even took my exam at Tokyo University. But I believe the carpal tunnel problems I had came from punching the makiwara, a piece of wood wrapped in straw. I loved karate, but not the violence.

MD: It was surprising to learn that you recently had an angioplasty and a stent placed in one of your heart valves.

Carl: Here's what happened: I'd lost contact with one of my family cousins, Warrick Lewis. When we finally did get together, he told me he'd had a heart attack four years prior. A week later I got a call from his wife saying he'd dropped dead in the driveway. I immediately thought, "Carl, this is an omen. You met Warrick after thirty years so he could tell you to get a checkup."

I was off to the doctor's, they ran an MRI, and they found a blockage of 90%. I didn't have any pain and I wasn't out of breath—I was asymptomatic—but they said I was "a walking time bomb." The heart was working harder to get the blood through. So they put in a stent. It's smaller than an E string, but it stops the narrowing of the arteries. I'm happy to say it's working well. Now I'm back to

running—and drumming—full out.

The Future Of ELP

MD: What tracks will we hear on The Carl Palmer Band's Working Live, Volume Three?

Carl: We do "Halloween Drums," a piece I wrote as an intro. It's me playing lots of tomtoms. Then there's Prokofiev's "Romeo And Juliet," Mussorgsky's "Pictures At An Exhibition," Henry Mancini's "Peter Gunn," and Emerson, Lake & Palmer's "Bitches Crystal." It's forty-three minutes of exciting instrumental music.

MD: Speaking of ELP, what's the biggest impediment to a reunion?

Carl: Personalities always get in the way, because we are three completely different people. The music is the salvaging factor. And I would also say a dominant factor is that the clock is ticking—if we don't do it now, we never will. Keith Emerson is sixty-four, God bless him! But plans are in motion for a reunion in '09.

MD: Finally, you've been doing great work hosting drum clinics for blind and deaf children.

Carl: Yes, in association with the Deaf Association of Great Britain. I developed a program working with thirty children in groups of

three, using hand drums provided by Remo. I use a number system. I sit in the middle and get them to play simple rhythms with their hands. The blind kids can hear it, and the deaf children can feel it. I get one group to remove their shoes, so they can feel the vibration through the floor and through their hands. I get them to play simple patterns, and they enjoy it so much.

One day a blind Iranian girl was down front playing the drums with me. She had no face to speak of, no eyes and just two holes for a nose. But she had the greatest sense of rhythm you could ever imagine. Then, a few months later, when I went back to play with those groups again, I walked into the classroom, and she was there. She couldn't see me, obviously. But I walked up behind her and touched her on the shoulder, and she said, "Ah, Mr. Palmer, it's you. I can smell you." She's an amazing person, as are all of those kids.

I feel very fortunate to be able to work with these kids. It's much more satisfying than doing a master class for thirty drummers who can already play. It's been a great thing to be a part of.



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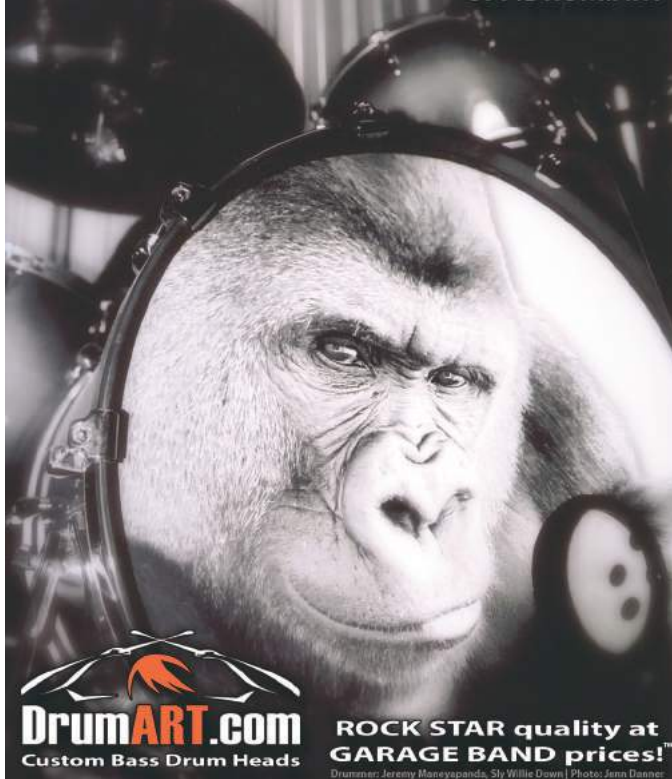
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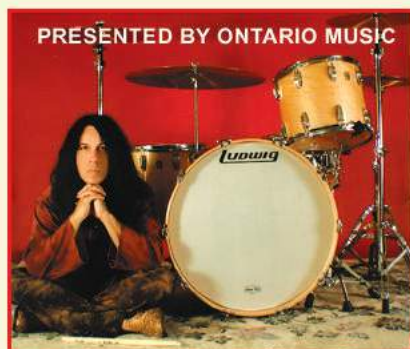
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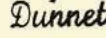
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ALI JACKSON

Spreading The Jazz Gospel

When I told Ali Jackson that, as drummer for the Jazz At Lincoln Center Orchestra—the musical offshoot of the famed organization that has a year-round schedule of performance, education, and broadcast events for audiences of all ages—he quite possibly has the most coveted drum seat in all of New York City, he humbly corrected me: “You could probably say in all the United States.”

Jackson can tell you exactly *why* he feels so blessed: “I’m in an orchestra that is really the last living jazz orchestra, the last embodiment of Duke Ellington’s, Count Basie’s, or Fletcher Henderson’s orchestra. Of course, it’s a plus having it be led by one of the greatest musicians of our time, Wynton Marsalis. There’s no other musician of his generation who has such care and belief in the music, and that goes beyond all of his amazing musicianship, his trumpet playing, and his compositions. He really believes in the history and tradition of the music. Being associated with Wynton, not to mention all the musicians in the orchestra, who are truly great and who have their own careers and their own sounds, is humbling.”

When Jackson talks about music, it’s with a deep reverence and love, something that was nurtured by his parents early on. His mother, a classical pianist, taught him piano and how to read music at the age of four. Jackson’s father, a professional bass player, taught him music theory and gave him drum lessons from rudiment books. He also let the young drummer sit in on rehearsals so he could watch and learn.

By the time Jackson was eight, he was playing street gigs in Detroit with his dad and already knew he wanted to spend his life as a musician. Even when his family life fell apart when he was twelve, Jackson’s commitment to the music kept him on an even path, and he continued to walk to the school bus in the dark at 6:00 A.M. so he could attend Detroit’s prestigious Cass Tech High School, forty-five minutes from home. It was at Cass Tech where Jackson was involved with the symphonic orchestra, symphonic band, concert band, stage band, jazz ensemble, marching band, and every other musical situation he was able to dedicate himself to. Ali was so well versed, in fact, that he received a classical scholarship to Juilliard, which he turned down to attend the New School, where he graduated with a degree in composition.

“Jazz has a deep meaning for me,” insists Jackson. “It’s a form that not only allows you to express yourself, but that says specific things about who you are, your integrity, your family, about love, kindness, manners, how patient you are, your sense of humor.... All of that comes through your playing. And it’s all there to share with people.”

Jackson has performed and recorded with such artists as Cyrus Chestnut, Reginald Veal, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Aretha Franklin, George Benson, Harry Connick Jr., Marcus Roberts, Joshua Redman, Diana Krall, Kurt Rosenwinkel, and Wynton Marsalis. He’s been involved with many projects through Jazz At Lincoln Center, including an upcoming CD and DVD with Willie Nelson and Mickey Rafael. And he performs with his group Horns In The Hood and his own Ali Jackson Quartet.

Besides his unflinching dedication to his own family—his wife and two sons—Jackson is very active with educating the youth of New York about jazz, as part of a program called Youth Audiences. He’s quite dedicated to it, which this writer witnessed firsthand. After a recent clinic for a group of high school students, Ali was scheduled to play a sold-out Jazz At Lincoln Center concert nearby. The drummer generously offered the students seats in the wings of the stage to watch Wynton and the band. It was an amazing experience, one that those young jazz fans will not soon forget.

Gigs

Jazz At Lincoln Center

Wynton Marsalis

Cyrus Chestnut

Reginald Veal

Dee Dee Bridgewater

Harry Connick Jr.

Marcus Roberts

Frederick P. Rose Hall, Home Of Jazz At Lincoln Center

MD: Who would you say was one of your first drum heroes growing up?

Ali: My first major influence, the person I was star-struck about, was Max Roach. He had such a unique style and melodic concept about playing the instrument, and that stuck with me more than anybody else.

MD: And you got to take lessons with him?

Ali: Yes, I studied with him. The first time was when I was eleven. He did a master class at the Detroit Jazz Festival, and one of my uncles took me. Max had some people participate from the audience. I knew all of the people in the scene and they knew who I was, so they had me participate and I got to play. Max was really impressed. It was in the style of his playing. After that, he and I stayed in contact. I saw him again at an IAJE [International Association for Jazz Education] convention, and he let me hang out with him. As I recall, it was his birthday. I followed him around all day, and he shared so much information with me about playing, how he tuned his drums—everything.

Years later, when I moved to New York right out of high school, I'd go over to Max's place and he'd give me lessons. He'd talk about the history of drums, his different influences, different styles, his conception of using rudiments, his conception of independence, how to construct drum solos, and so on. He let me tape the lessons, and it was so beneficial not only in my development, but to be able to spread that information to others. He was very open with me.

Later on, I got to be very close with Elvin Jones, because he was very close with my father. So I would go to Max's for a lesson and then go to Elvin's and have dinner with him, because they lived in the same building. Can you believe that?

MD: You moved to New York right out of high school?

Ali: Yes. I was offered scholarships to go to Juilliard for classical percussion, the Manhattan School of Music, and the New School, and I chose to go to the New School. I figured I would have more opportunity to play at the New School, and I also had a cousin who was going there at the time, the piano player, Carlos McKinney.

The attitude at the New School was a little different from that of a traditional conservatory or college institution. It was a little looser, I guess you could say, and they wanted you to get the experience, network, and live the lifestyle, as opposed to just going to class and doing what you're told. I had a lot of great instructors, and I was blessed to have a great

ensemble instructor, bassist Buster Williams, for my first year or two. He really taught me how to understand nuance and detail. He was very detail-oriented when it came to jazz

who had an impact on my development and overall balance on my musical perspective, and I wouldn't trade those experiences for anything. But school is for the individual and what

“YOU REALLY HAVE TO BE VERY SURE OF YOURSELF AND CONFIDENT ABOUT WHAT YOU’RE DOING, ESPECIALLY PLAYING DRUMS.”

music and his approach and philosophy. It homed me in on my instrument, how to play with the bass, the usage of dynamics, and refining the music.

A lot of times as a young musician you don't think about it like that, but it was extremely effective in my overall concept of playing the instrument and my approach to music. Frank Foster was also a huge influence in arranging and ensemble writing. We talked a lot about that, and he was a great human being. I loved being around him. Henry Martin was also great. There were so many people

that person wants to get out of it. For me, it gave me enough freedom. After my first year there, I went on tour with Wynton Marsalis. I took a semester off to tour with him and his quintet.

MD: How did that come about?

Ali: I've known Wynton since I was twelve. I met him at a master class in Detroit and saw him again at the IAJE where I was hanging out with Max. So when I wasn't hanging out with Max, I was hanging out with Wynton. He knew about me and my family. You kind of know about people who can play. If some-



ALI'S DRUMS

Drums: Yamaha Maple Custom Absolute in cherry finish with wood hoops

- A.** 5 1/2x14 bamboo snare
- B.** 8x10 tom
- C.** 8x12 tom
- D.** 14x14 floor tom
- E.** 16x20 bass drum (or 14x18)

Cymbals: Zildjian

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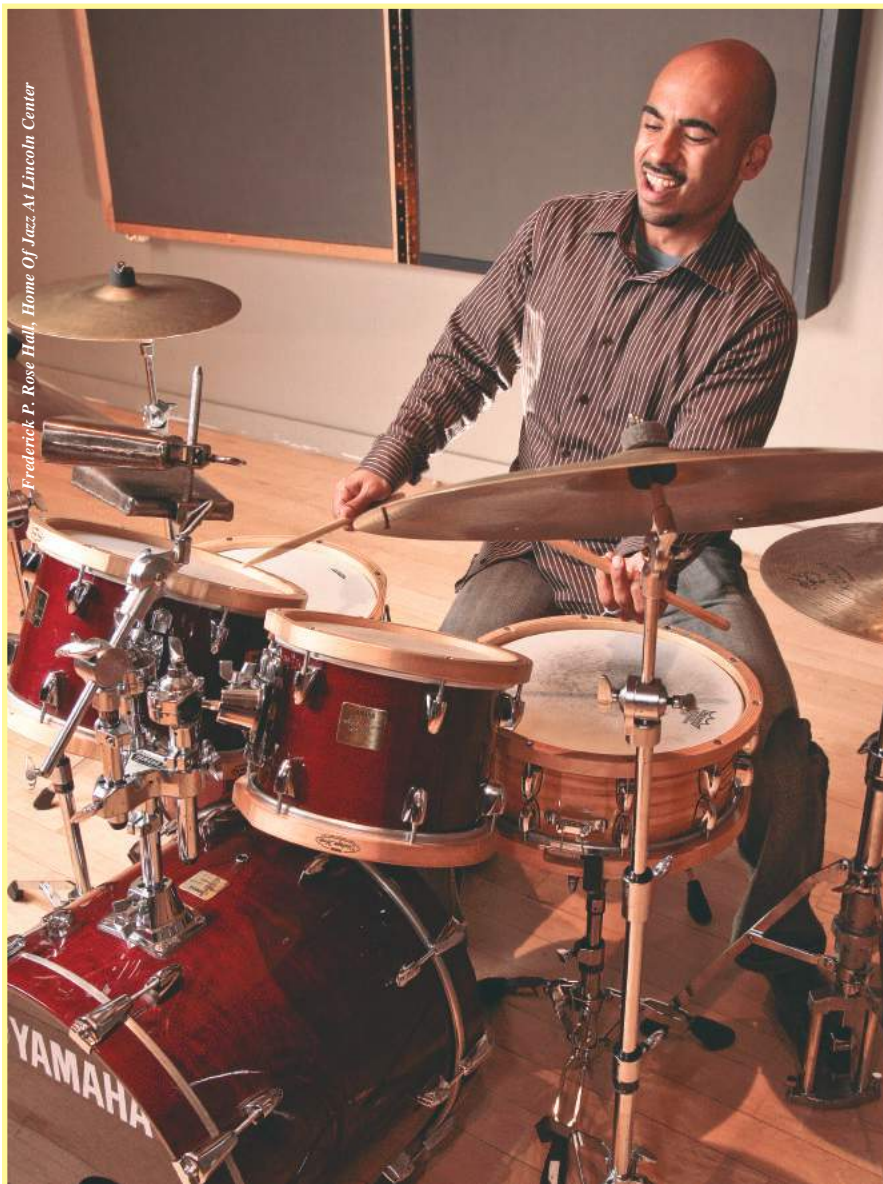
aa. cha-cha bell

bb. bongo bell

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WYNTON MARSALIS

Trumpet And Drums: A Special Relationship

MD: What do you expect from the drummer in your group?

Wynton: The first thing I need is clarity of sound. Next would be an ability to orchestrate. And most importantly, I need a drummer who has a knowledge of the history of the music, from New Orleans right up to the most modern aspect of drumming exemplified by artists such as Ed Blackwell and Elvin Jones. I also need someone with the ability to play with intelligence behind soloists. And, of course, I want a drummer who can play with originality.

MD: Your drum seat is one of the most coveted there is, and Ali Jackson is the man who has it. What makes him such a special player?

Wynton: Look at his journey in the music: how serious he's been and for how long, and his pedigree—his dad was a jazz musician and his uncle was the great Oliver Jackson. Plus he's played with a lot of musicians. For a young person, Ali has had a lot of experience. He knows our way of playing. He's studied our style, from the style we played with Jeff "Tain" Watts, to what we did with Herlin Riley, and right up to today.

Playing with a big band, which Ali does with me, can be difficult, especially to be able to pull the band effectively and not play too loud, to be able to play with dynamics and know how to orchestrate on the kit in such a way that will be most effective for the music. Many times Ali doesn't have a written-out part; he invents his part.

In a small-band setting, like the drum part Ali played on a song we did called "From The Plantation To The Penitentiary," he was so inventive. And he understands how to play "call & response." He plays in that way, which can be very hard to learn. I also enjoy playing with Ali because we have a lot of rhythmic interplay. His drumming has tremendous depth.

MD: Can you talk about the special relationship between the trumpet and the drums?

Wynton: The very first images of trumpet players are in Egyptian art, and in it you can see the trumpeters playing along with the drummers. In classical symphonies, like by Haydn and Beethoven, the trumpets play the same parts as the timpani much of the time. And in a big band, if you lose the drum book, you give the drummer the lead trumpet part.

Think about the great trumpet players and the drummers they relied on: Louis Armstrong and Zutty Singleton, Miles Davis and Philly Joe Jones or Tony Williams, Clifford Brown and Max Roach. Yes, trumpet and drums have a special kind of relationship.



body is serious, you get marked. They track you. I was on his radar.

By the time Wynton came back to do another workshop in Detroit, I was maybe sixteen or seventeen. During the workshop, he asked if anyone could come up and play piano. I play piano, so I got up. Wynton said to me, "I thought you played drums." No one else at the workshop could get the concept he was trying to explain, a boogie woogie blues type thing he was trying to get someone to play on the piano, but I played it. From that point on, Wynton said he knew that we were going to work together at some point.

About a year and a half after that, I was in New York going to school. I went to all the jazz sessions around town that I could find while I was in school. People would hear about you from the jazz sessions, and word trav-

eled fast—good information and bad information. Luckily for me, it was good. One of my first gigs in New York was with Cyrus Chestnut, who was just forming a trio. Then, after about a year, Wynton called. That was in 1995, which was the year I met my wife, too.

MD: You were a kid.

Ali: Yeah, nineteen. I left school for a semester, and the enigma for me was going on the road and then going back to finish school. Most of the guys at school were saying, "Man, forget it, everybody's trying to do what you're doing. Why are you even here, bro?"

I feel blessed. It's totally a blessing to be able to do what you love to do for a living. So I played with Wynton for a little over a year and I was trying to finish school. It took me an extra year to finish. After that I had the opportunity to work with James Spaulding and

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ALI JACKSON

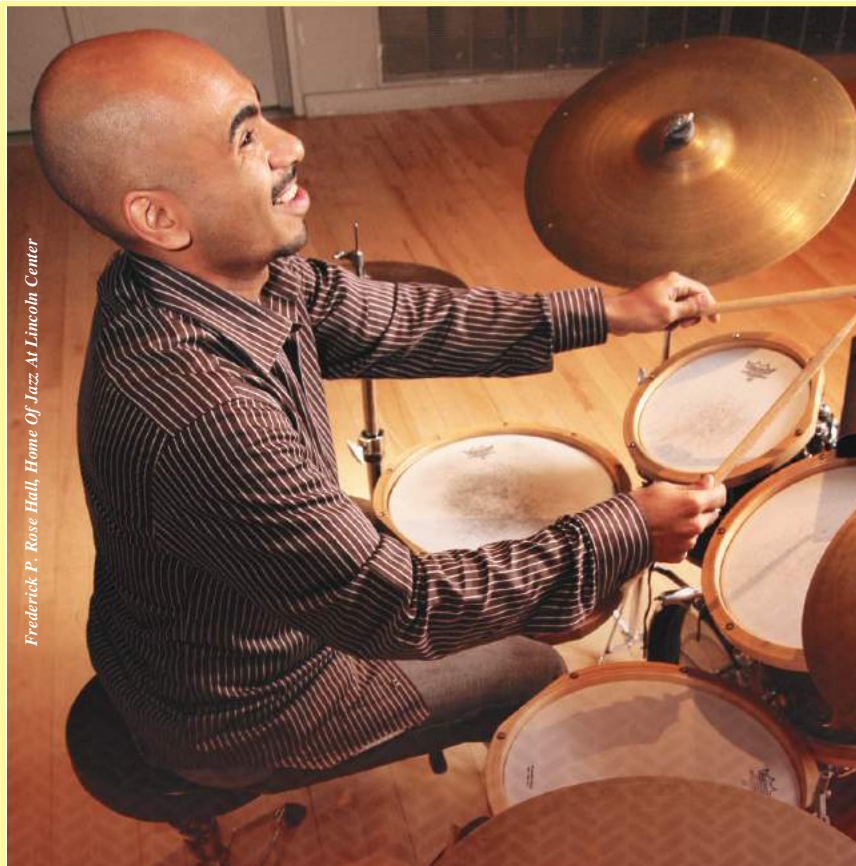
Frank Foster and his group. I also did some subbing work with Lionel Hampton's Orchestra, Jacky Terrasson, and then Dee Dee Bridgewater, who I worked with for almost four years.

MD: What was that like?

Ali: She had unbelievable charisma, such a big personality, and a lot of energy, so it was

a real mutual mesh because I have a lot of energy as well. We connected instantly. Because of her style, or maybe because of the way I interpreted it...most of the time singers have real strict arrangements, but it got to be real loose. By the third or fourth year, it was pretty well documented on the Live At Yoshi's record; it was very free.

Frederick P. Rose Hall, Home Of Jazz At Lincoln Center



JACKSON ON RECORD

Here are a few discs that Ali feels best represent his playing.

ARTIST

Ali Jackson Quartet Featuring
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Wynton Marsalis

Craig Handy
Dee Dee Bridgewater
Ali Jackson/Cyrus Chestnut/
James Carter/Reginald Veal
Russell Gunn

ALBUM

Big Brown Get Down, Vol. 1

From The Plantation
To The Penitentiary
Reflections In Change
Live At Yoshi's
Gold Sounds

Gunn Fu

FAVORITES

ARTIST

Max Roach/Clifford Brown
Thelonious Monk
Count Basie
John Coltrane
Wynton Marsalis

ALBUM

Live At The Bee Hive
Underground
Best Of Early Basie
Coltrane Plays The Blues
Black Codes From The Underground

DRUMMER

Max Roach
Ben Riley
Jo Jones
Elvin Jones
Jeff Watts

Adds Ali, "Herlin Riley, Jeff Watts, and Lewis Nash are also special influences and inspirations. I admire their styles and have infused them into my overall conception of playing."



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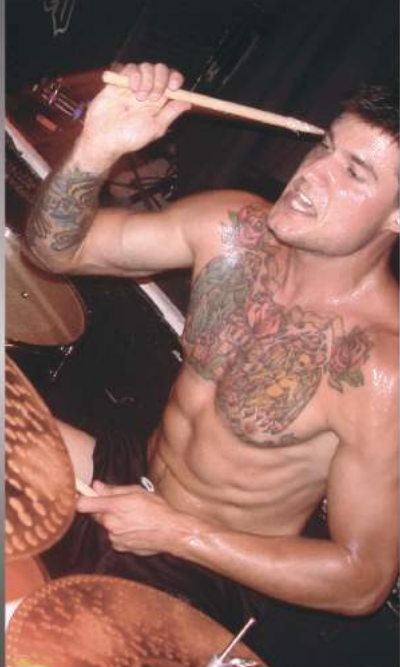
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Dee Dee's not just a singer, she's an entertainer, and she brings her whole life force into the performance. You're not going to just hear someone sing, you're going to get the whole package. I learned a lot about putting on a show from her.

Then I moved to Japan in 2000 for a year. My wife, Jánell, and I had been married for a year or so, and she got a fellowship to teach English in Japan, so we moved.

MD: And what did you do?

Ali: I took that time to practice, shed, and write. I wrote a lot of music. I wrote a suite for three drumsets. I was also "Mr. Mom." Our oldest son was three at the time. That was tough, but we worked it out.

When we moved back to New York in 2001, I basically started from scratch. All my connections thought I wasn't there anymore and I had to start over. I played every \$50 gig I could play, and I hustled. Then Wynton heard I was back in town and called me to do a couple of benefits. A few months after that, Herlin Riley, Wynton's drummer at the time, got really sick and I got the call to sub for him. That was the year of September 11, and Herlin got sick right before that. It was a big tour with Jazz At Lincoln Center, and it was a pretty challenging chair. There were maybe a hundred songs in the book.

MD: What was the challenge of that band?

Ali: There was no room for errors. The other guys in the band are all very serious, so you don't want to come up there and not have your stuff together.

MD: How intricate is the music?

Ali: Some of it is super intricate and some of it is big band standards. There's a huge range, which is what makes it pretty challenging. You have to be prepared to play everything, and there's a certain level of confidence you have to have when you're playing in an ensemble like that. You really have to be very sure of yourself and confident about what you're doing, especially playing drums. You have to be definitive.

MD: How hard was it taking Herlin's place?

Ali: The biggest concern was playing experience. Herlin is old enough to be my father, so more than anything was the experience and leadership ability to play in a band like that, especially the drum chair because, by far, that's the most difficult chair. You have to know all of the music and you have to be respected. You don't have to be liked, but you have to be respected. I earned a lot of respect from the guys in that orchestra because I had no rehearsal time. September

11 happened, and I flew out on one of the first flights I could to Seattle, Washington to start the tour.

I remember that first gig. I went out there very prepared. I had about a week and I learned all that music. I learned all the arrangements, I studied all the scores, and I studied all the drum charts.

MD: Can you describe how you did it?

Ali: I had a CD player, headphones, and arrangements. I had most of the original recordings of all of those arrangements and read through them with the recordings. The Jazz At Lincoln Center library gave me whatever recorded music and all the sheet music they had.

MD: What's required of the drummer in the seat at Jazz At Lincoln Center?

Ali: In a nutshell, you have to understand the history and be very confident of what your style and conception is of playing the drumkit. You should be able to articulate that. Your style should encompass the whole history of jazz. If I had to say how I constructed my style or what my style of playing is, I'd say it encompasses the whole history of jazz, from Baby Dodds through Big Sid Catlett, A.G. Gottlieb, Jo Jones, Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Ed Blackwell, Sonny Payne, Sonny Greer, and Louie Bellson. I have a bit of all of their styles in me, because I admire all of them. Over time, even though I'm not that old—I'm thirty-two—I've developed an affinity for understanding the whole language of jazz music. That makes my job a lot easier.

I've studied the styles of other cultures in music because now it's almost impossible to be a proficient drummer without understanding other rhythms from other places. We had a big collaboration about two years ago with a group from Ghana called Odadaa! They had a master drummer from Ghana whose name was Yacub Addy, and I had to assimilate and understand their concept of playing music and their rhythms. Not that I'm an expert, but it takes time to understand the way they feel music.

MD: The orchestra plays a lot of Duke Ellington, and JALC even has an Essentially Ellington competition for high schools in the US and Canada, so you're expected to be authorities on the genre. When you play that material, how much room do you have for your own interpretation?

Ali: If you listen to a lot of Duke Ellington's music, Duke was not someone who believed in [having one] style. His style was constant-



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ALI JACKSON

ly evolving. He had things he worked on. There were things that he did compositionally that no one did before him, so he was open to lots of ideas, and that's what made him Duke. That's what made him unique. He also loved the musicians that played with him, and he wrote specifically for them.

We adapt the same kind of concept. Wynton writes for us. When we play Duke's music, we're trying to emulate Duke Ellington's band, but we're also trying to make the music come alive, so sometimes we deviate from what they did. For instance, we'll play "Braggin' In Brass," and our trombone section plays it so well, it's scary. I don't think Duke played it as well. Athletes have records that are made to be broken. That's the beauty of it. If Duke were living today and he heard our orchestra play, I think he'd be like, "Yeah!" That's what you want. You don't want status quo.

I think from an artistic and cultural standpoint, we're making history with this orchestra. Maybe right now no one can appreciate it, but we're making a statement. I don't think there's ever been an orchestra in history that has played such a body of music and done it as well as we do in Jazz At Lincoln Center.

MD: When you get a new chart, what's your approach? What do you do first? What do you think about?

Ali: It depends on who composed the piece, so you have an idea of their style or what they like to do. If it's a Duke Ellington transcription, I have a very good idea of what it should sound like. Generally, you have an

idea or audible blueprint in your mind of what it should sound like, and normally you try to get an idea of what the overall arrangement is or what the piece is or the statement the piece is trying to make. That's the first thing I try to discern.

If it's new music, we play through it, and I constantly make adjustments. We might just play through one section, and I'll get an idea and start making adjustments and negotiating what I can and cannot do, based on the music. When we have new works or commissions that people write for the orchestra, it's just like any drum chart. Someone will write "Latin," and I'll research whatever groove they're asking for. If they're asking for swing, there are different ways to swing. I'll have to figure out which era or style it's swinging in.

That's probably the most unusual part of that drum seat, being able to discern all of the different styles and ways of playing. You can hear me on a recording and it can sound just like the style of Duke Ellington from the '20s with Sonny Greer on drums. Or it might sound like Ellington of the '70s with Sam Woodyard. It's two totally different drummers, two totally different ways of playing.

MD: I understand that you have a new record coming out.

Ali: It's called *The Wheelz Keep Rollin'*, and it features a young pianist by the name of Jonathan Batiste and a singer by the name of Jennifer Sannon, plus some of my fellow bandmates, Carlos Henriquez [bass], Vincent Gardner [trombone], Mike Rodriguez

[trumpet], and the great bassist and my longtime friend Reginald Veal, who is singing on it and playing. It's basically a tribute to a modern approach to the blues.

Most of the grooves are bass drum/snare drum-type grooves, including things like second-line/military cadence-oriented grooves. On the drumkit, it's real basic, but very deep-rooted. The songs are simple, as opposed to my earlier days when I'd be playing polyrhythm on top of polyrhythm. It's all original compositions.

MD: Something we must talk about is your passion for educating young people and your desire to keep the genre of jazz music alive.

Ali: I feel that's a part of my calling from a higher power. I think if God has given me the ability to do that, then it's incumbent upon me to do it to the best of my ability. Music is one of the treasures that God has given us, and it should be shared as much as possible. If that means I go to a school and talk to kids for however much time I can, I'll be the best conduit I can be. I've been blessed in my short time on this planet to have a lot of musical experience with a lot of great musicians, so I try to translate those experiences in a way that will connect and resonate.

Music can teach us how to be better people. If I can continue to share that with people, that will be tremendous. It's a gift to be able to play and talk about the music. But I don't want to just talk about it, because playing it is so much fun!



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RAYMOND



Gigs

Dumpstaphunk

Trey Anastasio

The Dirty Dozen Brass Band

Irma Thomas

Solomon Burke

Harry Connick Jr.

WEBER

Story by Andy Tennille
Photos by Josh Miller

Family Man

Over its nearly three-hundred-year history, New Orleans has become synonymous with jazz music, Cajun cuisine, hurricanes, and debauchery of nearly every stripe. But just as mudbugs and Mardi Gras are embedded in the genetic makeup of The Big Easy, the city has a rich familial tradition dating back to its discovery in 1718 by brothers Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville and Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville.

Nowhere in the Crescent City is this familial vibe felt more than in its vibrant music scene. Born out of the informal jam sessions and slave dances in Congo Square in the 1700s, the city's early indigenous music blended the influences of its European, Latin American, and African residents like a simmering pot of seafood gumbo. By the twentieth century, New Orleans had become home to its own distinct brand of rhythm & blues, funk, and jazz music led by famous local families like the Nevilles, the Batistes, and the Marsalises, who incorporated its diverse musical heritage while contributing greatly to the evolution of music.

"New Orleans' music has always been a family affair," says Raymond Weber. "And it was the same in my family. My dad played bass with a couple of groups, and all my daddy's brothers—my uncles—are musicians. There was always music on in our house."

Born in 1967, the forty-one-year-old drummer—who landed his first paying gig at age eleven and whose career credits include stints with The Dirty Dozen Brass Band, Irma Thomas, Solomon Burke, Harry Connick Jr., and former Phish frontman Trey Anastasio—grew up in the Carrollton neighborhood of New Orleans, the youngest of three children. While many of Weber's earliest memories are of Mardi Gras parades, his first musical experience came as an infant watching his father's band rehearse at his grandmother's house.

"I remember sitting there for hours and hours just watching them play," he recalls. "My father's youngest brother, Jack Weber, was a drummer. My Uncle Herbert played the keyboards, and Uncle Shelby played the guitar. I was fascinated just watching them play and thought it was the coolest thing that my Uncle Jack had a drumset in the living room of his house. Uncle Jack had his drums set up next to his mega stereo system, and he would just play along with music on the stereo. I think watching those practices is where I fell in love with music."

By age two, Weber was drumming, commandeering his mother's pots and pans to bang away on the kitchen floor behind his homemade kit. "My dad saw that I had an interest in playing early on," Weber says, "so he bought me an old Ludwig set. I wore that thing out practicing for hours and hours every day after school."

Like his Uncle Jack and so many other old-school drummers, Weber practiced by playing along to his favorite records, "...Steve Ferrone with Average White Band, Parliament, The Ohio Players, The Meters, and all the other funk records," he says. "Stuff like 'Love Roller Coaster' or 'Fire' by the Ohio Players had a lot of syncopated beats, and I just listened to those records and tried to figure out bass drum and snare patterns and cop a few things here and there. That's where I really learned to play the drums and work on my timing. My best teacher was the stereo."

Although Weber attended programs at the prestigious New Orleans Center For Creative Arts for two years, he learned the basics where most every New Orleans drummer does—in the high school marching band. During his senior year, Weber was the section leader at Warren Easton High School, while Russell Batiste, future drummer of The Funky Meters, held the same title at cross-town rival St. Augustine.

According to Batiste, "I remember one day walking up to see my friend playing keyboards with Raymond and realizing for the first time that I wasn't the only badass drummer in New Orleans. I'd come up playing drums with my family band since I was seven years old, so I was always playing with adults and never with anyone my age. There's a drummer on every square block of New Orleans, but that day was the first time I realized someone else out there was doing what I was doing, and his name was Raymond Weber."

"After that, Russell and I used to challenge each other every day after school," Weber adds. "Every evening, like clockwork, Russell would come by the school and tell me to meet him at the mailbox out front. We'd sit out there doing rudiments and challenging each other. I'd whoop his butt one day and he'd come whip my butt the next. We went back and forth, but we drove each other to improve."

Today Weber is turning heads with his funky stylings in the band Dumpstaphunk, the all-star quintet featuring keysman/singer Ivan Neville, guitarist Ian Neville, and bass players Tony Hall and Nic Daniels, all modern-day descendents of The Meters and the current flag boys of Crescent City funk.



MD: Tell us about your start with the group Dumpstaphunk.

Raymond: It all started a few years back when Ivan got a call to put something together for the [New Orleans] Jazz Festival. Ivan wound up calling me, so we got together and started jamming with Tony Hall, who was playing in Ivan's band at that time. Then we got Ian in there, and Nic came along a little later. But when we all played together, phew, it just felt right.

I think the mixture of cats in this band is unique. We're all from New Orleans, but we were all brought up on different music. Ian is the youngster in the group, and he's a rock kid. I'm a funk and jazz guy. Tony has a funk background. Ivan loves the funk but also came up listening to rock. Nic is an R&B guy and likes reggae music too.

Even though we all listen to different music, we're all from New Orleans. When we got together the first time to jam, we gelled immediately, and it was like we'd been playing together all our lives. I remember after we finished that first jam session, Ivan said something about it being more funky than a dumpster. We all kinda laughed, but that's how we got the name, and it stuck. We decided we liked playing together so much that we wanted to have a band and all be equal partners in it. So we put together Dumpstaphunk, and for the last few years that's what we've been trying to do: push Dumpstaphunk to the forefront.

MD: Did you know Ivan at all before getting the call for the Jazz Fest gig?

Raymond: Oh yeah, I've known Ivan for a long, long time, man. We used to always play together with other people and do records, but we never really thought about putting a band together. I knew him back in his drinking and drugging days, but he's been sober for ten years or so now, and he's totally focused on the music. I'm really proud of him.

MD: This band has an interesting dynamic in that you've got two bass players to play with. What's that like?

Raymond: Man, it's fun, and I couldn't ask for two better bass players than Tony and Nic. They bring different things to the music but still gel with the rest of the band. But things can get loud up there with the two of them! I've walked away from a lot of Dumpstaphunk gigs with a sore foot from trying to keep up with those two.

MD: How do you determine your setup? I imagine it changes from gig to gig depending on the music you're playing, but how did you start out?

Raymond: That's a funny story. My older brother, James, played drums before I did as a kid. Before I got my own kit, I'd play around on his, but since I was left-handed, I'd have to change his kit around every time I played on it because he was a right-handed drummer. Eventually, he got tired of me messing with his kit, so he told me one day that the only way I could play on his kit anymore was if I learned how to play right-handed. So I learned how to play right-handed and have been a right-handed drummer ever since.

MD: How do you think that's influenced your playing? Being a right-handed drummer who is naturally left-handed, my guess is you're more comfortable leading with your left hand.

Raymond: For sure, man. I feel like I'm a much better drummer because of it. I remember my brother telling me that it would be hard for me to sit in with people and play around town as a lefty because most drummers are right-handed. So he really pushed

me to do that. It's helped out a lot because I can set up a whole percussion rig on my left side if I want to and play that while I'm holding down the basic drum beat with my right hand.

MD: Drummers differentiate themselves through technique, style, and drum sounds. What kind of drum sounds do you go for?

Raymond: It all depends on the type of music I'm playing. If I'm playing jazz, I like the old, traditional jazz sounds, where the snare drum is a little loose, and you've got high-pitched toms and an 18" bass drum. But for the funk music we play in Dumpstaphunk, I like a tight snare drum with a popping sound, because I play a lot of rimshots. And I want deep toms and a big, fat kick drum sound, something to really drive the groove with.

MD: What's the best piece of drumming advice you've ever been given and who gave it to you?

Raymond: It probably came from my Uncle



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Ludwigs, he gave me a new set of Ludwigs that I ended up keeping forever. As a matter of fact, I gave them back to him three years ago, completely redone and fixed up, but they were then destroyed when Hurricane Katrina hit.

MD: In your opinion, what's the most important thing to keep in mind when playing drums in a funk band?

Raymond: It's all about playing in the pocket and learning how to groove. Playing drums in a funk band, you want people to feel the groove coming from the music. Playing funk music is all about feel. I'm a

guy who plays from the heart. Everything I play, I've got to feel it. I think a lot of drummers from New Orleans are like that. We all play from the soul.

worked really well for me.

My uncle is definitely one of the reasons I play drums today. Back when I was first starting, I used to break a lot of stuff. Whenever I would crack a ride cymbal or break a drum pedal, I would call Uncle Jack. He was the kind of uncle who, on the next day, would have a new pedal there for me.

I remember after I wore out my first set of

guy who plays from the heart. Everything I play, I've got to feel it. I think a lot of drummers from New Orleans are like that. We all play from the soul.

MD: Can you elaborate on what "playing in the pocket" means?

Raymond: Playing in the pocket means you're playing 2 and 4, but you're not playing a stiff 2 and 4—you're grooving it a



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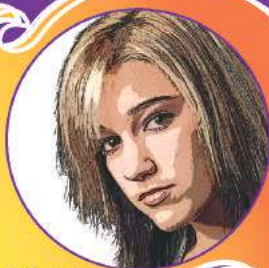


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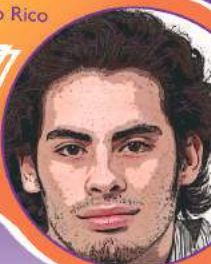
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little bit. You're playing 2 and 4 for most of the measures of the song until you come to a change, where you might throw in a fill or something a little funky. It's all about feeling the music, finding the groove and playing in the pocket.

Being able to groove might be the most important thing to learn about drumming, because the groove is the reason why people dance, clap their hands, and feel happy. Chops are great, but you gotta be able to groove to keep a gig.

MD: It sure seems that drummers who

come out of New Orleans understand pocket and groove.

Raymond: Yes, there are a bunch of the cats down in New Orleans who know how to play this stuff, but we do have our share of younger cats who are all over the place too! But I think the reason drummers from New Orleans are great pocket drummers is because a lot of us started in marching bands and brass bands, where we came up playing all these beats behind horns, guitars, and different percussion. We had to learn to keep the groove going or the parade would stop!

MD: What are your thoughts about ghost notes and the role they play in your drumming?

Raymond: They're a big part of New Orleans music, along with playing with syncopation. Zigaboo Modeliste was one of the best at that—playing these slick ghost notes that really made the groove happen. Without those ghost notes and the space they made, the beat would sound like a drum machine or something. Ghost notes make the beat more human and really drive the groove.

MD: New Orleans has a long history of producing great drummers, like James Black, Smokey Johnson, Earl Palmer, Johnny Vidacovich, Idris Muhammad, Willie Green, Herman Ernest...

Raymond: Herman Ernest schooled me on a lot of stuff coming up. When I was a kid, I used to sneak down to the French Quarter and look in the window at the bar he played in. When he would go on a break, Herman would come out of the club and talk to me. He'd show me something or just talk about music. That really meant a lot to me.

Another of my favorite drummers of all time is Harvey Mason. He's one of those cats that you might not think you know, but you've definitely heard him. Harvey is the drummer who played on Herbie Hancock's "Chameleon." The things he was laying down on that record just blew me away. From the moment I heard that song, I knew I had to buy everything Harvey Mason played on. "Mr. Magic" is another song Harvey played drums on that's big in New Orleans.

Another guy who was a big influence on me was James "Diamond" Williams, the original drummer in The Ohio Players. He's an icon for a lot of cats from New Orleans who play R&B and funk music. Diamond and John Bonham did some similar things with the bass drum, playing doubles and triples on the bass drum with one foot. A lot of younger guys nowadays are doing it with two pedals and think they're on to something, but these guys were doing it with one pedal back in the day.

MD: I imagine though that your biggest influence was Zigaboo Modeliste.

Raymond: I remember the first time I heard "Cissy Strut"—I almost dropped the glass of water I was holding. It was the early '70s and The Meters were really popping and giggling around town a lot. I couldn't



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believe what this cat was playing on the drums, and I couldn't stop listening to it. The things Zig did on the hi-hat and all the syncopation, I knew he was funky from the minute I heard him. He's been my biggest influence ever since.

MD: As a drummer, do you spend a lot of time practicing on your own?

Raymond: I used to practice for hours and hours when I first started playing. Since I hit my twenties and started gigging a lot, I haven't had as much time to really practice. But my five-year-old and twelve-year-old sons keep me sharp. Both of them have

been playing since they were two, just like me. They make me rehearse with them because they want me to show them stuff.

It's funny. I'll show them something new, and fifteen minutes later they'll be doing something different with what I taught them that I never thought of. My five-year-old will be like, "Look, Pops, I'm waxing you up. You didn't come up with this. That's my idea." So I'm always trying to come up with something else to teach them. That keeps me real busy.

MD: The funky foot is in the family....

Raymond: Oh yeah, it's alive with my sons,

man! My wife thinks she's gonna get a break every time I go on the road, but they keep it going between the two of them. Sometimes we have two drumsets going at one time. My wife is always saying, "Lord, why did I have to marry a drummer!" [laughs]

MD: When you're not on tour, do you do anything to keep in shape?

Raymond: When I'm not out on tour, I'm gigging in the French Quarter. I'm one of those guys that can be playing on Jay Leno or Conan O'Brien on Monday and then I'll be down in the Quarter the next night playing with some bar band. The Quarter keeps me grounded, because there are guys playing down there who are killer but who just haven't caught a break.

I've been on a gig for years on Bourbon Street, playing with this group called Connection that plays Top-40 stuff. If you're ever in New Orleans hanging out on Bourbon Street, go to a club called Fat Cats. They play there from Monday to Thursday. A lot of my friends make fun of me for playing the gig, but I just love to play. It's what I love to do. I'm very blessed to be able to play music and make a living out of it.

MD: Is there anything that you want to get better at as a drummer? Do you see holes or weaknesses in your drumming that you want to improve on?

Raymond: Well, it's kinda funny, because I'd like to get better at reading music, which is what the folks at NOCCA tried to teach me back when I was a kid, but I wouldn't listen. I've been on gigs where being able to read music really well would have helped me out and made the gigs easier, so I'd like to get better at that.

MD: Do you have any advice for younger drummers out there who want to be as funky as Raymond Weber?

Raymond: Hopefully they can be even funkier than me! I always tell people that the best way to learn to play drums is to play along to music you know and love. Like I said, the stereo and my record collection were my greatest teachers. So my advice to young drummers out there would be to go out, buy some records, and try and play along with them. It's an old-school approach, but it worked for me.

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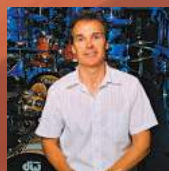
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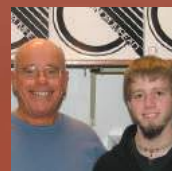
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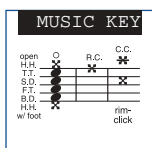
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Memphis Soul Legend Al Jackson Jr.'s Coolest Grooves

by Ed Breckenfeld

Courtesy of Stax/Factory



Al Jackson Jr.'s drumming was the motor that helped generate countless hits for Stax Records in the '60s and early '70s. As a member of one of the all-time greatest studio house bands, Booker T. & The MG's, Jackson was the rock-solid backbeat on the classic songs of Otis Redding, Sam & Dave, Wilson Pickett, and many other important R&B artists of the era.

Al used a tasteful, straightforward approach on those recordings, saving his most creative and unusual drumbeats for Booker T. & The MG's own records. Here is a collection of his unique grooves from a few of The MG's instrumental classics. All of these tracks can be found on the Stax box set *Time Is Tight* and Rhino's *The Very Best Of Booker T. & The MG's*.

"Tic-Tac-Toe"

With no vocalist to support, on the Booker T. recordings Jackson was free to invent drum patterns that would become as much of a hook for the song as Jones' keyboard melodies, Steve Cropper's guitar licks, or Duck Dunn's bass lines. Here Al inverts the snare and bass drum placement on the second beat of the groove, making the offbeat more prominent. His subtle tom stroke in front of the last snare note in the measure adds tonal color to the beat. (0:00)



"Burnt Biscuits"

Al rides on his snare drum for this groove, with a single offbeat rim-click providing a hiccup effect. In place of a heavy snare backbeat, Jackson lets his strong left-foot hi-hat drive beats 2 and 4. (0:01)



"Soul Dressing"

Here's another gem of drumbeat design. Al's 16th-note rim-clicks link the two measures of this pattern. Notice the single right-hand non-rim snare note placed on the "&" of beat 4. (0:00)



"Boot-Leg"

This tune opens with a light snare ride pattern, punctuated by heavy backbeats courtesy of a rimshot/open hi-hat combination. Al's 16th-note drum fill in measure 4 launches the song into its verse groove, which features a conspicuously missing backbeat on the fourth beat of the measure. (0:01)

4

$\text{♩} = 117$

Musical notation for 'Boot-Leg' in 4/4 time, tempo 117. The notation shows a snare drum pattern with rimshots and backbeats, and a 16th-note drum fill in measure 4.

"Booker-Loo"

On this track, Jackson locks in on—and never wavers from—an atypical groove. The song starts with the beat by itself. And with its lack of downbeat bass drum notes or snare backbeat, the pattern presents a disorienting effect until the rest of The MG's join in. (0:00)

5

$\text{♩} = 102$

Musical notation for 'Booker-Loo' in 4/4 time, tempo 102. The notation shows a snare drum pattern with rimshots and backbeats, and a 16th-note drum fill in measure 4.

"Slim Jenkin's Place"

This cool groove revolves around a catchy snare drum/cowbell trade-off. Al combines rim-clicks with normal snare drum notes and an offbeat tom stroke to pack the beat with a load of rhythmic and tonal luster. (0:05)

6

$\text{♩} = 112$

Musical notation for 'Slim Jenkin's Place' in 4/4 time, tempo 112. The notation shows a snare drum pattern with rimshots and backbeats, and a 16th-note drum fill in measure 4.

"Heads Or Tails"

The intro of this track features the following two-measure beat, which includes a reoccurring fill in the second bar that sets up Duck Dunn's bass line. It's another example of Jackson's ability to integrate rim-clicks with regular snare notes for more sonic variety. (0:00)

7

$\text{♩} = 126$

Musical notation for 'Heads Or Tails' in 4/4 time, tempo 126. The notation shows a snare drum pattern with rimshots and backbeats, and a 16th-note drum fill in measure 4.

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"Hang ' Em High"

Al begins one of The MG's' most successful singles with a 16th-note hi-hat pattern, letting the cymbals carry the groove for the first verse. When it's time to bring in the whole kit (measure 2), Jackson's snare accents create a three-against-four polyrhythmic feel for the remaining verses. (0:44)

8
♩ = 117

"Chicken Pox"

Here's one of the band's funkier tracks, enhanced by Al's syncopated groove and the slight swing feel he gives to his fills. (0:07)

9
♩ = 91

"Melting Pot"

This jam simmers along on the strength of Jackson's beat. As the track reaches a climax, Al pulls out a rare two-bar drum fill. This fill is perfectly composed, capping the excitement of the section before breaking into sparse syncopation to bring the song down into a lower-intensity outro groove. (3:03)

10
♩ = 120



You can contact **Ed Breckenfeld** through his Web site, www.edbreckenfeld.com.



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The First Drum Lesson

Instilling Good Technique From The Start

story by Joe Maroni

photos by Nanoo Tippavongse

Learning to play the drums correctly from the beginning is essential. Bad habits are easy to develop yet hard to break, and they can limit your progress on the instrument. This article will explain the correct way for beginning drummers to start their journey.

There are seven fundamental concepts that need to be covered in the very first drum lesson:

- 1) Preliminary wrist movements
- 2) Playing without tension
- 3) Holding the sticks
- 4) The "ready" position
- 5) Wrist strokes
- 6) Playing alternate sticking
- 7) Using your foot

Preliminary Wrist Movement

To get the most out of drumming, we need to get the sticks and our body to work together in the most natural way possible. You must also be sure that your movement works in the way your body is naturally set up to move. While your wrist can move in many different ways, there is one specific way that is better for playing the drums. Here's how to get the correct motion from your wrists:

Step 1: Rest your arms at your sides, palms facing in, fingers slightly curved, and thumb resting on your middle finger. Be sure to let your arms and hands rest in a natural position, without tension.



Fig. 1

Step 2: Bend your elbows and bring your arms up parallel to the floor, palms facing down. Now move your wrists up and down in the motion pictured in Figure 2. Be sure your wrists are nice and loose. Also, make sure you are only moving your wrists, not your elbows. Repeat this motion until it feels comfortable.

Fig. 2



Be Tension-Free

In order to develop proper technique, it's important to be relaxed. You will quickly learn that faster playing is only possible when playing without tension. Your muscles are designed to work with each other to produce movements. However, when you tense up, your muscles are working against each other, making it more difficult to perform the desired movements. To demonstrate this point, make a tight fist and perform the same wrist movement from before.

Fig. 3

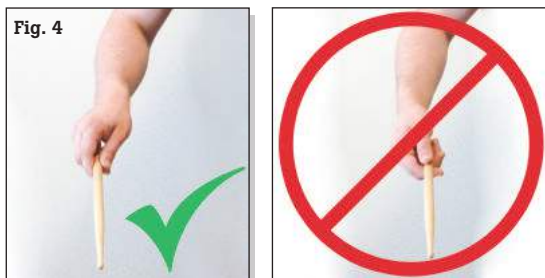


Notice that it's much more difficult to move your wrist up and down when your fist is tightened, and that there is a considerable amount of tension in your arm. Remember to stay relaxed for the next section...

Holding The Sticks

Grip each stick between the first two knuckles of the middle finger and the thumb, placing the thumb on the side of the stick, one fourth of the way up from the butt end. Slightly squeeze the stick with the thumb and second finger. Rest your index finger on the stick and lightly curve the other two fingers around the stick. This grip provides a very important pivot point and allows your wrist to move in the natural position that you practiced before. Be sure that your thumb is not facing up. Instead, rotate your wrists inward about 45° to achieve the correct position.

Fig. 4



Ready Position

Once you're holding the sticks properly, position your hands so that your wrist can perform the preliminary motion we practiced while not holding the sticks. Raise the tips of the sticks a few inches from the drum. Hold both sticks at a 45° angle, forming a triangle.



Fig. 5

Wrist Strokes

Now that your sticks are in the correct position, let's practice playing wrist strokes. Wrist strokes are accomplished by moving the wrist using the same motion from the previous steps. Begin each stroke from the ready position, using the wrist motion to move the stick down and hit the drum. (See Fig. 6.) Make sure you allow the stick to come back up to the ready position immediately after striking the drum, much like dribbling a ball. Basically each stroke should end where it began. When developing your wrist stroke, it's good to exaggerate the heights and movements.

Fig. 6



As you make wrist strokes, be sure that your thumbs are not on top of the stick and that you aren't playing from your elbow (Figure 7).

Fig. 7



Playing Alternate Sticking

Now we're ready to begin playing alternate sticking. Whether right-handed or left-handed, we often tend to favor our dominant hand. As a result, the underdeveloped hand is the root of most technical problems that beginning drummers have. Playing drums requires the development of equal dexterity with both hands. Getting used to playing with alternate sticking from the very beginning will help to accomplish this. It might feel awkward at first, but eventually you'll develop the technique and confidence necessary to play without having to favor either hand.



Fig. 8

DAILY PRACTICE TIPS

- 1) Set aside a certain amount of time each day to practice.
- 2) Practice in a quiet room where it's easy to concentrate.
- 3) Practice in front of a mirror to ensure proper technique and hand positioning.
- 4) Listen! Everything in practicing depends on your listening to yourself.
- 5) Listen to good drummers. (Invest in CDs and attend live concerts.)
- 6) Take lessons. Find someone who can help you maintain and improve on your playing technique.

COORDINATION 101

Play the following exercise with alternate sticking. Tap your foot on each stroke, including during the pauses. Tapping your foot is necessary in order to maintain a steady tempo and to measure the note values. Tapping your foot allows you to reinforce the note values and counting system by measuring the value of every note against a foot tap.

Begin in the ready position, and consider the following as you practice.

- 1) As you move the right stick down to strike the drum, the left stick should remain in the ready position.
- 2) As you move the left stick down to strike the drum, the right stick should remain in the ready position.

3) After you strike the drum, allow the stick to come back up to the same height at which it started.

4) Maintain the correct stick position by gripping the stick with the thumb and second finger.

5) Rest your first finger on the stick and lightly curve the other two fingers around the stick.

6) Be sure to play using wrist strokes. There should be no arm movement at this point.

7) Check the angle of the sticks to make sure that they form a triangle.

8) Repeat these exercises several times each day.

Hands	4	R	L	R	Pause	L	R	L	Pause	R	L	R	Pause	L	R	L	Pause
Foot	Tap	Tap	Tap	Tap	Tap	Tap	Tap	Tap	Tap	Tap	Tap	Tap	Tap	Tap	Tap	Tap	Tap

Put Some Funk In Your Funk

Using Sextuplet Crossover Rhythms To Enhance Your Grooves

by Paul Nieft Jr.

MUSIC KEY

open	○	R.C.
H.H.	×	
T.T.	×	
S.D.	×	
F.T.	×	
B.D.	×	
H.H.	×	
w/ foot	×	
Add'l	×	
T.T.	×	

This article will show you how to intensify your funk grooves by incorporating sextuplets.

While the following beats feature sextuplets that could be played in a more "traditional" manner (as doubles with the left hand on the snare), these use alternate sticking, which will require your hands to maneuver between the hi-hat and snare. Notice that as the hands "cross over," the 8th notes within the sextuplet will remain on the hi-hat, while the sticking

of those 8th notes alternates to create an even, continuous pattern.

Be sure to observe the snare drum accents carefully. The majority of these accents fall directly on the backbeat (beats 2 and 4). However, some of these accents are either anticipated (played ahead of 2 or 4) or delayed (played behind 2 or 4). While practicing these exercises, keep in mind that feel and musicality are much more important than speed. Take your time, play in a relaxed manner, and make the grooves sing.

Practice Example 1 to get the overall feel and rhythm of the crossover. Then move on to the remaining grooves. Have fun!



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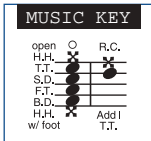
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Foot Ostinatos

And Melodic Thought

by Rob Leytham



One of my favorite ways to approach the development of limb independence and melodic soloing is through the use of ostinatos. Piano players have always practiced this concept with their left hand playing a walking bass line while their right hand solos. These days, drummers like Terry Bozzio and Marco Minnemann are doing the same thing in their solos by playing a repeated pattern with one or two limbs and soloing with the others, thus creating some very musical and exciting drumming. Let's dive right in and start with some foot ostinatos, then ultimately apply rhythmic and melodic ideas over them.

First learn these three ostinatos between the hi-hat and bass drum. The ride cymbal plays even 8ths over the 16th-note foot pattern. (Note: You may also play a cowbell or wood block with your left foot in place of the hi-hat.)

1

2

3

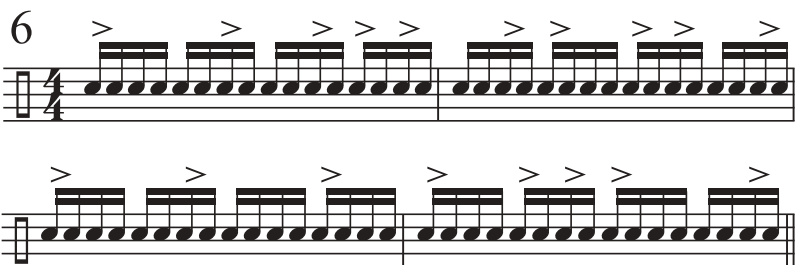
Next, use your left hand to play this rhythmic solo on the snare while continuing to play one of the foot ostinatos.

4

Now play the same rhythms with the left hand, this time breaking it up between the various voices of the drums for a more interesting interpretation. Here's one example:



Next, play alternating 16th notes on the snare while continuing the foot ostinato. Notice that the accents in this pattern match up with the previous 8th-note rhythm.



Once you're comfortable with this, try moving the accented notes to different voices of the set, as in Example 5. All unaccented notes should stay on the snare.

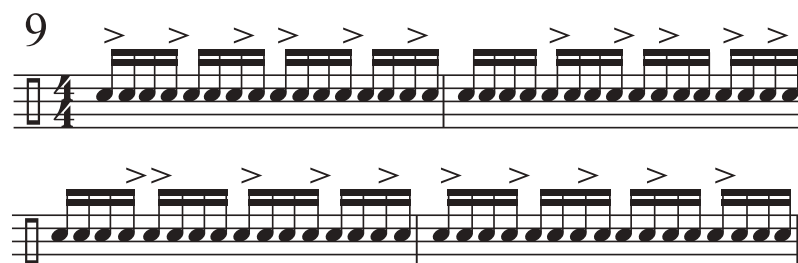
Continue the same foot ostinatos with the following 16th-note rhythmic solo in the hands.



Again, make it melodic!



Here's another alternating 16th-note accent pattern for the hands.



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FOOT OSTINATOS

Continue playing the foot ostinatos with alternating 16th notes in the hands. Move your right hand to either the bell of the ride cymbal or to a cowbell, keeping your left hand on the snare. Practice each of these 16th-note hand stickings over each of the foot ostinatos.

10



- | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) | R | L | R | L | R | L | R | L | R | L | R | L | R | L |
| 2) | R | R | L | L | R | R | L | L | R | R | L | L | R | R |
| 3) | R | L | R | R | L | R | L | L | R | L | R | R | L | R |
| 4) | R | L | L | R | L | R | R | L | R | L | L | R | L | R |
| 5) | R | R | L | R | L | L | R | L | R | R | L | R | L | L |
| 6) | R | L | R | L | R | L | R | R | L | R | L | R | L | L |
| 7) | R | R | L | L | R | L | R | L | R | R | L | L | R | L |
| 8) | R | L | L | R | L | R | L | R | L | R | R | L | R | L |
| 9) | R | R | L | R | L | R | L | R | L | L | R | L | R | L |
| 10) | L | R | L | R | R | L | R | L | L | R | L | R | R | L |
| 11) | R | L | R | L | L | R | L | R | R | L | R | L | L | R |

Once you feel that you have enough control to play each of these exercises, practice the ostinatos with rhythms found in Ted Reed's Progressive Steps To Syncopation and Gary Chester's The New Breed, and the stickings in George Lawrence Stone's Stick Control. If you want more melodic drumming ideas, try out my book Ostinatos For The Melodic Drumset. Have fun discovering the new drum grooves and solo ideas that these ostinato exercises will inspire.



Rob Leytham is a private drum instructor, clinician, and author. He has written numerous books and is a member of the progressive rock group Ancient Vision. Learn more about Rob at www.robeytham.com.



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Tom Brechtlein Reflects...

On Steve Gadd

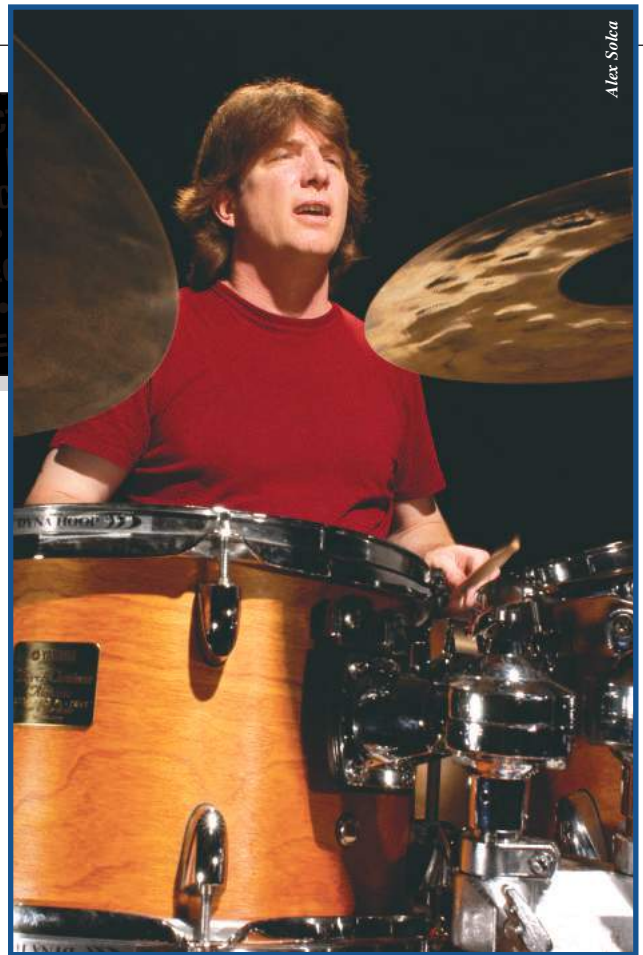
by Mark Griffith

We all have major influences in our drumming careers. If we're fortunate, we can point to important times in our careers when we've been lucky enough to see our major influences in person. These special first-hand experiences always leave lasting impressions, and because most times these nights are never "officially" documented, our memories are all that we have. For Reflections, we will talk to some of today's greatest drummers about these important nights that have left indelible impressions on their drumming memories.

Major Inspirations

Tom Brechtlein is one of today's most underrated and versatile drummers, and one of the drumming business's nicest guys. Throughout his multifaceted career, Tom has worked with many of music's top bandleaders, including Chick Corea, Wayne Shorter, Al Di Meola, and Robben Ford. His recent work with pop icons Ricky Lee Jones and Kenny Loggins has shown yet another side of Tom's playing. Longevity, creativity, reliability, and a huge sense of groove are Brechtlein's many calling cards.

When we talked, Tom was fresh off of a tour with Neil Larsen, and had just had the daunting experience of playing the Yamaha Groove Night after his heroes Andy Newmark (who Tom calls



while, most importantly, making it his own. When Steve plays something, he makes it his, and that's what has always appealed to me. It isn't the licks that he plays, it's the industry 'standard' of time and groove that he brings to everything that he does. He's able to put himself into everything that he plays, and while he always plays the music he's performing authentically, he's also

"My first impression of Steve was that he was like a Mr. Coffee maker: You poured the water through the filter in his head, and what came out was music."

"pocket personified") and Rick Marotta ("the quintessential groover of life").

Tom has chosen to reflect on the first times that he was exposed to the great Steve Gadd. "There are a lot of drummers who aren't willing to admit that Steve Gadd is one of their major influences," Brechtlein insists. "For me, Tony, Elvin, Keith Moon, Ringo, Joe Morello, and Mitch Mitchell are major influences in my life, but the natural level of confidence that Steve Gadd brings to all of the music that he plays has been a huge source of inspiration to me."

Conviction

"With Steve, it isn't only the fact that he's an amazing musician," Brechtlein states. "It's the fact that he can play anything

able to insert his own conviction into that authenticity. That's why his performances sound so sincere, and why his drumming comes out being so wonderfully 'Steve Gadd.'

"In playing music, we all want to try to play a style authentically. But if you don't know the specific vocabulary, all you have to do is listen to the other guys in the band and listen to the music. That's what I learned from Steve. It transcends licks and grooves; it's about listening and becoming part of the music."

First Impressions

"The first time I heard Steve play," Tom recalls, "was in 1974 on a Jackie Cain and Roy Kral record called A Wilder Alias. At the time I was a Billy Cobham and Tony Williams freak. But hearing that record set me off on a quest to find every record that Gadd



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was on. His groove was infectious. I was a student at Nassau Community College at the time, and during a lunch break one day I found myself watching a rerun of The Mickey Mouse Club on TV. And they had this kid on the show playing Dixieland drums and tap-dancing. I remember thinking, Wow, this kid is really good! When he finished I remember the host [Jimmy Dodd] coming out and saying, ' Now let's hear it for little Stevie Gadd!' I stopped in my tracks. This was the guy I'd been listening to on all of these records, and there he was on a Mickey Mouse Club rerun.

" Then I heard Steve on the Chet Baker record She Was Too Good For Me, and I was hooked. Like everyone else, I began to see Steve playing on TV behind Paul Simon and Joe Cocker, but I'd still never seen him live. Then I heard Chick's The Leprechaun, and that really sealed the deal. The next thing I remember is going into New York to hear Stuff play live at the Bottom Line. These nights are etched permanently in my memory. The first time I walked into the club, I saw two drumkits on stage, Steve's and Chris Parker's. Although I'd never seen either guy play live, somehow I just knew which kit was Steve's."



Percussive pals: Brechtlein (right) with his idol Steve Gadd and percussionist Ralph MacDonald

The Early Equipment

" I remember every component of the drumkit that Steve played that night. It was a white 20" Gretsch bass drum with the front head removed, and the drums had Rogers Swiv-O-Matic tom holders. He had 10" and 12" Pearl spun-fiberglass concert toms as

rack toms, and 13" and 14" models as floor toms. But all of the concert toms had bottom heads added on. I even remember the types of lugs that the drums were fitted with.

" For cymbals," Brechtlein goes on, " Gadd had two 18" crash-rides that I think were Ks. I think they were the same ones he used previously in the Army band. His snare drum

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was a 5x14 plain brass Ludwig—not a Supraphonic. His hardware included a Pearl hi-hat stand with the springs mounted on the outside of the stand, and two straight Ludwig cymbal stands.

"Chris was playing 8", 10", and 12" concert toms mounted across the front, and a 16" floor tom," Tom remembers. "His bass drum was a 22" Gretsch or Pearl, and he had a Ludwig tube-lug snare, which sounded killer. He was playing a 20" A ride, an 18" crash, and that was it. I also recall that Chris had this great ride that eventually cracked. Steve must have 'pinched' that from Chris, because later on when I saw Steve he had that cracked ride with a cheap smaller cymbal laying on top of it, and that became the first 'piggy back' cymbal."

Live Impressions

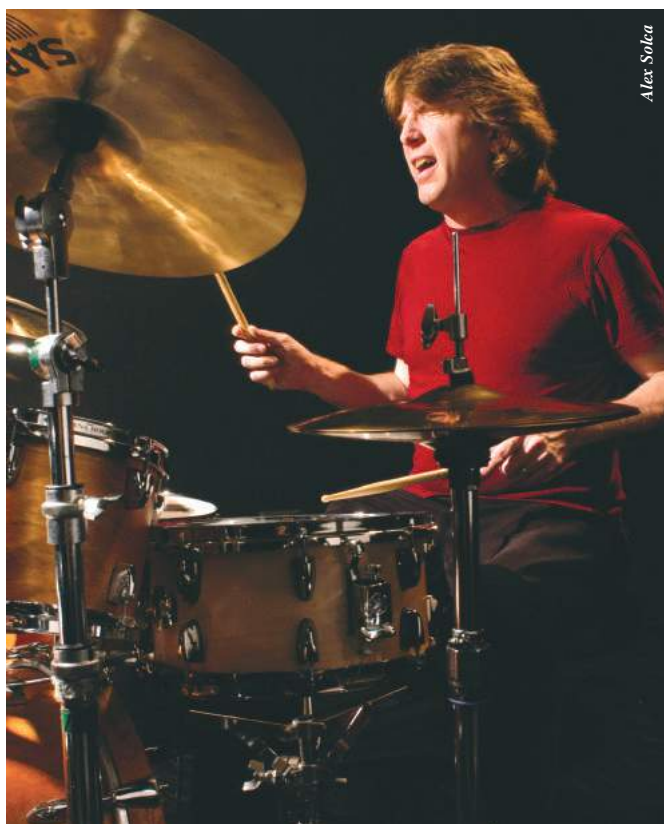
"Chris and Steve played great together. Seeing them really taught me about time, flow, and groove. Seeing their movements around the kit really helped to smooth out my movements behind the drums. My first impression of Steve was that he was like a Mr. Coffee maker; you poured the water through the filter in his head, and what came out was music. From then on, I went to see him every time he played in a club,

especially when Steve and Rick Marotta played together at Mikells with John Tropea's band. As you can tell from these vivid memories, I became obsessed.

"There are two really important points that I learned from seeing Steve play live. I saw him playing with Mike Mainieri's group in 1976 or '77. The album Loveplay had just come out, and that was the most amazing I had ever seen Gadd play. The thing that sticks with me is his groove. It was so intense...no one has ever grooved that intensely.

"Many years later, after I'd started playing with Chick, I took my wife to see Steve playing with Chuck Mangione. This was in 1980 or '81. That night they played the

song 'Land Of Make Believe.' When Steve played that tune, he started with a stick in one hand and a brush in the other. The



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thing that killed me was that when they went to the B section of the tune, Steve didn't increase his volume, he didn't change sounds—he stayed on the snare—and he kept the stick and brush in his hands. He managed to lift the tune to the B section without physically changing a thing. That completely freaked me out! At that point I knew that I was watching sheer genius.

For Steve, it was so simple, and required no extra effort. That's what we should all be doing when we play the drums. For that entire tune, Steve stayed with the stick and brush combination, and he kicked each soloist in the ass without ever going to the cymbals or raising the volume level. The intensity was as if all hell had just broken loose, but he never broke away from that stick and a brush on the snare drum pattern. That was the most amazing thing I've ever seen on the drums. I saw him do that many times after that, but that first time, it was a religious experience.

"Similarly," Tom goes on, "I remember seeing Steve play at a Zildjian Day event years later, and after a number of amazing players had played their stuff, Steve came out. He played the simplest of beats—four on the bass drum, 2 and 4 on the snare, and 8th

notes on the hi-hats—and he slayed me (and everybody else in the house). It was unbelievable. I was sitting up in the rafters, thinking, 'You have got to be kidding me!' I remember thinking that Steve had just set the bar. I knew that I would never reach that, but it would always be something that I would reach for."

The Man

"On top of all of this," Brechtlein shares, "Steve is just a wonderful guy. At one of the early Stuff gigs (before I'd ever played with Chick or anybody), a friend of mine was telling me to ask Steve for a lesson. Steve replied that he would love to give me lessons, but that he knew that as soon as we started he would have to go on the road and that he was afraid we wouldn't be able to finish what we'd started. I remember thinking that for a guy of his stature, and being so in demand, he could have just brushed me off and said, 'Sorry man, I can't do it.' But instead, he made a sincere effort to explain to me why he couldn't do it, and it was genuine. That has stuck with me throughout the years and has set a good example for me to follow.

The thing that really blows my mind is that

to this day, Steve knows my name. That is utterly amazing to me. I saw him with Chick recently when he was playing the music from the Leprechaun. When Steve walked into the club and saw me, he acted as if he was actually intimidated that I was there on the first night. That was really 'cute,' because this is Steve Gadd, for God's sake. Everybody knows that he can play that music in his sleep, but he was actually a little nervous to see me, and was sincerely surprised and appreciative that I had come to hear him play. Needless to say, he did not disappoint.

"Steve was the guy to inspire me to become 'multi-musical,' and to try and play all of the styles," Brechtlein concludes. "There is nothing wrong with having a specialty, be it straight-ahead, rock, or funk. But Steve was the first guy that I knew of to approach music with the outlook of, 'Why can't I play it all?' He plays the best that he can in all styles, and in the process he creates



Mark Griffith is a New York based drummer, writer, and music historian. His recording *Drumatic* is a tribute to the great drummer composers. Mark recently wrote the books that accompany Hudson Music's DVD packages: *The Art Of Playing With Brushes*, and *Steve Smith: Drum Legacy*.



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Navigating Open Mic Nights

A Good Opportunity For Networking

by Jeff Greenwald

Many local bars and clubs across the country offer open mic nights, a chance for local musicians to perform a few songs onstage as either a solo act or with other local musicians. Without a doubt, these sometimes weekly events can be a great way to meet other musicians and establish a good reputation—if you do things right.

Open mic nights provide the opportunity to interact with a wide array of talent. Too often, however, a drummer might only be on stage for one or two songs. While other instrumentalists might use this brief time to show off their chops, that kind of display can backfire on a drummer. What follows is a guideline for making the best use of a potentially limiting situation.

Downtime

Attending an open mic night can be quite trying, especially if you look at the amount of time spent waiting to play. This wait time can be very productive and should be put to use. First of all, use the time to network, especially during a break. Introduce yourself to the musician running the jam session, for he usually decides when and who goes on stage. Furthermore, he usually knows most of the musicians in the room and can be a great ally in introducing you to them.

Secondly, use the time to actively listen to the house band. Chances are, when you get on stage, you'll be playing with the keyboardist, bassist, and/or guitarist. Ask yourself questions

like, Does the bass player like to push or lay back? And does the guitarist play differently with each soloist? Also, watch to see which member of the group tends to give cues. If you can find answers to questions like these, you'll be more prepared when it's your time to play.

Learn Tunes

Another tactic in preparing for an open mic night is learning tunes. Whether it's a blues gig or a jazz gig, there are certain tunes that you absolutely need to know. (While space is limited for a detailed list, consider the following: "Now's The Time," "A Night In Tunisia," "All Blues," "Got My Mojo Working," "Kansas City," "Summertime," "Watermelon Man," and "Blue Bossa.") This not only helps you be more prepared, it puts you in a position to suggest what tune should be played. (Suggestion: Don't be afraid to call a ballad.)

Nevertheless, your limited song knowledge should not stop you from playing. Remember, no one knows every song. While you're waiting to play, write down the name of every song performed that you don't know. This will help you build a catalog of songs you can search for in a record store or online.

Get Involved

When you do take the stage, it's very likely that there will be a discussion about what tune to play and how it should be played. Make sure you take part in this conversation, even if you just listen. The more you know about the tune, the better equipped you'll be to perform at your best.

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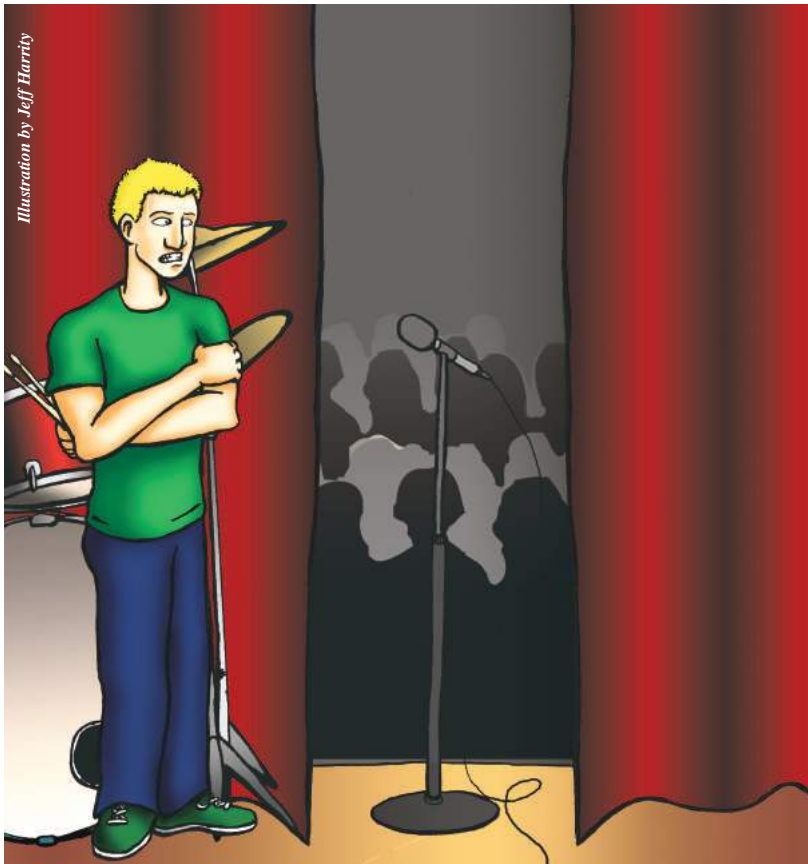
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Often the things mentioned in these discussions are very important to the tune, like, "This is a straight-ahead blues," "Play the bridge with a Latin feel," "The chorus has two extra bars," or "When I raise my hand, everyone should stop."

Accompany First

Once the playing starts, your goal should be to support and elevate those musicians who have come to solo. This is not the time to pull out all of the fills you've practiced at home, nor is it the time to dominate the stage. This mindset tends to work fine for guitarists or horn players, but can make a drummer seem busy and inattentive. Rather, you're more likely to be noticed the less noticeable you are.

To begin, try to lock into a groove with one of the members of the house band. Those guys are on the gig to play and will be glad to interact with someone whose goal is the same. Beyond that, don't forget to listen while you're playing. Your ability to act and react with the other musicians will greatly improve by paying attention to what others are doing.

Trading Fours

Everyone else on stage gets the chance to solo, so why shouldn't you? In an open mic situation, the opportunity for a drum solo often comes in the form of trading fours, usually signaled by someone holding up four fingers. This means that you'll alternate four-bar breaks with the other instrumentalists over the form of the tune.

For example, a twelve-bar blues is made up of three four-bar phrases. The first four-bar break will be taken by a horn player, the second four-bar break by you, the third four-bar break by another horn player. The entire ensemble plays during the horn break, while your break is treated as a solo.

It's customary for the drummer to play the last four-bar break before returning to the head or top of the tune, which means that you should play through the twelve-bar blues form at least twice. During the second time through the form, the first four-bar break will be taken by you, the second four-bar break by another horn player, and the third four-bar break by you. While these four-bar breaks might seem limiting, there is still a lot of room for expression.

Just Do It!

Not every open mic night is the same, nor is every open mic night suited for every drummer. You might have to attend various ones to find those that match your musicianship and musical interest. It's fairly safe to say, though, that the more you attend the same session, the sooner you'll get on stage and the longer you'll play. Good luck!



Jeff Greenwald is a professional studio drummer and writer in the Boston area. Jeff can be reached at greenwald_dowling@yahoo.com.



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Larry Fink

Sonny Rollins

The Saxophone Colossus Talks Drums

by Sriram Gopal

Legend..pioneer..elder statesman—all words used to describe Sonny Rollins' stature in the world of jazz. This titan is one of the few remaining greats who were at the vanguard of arguably the most fertile period in the history of American music. The harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic vocabulary Rollins helped create over the past sixty years has influenced musicians around the globe and across generations. The seventy-seven-year-old saxophonist is still going strong, with plans to release a live DVD and a new recording later this year, all while maintaining a steady schedule of international performances.

Rollins started gaining notice while still a teenager, recording in 1949 as a sideman with trombone great J.J. Johnson and legendary pianist Bud Powell. His career took off in the '50s, beginning with a stint in Miles Davis' s group, then stretches with Thelonious Monk and the famed Clifford Brown–Max Roach Quintet. The latter half of the decade saw him grow as a leader,

“Jazz isn’ t just a profession, it’ s not just playing. It’ s a life.”

recording the landmark Saxophone Colossus album featuring his signature tune, “St. Thomas.” He also recorded with his piano-less trio. And the decade culminated with his sublime Freedom Suite album.

In the '60s Rollins continued to break new ground with each release, and the '70s saw him embrace electric instruments and play numerous solo saxophone performances. He remained cre-

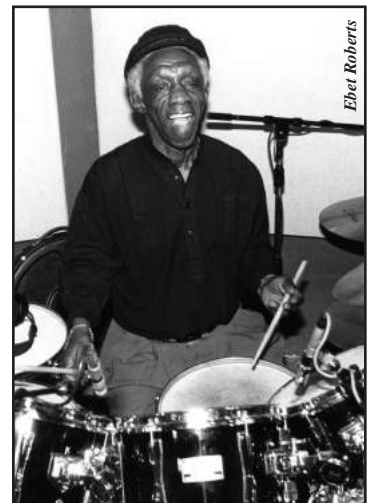
atively active throughout the '80s and '90s, and the twenty-first century has witnessed yet more memorable recordings, most notably Without A Song: The 9/11 Concert, his 2005 tribute to the victims of 9/11.

“This might sound old-school, but jazz is a life,” Rollins insists. “It’ s not just a profession, it’ s not just playing. The heartaches, the down times, the suffering, the not getting enough gigs, all of this stuff. it turns into something else.” MD was honored to speak with the great Sonny Rollins to get his insights into some of the great drummers he has known.

Art Blakey

I have to begin with Art Blakey, because he was one of the earliest drummers I played with who was on a special level. He encouraged me to react to what he was doing. And he was a very “earthy” drummer, I guess you might say, more so than a technical drummer like Max [Roach], for instance.

Art had an extraordinarily strong rhythmic beat. It was elemental, and that meant it sort of went with everything. It went with all kinds of music, which is why he could fit with all the incarnations of The Jazz Messengers over the years. All those guys weren’ t exactly the same horn men, but Art’ s drumming could fit with them because his music was so seminal in everything that was going on. That got in my music the same way. When we came together, Art’ s playing with me turned it into more or less a finished product and something that I couldn’ t have created alone or with any other drummer.



Ebet Roberts

Max Roach

Playing with Max was interesting because he was a very musical drummer who was also very precise. For instance, when we would trade four bars, two bars, or whatever, the things that he played brought out that precision. I responded to that aspect of his playing in a way that would've been a little different from how I would have responded to Art Blakey, for instance.

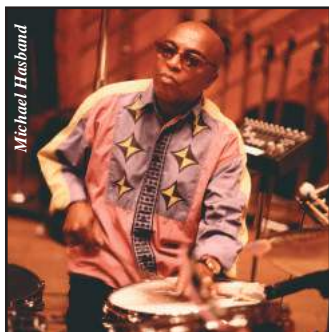
Even though people might now think that Max and I were contemporaries, which we were, he was actually about six years older than me, and six years is a long time, in a way. He did have a certain amount of training, I believe, and so you could assume with Max that he was a person who kept up with social issues and was not strictly a drummer. He also carried himself as a well-rounded personality.



For us saxophone players, Charlie Parker was our prophet and our god. Max was part of those groups with Charlie Parker, so we looked up to everybody in the group. Plus, in my community, a lot of the guys wanted to play drums, and Max Roach was always their guy in the sky. Max had a lot of followers, and I had that kind of respect for him, too. I was a musical contemporary of his, but I also had a great understanding of and respect for the position he held among players in the community.

Roy Haynes

I really enjoyed Roy's playing, and I used him often on my own recordings. We'd play together in a lot of the early bands of that period. Roy was on drums in a lot of bands that Miles had—he was one of the people who was in that select company—so we go back a long way.



Roy has his own sound and individual way of playing. He was one of the people I would seek out whenever I had a record date or something in which I needed a top-notch drummer to help me put across what I was

doing.

One of the amazing things about Roy is that he was able to fit in with whatever was going on. He was always "there," always correct. What he'd play would be right, hip, and it would make everything move. I didn't have to think about it. Roy was very supportive, and that's not in any sense to diminish what he was doing. He maintained the music and then raised it to a higher level.

Billy Higgins

Billy Higgins had a beautiful feeling. He made the other players feel

so comfortable. When I say beautiful feeling, I mean he had a touch. Billy's touch was different to the point where one would remark about it. It was gentle, swinging, very intelligent, and tasty.

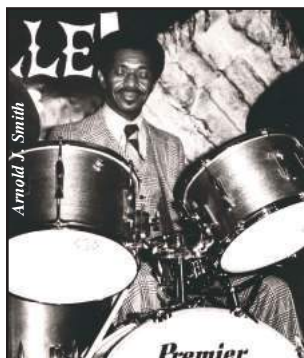
Billy had a grasp of the big picture. It wasn't just about what was happening here in the song or there in the song. He seemed to have that understanding of where the whole thing should be, and that would be throughout the entire piece we were playing. In his mind, there was a plan. Of course, he was a spontaneous player too, as we all were. But within being spontaneous, he had a general scheme of what he wanted to do.



Clayton Call

Philly Joe Jones

Philly Joe had an urbane way of playing that was sophisticated. I



Arnold J. Smith

just knew that if he was there, whatever I needed him to do, it would be done. I knew I could expect more than just good-feeling swing. He would play all of these things that would inspire me. Whatever he was doing specifically, and whatever all of these drummers were doing, wasn't important to me. I couldn't go through what they were doing technically and analyze it. But

what they were doing for me was providing all of these basic elements that a soloist needs behind him in order to create. Philly Joe, of course, was a great drummer who had all of these things in his playing.

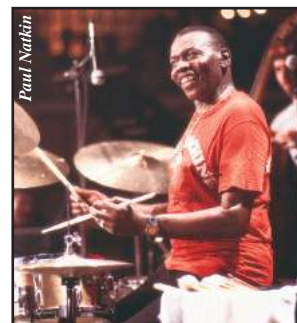
Philly Joe Jones is one of these people whose life was shrouded in mystery. He had some personal problems, which he never got away from. We all dealt with some of those issues.

Philly Joe and I made a record with just saxophone and drums ["Surry With A Fringe On Top," from 1957's Newk's Time]. I haven't heard that in decades, but I'd like to hear it now.

Elvin Jones

I read a story in the Local 802 [American Federation Of Musicians newsletter] after Elvin passed away where somebody was talking about the way he would play 6/8 or 3/4 time. Elvin was commenting on what a great universal rhythm this was, and that it went through all types of drumming. It was such a beautiful article, and it really hit the mark.

The last time I had a chance to be with Elvin, we were playing a concert in Perugia, Italy. I was playing a concert and Elvin was on the bill on another night. I played a song in 3/4 that night. It was an old Italian



Paul Natkin

SONNY ROLLINS

folk song. Elvin heard it, and when I came off the bandstand he said, "Wow, man. What's that song? We've gotta record that together." It would have been a perfect vehicle for him, because I relate very closely to that type of playing. Unfortunately, Elvin passed away before we could get in the studio to do it. But he recognized right away that it would have been a perfect tune for us to do together. His beat was so liberating, so free, and so universal, and playing with him gave me some great experiences.

I can't say Elvin was my "favorite" drummer—that wouldn't be fair. But I enjoyed his playing a great deal. Some of the things Elvin would do, I related to very closely. His rhythm was so open. I particularly like the expansiveness of being able to play with an open-ended form.

Tony Williams

Tony was never in my band, per se, but he made some records with me. A lot of people considered him to be the new wave of drumming, so he brought that to the table. The times we played together, I have a strong sense of rhythm, so his playing complemented me perfectly. I don't remember his approach changing my playing, but I related to the things he was doing because it was so rhythmic. It was music to my ears, so to speak, and I related to that style of drumming.

I loved Tony's playing. He was an exciting drummer, and I feel that's a big part of playing drums. That's part of what drummers should do, as long as it's not overbearing.



Joost Leijen

Jack DeJohnette

Jack is also a fiery drummer, and he's made a lot of records with me over the years. He hasn't played that fiery, sort of all-over-the-place style with me like Tony Williams did, though. He's played more straight-ahead and more conventional-style swing drums. Jack probably intuited that that style would fit my material better. He played more simply, just riding the ride cymbal and not doing a lot of the stuff you would probably identify him with today, or with him and Tony when they were coming up.

Jack is one of the finest drummers we've produced. I've heard him do some unbelievable things. He can do the cluttered stuff, and it's great, but he can also play a more simple straight-ahead. He's a very versatile drummer. You've got to include him in the hierarchy.



Paul La Raja

Al Foster

Max Roach once described Al as one of the masters. Al has a great background, and he's got his roots firmly established. He's played with rhythm & blues bands and all that stuff. When he plays, he brings all of that to the table. He's got a terrific sense of swing and doesn't fill up all the bars of music.

He's a very accomplished accompanist.

For the style that I played, Al was per-



Tom Copi

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fect in many ways because he had a good sense of rhythm that complemented what I was playing. His drumming was elemental enough and yet not as busy, in the sense that he allowed me to be completely expansive and free.

With Al's playing, it was such a steady, sure, and secure beat, it complemented me in a different way. He was able to understand a lot of what I was doing and get close to what I was playing. I think a lot of that stemmed from the fact that he had intended on becoming a saxophone player at one time in his life. He really admired a lot of saxophone players, and I was one of the guys who he had looked at. So when we played together, his drumming melded very well with what I was doing. People have told me that Al Foster was really the drummer for me."

Steve Jordan

Steve was a very malleable drummer when he worked with me. There was nothing I could ask of Steve that he couldn't do. Playing with Steve, you always knew you had a safety net because he was there for you. This is very important in the type of

music we play. There are just a few people who have these gifts, and Steve Jordan is one. He was always there, always steady, and his time was impeccable. This is what helps me do what I have to do on stage.

The hardcore jazz community was sad to see people with the talent of Steve Jordan leave to play other kinds of music. That might be construed as a criticism of him, but it's not. This is 2008, and guys do different things these days. The small community of which I was a part had different possibilities then. Our possibilities weren't as varied as the young drummers of today have. So, in a sense, it's unfair to criticize that.

Kobie Watkins

If everything goes according to plan, Kobie and I will be working together for the rest of this year. He's from the Midwest, around Chicago. I met him when I was in the middle of changing drummers. I was playing with Steve Jordan, and he was about to leave to go on one of his lucrative rock tours. My guitar player told me he had formed a trio with Kobie, and that he thought this young drummer might be a good fit for me.

Kobie's playing is energetic. He's a very exciting drummer and very much into the music. He doesn't have that aggressive style that Tony or Jack has, but in what he's playing, he's got the same level of excitement. I've had to train him in certain rhythms. For instance, we play a lot of Caribbean rhythms in my group, and Kobie wasn't familiar with them. I had to walk him through those rhythms and train him in the way that I play them. He's gotten that together now, and he'll get it even more as we play together.

Again, I don't want to hear him. If he's doing the right thing, the less I hear him, the better. But he's young, and he'll be getting better and better.

Sriram Gopal is a drummer and writer based out of Washington, DC, where he performs regularly in a variety of settings. He's also a staff music writer at DCist.com.



Sparkling Peacock Finish Drums

As Vibrant As A Rainbow

by Harry Cangany

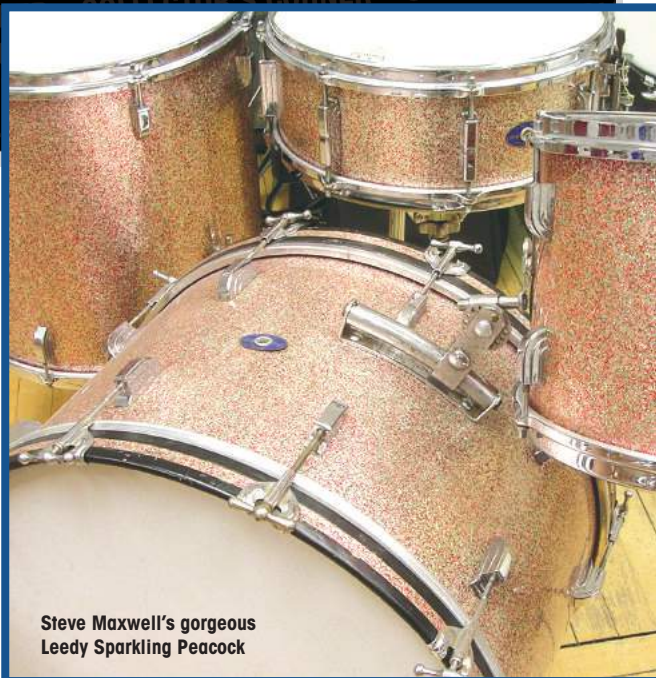
Back in the 1930s, there was a multi-color wrap known as Peacock Pearl that appeared on a few drums. But it was gone by World War II. Much later, there was a Peacock Satin Flame. But in between them, another “peacock” was introduced—and it was used by three companies. This peacock was a unique sparkle combination that had silver, pink, red, and green particles in it.

Slingerland, Leedy Chicago, and Gretsch advertised the wrap in the late '50s into the early '60s. Our good friend Steve Maxwell, owner of Steve Maxwell Drums in Chicago, kindly sent pictures of this month's featured set, a Leedy, made in Steve's town.

Leedy at that point was owned by Slingerland, a former rival. Looking at this kit, you can see that the lugs on the bass and toms were classic Leedy beavertails. The hoops, claws, T-rods, and holders, as well as the shells, were pure Slingerland. The snare drum, the Shelly Manne model, had a newer single lug designed by Slingerland using the motif of the beavertails. (Leedy Elkhart didn't have such a lug. Their snares used double rows of beavertails, or tube lugs.) This snare has the traditional Broadway strainer and extension butt plate.

I was eager to find a peacock set to showcase in Collectors' Corner because of an experience I once had. I bought a Camco bass drum in what looked like a dull or subdued champagne sparkle. When the claws were removed from the bass hoops, we saw the beautiful peacock sparkle unfaded by the years. How about that!

Camco had an uncataloged finish that I once saw—Capri Pearl. That was a Slingerland finish that had a few variations over its



Steve Maxwell's gorgeous Leedy Sparkling Peacock

lifetime. And I know there were two non-published plastic wraps from Camco. I think all that meant was that some companies would acquiesce to special orders—if they didn't cause too much trouble. (I wonder if Slingerland and Ludwig during their respective times on top resisted special orders, whereas a Camco or Rogers might try harder.) Perhaps it all rested with the relationship between the dealer and the manufacturer. Getting another company's finish was probably not too difficult, either.

The Slingerland catalog that mentions Peacock Sparkle is the 1963 issue. So the Peacock Sparkle fad must have ended before the big rush that The Beatles created the following year. Perhaps the Peacock Sparkle wasn't popular, or maybe it had a higher propensity to fade. Regardless, Slingerland had eight sparkle finishes in '63, which would fit into three categories—least popular: Sparkling Peacock and Sparkling Pink; fairly popular: Sparkling Gold and Sparkling Green; most popular: Sparkling Champagne, Silver, Blue, and Red.

I would probably have gone for the Champagne or Silver, but I have to say that our featured set this month is beautiful, colorful, and not to be confused with the other Slingerland and Leedy Chicago finishes. And under stage lights, I bet it's as vibrant as a rainbow.

There have to be more Sparkling Peacock drums out there. You now know the four drum companies that used it, so go out, find them, and report back.



Harry Cangany is an acknowledged expert in the field of vintage drum gear. He's authored two books and numerous articles on the subject, and for twenty years owned The Drum Center Of Indianapolis.



This close-up shows the amazing multi-sparkle effect.



Ableton Live

A Look Inside The World Of Interactive Music Software

by Paul Wells

You may have noticed a lot of references in recent issues of MD to a computer program called Ableton Live. Since its initial release in 2001, Live has become a staple for many creative and cutting-edge drummers, including session greats Shawn Pelton, Pat Mastelotto, and Matt Chamberlain. For these incredible drummers, this innovative piece of software is just as important to their sonic arsenal as their favorite snare drum.

So what exactly is Ableton Live, and what does it do? And more importantly, what use does it have for drummers? Let's take a look.

What Is Ableton Live?

In order to describe Live to a newcomer, we need to begin with a brief discussion on the different types of music-making computer programs that are out there. Some programs (such as Pro Tools, Logic, and Cubase) function as entire recording studios inside a computer. They can record and edit digital audio, as well as program and sequence MIDI data. These programs allow you to arrange, process, and mix your music all at once. This type of software is commonly referred to as a DAW (Digital Audio Workstation).

When the first version of Ableton Live was released in 2001, its main function was to manipulate audio in creative ways. Now at version 7, Live has grown into a fully functioning DAW and can do most of the things that programs like Pro Tools can do. Shawn Pelton even uses Live as his primary multi-track software to record drums in his home studio.

Slice And Dice Your Beats

There are many aspects of Live that make it stand out from other programs, and that have made musicians so passionate about it. As we explained, Live initially focused on audio manipulation. And it continues to be one of the best programs for creative digital editing, especially when working with loops and samples of drum performances. For example, you can import a sample of a drumbeat into Live and change the tempo to be faster or slower without altering the pitch. The beat can also be cut into individual hits and re-arranged to create a completely new pattern. This kind of "beat slicing" was origi-

nally developed by hip-hop programmers in the late '80s, but has since become a very popular musical element in all styles of contemporary music. Pat Mastelotto uses this technique on his recordings with progressive rock bands such as King Crimson and Tuner.

One of Live's most innovative tools is warp marker, which allows an audio file to be stretched like a rubber band. If you import a beat that has a late snare hit on beat 2, you can put a warp marker directly over the snare hit and pin that as beat 2. This marker tells Live to stretch the rest of the beat so that the snare hit now lines up exactly where you want it. In addition to correcting imperfect performances, warp markers can be used to drastically alter the feel of a sample or loop in all sorts of innovative ways.

Create Your Own Loops

If you're new to electronic music production, you might be thinking, "Well, I don't have any loops. So what good would Live be to me?" Because Live also works as a DAW, you can easily record your own samples and loops into your computer. You just need a microphone and an audio interface. You'll be surprised how much your beats take on a completely different character once you start messing with them in Live. (Check out Shawn Pelton's Down And Dirty Loops video at www.ableton.com/movies to see how easy it is to record yourself in Live.)

If you don't have the ability to record yourself for loop material, you can also use Live to sample sounds off of CDs, vinyl, and cassettes. Or you can purchase some of the hundreds of royalty-free sample CDs that are available.

Another option for creating loops in Live is to use the software's built-in drum machines to program beats and patterns. Many drummers and producers spice up their tracks with programmed percussion textures. Live 7 Suite includes an add-on called Session Drums, which is a gigantic library of high-quality drum samples. You can also use other manufacturers' software drum machines or sample players in the VST plug-in format. Some of these include Native Instruments Battery, XLN Audio Addictive Drums, Toontrack Superior and EZdrummer, Stylus RMX, and FXpansion BFD2.





Explore Songwriting

Ableton Live is also a powerful tool for writing songs and developing arrangements. Live includes a bunch of software synthesizers to help you sketch out melodies and bass lines to go with your new beats. Once you have some basic ideas down, you can then use Live to improvise an arrangement. You can trigger different elements of your composition (beats, melodies, chord changes, percussion, etc.) in real time, and Live will keep track of the order in which each part was played. This is a fun and creative way to build an arrangement “on the fly.” Live also comes with a wide assortment of effects for sound processing such as reverb, delay, filters, compression, and distortion. These can be used to color your music in subtle or extreme ways.

Play Live With Live

Perhaps the most unusual and powerful feature of Live is its ability to be used in a performance situation. In fact, Live was originally designed so that musicians could use it to perform and improvise electronic music onstage. Today many bands use various pre-recorded tracks during their shows. Things like background vocals and percussion are often played back on a computer while the drummer listens to a click track to keep everything in sync. Like all DAWs, Live

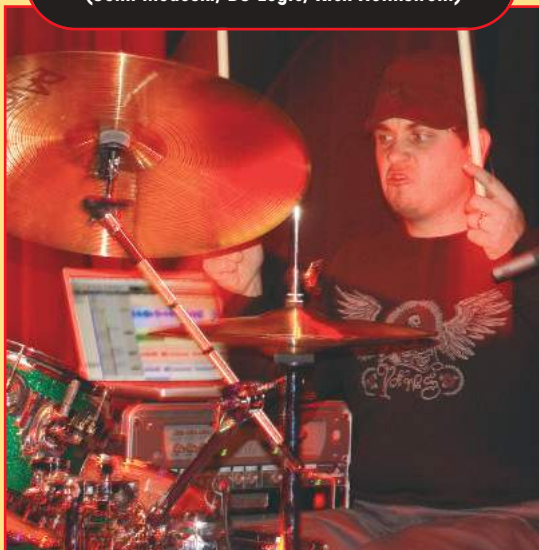
can play back samples, loops, and backing tracks in a predetermined order, much like a CD player. What sets Live apart is that it allows you to trigger different sections of a song to be played at any time. Before Ableton Live, bands playing to backing tracks were chained to the pre-written arrangement. But Live allows you to integrate samples, loops, and other electronic sounds into your performances while still maintaining a spontaneous musical flow.

It's Time To Jump In!

All of this technical talk can be a bit overwhelming if you've never used music-making software. Traditionally, the world of DAWs and audio manipulation has not been part of the drummer's domain. However, this type of technology is a big part of the modern music world, regardless of what style you play. So it's important for drummers to embrace these new technologies and methods. Live is one of the best ways to get your feet wet in the world of digital music making.

To give you an idea of how drummers are using this inventive software in the studio and on stage, we sat down with several world-renown players who are strong proponents of Live. Here's what they had to say.

DONNY GRUENDLER (John Medeski, DJ Logic, Rick Holmstrom)



MD: How long have you been using Live?

Donny: I've been using Live since version 2. Previously, I had used a sixteen-space rack with Akai S-Series samplers and MPC 3000s. This setup not only took up a lot of space on stage, the samplers were a pain to edit because of their tiny LED screens. If an artist wanted a change the tempo of a track or loop, or make additions to the selfist, it could take hours. Live can make these changes in a matter of minutes. I eventually sold all my rack-mount gear and bought an Apple G4 Powerbook running Live 2. I haven't looked back since.

MD: What do you use as source material when creating loops?

Donny: I have a studio where I can create twenty-four hours a day. A drumkit is always miked up and ready to record. I usually track a couple of grooves per day and save them as stereo WAV files. I then pull these files into one of my Live session templates, which are categorized by style. That way, when I need to program something, I just load a template that's full of my

loops, and I'm ready to go.

MD: Describe how you use Live, both in the studio and onstage.

Donny: Live has a creative and logical workflow. Not only does this enable me to write and capture ideas quickly, it's also useful for programming loops during a session. I just grab a few of my loops from one of my hard drives, drag them into Ableton, and match the tempo to the song. At this point, the fun begins. I can mangle the groove with Live's built-in effects.

For certain live gigs, I might need to reproduce loops, samples, and sounds from a studio recording. For these situations, I use a Macbook Pro laptop and a drumKAT, as well as my acoustic kit. Using Ableton Live's MIDI Map feature allows me to start a song, change a song's tempo, trigger loops, play Live's instruments, and add effects—all while drumsticks are in my hands! I assign each loop, instrument, or function in Live to a corresponding pad on my drumKAT.

PAT MASTELOTTO

(King Crimson, Mr. Mister)



MD: You've been using electronics for quite a while now. When did you start moving towards software for music making?

Pat: I've dabbled with electronics since the '70s. I got into software as soon as I got a laptop, which was in the early '90s. Besides the sonic and creative curiosities of electronics, a big reason that I moved toward this stuff is that I feel that I have certain limitations as a player. But I can go to a beatbox, sequencer, or sampler and create a version of my vision that I can't always facilitate with my hands.

Someone who helped get me into drum machines is producer Mike Chapman. When he came back to L.A. after doing Blondie's *Heart Of Glass*, he brought an early Roland beatbox into the studio for me to play with. I found I could keep time to that much better than to a regular click track. So I started carrying a Roland Rhythm Ace with me.

MD: Where do you get source material for samples and drum loops? Do you use vinyl or sample CDs?

Pat: I've done that, and I've pulled loops right out of the Ableton library. But more often than not, I pull from stuff that I've played. For instance, there were a couple of things on the first *Tuner* record that were taken from my drumming on King Crimson's *Power To Believe*. I cut up these samples and reprocess them so that they become something new.

Since I have a home studio, I usually record my own custom loops and chop those up. Sometimes I'll go for a very professional sound. Other times I'll just use a really simple lo-fi setup—like a microphone right into my laptop—and record something into Ableton Live. It could be a drum thing or just a bunch of metal or Tupperware that I banged on. Then I tweak it by cutting and pasting parts, or by moving the warp markers. This can turn a beat into something totally different.

MD: You've been using Live quite extensively onstage. Describe the basics of what you do.

Pat: For gigs, I might cut some loops out of previous recordings and assign them to drum pads—usually a Roland SPD, an M-Audio Trigger Finger, or a Roland Handsonic.

MD: Can you list some recordings on which you used Live?

Pat: I have a project called *Tuner* with a German touch guitarist named Markus Reuter. We did ninety-nine percent of the first record, *Toten*, in Live, for logistical reasons. We started working via email, and Markus didn't have a Pro Tools rig, but we both had Ableton Live.

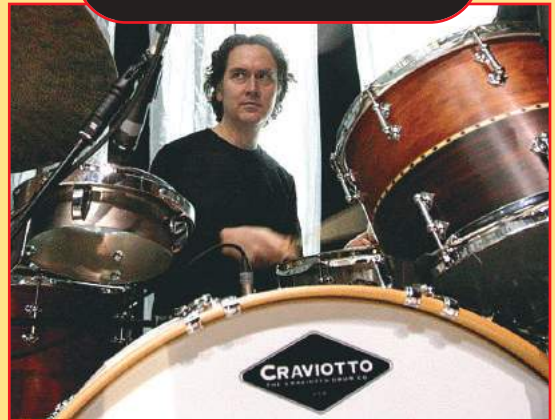
I also just worked on a project for Steve Wilson from Porcupine Tree called *No-Man*. For that, I chopped beats, did some degeneration, and detuned things in Live.

MD: Which of Live's audio effects are you using?

Pat: There are so many good effects, like compressors, gates, auto panners, beat repeat, and filter delay, which is a favorite. I also use the resonators effect a lot. I'll put towels on my drums so that they've got a tone without too wide a spectrum, record a pattern on them, and then add the resonators. It ends up sounding like a keyboard. There's an example of that on the opening track of the KTU record *Eight Armed Monkey*. When the other instruments come in, I used the knob on the Handsonic to fade out the resonators so that it becomes more of an acoustic drum sound.

MATT CHAMBERLAIN

(Tori Amos, Fiona Apple, David Bowie)



Ronn Dunnnett

MD: How are you using Live?

Matt: I'm using Live onstage, along with the plug-in Battery 3, for triggering loops and playing electronic drum sounds in real time. Also, I use Live to process my drums by running mics through some of its effects.

In the studio, I primarily use Live to create loops. These loops might be different lengths, multi-tracked, pitched up or down, and/or treated with some of the plug-ins.

MD: Which of Ableton's built-in effects are your favorites?

Matt: I really like the automated ones like Beat Repeat. When processing my drums using contact mics, I like using the Gate plug-in before any of the more aggressive effects, like distortions, severe compression, etc. The gate cuts down on feedback when you're cranking stuff through guitar amps or monitors.

MD: What do you use as source material when creating loops/samples in Live?

Matt: Ninety-nine percent of the loops I make are recorded straight into Ableton with a mic.

MD: What features of Live do you feel are of specific interest to drummers?

Matt: If you're the kind of drummer who is inspired by combining electronic music with acoustic drums, then this is the program for you. It can pretty much do whatever you can think of—it's a drum machine, sampler, DAW, a studio tool, and a totally stable live instrument. I used it on the road with Tori Amos for nine months and it never crashed.

MD: What are some recorded examples of your use of Live?

Matt: I used Live on my self-titled solo record, Tori Amos's *American Doll Posse*, Dido's upcoming record, *Critters Buggin's Stampede*, and *Floratone*, which I recorded with Bill Frisell.

ANTON FIG

(Late Night, Oz Noy)



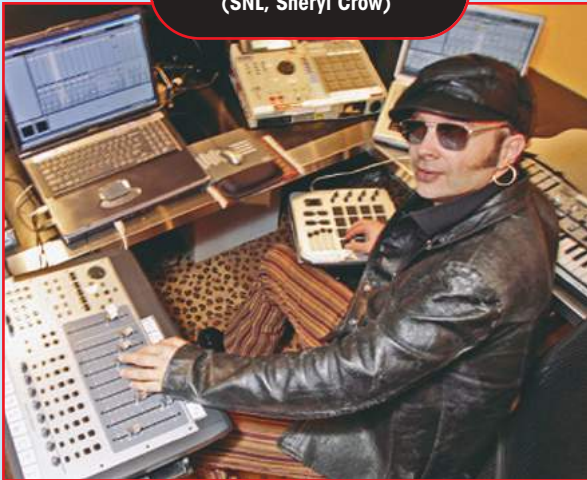
MD: How do you use Live?

Anton: There are many applications of Live that suit many needs. I'm primarily using it to construct songs out of loops and clips. I use CDs as sample sources and process the pieces using Live's audio effects.

I've been working on a movie score recently, and I'm using sample clips to create moods. In some cases, I take these tracks and add instruments on top, such as acoustic guitar.

SHAWN PELTON

(SNL, Sheryl Crow)



MD: What initially attracted you to Ableton Live?

Shawn: What is so revolutionary about Live is its ability to warp audio and treat it elastically. You can take audio files and loops that were originally done without a click—something like Coltrane's *Live At The Village Vanguard*—put warp markers to it, mix it with Stravinsky's "Rite Of Spring," and then mash those elements in millions of different ways.

The transparency of the interface is also really inspiring. With Live, if you hear an idea in your head, you can make it happen pretty quickly. Also, the ability to use the program to interact and perform in a live improvisational way is amazing. The software becomes an instrument that you actually play.

MD: You've said in other interviews that you use Ableton Live as your primary DAW.

Shawn: I do. It's a bit unusual to use it that way, because Pro Tools is such a staple that I think there are times when my method raises a few eyebrows. There are hardcore people that think if you're not using Pro Tools then something must be wrong.

But if you're tracking in your own studio, it doesn't matter what program you're using if at the end of the day you're just exporting audio for someone to import into his or her DAW of choice.

MD: Do you use any of Ableton's software instruments?

Shawn: Absolutely. With Ableton, you never feel bogged down by excess information, so you can get right to the music. I like the new drum machines and session drum libraries in Live 7. I also use other VST plugins within Live, like Stylus RMX, BFD, and Native Instruments' Battery. Reason is really strong for drums as well.

MD: Have you used Live for songwriting?

Shawn: The kind of writing I do with my band House Of Diablo involves using a lot of found sounds and chopping things together using a hip-hop style workflow. Ableton is great for working in this way, because you can still be involved in the writing process even if you don't play guitar or piano.

Being into electronic gear and production has opened up opportunities. For instance, I did a project recently at my studio for MTV. I helped produce it, and I got part of the writing credit. That never would have happened if I were just a "drummer."



Paul Wells is a member of the band Spiraling. He has also performed with Joe Williams, Marion Raven, Norman Simmons, Glen Burtnik, Randy Brecker, Dave Valentin, Rufus Reid, and The Duke Ellington Legacy. Paul can be reached through www.paulwells.info.



Photo: Melanie Ross

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Mapex Drums

It's All About Control

by Rick Van Horn

Mapex has come a long way in its sixteen-year history. From its entry into the US market as "yet another import brand," Mapex has pursued an aggressive campaign to establish itself as a major player. And they've succeeded admirably, thanks to a combination of quality products with attractive designs and finishes, creative promotions, and surprisingly affordable prices.

The company's image has also been solidified by an ever-growing roster of endorsing artists. These include Lamb Of God's Chris Adler, Living Colour's Will Calhoun, studio and touring greats Gregg Bissonette and Walfredo Reyes Jr., Nick D'Virgilio of Spock's Beard, and jazz masters Herlin Riley, Ralph Peterson, and Jason Marsalis.

Mapex drums are manufactured in Tianjin, China, in a factory as modern as any in the world. There, high-tech mechanical production methods are combined with hand-crafting techniques to create drums and hardware for every budget and musical application.

To get the full story on Mapex drum production, MD traveled to the headquarters of KHS (Mapex's parent corporation) in Taipei, Taiwan, as well as to the manufacturing facilities in Tianjin. It was a revealing trip.

The Mapex Philosophy

Our host for our visit to Mapex is Miles Chen, who handles international artist relations and promotions. An enthusiastic drummer himself, Miles explains how KHS's corporate philosophy influences the direction of Mapex drums.

"The company's full name is 'Kong Hsue Sheh,'" says Miles. "In Mandarin Chinese, those three words express the idea of 'an improved quality of life through contributions to school and society.' When it comes to Mapex, that means that our development efforts are always combined with education. So we try to focus on products suitable not just for artists and professionals, but also for students and upcoming drummers. We want to improve everyone's quality of life in a musical way."

R&D In Taiwan

Between 1989 and 1997, Mapex drums were made in a small factory in Taiwan. When manufacturing was moved to China in 1997, the Taiwan facility was retained as the lab for Mapex's R&D and engineering staff, which is headed by R&D supervisor/chief designer Gerry Wei and product development coordinator Taige Lu.

Jerry and Taige are drummers, so they bring both a drummer's and an engineer's perspective to their design efforts.

They combine those efforts with suggestions from Mapex artists, as well as from teachers, dealers, and consumers, in order to create products that are functional, practical, and affordable.

From Design To Production

Once a new product has been designed by the Taiwan R&D team, they describe it to their counterparts at the Tianjin factory. The production supervisors there teach the Chinese workers how to create the new item. Meetings are held to check the quality of the initial models. If everything is good, the factory starts production.

How long does it take from the time an idea is generated in Taiwan until it's ready for production in China? "That depends on how complex the item is," replies Miles Chen. "To change the angle of a bearing edge, we can simply put a new cutting bit on the table router, which wouldn't take long. But to develop a totally new bass drum pedal from scratch would involve research, designing, testing, and tooling up for production. That could take several years."

At The Finish Line

Creating new drum finishes is a challenge for Mapex's designers. Drummers tend to be fickle, and it's hard to predict what may or may not be well received in the future. In addition, different regions of the world favor different finishes, so the company needs to offer a lot of variety. Consequently, the Orion, Saturn, and Pro M series each offer fourteen finish options. Low-end and mid-range kits have fewer options.

The Magic Word

Over the past few years, Mapex has been offering promotions that include a free tom or snare drum with certain kit configurations. "The word 'free' is magic," says Miles. "These promotions are the fastest way to make customers recognize our value. Most young drummers today want more toms. Then there's the Plus Bass package. It's an add-on bass drum/tom package that turns a standard kit into a big rock kit. Nobody else is doing that."



A MAPEX SAMPLER

◀ SATURN SERIES

Saturn drums feature 6-ply, 5.1-mm shells, with two interior walnut plies and four exterior maple plies. Kits are available in ten drumset configurations (which include Mapex 750 series hardware) and three shell packs. Forty-two add-on components are available.

Shell packs list from \$2,399 to \$3,778; drumset configurations list from \$2,899 to \$4,289.



PRO M SERIES ▶

Pro M drums feature 7-ply, 5.8-mm all-maple shells. Kits are available in twelve configurations, which include Mapex 750 series pedals and 550 series double-braced stands. Forty-three add-on components are available.

Drumset configurations list from \$1,849 to \$2,559, and each set includes a free 6x13 Maple & Cherry Black Panther snare drum, as well as an instructional DVD.



ORION SERIES ▲

Orion drums feature 7-ply, 6.1-mm all-maple shells with an exterior ply of burl maple. Kits are sold exclusively by component, with forty-three components available.

List prices for individual components range from \$659 to \$2,619.



M BIRCH SERIES ▲

M Birch drums feature 6-ply, 7.2-mm birch shells with an exterior maple ply. Kits are available in nine configurations, which include Mapex double-braced 550 series stands. Twenty-six add-on components are available.

Drumset configurations list from \$1,269 to \$1,869, and each set includes a free add-on 8" or 10" tom with mounting hardware, as well as an instructional DVD.

◀ VX SERIES

VX series kits feature 9-ply, 7.2-mm basswood shells. Kits are available in three configurations, which include Mapex double-braced 320 series hardware. Twenty-five add-on components are available.

Drumset configurations list from \$1,183 to \$1,478, including a throne and an instructional DVD. Kits are also available with Zildjian Planet Z cymbals.

QR SERIES ▶

QR series drums feature 9-ply, 7.2-mm basswood shells. Kits are available in four drumset configurations, which include Mapex double-braced 300 series hardware. Thirteen add-on components are available.

Drumset configurations list from \$726 to \$1,130, including a throne and an instructional DVD. Kits are also available with Zildjian Planet Z cymbals.



Q SERIES ▲

Q series drums feature 9-ply, 7.2-mm basswood shells. Kits are available in three configurations, which include Mapex double-braced hardware.

Drumset configurations list from \$699 to \$895, including a throne and an instructional DVD. Kits are also available with Zildjian Planet Z cymbals.



BLACK PANTHER SNARE DRUMS ▲

The Black Panther line of snare drums features twenty-nine models, each constructed to rigid professional specifications. A variety of maple, walnut, steel, phosphor bronze, brass, and hammered drums are available.



◀ MAPEX HARDWARE

Mapex Hardware is available in 950, 750, 550, 350, and 320 series. Stands feature double-braced legs, die-cast memory locks, nylon tube inserts to prevent slippage, ball-in-socket tilters, and durable steel construction. Tom stands, snare stands, cymbal stands, boom stands, hi-hat stands, single and double bass drum pedals, thrones and clamps are available to fit any budget.

MAPEX

We've had a lot of positive feedback about these promotional deals."

Manufacturing In China

From Taiwan, we travel to the Mapex drum factory in Tianjin, China—an industrial area about an hour southeast of Beijing. This is where wood drums are created, and where all assembly takes place. The factory that manufactures metal drum and hardware parts is about thirty miles away.

For this trip, we're joined by Mapex USA artist relations and product development manager Joe Hibbs, who explains a key advantage that Mapex enjoys over many other drum manufacturers. "We control every aspect of our manufacturing," says Joe, "from creating the drumshells to making each individual hardware part. Drum companies who use sub-contractor vendors don't enjoy that sort of control. It's hard to build a drum when the drumheads don't come in, and it's hard to build a stand when the wing nuts are late. Owning everything, as we do, means production comes together in a coordinated process. And that, in turn, means delivery is always on time. That's one of the little things drummers usually don't think about—until they can't get something."

Heavy Metal

The factory that does all of the metal fabrication for Mapex is a half-hour's drive from the drum assembly plant. This facility die-casts certain parts, machines others, and electro-plates all the finished items.

Hundreds of die-cast parts are required to make drum hardware, and each one must be created in its own mold. Many of these cast parts must then undergo additional processes, such as drilling and shaping. And each must be buffed and polished before it can be plated.

Other parts are fabricated from raw steel—often requiring complex machining processes. For example, converting a 4"-wide flat steel ribbon into the bass drum hoops used for Mapex's low-end drumkits requires a 20'-long machine that forms, cuts, and welds the hoops in one continuous operation.

In another workshop, circles of flat steel are turned into drum rims. The hoop is shaped and welded, the flange is created on a pressure roller, the "ears" are formed in, and the tension-rod holes are punched into those ears. Other machines punch lug holes in metal drumshells, while still others cut and punch lengths of steel to form the legs for cymbal stands.

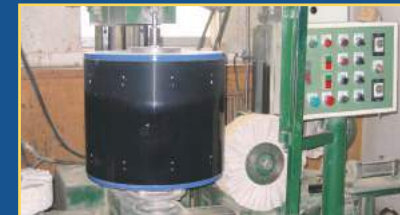
Hundreds of skilled workers are required to

operate the plant's machinery and do the various finishing operations. This illustrates the significant amount of handwork that goes into Mapex's "automated" manufacturing processes.

Plating

Mapex's high-tech electro-plating facility opened in May of 2007. It operates in accordance with stringent environmental regulations. All wastewater from the plating process is cleaned and recycled; nothing is dumped. Hundreds of thousands of parts are plated each day.

FIT & FINISH



Top: Some Mapex drums receive hand-applied stains; others are sprayed, like the lacquer-finished shell shown here.

Bottom: This computerized machine buffs each lacquered shell in two directions, smoothing the finish to create a high gloss.

In The Drum Factory

Back at the Mapex drum factory in Tianjin, production begins in the wood warehouse. Maple for the high-end Orion and Saturn lines comes from North America. Maple used in the Pro M series comes from China, as does the birch used in the M Birch series. This helps to reduce the costs of manufacturing those lines, which helps keep their prices down.

After the material is carefully inspected, it gets cut to size, glued, and placed in a pressure mold. "Our shells feature three sets of 2-ply veneers, with staggered seams," says Joe Hibbs. "We also take steps to keep the moisture content consistent while the shells are drying and the glue is setting."

Shell Finishing

After the shells come out of their molds, a conveyer system moves them through all the finishing processes. Covered shells are carried on one line, lacquered shells on another. Covering material for lower-end lines is sourced in China. Higher-end lines are covered in a variety of unique Delmar wraps.

Shells to be lacquered receive extra sanding steps prior to receiving their color. Some get hand-applied stains; others are spray-painted. Crushed-glass glitters are applied using special nozzles. Fades are done in a two-step process.

After being covered or lacquered, each shell is given its bearing edge and then drilled for the appropriate drum hardware. Small burrs left by the drilling process are hand-removed by craftsmen who do overall quality-control inspections at the same time. Then the bearing edges receive a chemical sealant to help ensure that the edges remain true and don't pick up moisture through the end grain of the wood.

Assembly

The final stage of the conveyer line is assembly, where the shells are fitted with lugs, heads, rims, and mounts. Each worker refers to a printed diagram and a list of instructions in order to do his or her individual operation precisely to spec.

Another large section of the drum factory is dedicated to hardware assembly, where the components that were made at the metal factory are turned into pedals and stands. This operation, too, requires many finishing processes that must be done individually by skilled workers.

Joe Hibbs comments, "Even though Mapex drums and hardware are created in a factory using a lot of machinery, there's still an important human element involved. Everything is looked at and touched."

The Bottom Line

"Affordability is important, of course," Hibbs concludes. "But it has to come with value. We cannot, and will not, sacrifice the things we do in order to make drums that are simply cheap. That's where we draw the line. If we were sub-contracting out some of our manufacturing operations, we wouldn't have the oversight capability that we enjoy. We wouldn't be able to say, 'It will happen at this quality level, or it won't happen.' But we can say that—and we do."



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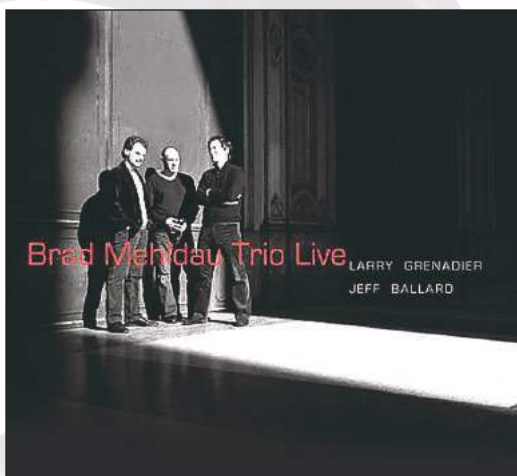
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 ★★★★★ Excellent
 ★★★★★ Good
 ★★★★★ Fair
 ★★★★★ Poor

BRAD MEHLDAU TRIO
LIVE

★★★★★

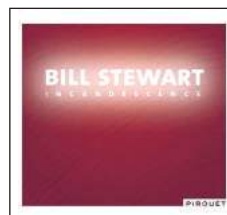
JEFF BALLARD stakes his claim as arguably the finest small-group jazz improviser of recent times with this two-CD live recording from the Village Vanguard. Ballard, free to explore and obviously spurred on by his highly sympathetic bandmates, unleashes playing that's beautifully busy, intuitive, and exciting. On the twenty-three-minute cover of Soundgarden's modern-rock classic "Black Hole Sun," Ballard is finishing pianist Mehldau's thoughts, literally dancing on his ride while his conversational side-sticking races by in a blur. Elsewhere, the hard-swinging "C.T.A." showcases Jeff's by-now trademark dry-as-toast kit sound and fiery tom rolls. A very rewarding listen. (Nonesuch) **Ilya Stenkovsky**



DR. DOG FATE

★★★★★

The members of Philadelphia's Dr. Dog don't wear their influences (The Beatles, The Band, and The Beach Boys, among others) on their sleeve so much as keep them at the ready in their back pockets. Speaking of pockets, on their latest, *Fate*, drummer **JUSTIN STENS** provides an ever-changing one for the band's homespun sound. Stens plays like a rock guy sitting in with Harold Melvin & The Blue Notes on "Army Of Ancients" (his performance captured in glorious room-mic sound), moves like an R&B cat sitting in with a rock band on the dark dub-rock collision "The Ark," and tickles the kit with a loving touch on the swelling "100 Years." (Park The Van) **Patrick Berkery**

BILL STEWART
INCANDESCENCE

★★★★★

Intriguing drumming and composing from the fearless Stewart. Tapping the unorthodox format of drums, Hammond organ (**Larry Goldings**), and piano (**Kevin Hays**), this trio is an inexhaustible well of liberal yet cohesive improv. It's a heady and somewhat mysterious sound. Their previous release explored multiple keyboards and even samplers. Here, the instruments' natural sounds alone offer abundant textural variation. These guys don't repeat themselves, and Stewart continues to be a superbly musical kit master. From a quirky second-line-ish "5" funk ("Knock On My Door"), to bluesy swing ("Toad"), to time-free coloration ("Portals Opening"), Stewart's drumming shows purpose, passion, and a compelling personal sound. (Pirouet) **Jeff Potter**

ENCORE

by Patrick Berkery

DENNIS WILSON

PACIFIC OCEAN BLUE: LEGACY EDITION

The famous last name and occasional splashes of neatly arranged harmony form an obvious link between Dennis Wilson's *Pacific Ocean Blue* album and those of his legendary band. But everything else on this reissue of The Beach Boys drummer's out-of-print 1977 solo album (bolstered by the aborted *Bambu* sessions) is uniquely Dennis. That means a wounded voice singing heartbreaking piano ballads like "Thoughts Of You" and funky California pop like "River Song." This is a tortured soul finally committing to tape what was only hinted at on the occasional Beach Boys album cut: a gift for singing and songwriting as accomplished as, yet completely unlike that of his more lauded brothers'. Wilson played some of the drums, but heavies like Beach Boys studio drummer **HAL BLAINE**, **BOBBY FIGUEROA**, and **RICKY FATAAR** did much of the kit work, albeit unspecified in terms of specific tracks. Another drumming heavy—**TAYLOR HAWKINS**—contributed posthumously,

adding vocals to the previously unreleased "Holy Man." (Sony/Legacy)



Hal Blaine on Pacific Ocean Blue

What tracks did you play on?

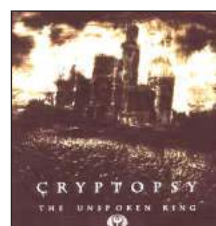
It's hard to remember exactly. Friends of mine from RIAA did some research. And it came as no surprise to find that Dennis didn't file contracts on the songs we did.

Was he actively producing the session?

He was, a little like Brian: "I love what you're doing there, give me a little more there, and when we get to the bridge, how about trying this."

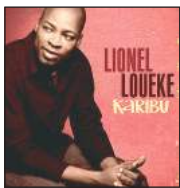
Had Dennis straightened his life out, do you think he would have continued writing and recording his own stuff?

No question. He loved working in the studio. And they had their own studio. It was another great toy, like his motorcycle.

CRYPTOPSY
THE UNSPOKEN KING

★★★★★

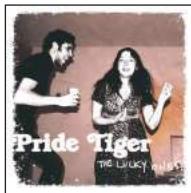
Flogging the kit for Montreal's Cryptopsy since way back in the early '90s, **FLO MOUNIER** could be considered an elder statesman of thrash. Yet he plays with the fire and energy of a fresh convert to the metal way. Mounier meets the dark matter of the songs with the requisite power and speed, but he's set apart by his creative orchestration and his ability to slide effortlessly into and out of blast beats—let's call it going from 80 to 240 bpm in one head-bang. It shall remain unspoken no more: He's the king. (Century Media) **Michael Parillo**



LIONEL LOUEKE KARIBU

★★★★★

Currently a "big-discovery" member of Herbie Hancock's quartet, Benin-born guitarist Loueke is poised for jazz stardom with his first major-label outing as a leader. The limelight is also due for his superb longtime drummer, **FERENC NEMETH**. Hailing from Hungary, Nemeth beautifully realizes the music's mix of jazz, traditional African, and Brazilian elements with tremendous touch. Along with imaginative bassist **Massimo Biolcati**, it's stunning how effortlessly this trio segues between tight odd-metered grooves into airy, pulse-elastic improvis. Loueke's angelic voice frequently accompanies his soloing, soaring above Nemeth's elegant interplay slipstream. It's quite complex, yet the gorgeous sound and feel result in an accessible, sensual listen. (Blue Note) **Jeff Potter**



PRIDE TIGER THE LUCKY ONES

★★★★★

Retro-minded records always present problems in terms of questions about a band's authenticity. In the case of Canada's Pride Tiger, comparisons to Thin Lizzy and KISS are inevitable (perhaps even engineered). While this record *could* be dubbed *Jailbreak Revisited*, this feel-

good, riff-rampant material forgives any artistic trespassing. To this end, drummer/vocalist **MATT WOOD** doesn't play a mess of beats, but rather uncluttered, kick/snare/hi-hat-heavy grooves tailor-made for huge outdoor arenas. Wood's deceptively simple beats might have been enhanced with slight nips and tucks (to these ears, anyway), but their booty-shaking power remains unassailable. On face value, this is a solid, '70s-centric rock record. (Caroline/EMI Canada)

Will Romano



CUONG VU VU-TET

★★★★★

The lines between jazz, rock, and ambient music are satisfyingly blurred on *Vu-Tet*, a new disc from trumpeter Cuong Vu (Pat

Metheny). New York drummer **TED POOR** (Chris Potter, Bill Frisell) has no reservations applying an aggressive, open-hi-hat attack in the same song as subtle cymbal accents or marching snare rhythms ("Solitary Confinement"). Poor grooves his tail off on the fusion-y head of "Never, Ever, Ever," switching from side-stick to backbeat before perfectly supporting the soloists with flams, *really* fast singles, and a heavy dirge rock beat where he's riding his crash. Adventurous, truly dynamic, and forward-thinking drumming. (ArtistShare) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



ARTURO O'FARRILL AND THE AFRO-LATIN JAZZ ORCHESTRA SONG FOR CHICO

★★★★★

Pianist O'Farrill puts a fresh face on the Latin jazz big band format while respecting roots. Think "Caravan" is done to death? Check out this version. This tremendous group feels more like a smaller interactive band than a large, "sectioned" one, partly due to the generous, grooving, big-eared drumming of **VINCE CHERICO** and his shared wavelength with percussionists **JIMMY DEGADO** and **TONY ROSA**. Since Vince's steady stint with Ray Barretto, he's been in well-deserved demand by serious Latin jazz leaders. And his "drive but don't clutter" drumming ideally serves this big sound. A modern institution playing great tunes old and new. (Zoho) **Jeff Potter**

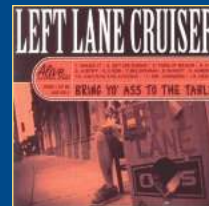
DOS DUOS

by Robin Tolleson

THE BLACK KEYS, LEFT LANE CRUISER

The temptation to perform as a duo is usually cured by actually trying to do it. Sometimes it works, though, as in the case of Ohio's Black Keys. The duo's fifth CD, *Attack & Release*, was produced by **Danger Mouse** (Gnarls Barkley) and is reminiscent at times of a stripped-down Radiohead, psychedelic supergroup Blind Faith, and Citizen Cope, with plaintive vocals, banjo, and distorted guitar by **Dan Auerbach**. Throughout, drummer **PATRICK CARNEY** grooves hard for the song, adding accents where they're useful, helpful, provocative, or funny. He knows how to make the drums big when needed without busying it up. (Nonesuch)

Left Lane Cruiser's *Bring Yo' Ass To The Table* is some pretty raw stuff by the duo of guitarist/vocalist **Freddy J IV** and drummer **BRENN "SAUSAGE PAW" BECK**. The resophonic guitar work by Freddy J IV is commanding and his vocals probably obscene (if we could tell for sure). But setting it off on tunes like "Wash It," "Pork N' Beans," "G Bob," and "Mr. Johnson" are Beck's simple back-and-forth grooves, from double-time to half-time, heads barely tightened on, cymbals cranked, cowbells stung on the off beats, metal scraped, and cardboard trashed. (Alive Natural Sound)



AND FURTHERMORE...

LOCAL H TWELVE ANGRY MONTHS

The alt-rock duo of **Scott Lucas** (vocal/guitar) and **BRIAN ST. CLAIR** (drums) returns with an album of well-written songs. St. Clair lays a solid foundation throughout, providing integral support to their guitar-driven tunes. Check out the simple, simmering groove of "White Belt Boys," or tap your foot to the rocking "BMW Man." (Shout! Factory) **Martin Patmos**



RADIO I-CHING THE FIRE STILL BURNS

Using Middle-Eastern melodies as a starting point, this guitar/sax/drums trio draws on jazz, rock, and improv for their sound. Drummer **DEE POP** (Bush Tetras) accompanies and colors the music, often using the set to mimic Middle-Eastern hand drums. With moods ranging from mysterious to rambunctious, this is an adventurous and interesting listen. (www.myspace.com/radioichingnewyork) **Martin Patmos**

CARLOS CUEVAS UNINHIBITED REALM

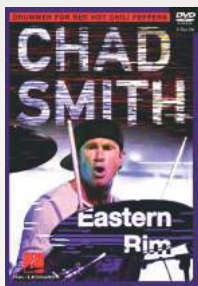
A fine jazz pianist and composer, Cuevas expands on his classical influences here. Bolstered by guest star bassist **John Patitucci**, a vibrant jazz trio set is followed by a three-movement concerto including sixteen-piece chamber orchestra. Drummer **JIMMY BRANLY** sports great taste and swing, and he's key at making the whole large group breathe and gel. Sumptuous. (Cuevitas Music) **Jeff Potter**

THE CAT EMPIRE SO MANY NIGHTS

This collision of ska, Latin jazz, soul, Middle Eastern motifs, hip-hop/DJ culture, '70s prog, '60s garage rock, and Beatles-esque pastiche is sonic voodoo. Drummer **WILL HULL-BROWN** and turntablist **Jamshid Khadiwala** and vocalist **Felix Riebl** lay down steady, bouncin', and utterly danceable grooves, providing a solid foundation for this cross-genre, musi-comic madness. (Velour) **Will Romano**



MULTI-MEDIA



CHAD SMITH EASTERN RIM

★★★★★

DVD (2) LEVEL: ALL \$39.95

Eastern Rim features over three hours of Red Hot Chili Peppers drummer Chad Smith performing, chatting, and basically being his amiable self over a two-DVD set. Among the variety of settings on disc one, Chad is filmed at a clinic in Australia performing drum solos, telling funny stories, and playing along to Chili Pepper tracks...at LA's Whiskey playing with friend and former Deep Purple bassist/singer Glenn Hughes...and in Chili Pepper bassist Flea's

hometown of Melbourne, Australia, partaking in a thirty-minute jam. Also featured on the disc is a documentary filled with a very funny, entertaining, and definitely *not* PG Chad Smith.

On disc two, Chad is even more amusing while in Japan for a Tokyo drum clinic, during which he performs *more* drum solos and sits in on Zeppelin's "Moby Dick" and "Rock And Roll" and The Beatles' "Helter Skelter" with the Japanese all-girl band e-ha? featuring drummer Miffan. Chad then sits in with four other Japanese drummers—Tomo'o Tsuruya, To-Bu, Tetsu, and Toshi Nagai—who are all pretty darned good themselves. And be sure to check out the cool bonus audio and video clips, some of which include Chad *before* he was a Pepper.

This is a must-watch for fans of Smith's playing and humor. Rock on, Chad! (Hal Leonard) **Billy Amendola**

JOHN LENNON/PLASTIC ONO BAND CLASSIC ALBUMS

★★★★★

DVD LEVEL: ALL \$14.98



Yoko Ono was John Lennon's muse during The Beatles' waning days, but **RINGO STARR** remained his drummer of choice. Instead of hiring an ace session drummer for his first post-Beatles album, Lennon opted for the simple familiarity of Ringo because, as he says in an archived interview, "If I get a thing going, Ringo knows where to go just like that." Ringo's role on the spartan Plastic Ono Band album was to keep time while Lennon exposed his demons and his voice like never before. That role is praised highly on this DVD, most animatedly when engineer Phil McDonald lights up at the sound of an isolated fill from "I Found Out" and Ringo pro- nounces, "A great fill!" (Eagle Vision) **Patrick Berkery**

NICK MARCY SOLO DRUMSET

★★★★★

BOOK LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED \$14.95



Texas instructor and author Nick Marcy returns with *Solo Drumset*, a new book focusing on drum soloing and its musical applications. Marcy's book tackles his own unique, notated examples of motivic soloing and various cym- bal permutations for jazz in 3/4, 4/4, and 5/4 (as an alternative to the standard "ding, ding-a ding" ride patterns used in classic books).

Melody orchestration, ostinatos, and "Shuffled Feet In 9/8" are addressed as well, complete with Marcy's humorous anecdotes. A great feature is a Classic Drum Solos section, including tran- scriptions of Ringo's "Carry That Weight," Gadd's "Aja," and Max Roach's "The Drum Also Waltzes." (www.nicksdrumstudio.com) **Ilya Stenkovsky**

BRAIN HAS MADE THE WORST DRUM INSTRUCTIONAL DVD EVER

★★★★★

DVD LEVEL: ALL \$39.95



When watching *Brain Has Made The Worst Drum Instructional DVD Ever*, bring your chops and your sense of humor, because he will stretch both of them. With tongue in cheek, Brain confesses on the couch that he has lost his way and needs to get back to the center, back to the 2 and 4. He jams with a DJ, plays beats for breakdancers, stretches out with guitarist Buckethead, mentors a group of teenagers, and answers an ad for a used drumkit, asks permission to set it up, and waits on it mercilessly in the owner's garage for ten minutes. Whether or not you're entertained by Brain's exploits, there's no escaping his conviction to the groove and his ability to play it. (DW) **Robin Tolleeson**

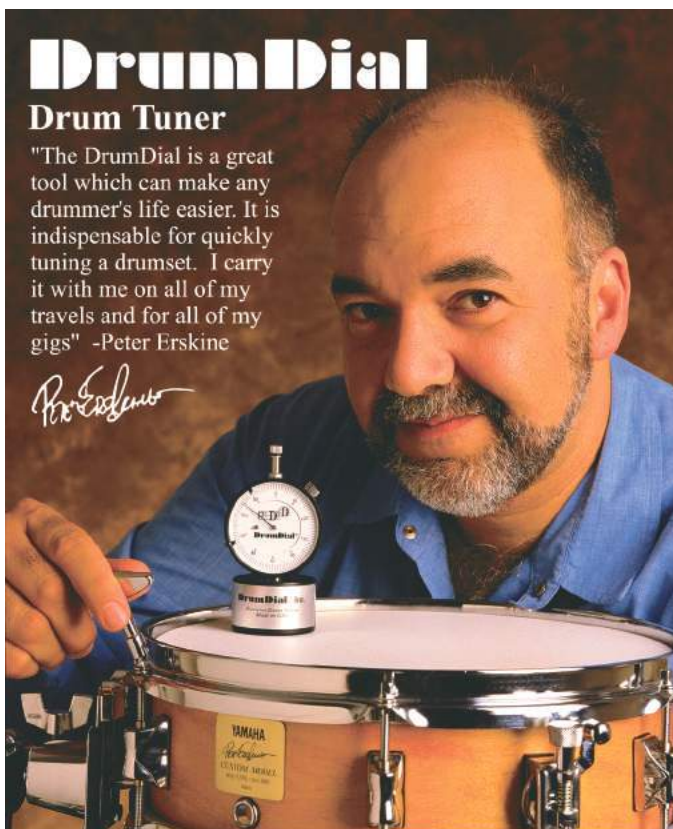


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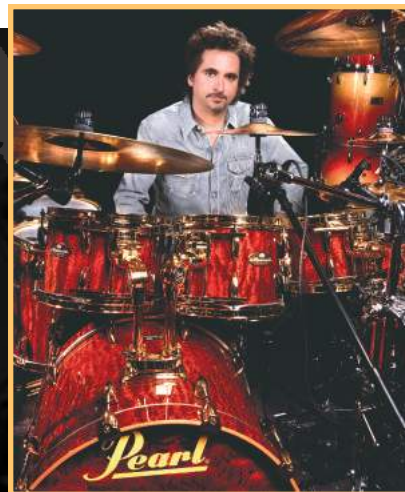
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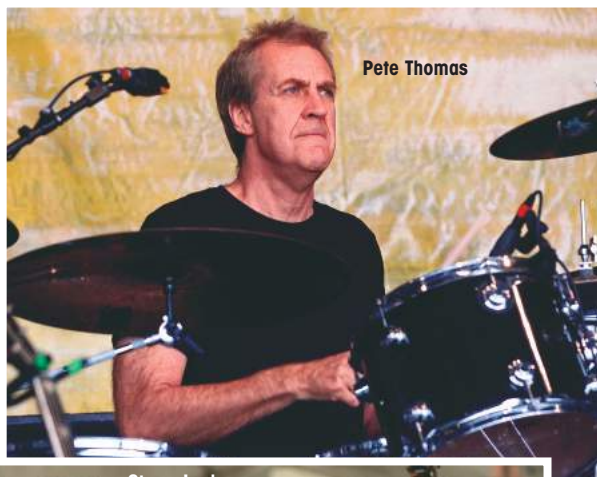


New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival

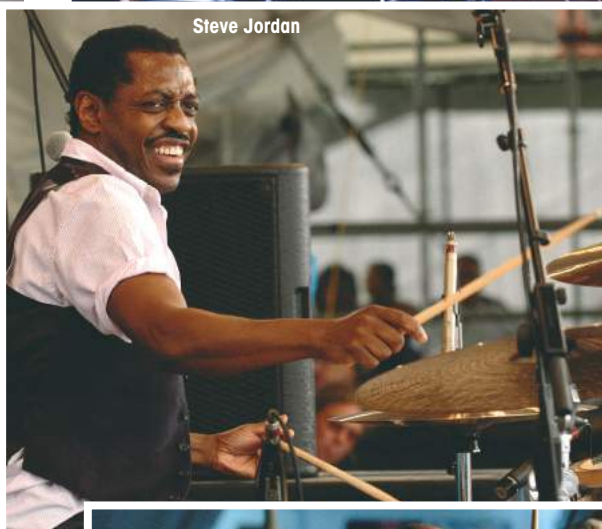
Story by Paul Siegel
Photos by Clayton Call



Questlove



Pete Thomas



Steve Jordan

The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival 2008 provided, for the thirty-ninth consecutive year, an unparalleled cross section of music. Performers emanated from across America, from other parts of the world, and from Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, and the other southern states, where so much of America's music has originated.

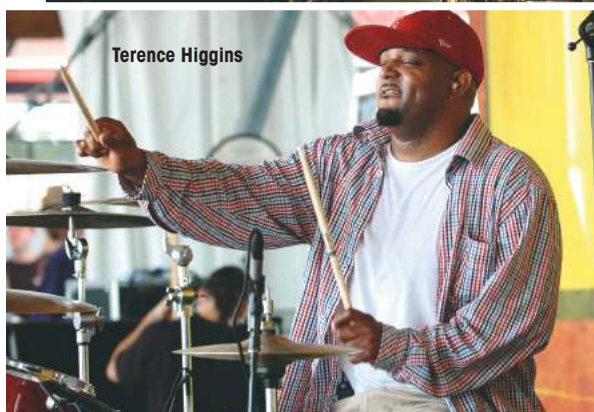
Styles represented at the festival ranged from Gospel to jazz (of all varieties), to R&B and funk, to rock and rockabilly. Consequently, the drumming heard ranged just as widely in style, with world-class rock drummer **Pete Thomas** performing with Elvis Costello on one stage, funk innovator **David Garibaldi** grooving on another with Tower Of Power, and hip-hop guru **Amir "Questlove" Thompson** laying it down with The Roots and guest MC Ludacris. **Steve Jordan** also played a tremendously soulful set with New Orleans music icon Art "Papa Funk" Neville, the founder of The Meters and the patriarch of the Neville Brothers band, who closed the festival for the first time since hurricane Katrina.



Stanton Moore



Ricky Sebastian



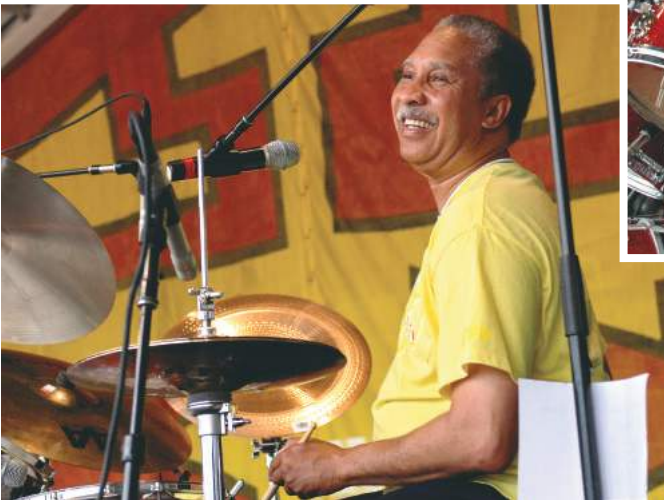
Terence Higgins

David Garibaldi



Jason Marsalis, Herlin Riley, and Shannon Powell

Zigaboo Modeliste



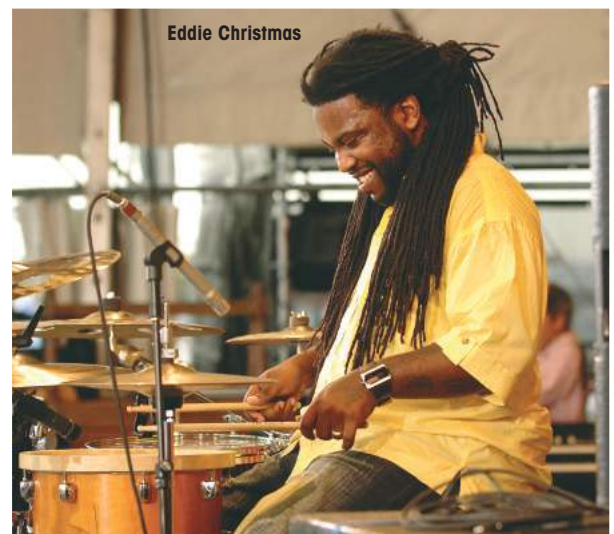
Russell Batiste

A truly inspired set was performed by three of the city's most eloquent drummer/percussionists—**Shannon Powell**, **Jason Marsalis**, and **Herlin Riley**. Together they put on an extraordinary tribute to Max Roach. Their set exemplified the free spirit of Max and his disregard for convention with a sparkling rendition of the bop god's famous solo piece "The Drum Also Waltzes" and gorgeous compositions by Jason and Herlin. The tribute culminated with a piece based on a traditional Mardi Gras Indian chant, with Herlin and Shannon playing tambourines.

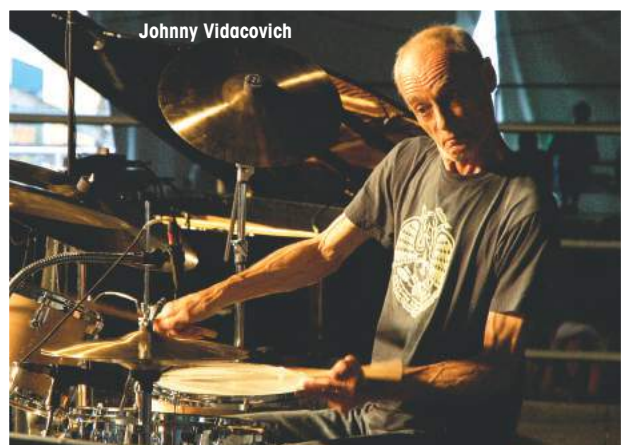
Other drumming highlights at the festival included the great **Ricky Sebastian** with Turbinton's House; **Russell Batiste** with Porter, Batiste, and Stoltz; the legendary **Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste** with his own band; the inimitable **Johnny Vidacovich** with Astral Project; and **Eddie Christmas** with the soulful Jon Cleary And The Absolute Monster Gentlemen.

New Orleans native **Stanton Moore** was featured all over town with no less than five bands, including Galactic, The Stanton Moore Trio, and The Midnight Disturbers. The incredibly funky **Terence Higgins** held down the fort with the mighty Dirty Dozen Brass Band, while snare drummers **Benny Jones** and **Derrick Tabb** held up their side of the bargain with the Treme Brass Band and Rebirth Brass Band, respectively. Seventy-seven-year-old "**Uncle**" **Lionel Batiste**—the best-dressed drummer in New Orleans—helped keep The Treme Brass Band headed in a distinctly funky direction with his syncopated touch on the bass drum.

If New Orleans at Jazz Fest time isn't drum heaven, or music heaven for that matter, then I guess it doesn't exist.



Eddie Christmas



Johnny Vidacovich

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CLIPS OF THE MONTH

by John Citrone



TONY WILLIAMS 1972

Tony is in top form in this rare clip—with saxophonist Stan Getz, bassist Stanley Clarke, and keyboardist Chick Corea—finessing, caressing, and pounding the drums into submission over a trademark Corea montuno. Williams' solo incorporates unison sticking, super-sensitive snare passages, and freakish flams. This video captures what Tony Williams was all about—musical phrasing, cutting-edge technique, and mind-blowing originality.

JOE TRAVERS DRUM SOLO FROM 1992

Going back fifteen-plus years, this clip features a young (and hairy) Joe Travers, current drummer for Zappa Plays Zappa and protector of all that is holy in the Zappa family vault. Long before he toured with Dweezil, Mike Keneally, and others, Travers was a diligent student at Berklee College Of Music. In this solo, Travers jumps back and forth between whipping out monster chops and laying down rock-hard grooves. Check out his impressive hand speed (3:00) and tasty locomotive ending (4:23). It's no wonder this guy ended up sharing the stage with Terry Bozzio, Steve Vai, and other Zappa alumni.

FRED ASTAIRE DRUM CRAZY

History shows that Fred Astaire could cut a mean rug. What may not have been clearly established is whether or not the lanky hooper could play drums. The answer is a resounding "hell" to the "yeah." In this clip of the song "Drum Crazy," taken from the movie *Easter Parade* (1948), Astaire stick-synchs to a wonderful song by Irving Berlin. Though he's playing along to a recorded track, Astaire's accuracy is impeccable, as he plays toy snares, bass drums, and woodblocks, plays lying down, plays with tiny sticks, and so on—all the while executing his trademark tap dance moves and singing along. It's a wonderful piece of film—and drumming—history.



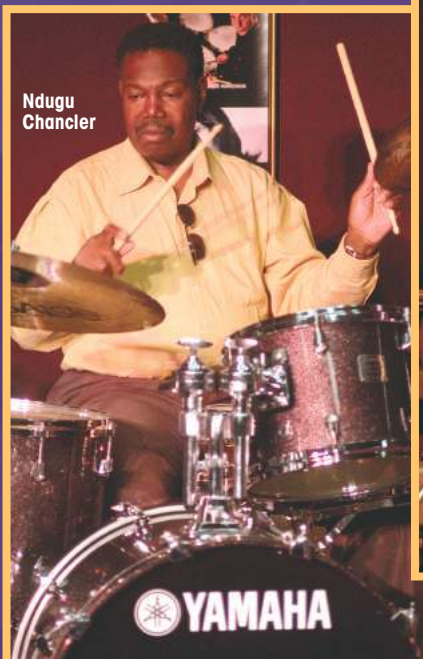
Paiste Los Angeles Artist Hang

Story by Waleed Rashidi • Photos by Alex Solca

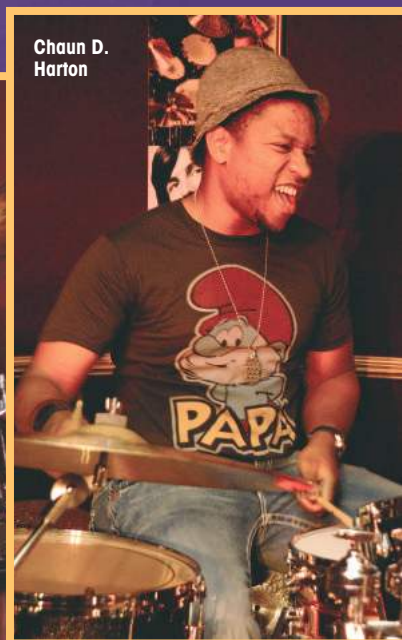
The sounds of crashing, riding, and talking were abuzz in Room No. 5 at S.I.R.'s Los Angeles complex on May 15 for the Paiste Artist Hang.

A number of Paiste artists and company guests filtered around the room throughout the day, as the sounds of bronze and brass filled the air. Good Charlotte's **Dean Butterworth** was on the scene with a demo of his Paiste picks, and drumming legend **Ndugu Chancler** got behind the kit for an attention-grabbing session. L.A.-based drummer **Chaun D. Horton** (who will be on the road this year with Natasha Bedingfield) and Go Betty Go's **Aixa Vilar** were also among the many Paiste artists spotted in the crowd. Some of the pros in attendance became the center of the event through impromptu jams, including a tasteful "trading eights" stint between Horton and **Mike Clark** later in the day. Company representatives were also on hand to meet and greet attendees, including Kelly Paiste, Erik Paiste, Andrew Shreve, and Wayne Wilburn.

This was an opportunity for Paiste to not only corral its talent into one location, but to display its latest wares, including its new Twenty and Signature Reflector series, most of which were introduced earlier in the year at the winter NAMM show.



Ndugu Chancler



Chaun D. Horton



Mike Clark



Kelly Paiste, Alvino Bennett, Ndugu Chancler, Rayford Griffin, and Erik Paiste



From Left: Bogie Bowles, Pete Korpela, and Dean Butterworth



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"The congas have seed pods, nut-shell rattles, and a squeaky dog toy suspended from them with plastic coat hangers," Bongodoggie goes on. "I have a 14" djun djun on the floor, which I play with a double pedal, and on the right side I have a horizontally mounted pedal cowbell. The mount is my invention; it has a closer throw than vertically mounted ones, which gives me better control of volume and articulation. And then, on the left is a pedal that plays a Nigerian log drum, and next to that is a pedal that plays goat toenail shakers."

Bongodoggie informs us that he plays this global setup with Native American flutist Looking Wolf, spoken-word artist Lorado, and rap poet 6KILLA. To watch the drummer playing the Indigenous Roots drumkit, check out his videos at youtube.com/bongodoggie.



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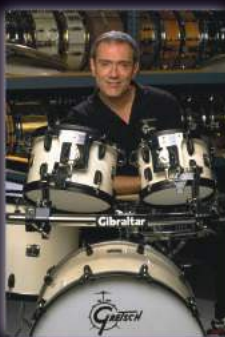
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A Crash should be the perfect accent for your musical voice. It should ripple out through the crowd and demand to be acknowledged. Zildjian knows that a sound that resonates is a sound that can change the way people hear music. That's why the new A Custom ReZo™ Crashes were born. Brand-new lathing techniques using Brilliant and Traditional finishes help blend an aggressive array of bright overtones with an instantaneous response. Combined with a new bell design to attain exceptional projection and reso-nating qualities, it all adds up to a sound that is sure to make waves.

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