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DECEMBER 2008

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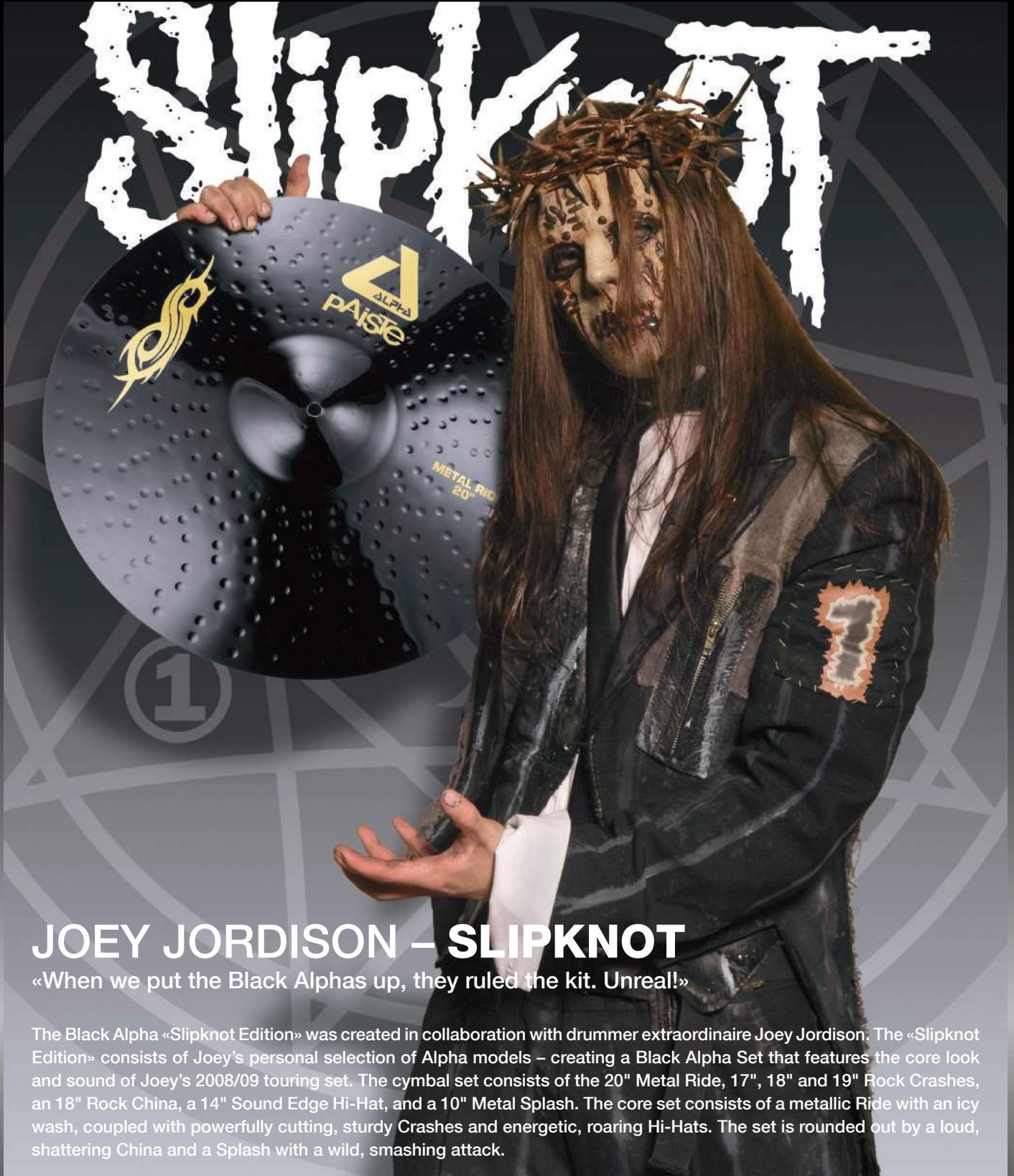


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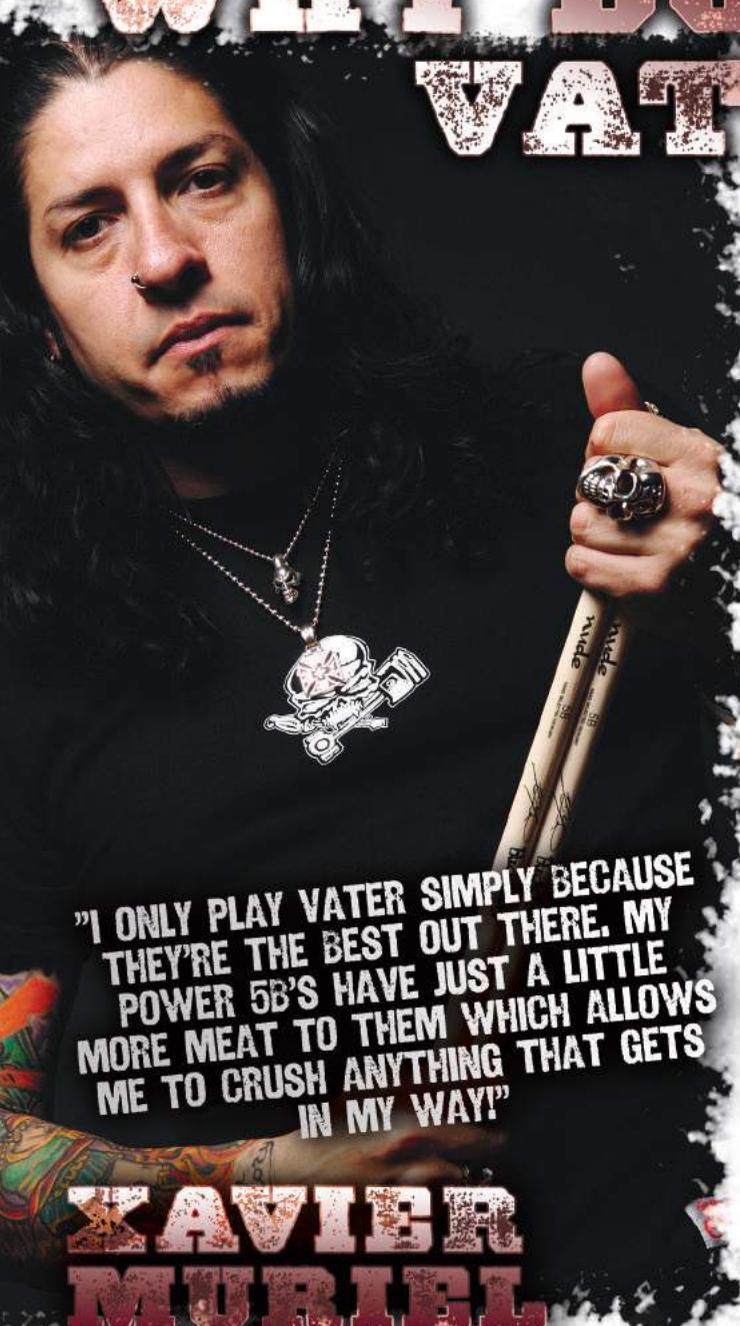
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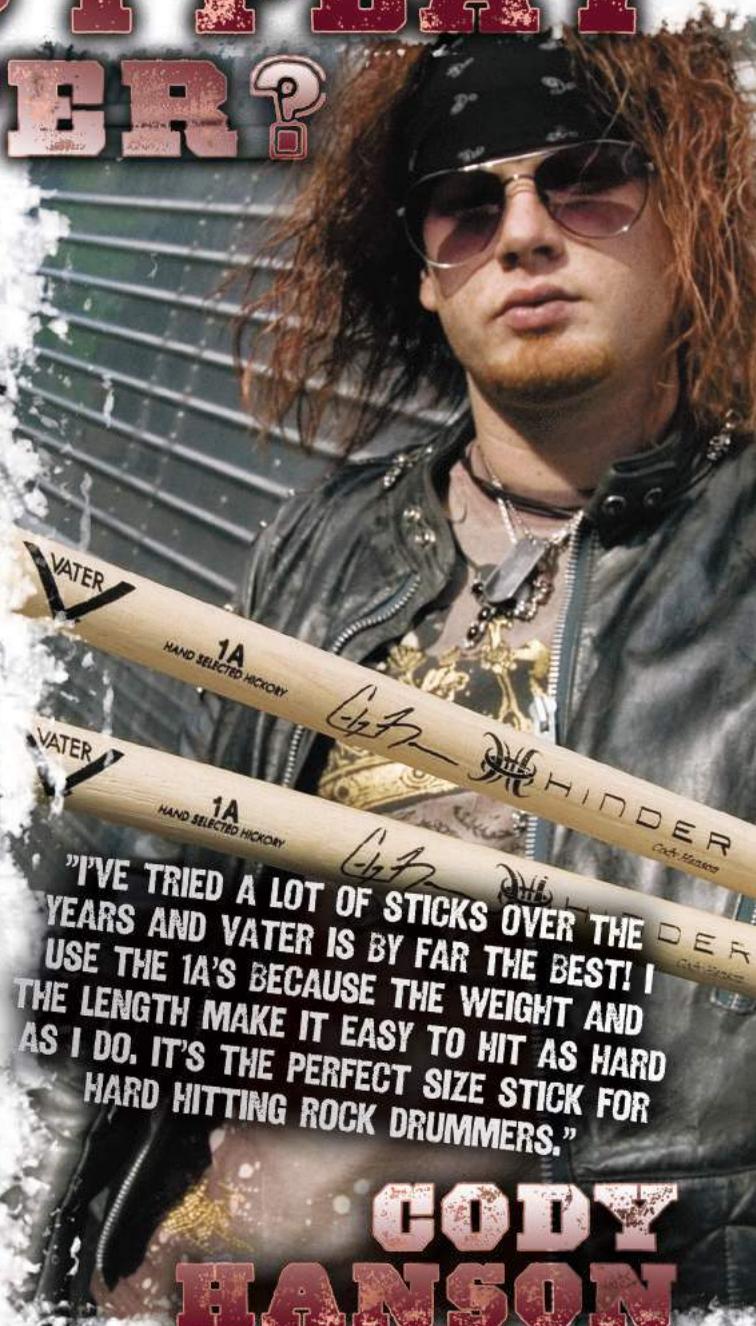
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In the '90s Metallica simplified their assault—and became a household name. Today drummer Lars Ulrich and crew are bringing back the complexity in a BIG way.

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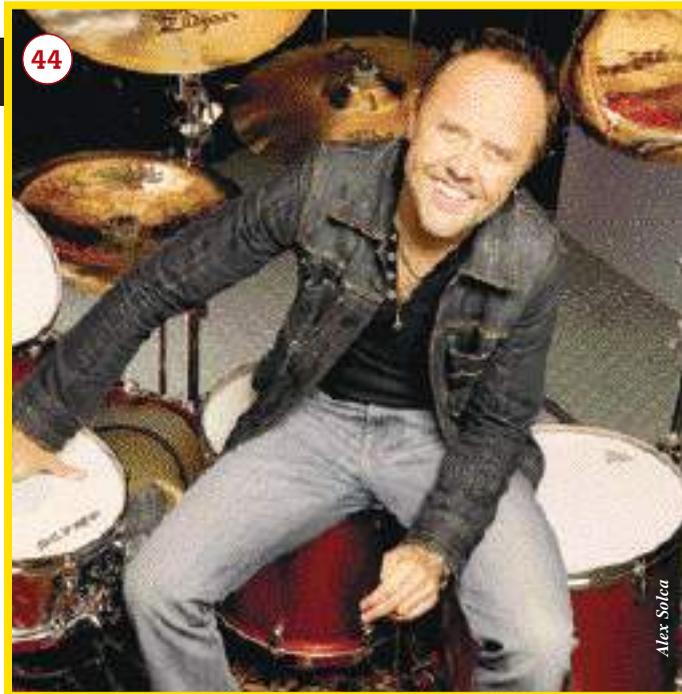
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As half of the most notoriously demanding hit-making jazz/rock duo in history, Walter Becker is as qualified as anyone to pontificate on drums and drummers.



136 Woodshed
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The veteran So-Cal punk band's beachfront rehearsal space is small—but effective.

WIN!
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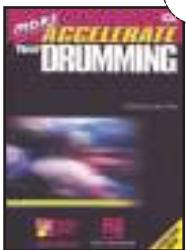
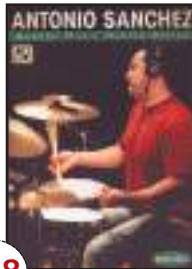
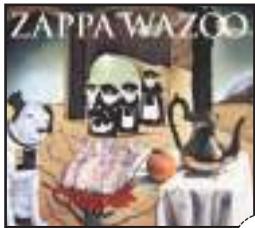
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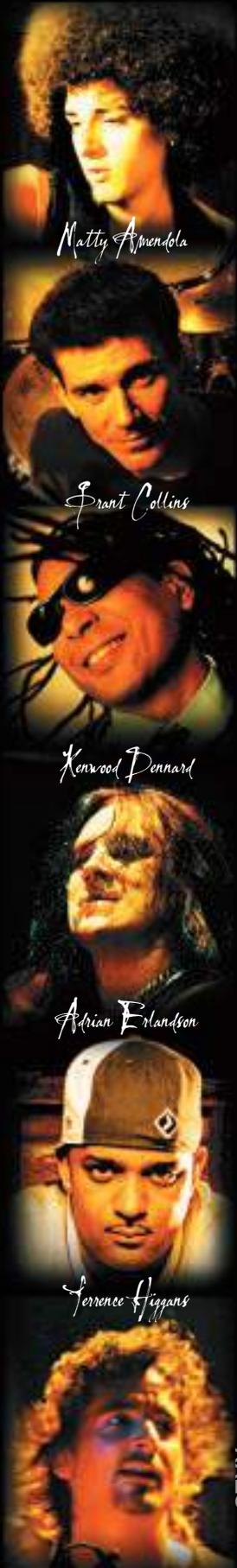


6 CHEAP DRUMS....

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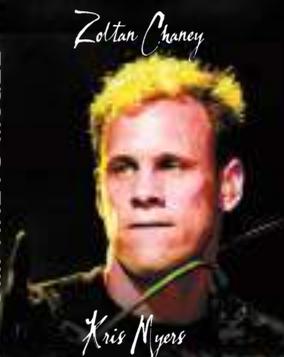


VINCE NEIL



Vince Neil

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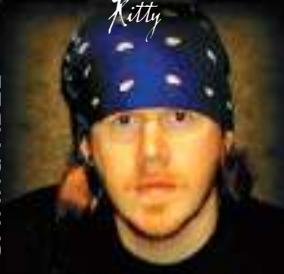
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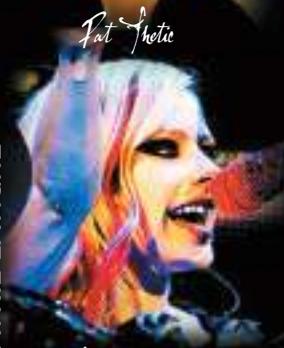
Blake Dixon

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Pat Nolet

AVRIL LAVIGNE



Avril Lavigne

MD Plugs In



I love recalling the old story from Modern Drummer readers who told us they would hide under their sheets at night, reading the latest issue of MD with a flashlight. That's just how into drumming they were. (Gotta love that!) That passion for drumming—and thankfully for MD—certainly hasn't waned over the years. Modern Drummer continues to be the most successful, most-read drum magazine on Earth. (That means everywhere, including in bed!) But seriously, we sincerely thank you for your loyal support.

Yes, the print medium remains strong. But the potential for drumming info in the digital realm is immense. In fact, we feel the online world of drumming has yet to be creatively, honestly, and successfully utilized. As it's been said to us on many occasions, it's time for Modern Drummer to do for electronic media what it's done so successfully in print.

With that in mind, in the past couple of years we've been making inroads and plans to create several digital "vehicles" to offer you even more inspiring drumming info in a way you may never have imagined possible. I'd like to briefly mention them here.

Modern Drummer Digital

Just recently launched, MD Digital combines our tradition of editorial excellence with cutting-edge technology. In its basic form, MD Digital is a regular issue of Modern Drummer, offered monthly, but available online and "supercharged" with many interesting features—too many to list here. (My fave: embedded audio and video that enhances the editorial content.)

Modern Drummer Online

Ranked among the top drum-related Web sites in the world, Modern Drummer's newly redesigned site now has tons of new features—up-to-the-minute drumming news, playing tips, an extensive photo gallery, sound files, video clips, a forum, contests, and so much more. (Please check it out at www.moderndrummer.com.)

MD Wire

Modern Drummer's monthly electronic newsletter, distributed free of charge to a large and growing list of drummers of all abilities, features breaking news on artists and the drumming community, hot new product, CD, and DVD releases, technique builders in the "Lick Of The Month" department, and much more. And it's simple to receive: Just sign up at moderndrummer.com.

In addition to all of that, we even have an MD MySpace page with over 30,000 friends! (Why not head on over to www.myspace.com/moderndrummermagazine and reach out to them?)

As you can see, we're very seriously pursuing the digital realm. We feel by expanding and integrating electronic media with our print publication, we'll be able to provide you with the best drumming info available anywhere. We hope you'll check out these new endeavors. For much more info on each of them, please see page 88 of this issue. And for those of you still using the flashlight trick, hey, whatever works best for you!

Bill Miller

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Volume 32 Number 12

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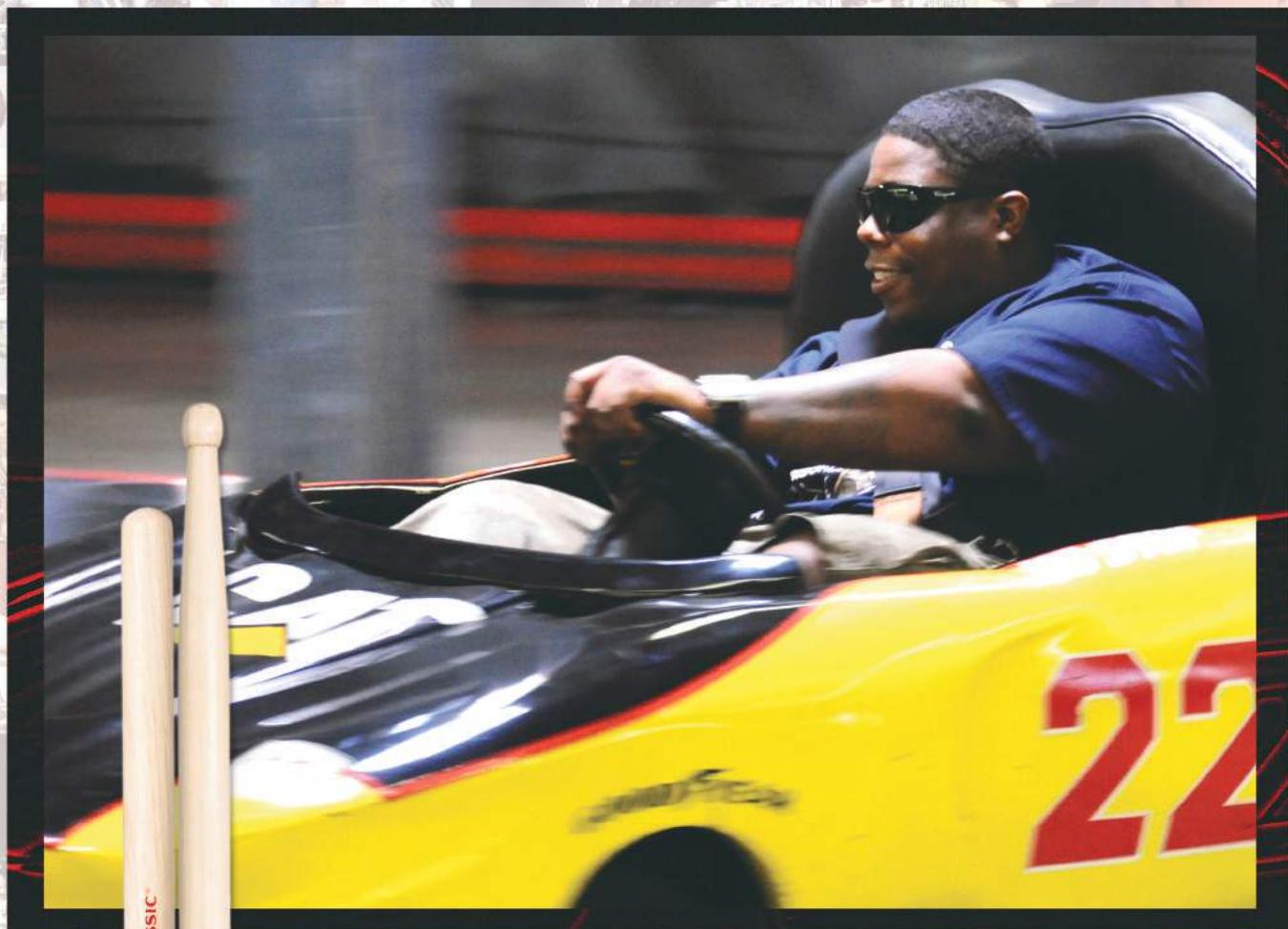
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As we went to press, we learned of the passing of drumming legend Earl Palmer. Please check out the March issue of MD for a full tribute.

AARON RACES GO KARTS

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Thomas Pridgen

I was stoked to read about Thomas Pridgen in the September issue of MD. I've heard about Thomas and his crazy technique, but wasn't sure what to expect when I found out he had taken over the drum seat in my favorite band, The Mars Volta. But his playing on The Bedlam In Goliath is ridiculous! Thankfully, you included some transcriptions to help me figure out what in the world he's doing.

Aaron Stratton

It is tasteless enough that Thomas Pridgen is shirtless on the cover of the September issue. But is it necessary to have his underwear exposed?

Joe Cistone

I don't understand why you would put a picture of a half-naked man on the cover of your magazine. It's embarrassing to read this at work, or anywhere for that matter, and is quite simply not something I want to see on my Modern Drummer. This isn't Playgirl, but, sadly, at a glance people wouldn't know the difference!

Jason Newman

As this issue went to press, MD learned of the recent airplane accident involving Travis Barker and DJ AM. We wish both of them a quick recovery, and we send our condolences to the families of the four individuals on the plane who lost their lives.

Re: Travis Barker Backlash

This is in response to Krist Whelan's comments about Travis Barker in the Sept '08 issue. Do people like Mr. Whelan stop to think that his comments might be discouraging to younger players who look up to guys like Travis Barker? While I'm not a big fan of Blink-182 or the other projects Travis is involved with, what he plays within the context of his bands fits pretty well for the style of music. So why should he be bashed for that, or why should he not get the publicity from MD for his accomplishments as a drummer? There have been times when I questioned someone that was on the cover of the magazine, only to find out that I actually learned something in their interview. I applaud MD for spotlighting players of all styles of music, and I hope they continue to do so.

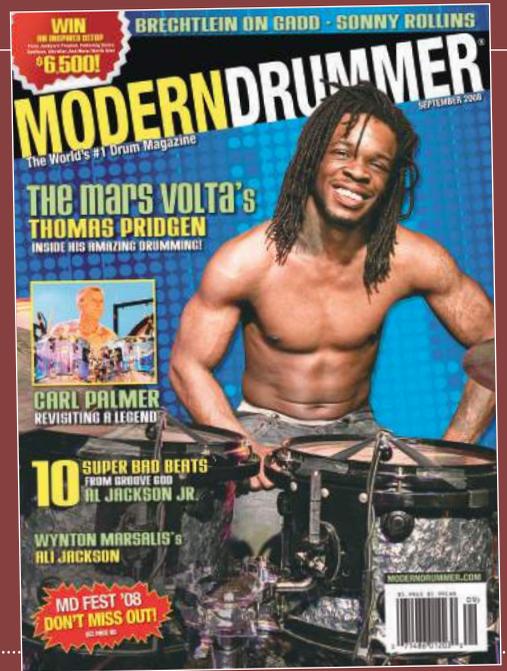
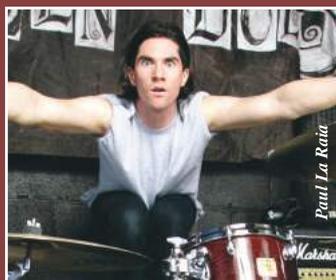
Brian Koker

It's time to cut Mr. Barker a little slack. He is living large, to be sure. And he slams hard. But if you've ever seen the Youtube clip of him warming up with some rudiments, you can tell that the man has done his homework. Even at age fifty-four, I remain open to all forms of music, and I listen to and draw from all drummers. I love it all—The funk of Questlove, Zigaboo, Vinnie, Gadd, Keith Carlock; the grace of Jim Chapin demonstrating the Moeller technique; or the mathematical density of Terry Bozzio, Tony Williams, and Elvin Jones. I salute Travis for his accomplishments.

Timothy Lee Cromer

Brian Viglione

I just began subscribing to MD and was excited to see an article on Brian Viglione in my first issue (August 2008)! His drumming has been a source of inspiration since I first heard him



play, and I have been disappointed that he gets so little attention from the drumming community. He brings an expressive quality to drumming that rivals some of the greats on any instrument. I aspire not just to Brian's level of drumming, but to his level of musicality.

John Ward

I'm glad you've given coverage to Brian Viglione. He's a very talented drummer who's flying under the radar.

Robert, via MySpace

Nice job on the Brian Viglione story in the August 2008 issue. He's one of my favorite drummers, and I really appreciated seeing him get the coverage and recognition he deserves.

Jasmine, via MySpace

Adam Deitch

I just read the interview with Adam Deitch in the August issue, and it was exactly what I want from an interview! I didn't even know who he was, but nevertheless he had my attention



throughout the entire story, thanks to the way he answered the questions. Very educational and inspiring.

Erik Edlund

DROPPED BEATS

The two DJ Drums kits reviewed in the September issue were listed with the incorrect prices. The Maple Custom kit sells for \$4,200 with hardware. The Sapele Custom setup is \$4,500 with hardware.



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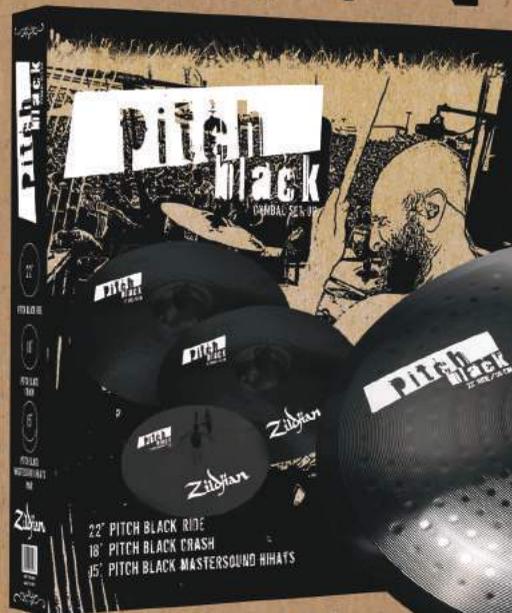


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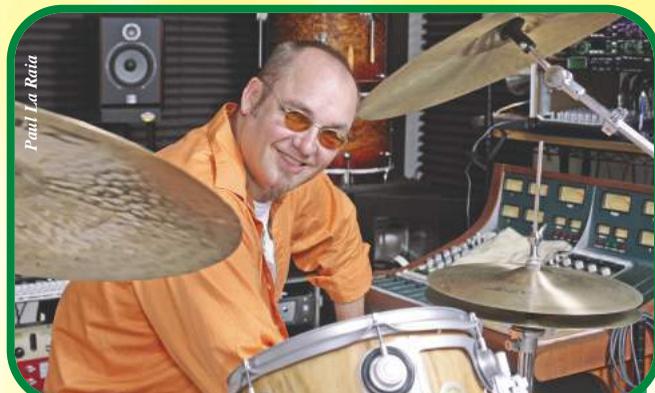
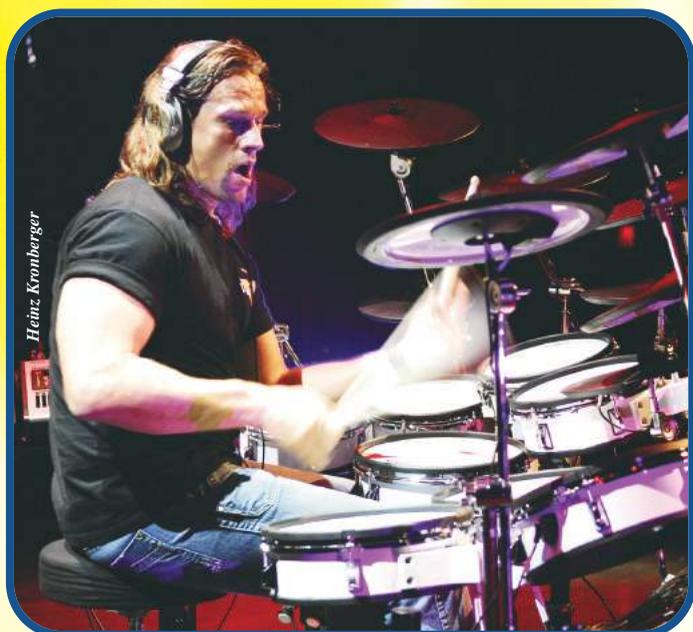
Clinic Advice From The Pros

I've started teaching at a local music store, and they've recently asked me to hold a drum clinic to help bring in new students. I've drawn up an outline where I would start out performing with a rock playalong track. Then I would discuss the importance of time and feel and how to use playalongs and a metronome to improve in those two areas. The storeowner informed me that they wanted me to gear the first clinic towards young drummers and a later one for adult drummers. I'm a bit unsure as to how to approach the clinic

for younger players. Can you give me some ideas on what to focus on?

Steve Trovao

We sent your letter to two of today's most active clinicians, Thomas Lang and Billy Ward, since they often perform for hundreds of drummers at different playing levels each year. Here are their responses:



I've never really changed my playing or show/set/plan according to the age or skill level of my audience. I go with the flow and maybe adjust only my answers in the Q&A part of a clinic according to the skill/comprehension level of the listeners.

The most important thing is to inform and excite your audience. Beginners and more seasoned players often want the same thing—to be inspired and entertained. I believe the general feel and presentation of a clinic is more important than what you're actually playing. Even a beginner will listen to advanced groove and feel discussions, if it's presented in an interesting way. And more advanced players will get into things like fast double-kick playing, if they're being inspired to try it.

It's all about the "fun factor." I try not to overthink my clinics; I just share what excites me. And that's when I get the best responses. If you're into it, they'll be into it, too.

Just remember that you're not their private teacher; you're doing a one-off clinic. So try to blow everyone's minds. If the older guys like what you do, it rubs off on the younger players, and vice versa. Excitement is infectious!

Thomas Lang

Here are some general thoughts that I believe apply to giving clinics, regardless of the age of the audience:

Master classes are probably easier for most of us drummers because they dig into the nuts and bolts of drumming. A clinic is different from a master class in that clinics need to be entertaining and inspiring, as opposed to simply educational. My target in a clinic is not only the nine-year-old kid but also that child's parents, who I hope to influence in understanding the value of music education for children. I believe that a clinic is successful if everyone in attendance wants to rush home to play the drums. A clinic can be very inspiring because of the absolute wonder it creates about drums and drumming. It's truly incredible what a drum can do—whether played by itself (in a clinic) or within a song with a band. Whatever seems wonderful to you about drumming and music is what you have to share in a clinic.

If you haven't spoken in front of a group before, pick one or two people in the room and make a lot of eye contact with them. It's important that the presentation be personal. The power of a rhythm or a song is undeniable and will charm an audience of any age. Just try not to sink inside yourself or hide anything. If you don't know what to discuss next, then admit it by saying something like, "I'm not sure what to talk about now." Show it all—including the mistakes—and your audience will love you for it.

With a younger audience, speak directly to one or two of them from time to time, and have one or two of them come onstage so you can teach them something simple. Also, having the audience clap (or sing a simple song) while you play might be fun. Children can't focus for as long as adults—which I enjoy, given my own short attention span! Don't forget to have fun and keep your inner judge (or watcher) away while you're onstage.

Billy Ward



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

Tennis Elbow Relief

I'm a drummer with tennis elbow in my right arm, so it hurts to clench my fist when my arm is in an extended position. It hurts most doing things like playing hockey, weight training, computer work, and yard work. But it also bothers me occasionally while drumming. What can I do to eliminate the pain and strengthen the elbow?

Sam Albidone

Lateral epicondylitis (LE), or tennis elbow (TE), is a commonly encountered problem caused by repetitive use of the elbow joint, and it regularly occurs in drummers. Several factors have been identified as possible causes, including improper technique, using oversized drumsticks, and extreme cymbal placement.

Any rigorous activity involving wrist extension and/or rotation of the forearm can cause overuse of the muscles on the outside part of the elbow. The risk increases in drummers who do more than three or four hours of rigorous playing per week, and if they're over forty years of age.

A good test to help diagnose LE is to stretch out the arm fully, palm down, and pull your fingers back towards you against resistance. Another helpful test is to stand behind a chair and attempt to raise it by putting your hands on the top of the chair back and lifting. In patients with TE, pain results over the outside part of their elbow when conducting either of these tests.

Most patients respond well to conservative treatment, including getting rest, using a tennis elbow brace (available at any drugstore),



An epicondylitis brace helps reduce pain and elbow strain.

and taking non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs like ibuprofen. In more extreme cases, wrist splinting and/or corticosteroid injections may be necessary. If these measures don't help after six months of conservative therapy, outpatient surgery might be needed.

When a patient is free of pain through a full range of motion, strengthening therapy can be introduced in a very slow and progressive way. As elbow strength has increased to a point where you can resume drumming, focus on preventing future irritation by correcting any technique problems or addressing equipment concerns.

If surgery is required, you'll need to take your time getting back to playing the drums. Here's a timeline for recovery from tennis elbow surgery: Early motion in a brace may be initiated after three to five days, with strengthening exercises starting at three weeks, depending on your symptoms. You can return to drumming after four to six months. Surgical treatment of TE has yielded favorable results, with approximately eighty-five percent of patients reporting complete pain relief.



Dr. Asif Khan is a board-certified internist, specializing in allergy and immunology, with a private practice in north-east Ohio. He also directs the nonprofit organization Passion And Profession (www.passionandprofession.com), which focuses on career counseling and education. Dr. Khan has been an avid drummer for twenty years and is currently performing with Johnny Hi-Fi (www.johnnyhi-fi.com).

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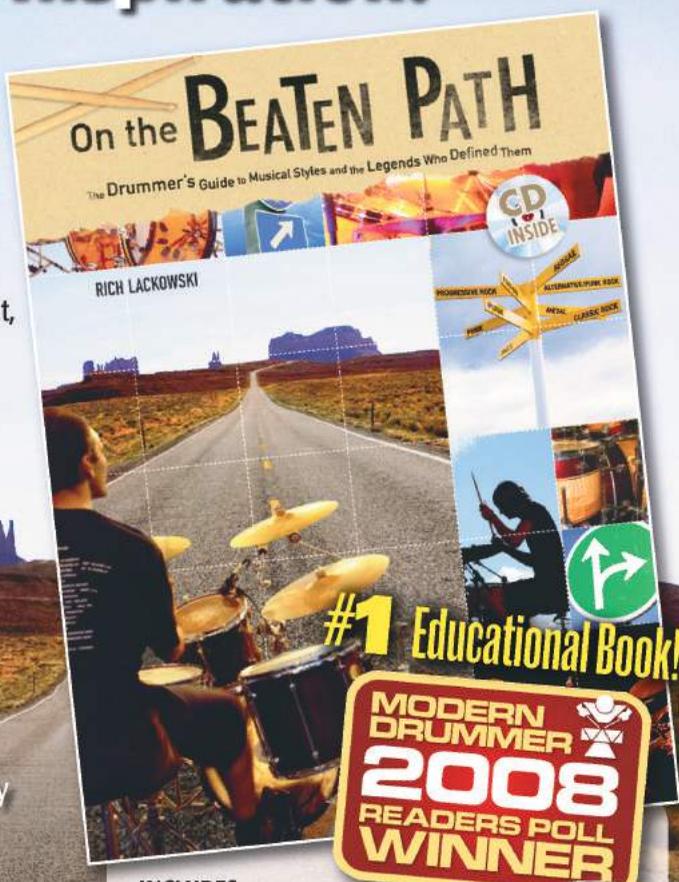
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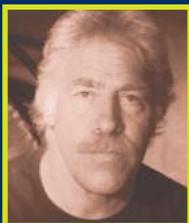
Drum Tech To The Stars

Jeff Ocheltree

Big Bass Drum Tone

In the November 2007 issue (MD's Guide To Setting Up), Jeff Ocheltree mentioned, "I'm ready for multiple bass drum setups with a variety of my Old School heads, so that an 18" bass drum is as dynamic as a 22", 24", or the occasional 26". I was wondering if that could be further elaborated on, in terms of head selection, tuning, muffling techniques, and microphone placement.

Ryan Martin



Ryan, thank you for your question. I've been fortunate to have worked in studios and on stages with gifted drummers in all genres of music since the late '60s, and continue to do so today with drummers Steve Smith, Khari Parker, Jim Preston, Oscar Seaton, and Felix Pollard.

My methods are less technical and more fundamental—"old school," if you will. At the end of the day, the sound of any bass drum should be round and dynamic. The sound consists of three "dimensions"—the batter side, the middle of the drum, and the resonant side, which is very important. The resonant side is the audience (or "projection") side, and it's the second mic point.

Here are my thoughts on how to achieve the best bass drum sound possible.

Head Choice

In the past, I used what was available, either a clear or coated single-ply, or sometimes a double-ply. I usually use a clear head for live playing, with felt strips on both heads. Remo, Aquarian, and Evans make great bass drum head setups. Today I use my signature Old School setup by Attack, which consists of clear or coated No Overtone heads and thick felt muffling strips.

Setup And Tuning

Start with the resonant side. Place a felt strip on the inside of the head, a third of the way up from the bottom edge. Then place the head, hoop, and claws on the drum very evenly and flush. As you tension the head, stretch the felt from both ends so that it's tight against head. Using a mallet, start tapping, with force, in the center of head. This head should have no hole in it. I always pitch the resonant head slightly lower than the batter. The resonant side of drum should have a low, focused sound, which is achieved by using the felt strip.

Now repeat this process on the batter side, using a mallet to strike the head like a bass drum beater. Remember, the batter head needs to be pitched higher than the resonant to avoid a flapping, clicking sound. Bass drums must have the lowest but clearest sound possible in order to give your kit the "bottom" you're looking for.

Beater Balls

Felt beater balls produce a warm, distinct low-end sound. However, since the advent of different types of pedals and beaters,

Here is a variation on the Old School setup, with the felt placed higher on the head than where Jeff generally recommends.



engineers have started to lean towards a more one-dimensional sound. All of the records that I worked on with great drummers like Billy Cobham, Lenny White, Mark Craney, and Steve Smith—where they wanted a traditional "genuine" bass drum sound with various tunings—were made using felt beater balls and felt strips on the heads.

Miking

I use no internal miking, only external. In the past, RE20s and tube mics were used in the studio and live. There are many good microphones out there for bass drums. However, I use the Shure Beta 52 on the resonant side, placed off-center to the left or right 3" to 4" from the hoop, at the height of the beater and 1 1/2" away from the head. I've also used a Sennheiser 421 or Shure SM57 on the batter side, aimed at the impact point, 3" away from the beater and 1 1/2" from the surface of the head.

If there aren't enough inputs on the console, you might not be afforded the luxury of both mics. However, overhead mics can help add some attack. Shure KSM 32s, in particular, are great mics to pick up the low end of the kit.

Spurs And Surfaces

Drum risers sometimes help improve bass drum sound. A wood surface, like most stage decks, is great because it's reflective without losing low end. For years, John Bonham placed two 5/8" plywood pieces under his kit, and Steve Smith often gets a great sound by setting up directly on the deck of the stage. The bass drum spur height is something to be aware of too. I prefer to have the front of the bass drum 2"-3" from the deck/riser. And keep in mind that every venue—theater, club, arena, etc.—has its own bass drum peculiarities that'll require you to make some adjustments to your tuning and setup.

It's important to have someone play your bass drum so you can listen to it from the other side. You'll be surprised, even without a mic, how much the middle and resonant sides of the drum project. That's why resonant-side tuning is so important.

You can also get great bass drum sounds using my methods when the resonant head has a small hole cut out of it, or even with a pillow inside of the drum. But you'll be much happier with the sound when you don't have a hole in it. It's the movement of air from the impact of the batter side to the resonant side that gives you a big, three-dimensional sound, on any-size bass drum.

More tuning tips from Jeff can be found on his DVD, Trust Your Ears, and at his Web site, www.drumtree.com.



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Joseph Callice

Simon COLLINS Playing The Perfect. Phil

As the son of drumming and pop icon Phil Collins, Simon Collins grew up with music in his genes. But one listen to his impressive new solo album, *U-Catastrophe*, and you'll realize that Collins the younger is a talented artist and drummer in his own right.

Simon picked up the drumsticks at a very early age due to his father's inspiration, and songwriting wasn't far behind. When asked whether comparisons to his father, as a singer and as a drummer, are upsetting, Collins answers, "The only time it's upsetting is when people can't look or hear past that, and see that I have my own artistic capabilities. Our voices are undeniably similar. And I do what I do because of him, directly. I grew up on the road and I grew up listening to all of his records. Although I was rehearsing a lot to other bands when I first started playing drums, really, in essence, I learned to play by drumming along to his records and playing behind Chester Thompson and my dad during the drum duets at Genesis concerts.

"I absorbed all of that like a huge sponge," Simon says. "When I was young, whether it was on the drums, piano, or vocals, those influences were all right there in front of me. So yes, there's a similarity. But because of a generational gap, there are a lot of other things in me as well, stuff that makes up my own musical experience."

U-Catastrophe is Simon's first release in the United States. For the project, he teamed with Kevin Churko, who's known for his association with legendary producer Mutt Lange. Kevin had them record each vocal line separately, which Collins said was an arduous

process. But he also says the plan allowed him to release his passion more effectively. "Every word has so much energy, conviction, and power," he says, admitting that the year was a tough one—and that the album reflects that. "It's about my own personal uphill battle that I've been dealing with, and the climb back out of the trenches over the last few years."

One of the album's tracks is an amazing drum duet with his father called "The Big Bang." Interestingly, father and son didn't record their parts at the same time. "My part was recorded in Kevin's dining room," Simon relates, "miked everywhere we possibly could for that big-room drum sound. I wrote the arrangement myself, recorded my drums, and then sent it in an email to my dad. He then recorded his parts at the Tone Factory.

"There are some fills on the track that my Dad taught me," Simon goes on, "and that was great fun. And now, it's fun to listen to the song to try to decipher who is who." (Hint: Simon's in the left channel and Phil is in the right.)

Collins hopes to take a live band out to perform his material, mostly fronting the band, much like his dad. "But I'll be behind the kit more this time than previous times because of songs like 'The Big Bang,' which will be a highlight of the show. Also, it's been difficult finding another drummer who can replicate Dad's parts. I've said to other drummers wanting to play, 'You know, you've got to play his parts—and they're pretty damn good.'"

Robyn Flans

Black Stone Cherry's John Fred YOUNG

Rock 'N' Roll Storytelling



Jane Mattingly

Black Stone Cherry drew on their Kentucky heritage for their second album, *Folklore And Superstition*. "We love the mysterious stories that we grew up hearing, so we dug up some of those," says drummer John Fred Young. "Bluegrass and Appalachian songs are stories put to music. Same with a lot of blues. So we're like rock 'n' roll storytellers."

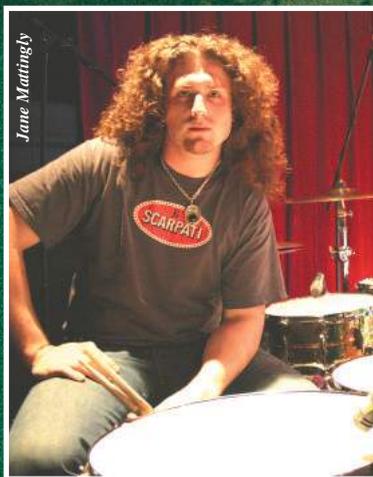
One song, "The Ghost Of Floyd Collins," features a spoken intro by John Fred's uncle, Kentucky Headhunters drummer Fred Young. "Whenever we're home, we try to sit down and play together," John Fred says. "I never cease to learn something from that man."

Since the release of Black Stone Cherry's debut CD two years ago, the band has toured non-stop. For John Fred, one of the best aspects of being on the road is meeting and learning from a variety of drummers. "You can always trade secrets and tips," he says. "We just got back from Europe doing the Def Leppard and Whitesnake tour, and I got to hang out with Rick Allen. He's got kind of an under-stage cage he can come down and sit in, and he would let me sit in there and watch him every night."

Some grooves on *Folklore And Superstition* were inspired by Ringo Starr. "On 'Reverend Wrinkle,' 'Blind Man,' and a couple of others, I'm playing 8th notes on the ride and playing hi-hat with my foot on the '&s.' When you do that, and you're going to the bell of the ride for the accents, it's like you're riding a roller coaster. On 'Sgt. Pepper,' Ringo didn't do that with his foot, but he was accenting the '&s' on the closed hi-hat. That makes it swing more than if you just played 'tick tick tick tick.'"

"When you try to learn something that somebody else did, nine times out of ten you're never going to play it the way they played it," John Fred says. "But it's going to open a door to where you come up with your own thing based upon the idea you went after."

Rick Mattingly



Jane Mattingly



John McLaughlin's Ranjit BAROT

Hot Like Curry

Ranjit Barot has the reputation of being one of the best drummers in all of India. Just ask guitarist John McLaughlin, who tapped Barot to perform on his latest album, *Floating Point*. The new project is a jazz-fusion extravaganza performed predominately by Indian musicians, who recorded their tracks in Chennai, India.

The forty-something Barot was born in the UK. His mother was a well-known classically trained dancer from India, so naturally his ears were accustomed to traditional Indian music. But it was the drums that really caught the young boy's imagination.

Barot is completely self-taught, yet his bravado is formidable, his chops advanced. It only takes a few minutes of hearing *Floating Point's* first track, "Aggaji (For Alla Rakha)" for listeners to begin wondering, Who *is* this cat?

The multi-talented drummer, who has also established a career in the Bollywood film industry scoring and producing music, recalls that at first it was a bit of a grind to conquer the mechanics of the drums with few visual reference points. "And there was very little audio you could scrounge up," he recalls. "We would have to wait for a friend of a friend to come from abroad with vinyl or cassettes."

"The rhythmic part of my upbringing was completely environmental," Barot continues. "It was all around me. I was blessed to be able to see and be in the company of so many great musicians. Being my mother's son opened a lot of doors for me."

Barot was honored to take lessons from one of India's most venerated tabla masters, rhythm wizard Zakir Hussain's father, Ustad Allah Rakha. "He understood that drumset was really my true calling, so he encouraged me in that direction."

Barot, like Trilok Gurtu and his counterpoint percussionist on *Floating Point*, Sivamani, is one of several Indian musicians who bring their country's sophisticated rhythmic sensibilities to a Western invention—the modern drumset. "I let the rhythms of my country enter me, almost like by osmosis," says Barot. "Then I bring that ideology to the drumset, as opposed to literally transposing Indian rhythmic structures on the drums. I play drums with a strong Indian 'thought,' so to speak."

Robert Kaye



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Drumming To Feed The Soul



"I've been lucky to play with some amazing people, and I learned so much from them. I took all this knowledge and put it in a blender. The juice from this blender is *Banquet Of Spirits*." This colorful metaphor is how percussionist Cyro Baptista describes his new album. The recording is an international aural feast, ranging from "Nana & Tom," a deconstructed version of Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Waters Of March," to the Moroccan soul of "Lamento Mourisco," as well as compositions by pioneering trumpeter Don Cherry.

Baptista's compositions focused less on his native Brazil and more on pan-global sounds. "Living in New York, with so many different cultures, was also a big influence on my writing," explains Baptista, who has lived in this country for twenty-eight years and has performed with Sting, Paul Simon, and Trey Anastasio, among many others.

As a percussionist, Baptista—the archetype of taste—plays only for the music. "The way I play, I always look to orchestrate the sounds," he comments. For this CD, Cyro also utilized a lot of found sounds, like typewriters and kitchen pots. "It's a lot of things I found in my environment, so it's like I orchestrate the environment."

The core band on the recording was recruited from his numerous projects, which include collaborations with saxophonist John Zorn, who co-produced *Banquet*, as well as Baptista's other group, Beat The Donkey. This musical open-mindedness even led to dancehall sensation Matisyahu performing with the band at its release party, which was held at New York's Joe's Pub.

Banquet took nine months to record due to Baptista's busy schedule, which won't let up anytime soon. In addition to touring behind this album, Cyro's got the next Beat The Donkey record in the can and slated for release soon. There's also more playing with Zorn, a recording with jazz legend Dave Brubeck and cellist Yo-Yo Ma, and yet another with guitarist Kevin Breit, a frequent collaborator in vocalist Cassandra Wilson's band.

Despite this frenetic pace, Baptista appreciates all the opportunities available to him. "With all this work, I'm so happy you won't believe it!"

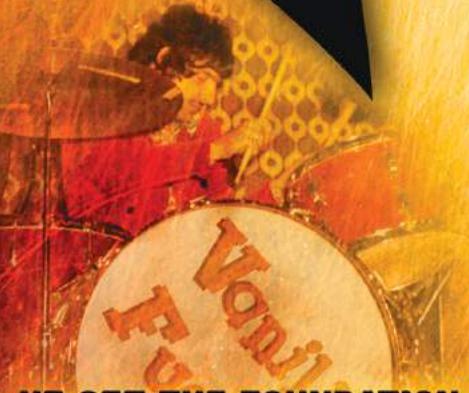
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UPDATE NEWS

Swingin' hard and playin' quite adventurously, **Jonathan Blake** tears it up on The Donny McCaslin Trio's latest, *Recommended Tools*.

New York Dolls and session drummer **Brian Delaney** is on Lucy Woodward's latest, *Hot & Bothered*. **Steve Williams** is filling in on the live shows.

Chester Thompson is on the Steve Cropper & Felix Cavaliere collaboration, *Nudge It Up A Notch*.

Craig Barnette is on Donavon Frankenreiter's *Pass It Around*.

Los Angeles-based drummer **Kevin Stevens** has been on the road with actress/singer Minnie Driver and Chilean pop superstar Beto Cuevas. Stevens will also be doing festivals internationally with Neon Neon for the remainder of the year.

John Blackwell spent the summer touring Japan with Japanese pop star Double. The concerts were filmed for her upcoming DVD, *Live From Tokyo*.

Brooklyn's **T. Motts** is playing and recording with Serial Obsession.

Next time you're online, check out **Carmine Appice** and SLAMM's Nascar video "SLAMMCAR," on YouTube.

Fountains Of Wayne's **Brian Young** is on the self-titled debut by singer-songwriter Alex Woodard.

Earl Young, Morris Jennings Jr., and Bernard Purdie are on The Manhattan's box set *Sweet Talking Soul: 1965-1990*.

Floyd Sneed is on *Three Dog Night: Greatest Hits Live*.

Ulysses Owens is touring with Kurt Elling. Between dates with Elling, he's also performing with Russell Malone and with Dr. Lonnie Smith.

Teri Cote has joined the Rogue Suspects, who recently opened for Tower Of Power.

Uriah Heep is back with a new CD, *Wake The Sleeper*. It's the band's first album without their long-standing, original drummer, **Lee Kerslake**, who sadly had to leave the band due to ill health. Filling the drum stool on the album and on tour is **Russell Gilbrook**.



Alex Solca

DRUM DATES

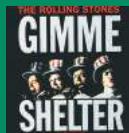
This month's important events in drumming history

Billy Gladstone was born on 12/15/1892, **Warren "Baby" Dodds** on 12/24/1898, **Tony Williams** on 12/12/45, **Cozy Powell** on 12/29/47, and **Dennis Wilson** on 12/4/44. Wilson passed away on 12/28/83, original Byrds drummer **Michael Clarke** on 12/19/93, and jazz great **Don Lamond** on 12/23/03.

12/09/64: The John Coltrane Quartet (with drummer **Elvin Jones**) records the classic *A Love Supreme*.

12/14/68: The Beatles release their self-titled double album, a.k.a. *The White Album*, with **Ringo Starr** on drums. It debuts at number-1 on the US charts, where it will remain for nine weeks.

12/6/69: The Rolling Stones (with **Charlie Watts**) play a free concert at Altamont Raceway in Livermore, California. The doomed event, which also featured The Jefferson Airplane, The Flying Burrito Brothers, and Ike & Tina Turner, was captured for posterity in the film *Gimme Shelter*.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Ed Thigpen (brush master): 12/28/30

Dave Clark (The Dave Clark Five): 12/15/42

Allan Schwartzberg (session great): 12/28/42

Alex Acuña (LA percussion great): 12/12/44

Bobby Colomby

(Blood, Sweat & Tears): 12/20/44

John Densmore (The Doors): 12/1/45

Clive Bunker (Jethro Tull): 12/12/46

Carmine Appice (rock legend): 12/15/46

Peter Criss (KISS): 12/20/45

Jim Bonfanti (The Raspberries): 12/17/48

Lenny White (Return To Forever): 12/19/49

Terry Bozzio (solo artist): 12/27/50

Richie Morales (Spyro Gyra, Mike Stern): 12/8/52

Buddy Williams (SNL/sessions): 12/17/52

Sheila E (percussion star): 12/12/57

Sonny Emory (Earth, Wind & Fire): 12/27/62

Lars Ulrich (Metallica): 12/26/63

Glen Graham (Blind Melon): 12/5/68

Marco Minnemann (Illegal Aliens): 12/24/70

Tré Cool (Green Day): 12/9/72

Josh Freese (sessions): 12/25/72

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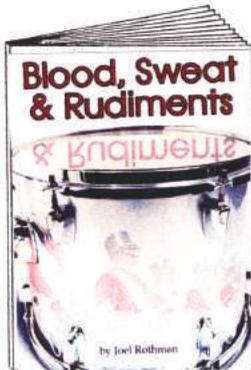
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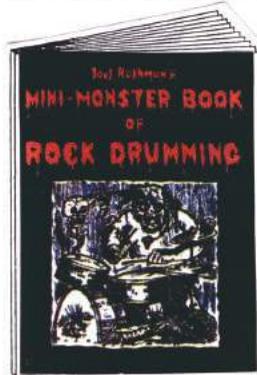
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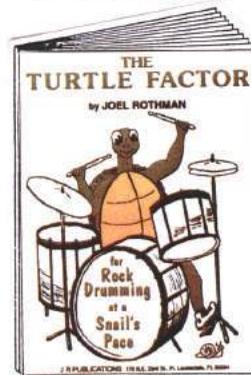
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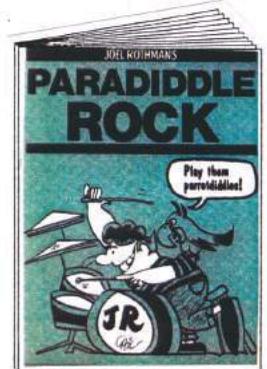
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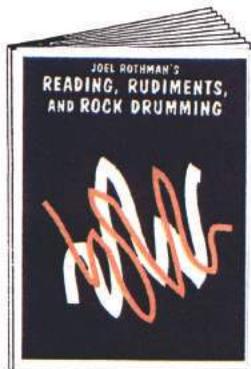
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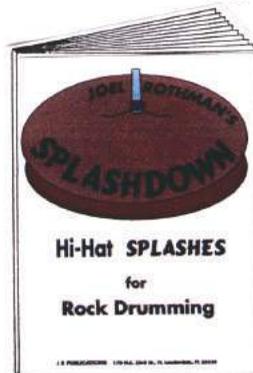
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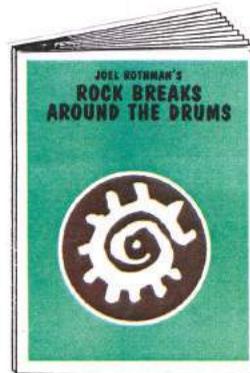
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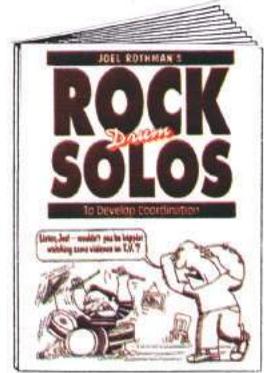
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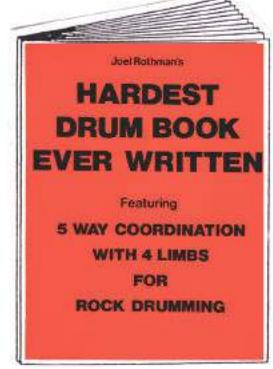
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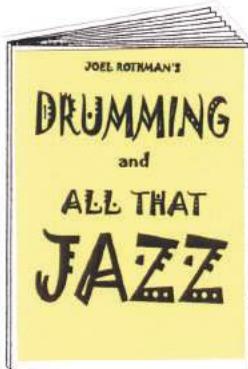
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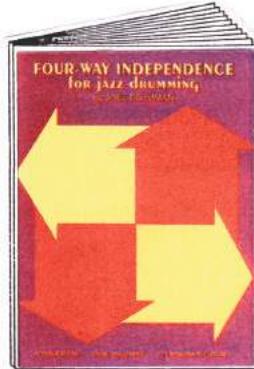
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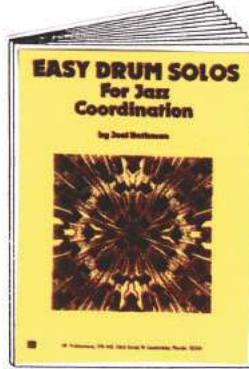
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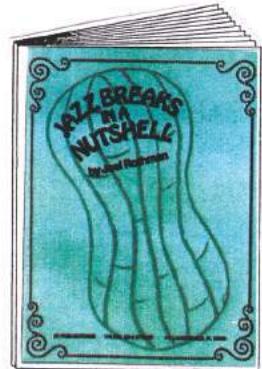
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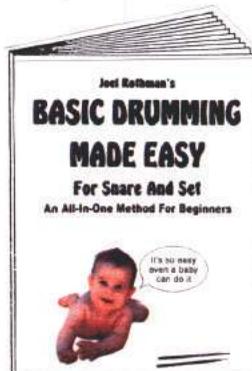
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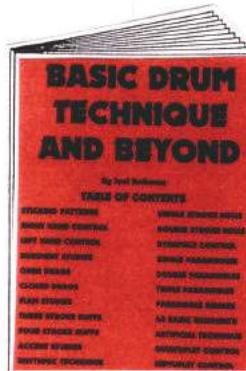
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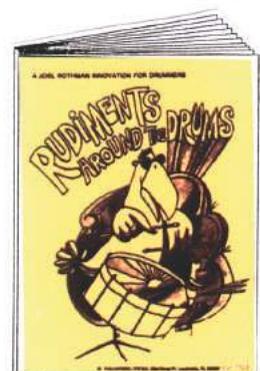
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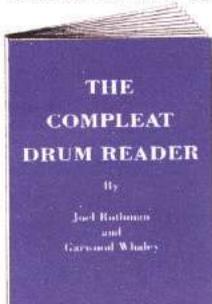


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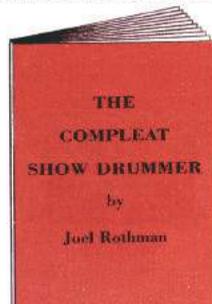
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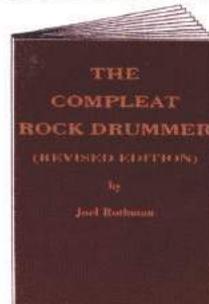
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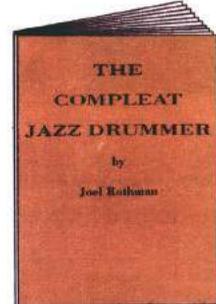
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Canopus

Carbon Fiber Kit

by Anthony Riscica

While other drum companies in the past have manufactured carbon fiber kits, Canopus' s idea was to create a new level of performance from this space-age material. Carbon fiber is known for its extremely loud tendencies, similar to the hardest of hardwoods. But not much attention has been paid to the quality of that explosive sound. That' s where Canopus' s engineers and researchers stepped in—to build a high-end carbon fiber kit that blends volume with substance. Let' s see how well they achieved that goal.

Under The Microscope

For review, we received a six-piece set consisting of 7x10, 8x12, and 9x13 rack toms, a 15x16 floor tom, an 18x22 kick, and a 5 1/2x14 snare (a different configuration than the one shown in the photo). The rack toms are outfitted with standard floating rim mounts that attach to the tension rods. The lugs are very low-mass, with a round button shape. Each tension rod is

equipped with one metal washer sandwiched between two rubber washers. I' m a fan of rubber washers on tension rods, due to their non-slip qualities, so it' s nice to see a company offering this unique combination of metal and rubber. The futuristic "waffled" finish on these drums is in fact the natural look of carbon fiber. It' s a cool feature that has an almost 3-D effect.

All of the toms have the same overall shell construction, but with slightly different bearing edges. The floor tom edge is cut at less of an angle than those of the rack toms, giving it a slightly shorter sustain. What I really liked about the edges was their





CANOPUS' S CARBON FIBER SHELLS are made by sandwiching high- and low-density resin between layers of carbon fiber, with the low-density resin in the middle of the shell and the high-density resin towards the edges. The bearing edges differ from drum to drum, which is said to maximize each drum's tone and sustain. (This variance in edge design carries through all high-end Canopus lines.) This added detail highlights the company's dedication to building fine instruments.

consistency. Since these drums aren't made from an organic material like wood, the manufacturers have the ability to make a flawless edge, which they've done here.

The edges on all of the drums are also slightly rounded towards the outside of the shell. This allows for a flush fit, while keeping shell-to-head contact to a minimum. The toms came with standard triple-flange hoops and Remo coated Ambassador heads on top and bottom. The mounts and legs for the floor tom were solid, which is what you'd expect on a high-quality kit.

The kick drum came with a Remo Ultra White head on the batter and a standard black resonant head. The hoops are made from what appeared to be bird's-eye maple with a black sparkle lacquer around the outside. While there was no rubber or felt on the contact side of the claws—which I'm a fan of—they're precisely shaped to conform to the edge of the hoop, giving them a snuggler-than-normal fit. When I first picked up this drum, I was excited by how light it was for transport purposes. But I was also concerned that the bass drum would fly away when I laid into it. This was not the case, though. The spurs on the kick are high-quality and beefy (but not too beefy), which helps to keep the drum solidly in place.

The snare came with a coated Ambassador on top and a snare-side Ambassador on the bottom. The edge of this drum was less angled than those of the toms, which helped cut down the sustained ring that you get with harder materials. The die-cast hoops add to the already explosive sound of the carbon fiber, while the lugs are double-sided in order to cut down the amount of hardware on the drum. The Canopus brand throw-off has a standard shape, but works smoothly, regardless of the amount of tension I had on the twenty-strand snares. The throw-off also featured drum key-adjustable butt plates, which is the only way it should be these days.

Thunder And Lightning

Carbon fiber is loud. But that was pretty much Canopus' idea, as this set is designed for hard-hitting drummers who want the volume and cutting ability these drums provide. The drums also sound better the harder you hit them (to an extent, of course). While they're not ideal for closed-in

areas, such as small clubs or studio/rehearsal spaces, they did have a huge presence when I finally got to use them in a larger venue.

As expected, these drums sacrifice a bit of warmth for volume, which puts their tone closer to that of metal drums or ones made of harder woods, like oak. For that reason, I felt that the provided coated single-ply Ambassadors were not the ideal heads for the toms. I swapped them out for some clear Emperors, which helped round out the sound a bit.

The kick was huge-sounding right off the bat, with nothing inside for muffling. (I know it's becoming a bit cliché but the first thing I thought of was Bonham and thunder, which are pretty much synonymous.) The snare cracks when tuned up high and has loads of projection. But I preferred a little looser tension, which gave the drum a rounder "thud" while still making its way through the music. When muffled a bit, the drums became more suitable for close miking. I put some Moongels on the toms and snare and an old pillow in the kick. This helped cut down the sustain, which let me hear a little more attack. I also tried a range of tuning on the toms and never found any dead spots, so there's a myriad of pitch possibilities.

The Price You Pay...

The list price on this six-piece kit is—brace yourself—\$17,963. I knew carbon fiber was expensive, but I nearly fell off my seat when I added up the prices (Canopus drums are sold as individual kit pieces), especially when considering the somewhat restricted application of these drums. I don't usually like bringing this much attention to the price of musical equipment, because if something grabs my ear I'll usually dish out the dough, regardless of how ridiculously expensive it may be. But in this case, the price seemed to be pretty significant to the overall review.

A Million Little Fibers

If you want some of the loudest, most explosive drums on the market, then these Carbon Fiber drums should be considered. (That's if the cost doesn't scare you away!) Canopus really does offer a level of high-end construction and sound from this man-made material that'll knock your socks off, as well as those of anyone who happens to be walking by when you rip into them.

THE NUMBERS

7x10 tom: \$1,457
8x12 tom: \$1,850
9x13 tom: \$2,125
15x16 floor tom: \$4,127
18x22 kick: \$7,044
5 1/2x14 snare: \$1,360
canopusdrums.com



Sabian

Vault Crossover Ride And Jojo Mayer Signature Fierce Hats

by Stephen Bidwell

Sabian's ever-expanding Vault series features two new additions, the 21" Crossover ride and the 13" Fierce Hats. Designed for modern fusion master Jojo Mayer, the Fierce Hats deliver a cutting but earthy palette that could be useful to many players as their main or alternate hi-hats. The Crossover is a unique and versatile ride that works comfortably in numerous styles and can deftly function as both a conventional ride and as a rich, dark crash.

Fierce Hats

The 13" Fierce hi-hats join the 21" ride and 16"–19" crashes in Jojo Mayer's signature line. They have a raw, dark, unlathed surface pocked with large hammer marks, which is a visual parallel of their dry and trashy sound. The pair that we received for review wasn't labeled in terms of which cymbal was "top" or "bottom." But since most hats are paired with the lighter cymbal on top and the heavier one on the bottom, it was pretty easy to figure out, especially considering that one weighed twice as much as the other.

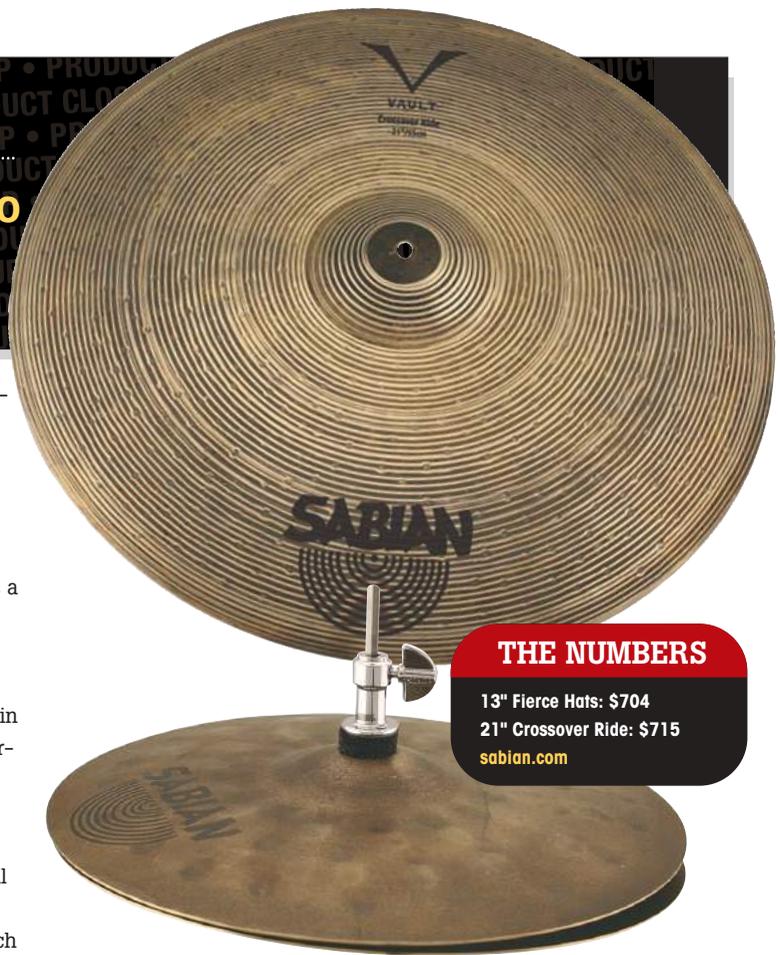
The Fierce Hats offer a substantial "chick" sound with considerable bite that can cut through amplified instruments, but might not be favorable in acoustic situations. Left-foot splashes create a dry clang with a short decay, and the cymbals' small size makes for cutting but dry stick definition. The heavy weight of the bottom cymbal also adds a chunky quality when playing the hats with the tip or shank of a stick. For those used to thinner hi-hats, these have a pretty rigid feel. But they would probably work really well in a funk session or something along the lines of the instrumental drum 'n' bass Jojo is known for.

Some cursory Web research tells me that a lot of people have been waiting for these hats since Sabian's Jojo Mayer Signature Fierce line was launched a few years back. They would be great as a main or auxiliary set for someone wanting dry, thicker hats that can cut through amplified instruments.

21" Crossover Ride

Sabian's Crossover ride is a unique piece of B20 bronze that has some light lathing and a distressed look on top, with a clean machine-lathed underside. Sabian claims that this cymbal can function as a crash and as a ride, and that it can "cross over" musical styles very successfully. Playing swing time with an acorn-beaded stick sounded convincing in a small-group jazz setting, but in some rooms this cymbal produced a gong-like overtone. There isn't much time wasted looking for a sweet spot, as striking with the tip anywhere around the bow of the cymbal produced a consistent sound.

Switching to a bigger stick with a round tip produced a bolder, more articulate sound, making the Crossover ride more useful in



THE NUMBERS

13" Fierce Hats: \$704
21" Crossover Ride: \$715
sabian.com

amplified music. The bell is on the small side, which makes it sound a little shrill in an acoustic setting but allows it to cut just right in moderately loud situations.

As a crash, this cymbal delivers a sizeable but not overwhelmingly dark sound that works great for accents in soft and loud jazz contexts, as well as when bashing it home in medium- to high-volume rock songs. Playing the Crossover with mallets produces dark swells with a warm but glassy decay.

I enjoyed the crash-ride capabilities of the 21" Crossover ride when I was touring in a blues band, as it had the right amount of ping and wash. I brought it on small jazz gigs, and it felt comfortable enough. But I would love to hear what it would sound like with a few rivets. I also used the Crossover for a few shows with a singer/songwriter, and it fit right in, both as a crash and as a ride. And with my high-volume post-rock band, I used it as a crash—with mallets—and as a ride. While at times it was too dark to compete with this band's multiple high-wattage guitar rigs, it was a nice contrast to the brighter-sounding Bonham-esque cymbal setup I usually use with that group.

Conclusions

Sabian is constantly providing new sounds for drummers in pursuit of their own sound, and these additions to the Vault series certainly deliver something unique. The 13" Jojo Mayer Signature Fierce Hats offer a cutting sound with an earthy personality that many players could be searching for, and the 21" Crossover ride combines a warm crash and a versatile dark ride that can prove useful in many musical styles.



by Michael Dawson

TRUTH

7x13 MAPLE/ACRYLIC CHAMBERED HYBRID



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Truth has four levels of custom drums. Custom 1 drums feature maple or birch shells with standard, sparkle, or vintage wraps and satin stains. The Custom 2 line offers high-gloss stain lacquers, satin exotic wood finishes, striped wraps, and acrylic shells. Custom 3 adds exotic woods, painted metallics, fades, and bursts.

For his personal snare, Truth east coast rep Ryan Robinson chose to go with a top-of-the-line Custom 4 setup so that he could create a one-of-a-kind drum of his own design, which is modeled after his mom and his sisters' favorite Coach "Scribble" handbag. Always looking for "the craziest thing possible," Robinson also chose a unique 30-ply chambered-hybrid shell that consists of a maple/acrylic/maple outer shell with an inner shell of maple. Further customizations include offset air vents (with huge vents cut into the acrylic), paired 50% offset lugs, off-white powder-coated hardware, and gold-plated tension rods ("just like the bag").

Okay, so the drum looks cool and all that. But does it stand up to its \$3,000 pricetag sonically? If I were playing this drum blindfolded, I'd probably say, "That's a sweet-sounding wood snare." But there wasn't really anything *super* exceptional about its sound. It's pretty sensitive for a drum this thick, and the tone has a lot of crack with a somewhat round and mellow attack, which ends up helping control the "bite" when you really tighten it up. And volume-wise, this thing can handle a lot of pressure without starting to choke. However, there wasn't anything from a performance perspective—good or bad—that really stood out. It's all about the visual impact. So maybe that's Truth's point: No matter how far you want to go by customizing your drum's *look*, it's always going to sound like a solid high-end snare. truthdrums.com



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Taye

GoKit

by Dave Previ

THE NUMBERS

Five piece GoKit with
hardware: \$1,399
tayedrums.com



As a drummer in New York City who doesn't own a car, I have a deep appreciation for compact drums. Lightweight drums and hardware are a must when moving drums to gigs via cabs, subways, and busses. (You've got to have some energy left for the music once you get to the club!) Taye's GoKit certainly holds its own as a lightweight drumkit that also sounds pretty good. Here's "the skinny."

On The Go

After playing the GoKit in my apartment for a couple of days (with brushes), I packed it up and moved it to my rehearsal space. The 6x12 floating floor tom, 5x13 snare, and 7x18 bass drum fit into a 16x18 bass drum bag, the 5x8 and 5 1/2 x 10 toms fit into an 8x12 tom bag, and the hardware folded up into a small hardware case. (Taye offers three cases especially for the GoKit, which can also hold cymbals, throne tops, and a double pedal.) The three cases that I used fit easily onto my fold-up hand truck. So the twelve-block walk to my studio was as easy as it usually is. This five-piece kit really packs up tight!

Setting up the GoKit is a breeze, due to the thumbscrew-adjustable memory locks that Taye uses on all its mounts. All of the

mounts held their position after making the trip to my studio, so each drum sat exactly as I had it in my apartment.

More Sound Than Expected

For drums with such shallow shell depths, the GoKit toms have a surprising amount of sustain. Each one has a clear tone that's suitable for high-energy funk fills, solo-supporting jazz licks, chorus-building rock hits, or colorful accents in a ballad. Their attack was quick and bright. And if you swap out the single-ply coated Dynatone heads for something a little thicker, you might even be able to pull off a convincing rock 'n' roll sound (if you keep your eyes closed, of course).

The 12" mounted floor tom was the most impressive drum of the three toms because of its warm, loud tone and long sustain. I liked how this drum meshed with the snare for 8th-note builds and for rolling hand/foot triplet patterns. It's sound was much larger than I expected, almost as if it were an actual floor tom.

The bass drum, while not sounding as impressive behind the kit as it did from the front—and lacking a certain amount of projection—had a low-end punch that seemed impossible for its size. The 8"

and 10" toms were bright and clear, and the snare had enough attack and ring to make it equally at home within a full-size kit.

Multi-Purpose Hardware With Minor Drawbacks

I found two pieces of hardware on the GoKit to be the weakest parts of the setup. For one, the snare basket rotates in a ball & socket joint that positions the center of the snare away from the center of the tripod base. Because of this off-balanced positioning, even the slightest bump with my thigh sent the snare tipping towards the toms. And if you use clip-on mics, the drum is even more prone to falling. This got annoying after a while. Also, the 10" and 12" toms tip forward within their RIMS-type suspension mounting system, which can make it a little tough to find your ideal positioning.

The other hardware pieces of the GoKit work fine. The hi-hat stand and cymbal boom are lightweight but sturdy, and the bass drum pedal is on par with most I've played. The rack tom mount holds a cymbal arm, and the floor tom attaches to a mount on a cymbal stand, so you have plenty of options for positioning drums and cymbals while also eliminating the need for extra stands.

Self-Attenuating Circumstances

The GoKit would work well in any small-venue acoustic situation, not only because it takes up minimal space, but also because the small sizes and short shell depths help limit the decibel level these drums can produce. That's not to say that these drums



sound weak, they just sound best when played at a soft to medium volume. If pushed too hard, they'll choke. But that's true with any drum if it's overplayed.

As a performance instrument, the GoKit would sound best at softer restaurant/bar gigs and weddings. It would also work great as a teaching kit in your private studio, as a mobile kit if you travel to your students, or as a rehearsal kit with your band. For what they are, these drums have a quality sound that stands up to that of any other portable drumkit on the market.

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Drum Workshop

Daniel De Los Reyes Practice Pro

by Mike Ramsey

The Practice Pro is not your typical gum-rubber practice pad. Built to the specifications of famed percussionist Daniel de los Reyes (Sheryl Crow, Peter Frampton, Drum Jungle), this product is designed to be an all-inclusive tool for practicing Latin percussion, in particular congas and timbales.

Conga On One Side...

Since I live in an apartment building in Brooklyn, New York, when I got the Practice Pro I was excited. Here was a compact and quiet way to practice some of my favorite percussion instruments.

One side of the Practice Pro is a conga practice pad. It's essentially the top of a conga drum, without the shell beneath it. This design allows you to practice hand drum techniques without having to lug around a heavy conga. The Practice Pro has a Remo Fiberskyn head that's approximately 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ " in diameter, which is similar to the feel of a quinto, the smallest drum in a traditional grouping of three congas.

..Timbales On The Other

While DW and Reyes could have simply released a conga practice tool by itself, they decided to up the ante by adding an entirely different practice tool on the underside. If you flip the Practice Pro over, so that the conga is upside down, there's a multi-surface practice pad that mimics a timbale setup, complete with mounts for a set of rubber cowbells. The drum pad is made of two surfaces, one white rubber and one black, which serve as the two drums in a set of timbales (the high-pitched macho and the larger, lower-pitched hembra).

It's important to note that the Practice Pro features a metal rim. This allows you to practice rimshots, which is a technique that is ubiquitous in timbale playing. The rubber timbale pad is removable, so you can take it out and use it as a regular practice pad.

The rubber cowbell assembly has two surfaces; one simulates a mambo bell and the other a cha-cha bell or clave block. The two rubber cowbells feature different densities, so each one has a mouth (low) and body (high) sound. The difference in sound is subtle, but it allows you to get into the headspace of real timbale playing at a low volume. When practicing with this side of the pad, I imagined I was playing two bells together, a bell and clave block, or even a bell and cymbal.



It Is What It Is

Between the two sides of the Practice Pro, you're able to cover many of the bases of Latin percussion and drumming. I found that it was a very effective practice tool unlike any that I've seen. But it's important to understand that this is a practice tool and is not meant to reproduce the exact sound of the congas or timbales.

That said, if you remove the piece of muffling foam in the middle of the pad, the conga sound becomes closer to that of the real thing. But I preferred leaving the foam in for a quieter sound and muffled feel when I was practicing my conga chops. You could use the Practice Pro with the foam removed in a performance situation, either in a percussion setup or as part of your drumkit. But you'll likely have to close-mike it. Open tones and slaps sound thinner than those of a full-size conga, and there's not much bass at all. However, given its small size, the Practice Pro could be a funky addition to a setup in certain situations.

I practiced conga tones on the Practice Pro while watching television and holding the pad on my lap. I also used it in my practice studio for timbale practice, with the pad mounted on a snare drum stand. The entire unit is a little too big to take on a flight as a carry-on, especially since some airlines are now charging for checked bags. So for an out-of-town gig, I took just the rubber disc with me, in place of my normal practice pad. As a regular snare drum practice pad it was a little thin and light for my taste, but I'm used to playing on a heavy practice pad when I do stick-work on a hotel bed. Had I been going out on a car trip instead of a flight, or on a long tour, I definitely would have considered taking the entire Practice Pro with me so I could work on my hand drumming technique too.

Practice Pamphlet

The accompanying pamphlet, which includes exercises and background written by Reyes, is invaluable. It contains a lot of information for young players or pros who might be new to Latin music. (I wish that I had something like this when I was starting out!) Reyes covers basic information about clave, independence, and technique exercises, and he defines common terminology and describes some of the stylistic aspects of Latin music. He also describes the abanico, which is a fill that's played on the timbales between song sections in certain Afro-Cuban styles. There's even a section on proper breathing, stretching, and posture. This pamphlet is a great tool. My only complaint is that the print is very small; it would be nice if they would increase its size.

All In All

The Practice Pro is a unique tool that serves its purpose quite well, making it ideal for anyone who wants to get into Latin percussion. You'll need a good teacher to help get your conga and timbale technique up and running. But once you know what to practice, the Practice Pro will prove to be a valuable tool to help develop your Latin percussion skills—especially considering you don't have to deal with the size, weight, or volume of actual congas or timbales.

THE NUMBERS

DW Practice Pro: \$299.99
dwdrums.com

istanbul
Mehmet handmade Cymbals from Turkey

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Mehmet Tamdeğer

Mikhael Zilçan

Kirkor Küçükian

Performance Set:
20" Ride
16" Crash
14" HiHat

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Istanbul Mehmet

X-FX And EFES Cymbals

by Anthony Riscica

From a company with a reputation for excellence like Istanbul Mehmet, you'd expect great-sounding cymbals produced with traditional craftsmanship. I recently had a chance to try out their new X-FX series cymbals, as well as some of their new EFES line. Unfortunately, I have to say that the former didn't really do much to enhance my otherwise good opinion of this brand and their products. But the EFES ride, China, and splash were another story.

X-FX Special Effects Cymbals

The X-FX line is Istanbul Mehmet's entrance into the growing special effects market that's increasingly popular among drummers of all styles. All of the X-FX cymbals have a semi-brilliant finish with loads of hand hammering across the entire surface, with the exception of the bell, which is finely lathed. The rest of the cymbals' surface is hammered, but unlathed.

While I appreciate Istanbul Mehmet's efforts, it seems as though they simply took their high-quality cymbals and loaded them up with rivets, which in most cases actually kills the sound of the instrument. Each time I hit one of these cymbals I thought to myself, "I wonder what this beautiful cymbal would sound like without all these rivets?" That being said, let's take a look at the cymbals individually to see how each model sizes up.

16" And 17" Fat Bell Crash

These 16" and 17" crashes have a slightly oversized bell and are relatively thin, as far as modern crashes go. The 16" was fitted with six rivets around the perimeter, while the 17" had eight. On first strike, I have to say I was not very impressed. The rivets really deaden the sound of the cymbal, leaving only the low overtones. They also force a premature decay. Fortunately the volume wasn't compromised, so the cymbal can still be heard in a live situation. I tried most of these X-FX cymbals in rock and drum 'n' bass settings, because those styles often call for effected sounds. Even in these applications, though, it was hard to find places where these cymbals fit well. The crashes, however, could probably hold their own if stripped of the rivets.



Flat Crash

The Flat crash's construction is similar to that of the Fat Bell crash, only there's no bell. The area where the bell would normally be is lathed, however, just like the Fat Bell crashes. Again, when I crashed these cymbals, they weren't very pleasing to the ear. (Call me crazy, but even when a cymbal is supposed to sound nasty and trashy, I still want it to sound musical.) By design, a flat crash is a little strange, since you usually want crashes to cut through the music. By making a cymbal flat, you take away a lot of overtones, volume, and decay. Then when you add rivets into the equation (eight in the 17" and ten in the 18"), you're left with almost no volume and, again, a premature end to the sustain.

I also tried these flat models as rides, which yielded better results with nice stick articulation. But still, they didn't have enough presence to carry through in a live setting. In the studio, I could individually mike them, which allowed me to better balance them in the mix.

Zheng China

The Zheng Chinas are small (14" and 15") with the same aesthetic as the crashes, including rivets. Unlike the other cymbals in the line, though, these had good volume and a decent trashy sound. The 15" gave a little dip in tone when struck firmly, which I found interesting. These cymbals can be used in the same way you would any other China, as the rivets don't really change the sound that much. These were my favorite of the entire X-FX line.





THE NUMBERS

X-FX cymbals range from **\$185** for the 7" Flat Bell to **\$520** for the 17" Flat Crash.

The 8" EFES splash lists for **\$184**, the 16" China is **\$530**, and the 20" Professional Ride costs **\$637**.

istanbulmehmet.com



X-FX Splashes

The thin 8" and 9" X-FX splashes differ in appearance from the rest of the line. They're entirely lathed with a milder hammering pattern and no brilliance to the finish. They also feature a raw 1" band around the edge. Sonically, I had the same dilemma that I had with the crashes, if not more so. Being that thin splashes decay quickly on their own, adding rivets only makes the sound disappear quicker, with an abrupt stop to the sound. Again, I was a bit frustrated because I'm sure these splashes would sound great sans rivets.

Flat Bell

The 6" and 8" Flat Bells represent the most original sound in the X-FX line. Featuring a brilliant finish across the entire surface except for the middle portion on the bottom, these heavy discs produce a distinct tone when struck with a stick. (The 6" was roughly a G above middle C, the 8" a whole step below that.)

With the rivets, the Flat Bells produce a glassy, shimmering sound that, if used in the right places, can be an interesting effect. The coolest effect I found was when I hit it along with the snare on backbeats, which created a sound I'd never heard before. You can also ride on them, as long as you tighten down the felts on your cymbal stand. Otherwise, they flop around like a fish.

EFES 20" Professional Ride, China, And Splash

New to the EFES line are a 20" Professional ride, a 16" China, and an 8" splash. The ride is a beautiful, classic-looking model that's completely lathed and hand hammered. The China and the splash are also lathed, but they have a raw appearance with round dimple

hammer marks that make them look like they sound—dirty (in a good way, of course).

The Professional ride was instantly pleasing to the ear. It had nice, dark overtones that didn't overpower the attack even when I hit it with some strength. The overtones also remained in check when I played at faster velocities, making it a great jazz combo cymbal. This ride also produced a complex tone when crashed with the side of the stick. The bell sound might not cut that well, but it's dark and semi-sweet, like good chocolate. Even a non-musician friend of mine tapped on it and said, "That's a nice cymbal." I agree.

The 16" EFES China was trashy, but not "all-consuming" as Chinas can sometimes be. It also didn't have that ugly long sustain that some Chinas have. I didn't mind laying into this cymbal, even when playing it by myself with no music to cover it up. That's an important thing for me when choosing a China. Sometimes a China can sound okay with a band, but then when you play it by itself it hurts your ears. This China had a nice tone and an almost gong-like quality when hit softly. And I didn't have to smack it to death to get its true tone to come out.

I was also a fan of the 8" EFES splash. This cymbal is quick and trashy. And like the China it had a darker, almost gong-like sound when tapped lightly. It's a cool effect cymbal and an overall gem as far as splashes go.

Win Some, Lose Some

Overall, I was a little disappointed with the X-FX line. There are tons of ways to turn traditional cymbals into effect sounds, so I was hoping to see something with a little more originality. I still love Istanbul as a cymbal maker, but I'm not in love with this particular line.

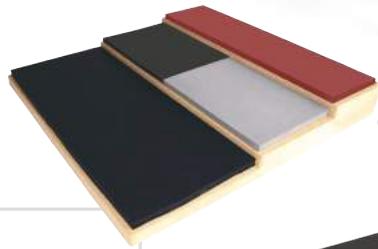
On the contrary, I really enjoyed playing the EFES cymbals, and you will too if you like complex, dark sounds. Like their motto, "Breathing Handmade Cymbals," suggests, these three Istanbul Mehmet models can bring a welcomed breath of fresh air into any setup.

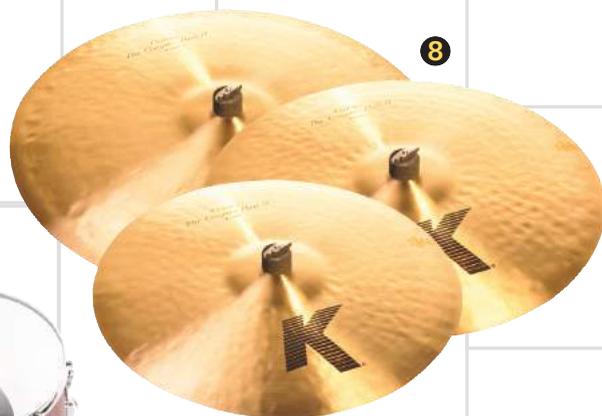


To hear some of this month's gear, log on to the Multi-Media page at moderndrummer.com.



NEW AND NOTABLE





JUST INTRODUCED!

From black cymbals to custom leather stickbags, here are some interesting pieces of gear to check out.

ALESIS // 1) The battery-powered **SR-18 drum machine** with integrated effects follows in the tradition of its ancestor, the SR-16, and is loaded with a 32-MB sound set of acoustic and electronic drum/percussion sounds and a bass synth, along with many pre-sequenced grooves. The integrated effects engine includes reverb, EQ, and compression. (\$399) alesis.com

SPAUN // 2) **Edgevent drumkits** feature a "shell within a shell" design. The outer shell holds all of the parts (lugs, spurs, strainer, buff, etc.) and also has outside holes for venting. The inner shell has no holes and no parts attached to it, so it resonates independently from the outer shell. Top and bottom bearing edges also have vent holes, which are claimed to work with the outer-shell vents to create a fat, warm sound with excellent attack and sustain. The pictured kit has Swiss Cheese venting, black and red glass finishes, and candy red and black hardware. spaundrums.com

GREAT LEATHER // 3) This **handmade leather drumstick bag** has a large interior pocket divided into three sections and is fully lined with tough, rich leather. The bag attaches to a floor tom with two "S" hooks. The exterior features two flapped pockets for drum keys and other small accessories, and includes a comfortable, durable handle for carrying. Bags are available in black, dark chocolate, maple, and wine cowhides. (\$229) greatleather.com

P4 // 4) The **Pat Petrillo Signature Practice Pad** consists of multiple playing surfaces, each made of a different type of rubber to produce unique feels and sounds. Moving between the levels simulates the feel of playing a drumset. The bottom level is a specially designed rubber that's not too bouncy and feels like a snare drum. The middle level has harder neoprene rubber, plus softer grey rubber for less bounce, similar to a floor tom. The hard red rubber on the top level simulates the feel of a ride cymbal. (\$49.95) interstatemusic.com

M-AUDIO // 5) The rack-mountable **Fast Track Ultra 8R 8x8 audio/MIDI interface** is a great solution for drummers looking to put together a simple recording setup. This interface features high-speed USB 2.0 connectivity, eight Octane preamps, and MX Core DSP technology, which allows for near-zero latency while recording. (\$629.95) m-audio.com

TANGEREENS // 6) These unique **shaker/tambourine sticks**, invented by jazz drummer Ari Hoening, consist of ruggedly constructed housings molded from high-impact polycarbonate with jingle bells or a bead shaker secured inside. (\$15 per stick) tangereens.com

GRETSCH // 7) The affordable **Catalina Club Mod drumkit** (6½x14 snare, 8x12 and 14x16 toms, and 20x22 kick) is now available with a unique G-Tube graphic finish. These drums consist of mahogany shells with 30° bearing edges, matching bass drum hoop inlays, a mini-GTS tom suspension system, Evans G1 batter heads, and black hardware. (\$1,075) gretschdrums.com

ZILDJIAN // 8) Medium-thin **K Custom Dry Complex Ride II** cymbals are the second generation of rides designed with renowned jazz drummer Bill Stewart. The new 20", 22", and 24" cymbals feature a wider bell design with a much lower profile that helps promote more control, while offering a smooth and less metallic array of rich overtones. Each cymbal employs traditional lathing with no tonal grooves on top, and a scratch lathing method underneath to achieve loose but contained overtones. (\$559–\$769) **9)** Black-finished **Pitch Black** cymbals are made from high-performance B12 alloy, which features enhanced tin content for a rich sound. The proprietary coating process allows the cymbals to be durable and visually striking, while still sounding open and full. Heavier weights and large sizes—combined with new profiles, cups, lathing, and hammering techniques—help deliver the brightness and presence required for rock and metal applications. (\$153–\$396) zildjian.com



309

304

303

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TAMA

5 & 6 PIECE
KITS AVAILABLE!



Like the experience of drinking a fine wine at the end of the day, Starclassic Bubinga Reserve drums make you want to savor every moment to the fullest. Tama's latest limited edition collection combines the brawny, yet textured punch of Bubinga with a new Smoky Satin Walnut finish. The result: a dark, rich appearance, a strong attack, and deep, complex, flavorful tones. Swirl that around a bit. Reward your sonic palette. Indulge Yourself.

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Features

- Limited edition Starclassic Bubinga Reserve kits feature new Satin Walnut outer ply.
- Available in two different configurations: 5pc with compact 18 x 20" bass drum and 6pc with Ultra Deep 20 x 22" bass drum.
- Less than 25 sets available in USA each with a Tama Certificate of Authenticity.

Alex Solca



METALLICA'S

LARS **UL**

“Metallica is a bunch of guys having the time of their lives,” Lars Ulrich proclaims from the basement lair of his luxury home in Marin County, California. “All the work we’ve done over the last twenty-eight years resulted in us finding the right balance to take care of the band, the guys, and their families. The dark stuff that everyone experienced during *Some Kind Of Monster* is happily behind us. But our new one is probably the darkest record we’ve ever made. I won’t say it’s is the best record we’ve ever done...it worries me when there is too much good stuff going on. I’m afraid somebody is going to drop a bomb around the corner.”

With the release of Metallica’s eleventh record, *Death Magnetic*, the band’s legion of fans may feel that a bomb *has* been dropped—on them. Recalling the complex arrangements, daring rhythms, longer song forms, and intense physicality of Metallica’s 1988 masterwork, ...*And Justice For All*, the new album, produced by Rick Rubin, pairs organic live tracking (no click tracks) with an adventurous rhythmic approach, and Ulrich’s more natural sounding drums with some of the most daring and difficult performances of his life.

From first single “The Day That Never Comes,” to such heart warming titles as “Judas Kiss,” “My Apocalypse,” “Suicide And Redemption,” “Cyanide,” and “The End Of The Line,” Metallica reenters the market like a possessed force: James Hetfield and Kirk Hammett’s guitars blast with a luxurious, super revved-up fury, Robert Trujillo’s bass is as ominous as a black storm of deadly wasps, and Ulrich’s drums slam the senses with a new-found purpose and resolve.

Far from Metallica’s early records, when the production sound of Ulrich’s drums recalled mega-amplified straws swatting a million flies against the wind, the Danish drummer’s sound on *Death Magnetic* is both natural and artificial, incredibly powerful, dynamic, and, finally, personal. Moving away from the sampled, treated sounds Metallica used to fortify Ulrich’s drums in the ’90s, producer Rick Rubin demanded that the forty-four-year-old former tennis prodigy record his drums almost entirely *au naturel*, meaning that when Ulrich strikes his Tama Bell Brass snare drum, you hear it exactly as he did in the studio.

Ulrich’s bass drum—what Hetfield calls “the click drum”—retains its alien-like punch-to-the-pelvis clarity and attack, but that too is the result of simpler recording methods and a more direct approach. Finally, Metallica eschewed extensive Pro Tools trickery on *Death Magnetic*, instead tracking live, like a band, like the old school, like a live performance, like their lives depended on it.

Ulrich is the first to say that the band’s unholy monster trinity of the ’80s—*Ride The Lightning*, ...*And Justice For All*, and *Master Of Puppets*—was for years the million-pound gorilla in Metallica’s closet. But with interpersonal band problems behind them, and perhaps more importantly, the maturity that comes with age now upon them, Metallica have seized their demons by the neck, expelled them from the kingdom, and returned to make one of the great metal albums of 2008.

The songs of *Death Magnetic* might be too long for some, too intricate and overblown for others. But as Ulrich himself says, “People might say that this is a return to our roots. I’m certainly not going to argue with that.”

Story by Ken Micallef

RICH FOR THE GREATER GOOD

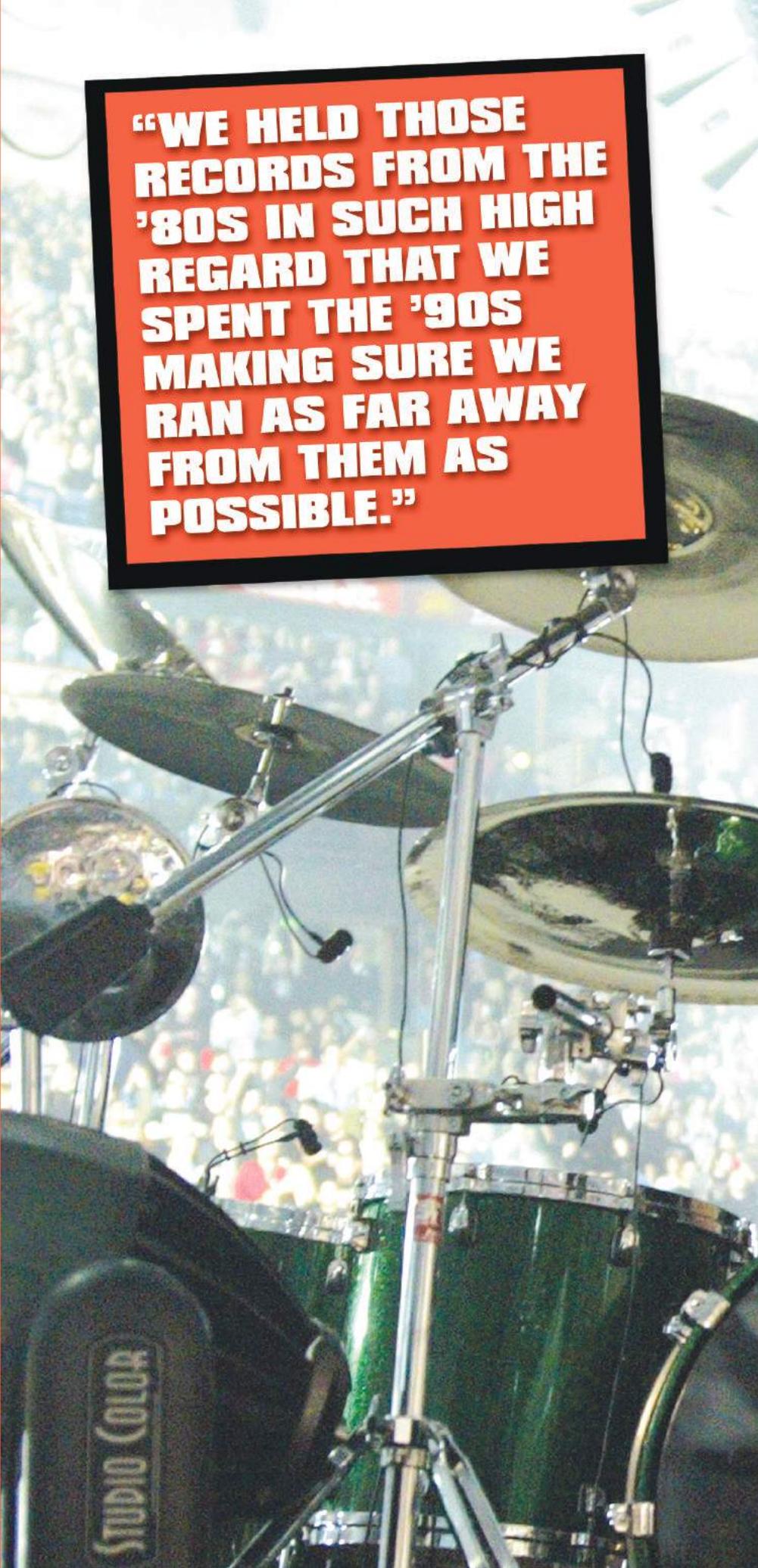
MD: Each Metallica album has a story behind it. What's the story behind *Death Magnetic*?

Lars: I'm still trying to figure that out! By the time most of these songs started taking final shape during the last six months, we realized that there was a significant thread running through the record. The songs are about death, obsession with death, anticipation, suicide, trying to control death from either side, redemption, forgiveness—all of these lighthearted topics! So as we found ourselves sitting and trying to come up with album titles, there was a lyric in the song "My Apocalypse," literally the words "death magnetic" next to each other, and we thought that was unusual, cool, and mysterious, that magnetic element of being attracted and repulsed by death.

MD: Each song is long and packed with complex time and texture changes, polyrhythms, three-over-two rhythms, double time, cut time, shuffles—it's very intricate. Is this a return to the style of *...And Justice For All*?

Lars: Certainly people can argue that, but there was no thinking, "Let's return to *...And Justice for All*." We always held those records from the '80s in such high regard that we spent the '90s making sure we ran as far away from them as possible. We've been maybe overly protective of those records and scared of doing anything that would dilute them. But our producer, Rick Rubin, told us that it was okay to be re-inspired by and revisit those records, to feel what was happening with the band at that time, and to acknowledge that it was special.

In the summer of '06 we got to re-experience *Master Of Puppets* and share it with the fans on a summer tour. We relearned the album and fell in love with it and realized that it was okay to be re-inspired by it and revisit that music that had maybe been dormant within us. Of those three records, *Ride The Lightning*, *Justice*, and *Master of Puppets*, *Justice* is the most extreme in terms of the nuttiness and the sideways time signatures. It's also the record that in some way drained us to the point of having to walk away from it and simplify. People might say that this is a return to those roots.

A photograph of a drum set, featuring a green tom drum and a black snare drum. The background is a blurred crowd of people at a concert. A red rectangular box with a black border is overlaid on the top right of the image, containing a quote in white, bold, sans-serif font.

“WE HELD THOSE RECORDS FROM THE '80S IN SUCH HIGH REGARD THAT WE SPENT THE '90S MAKING SURE WE RAN AS FAR AWAY FROM THEM AS POSSIBLE.”





Kevin Estrada

MY GREATEST MOMENTS

LARS DESCRIBES HIS PERSONAL BEST MOMENTS ON RECORD

"Battery" (from *Master Of Puppets*): "More straightforward but fast."

"Metal Militia" (*Kill 'Em All*), **"Fight Fire With Fire"** (*Ride The Lightning*): "Extreme stuff."

"Blackened" (...*And Justice For All*): "A lot of sideways stuff, I'm very proud of 'Blackened.'"

"One" (...*And Justice For All*): "When it goes into the part at the end [sings cadence], that is something people tell me was influential to a lot of drummers. A lot of the stuff on ...*And Justice For All* was the ultimate in just throwing it all to the wind and being as sideways and progressive as possible in the arrangements and the parts."

Also "Lars certified": **"Fuel," "Disposable Heroes"** (*Master Of Puppets*), **"The Shortest Straw"** (...*And Justice For All*), **"Sad But True"** (*Metallica*), **"Whiplash"** (*Kill 'Em All*), and **"Mercyful Fate Medley"** and **"Welcome Home (Sanitarium)"** (*Master of Puppets*).

RECORDS THAT INFLUENCED LARS

Artist	Album	Drummer
Deep Purple	Made In Japan	Ian Paice
Motörhead	Overkill	Phil "Philthy Animal" Taylor
Iron Maiden	Iron Maiden	Clive Burr
Diamond Head	Lightning To The Nations	Duncan Scott
AC/DC	Let There Be Rock	Phil Rudd
Mercyful Fate	Melissa	Kim Ruzz

Connecting The Moments

MD: These songs are long. Did you memorize the arrangements?

Lars: Yeah, you have to. You literally have to learn it and feel it. It can't be forced to the point of becoming a math exercise. Music has to come from your heart and soul and from your body.

We felt that towards the end of the '80s it was difficult to connect with the audience and with ourselves. It became an exercise in

not messing up. "Okay, I have to play this ten-minute song and my goal is not to enjoy myself. I have to get to the end without screwing up." You sit there for a year doing that and realize something is wrong.

So a couple of years ago we became adamant that when we wrote these songs we would not put brackets around them or limit them. We wanted to let them unfold so the natural elements would take us where they would. So the songs started getting

longer, and we started challenging ourselves more with crazier ideas as we realized what was working. We also started connecting pieces.

Some songs are a verse/chorus from one song and a middle bit from another. We started fusing it all together. But I just learned and felt it. When we cut the basics, Rick insisted that we feel it and really connect with each other musically and be aware not of our own instruments but of each other.

MD: So even though these are complex songs, it was really about making them groove?

Lars: Grooving and getting to a point where the songs became second nature. We didn't write these songs in the studio. Rick wanted the studio to only be a place of execution. We didn't figure out the drum fills in the studio. Rick kept us in preproduction in San Francisco until we could play these songs back-

adventurous as well?

Lars: We didn't make a conscious decision to get back to ten-minute songs. We just tried to let it go where it was going to go. We worked with parts and sections that worked well together, then all of a sudden maybe a part worked better elsewhere.

One major difference between the three records in the '80s and the new record was that every song on

“THE DAYS OF TRYING TO OUTSHINE THE BAND OR OUTSHINE YOUR PEERS, OR CHECKING TO SEE WHERE YOU SHOW UP IN DRUMMERS POLLS, ARE OVER FOR ME. NOW IT'S ALL ABOUT THE GREATER GOOD.”

wards standing on our heads. When he said we were ready we recorded them at Sound City in Van Nuys. We went in and played these songs like we were playing a gig, and that was different.

MD: Was part of the complexity of these tunes about you guys challenging yourselves and being more

the new record was played from beginning to end, in straight takes, with no click track. We started with click tracks on *Ride The Lightning*. Those songs were so long and complex, we had a click track and we would just start playing. Whenever I messed up, we would go back and punch the drums in. That's how we



Kevin Estrada

ULRICH'S NEW TOUR KIT



Drums: Tama Starclassic in custom orange sparkle finish

- A. 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 Lars Ulrich Signature snare
- B. 9x10 rack tom
- C. 10x12 rack tom
- D. 14x14 floor tom
- E. 16x16 floor tom
- F. 16x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian (all with brilliant finish)

- 1. 14" Dyno Beat Z Custom hi-hats
- 2. 17" A Custom Projection crash
- 3. 18" A Custom Projection crash
- 4. 18" China Trash
- 5. 19" A Custom Projection crash
- 6. 18" A Custom Projection crash
- 7. 20" China Trash

Hardware: all Tama, including Iron Cobra bass drum pedals (gaffer's tape on footboards) with standard felt beaters

Heads: Remo CS coated on snare batter with Ambassador snare-side, coated Emperors on tops of toms with clear Ambassadors on bottoms (no muffling), clear Powerstroke 3 on bass drum batter with single-ply Tama logo head on front with center hole

Sticks: Ahead Lars Ulrich model

Never-ending sustain.



LP Monsoon Rainmaker

Release your inner Go-Jo with the world's only mutable shaker.



LP GO-JO Bag



Music comes alive with



Authentic Brazilian sound.

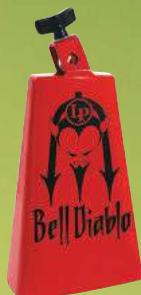


Surdo



Caixa

Devilishly hot, rock cowbell.



LP Bell Diablo

Killer tone. Deadly rimshots.



Drumset Timbale

Double or triple your sound with the world's only folding chimes.



LP Double and Triple Folding Chimes

NEW PRODUCTS 2008



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LARS ULRICH

made a drum track over the course of a day or two. We didn't do full takes. But for the new album we did full takes with no click tracks—eight, ten, or twelve takes for each of them and that was it. We spent months and months just learning and rehearsing these songs and knowing them in our sleep before we recorded. You can really hear a different kind of liveliness or spunk on the record.

MD: On one MissionMetallica.com video, you're joking about the click. How do you feel about it now? Love it, hate it?

Lars: In the Bob Rock years, we did a lot of takes and the click kept all those takes in the same zip code tempo-wise. We never used the click for anything other than a guide so that all the takes were usable and we could intercut between them. I've never felt that the click was artificial or weird. But we never adjusted snare hits to a click grid or any of that. It was just there as recording support.

For this album, I was a little leery when Rick said, "You don't need a click." Rick said, "Trust me. If they're all good enough, you can cut between them. But I think you can nail most of these in full takes anyway." With Rick, you have to suspend disbelief and roll with it. He asked me to play without a click, and I hadn't done that since 1983. I felt that the safety net had been pulled. But after a day I agreed, I didn't need a click. It was cool.

MD: So all of the tracks are complete takes, or were some sections edited in Pro Tools?

Lars: It's not all one or the other approach, but you are hearing closer to complete takes than ever before. There's an instrumental called "Suicide And Redemption," which is ten minutes long. There's an outro that is nothing but drum fills. We'd do seven takes of the song, then loop the outro, and I would literally sit and play crazy-ass drum fills for ten minutes. Then we'd pick the ten wackiest fills and put together an outro from that in Pro Tools. Rick Rubin is not a big Pro Tools guy, and with him we tried to keep things as organic as possible. Rick urged us not to depend on Pro Tools in the writing process, but to write on the floor or put things together in the rig.

MD: How do you prepare when a new record is in the works?

Lars: Somehow in the last four years we've gotten into this thing where we're playing gigs more randomly: We go to Europe for a month in the summer, we play South Africa

ALL NIGHTMARE LONG

From 1983's groundbreaking "Kill 'Em All" to 2008's riveting "Death Magnetic," it has been Lars Ulrich's apocalyptic double-kick thunderclaps that have propelled the snarling beast known as Metallica. And, year after year, the name on the drums has stayed the same: TAMA. 2009 celebrates 25 years of the ferocious combination of Lars and TAMA. As Lars and Metallica hit the road once again, TAMA will be there, onstage, all nightmare long.



Photo by: Hadas

LARS ULRICH

METALLICA



TAMA

Check out Metallica's latest release, Death Magnetic, and look out for Metallica on tour in a city near you. For more info, go to metallica.com

Visit tama.com to learn more about Lars Ulrich's Tama Signature Palette snare drums.

You cannot **DREAM** yourself into a character; you must hammer and forge yourself one. *—James Froude*



We make only hand-hammered, forged cymbals and gongs. Find your character.

dreamcymbals.com

LARS ULRICH

for two weeks. When we were growing up, it was all about the record and the road. It was very stringent; now it's more loosey-goosey.

So I play more continuously now than I ever did. I don't find myself not playing for nine months. We're sort of always playing, plus as you get older you take less for granted that you're in good shape, so you work at it a little more. I'm a fanatical runner, and I sort of watch what I eat. The hardest element is the shoulder, the arm—the physical element. We have a guy who stretches us out.

I've managed to keep myself in shape, and I play so much that I rarely get blisters any more. You hope that one day as you're playing you don't see your arm flying into the audience, or that you'll hear a snap that's a little louder than it should be.

From Saxon To The Sword

MD: You've been recording since '83. Has your style "solidified," or is it still evolving?

Lars: It changes all the time, because Metallica's music changes all the time. I go where Metallica's music goes. My role is to put Metallica, not Lars Ulrich and his drums, first. The days of trying to outshine the band or outshine your peers or checking to see where you show up in drummers polls are gone for me. Now it's about the greater good.

You play a bunch of super progressive sideways records like we did in the '80s, and then it's back to the drawing board. Phil Rudd becomes a big influence and you simplify. You listen to a bunch of Zeppelin and Deep Purple, and then Michael Kamen shows up with a symphony orchestra, so something else happens. You try to adapt and be open to wherever the drumming needs to go. So I just try to keep my style relevant to where Metallica is going at the time.

MD: You mentioned Phil Rudd and Zeppelin. Who are your drumming heroes past and present?

Lars: There are a bunch of new guys who blow my mind, but the guys who I grew up on were Ian Paice of Deep Purple, John Coghlan with Status Quo, Mick Tucker from Sweet, Lee Kerslake from Uriah Heep, and obviously Bill Ward with Black Sabbath. Zeppelin wasn't such a big deal to me in the early years. That happened for me later, when I came to America. Everybody's got a few years of Peter Criss, and then it went into



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Our condolences to the friends and family of those who were lost and best wishes for a speedy recovery to Travis and DJ AM.

Travis Barker

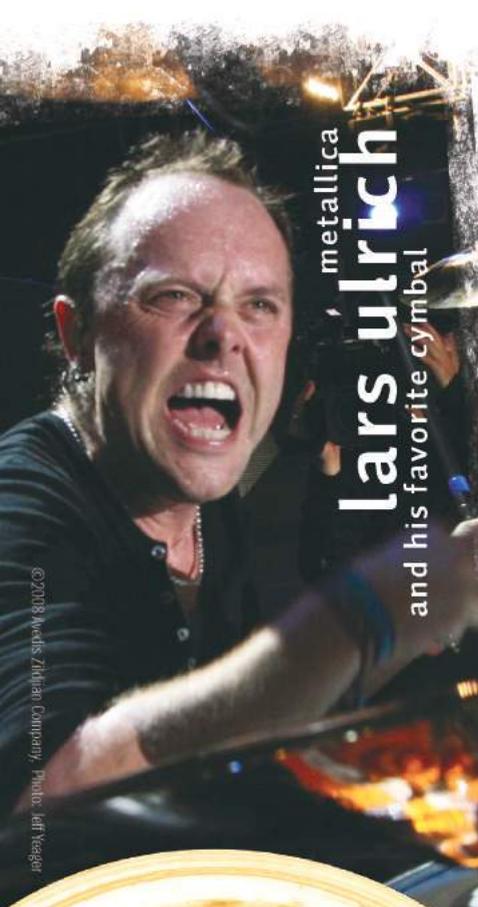
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LARS ULRICH

the drummers of the new wave of British heavy metal, which changed my life musically. Phil Taylor from Motörhead, Clive Burr, the first drummer with Iron Maiden, Duncan Scott from Diamond Head, Thunderstick [Barry Graham] from Samson, Pete Gill from Saxon. Obviously Gar Samuelson, who played on Megadeth's early records, was great, and Dave Lombardo was incredibly gifted and

intimidating. But after the '80s, I went off on this really simplified trip. I rediscovered Phil Rudd and Steven Adler and went on a major Oasis kick. I found a way to let the drums take a back seat to the song and to the guitars.

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SOUNDING OUT DEATH MAGNETIC

LARS ON HIS RECORDED DRUM SOUND



MD: The bass drum sound on *Death Magnetic* is your trademark "click," but the snare drum is different; it sounds wide open with no damping.

Lars: We used the Tama Bell Brass drums in the studio, which are great. I don't think there's anything else that gives you that crack and presence in the top as these Bell Brass drums. We used Remo CS Dot heads on them.

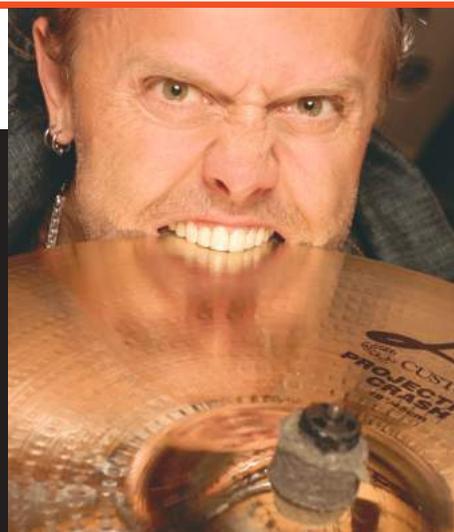
The main difference between this record and the earlier records, sound-wise, is that there's less happening in the sampling department. In the '90s we used samples to support the natural snare sound, but Rick Rubin was not into that. So we've gone more for the natural element. You're hearing a lot more of the snare and the drum itself.

MD: We're hearing your actual touch on the drum, too. And it sounds like there is less muffling on the drum than usual.

Lars: Yes, that's correct. We just wanted to go back to the word "organic." A couple of years ago, when Rick arrived, everything became more organic—less electronic, less Pro Tools, more human, and trying to have more of *us* come out instead of it being an artificial extension of us.

MD: Getting back to your bass drum sound for a minute, it still has the trademark click sound, like a muffled shotgun blast. Is that a matter of miking for head impact sound and less actual tone?

Lars: A little bit of both. I've used Gretsch drums on and off over the years in the studio. There's a particular Gretsch bass drum I've used for literally the last ten or fifteen years. It's one of those magic drums. It has the presence when it's tuned right. We put a pillow in there, then we keep the front skin on, but with a hole in it. It gives the presence and the attack in the initial strike, but it also gives you the size of the drum,



Alex Solca

which is what you hear after the hit. The sound reverberates within the drum and gets pushed out of the hole in the front skin so you get the size, the weight, and the hit. Bass drums should always have both, because you want the punch of the hit but you also want the weight. And even though I still use felt beaters, there's a lot of attack to the sound.

MD: When did you begin using Ahead sticks?

Lars: Back in '95. I would play a show and go through an average of twenty sticks a night. When you're playing "Battery" or "Fight For Fire" at those breakneck speeds and you break a stick, sometimes the actual physical act of having to grab another stick from your bag can throw you.

Rick Grossman of Ahead introduced these sticks to me. Plus Matt Sorum preached about them. I was wary, but I went with them, and pretty quickly I realized that what I gained in comfort by never breaking them outweighed any other issues. Ahead then custom-built a stick for me with the right weight and balance.

I depend on those sticks. I break one a year, maybe. They're just golden to me. When I started using these sticks, everyone said the cymbals sounded different, but to me the drums sounded better, especially when you're comfortably playing them. It's really that simple.

MD: Do they give you more volume?

Lars: Maybe. A big part of what I do is hit the rim and the snare in the center at the same time for backbeats. So with the Tama Bell Brass drums, there's an additional crack and volume. Those drums are loud. And when you get the rim in there, it's loud and present. It's got attitude.

HEADS ABOVE THE REST

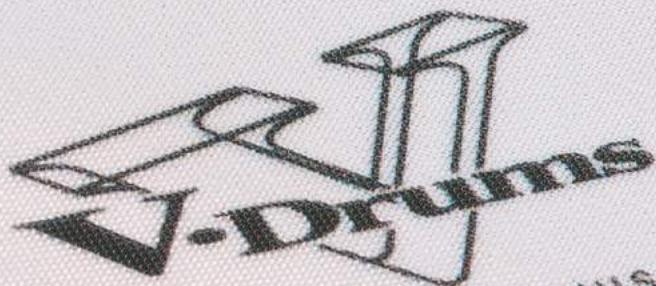


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LARS ULRICH

makes you want to play a little nuttier. Chris Adler in Lamb Of God and Trivett Wingo from The Sword are unbelievable. It makes you come full circle, because you hear very respectfully that a lot of these guys were influenced by what we've done.

No Rules—No Fear

MD: Back in the day, was there one thing that made a substantial difference in your drumming?

Lars: Certainly things like my athletic upbringing—that helped my endurance and playing fast 16th-note double bass rolls. I grew up in a very athletic family, playing soccer and tennis. I also grew up in an environment where there were very few rules—in a liberal household in a liberal country. There was a lot of music around and abstract thinking and philosophy. I've always had an uncomfortable relationship with specific rules. That fused with a tenacity I had and a desire to see things through.

James Hetfield and I had no rules in the early days. We would just run with it. We would come up with stuff that we liked that sounded good, and then all of a sudden

somebody would say, "You realize you are playing nine 16ths?" I would say, "What language are you talking?" Our book publisher, Cherry Lane, would ask questions about certain sections they were transcribing, and I would have no idea. I just play. I don't really care about that stuff. There are no rules. That attitude of never being limited by rules or too consciously aware of what we were doing helped a lot to define the early years of Metallica's sound.

MD: So your dad, who was a jazz musician, didn't insist that you learn the rudiments or spend three hours a day on the snare drum?

Lars: No, no, no. I started playing drums for fun. We would listen to Status Quo, Deep Purple, and Uriah Heep down in my basement in Copenhagen. We would play along, have fun, pretend we were in a band, and then go back to playing soccer and tennis. I always thought I would be an athlete.

When we came to America, I realized I wasn't good enough to do that—things were too competitive. So I turned to drums, because it was fun. But eventually I wanted to be in a band, so I started playing along to some British heavy metal. I met James

Hetfield, and we put a band together. Then I realized, "I can't actually play my instrument." So I hooked up with the great people at West Coast Drums in Santa Ana, and this guy named Joe walked me through paradiddles and rudiments. I did the best I could, but I didn't have a lot of patience to sit there and go "para-diddle" for three hours on a plastic pad.

MD: But how did you develop your bass drum chops? No metronome?

Lars: No. I didn't have patience for that. I just played—a lot. Being athletic helped. And there was a lot of learning involved in interpreting records. James and I would listen to records for hours on end, and I would then try to emulate what Clive Burr, Phil Taylor, or Duncan Scott was doing. A couple of years later, I took lessons from Jeff Campitelli, Joe Satriani's drummer. But this was after Ride The Lightning. Other than that, I'm self-taught.

MD: What is it that you and James did differently to create your own unique language?

Lars: Dude, that's the big question. As I get older, it becomes increasingly uncomfort-

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Lars Ulrich

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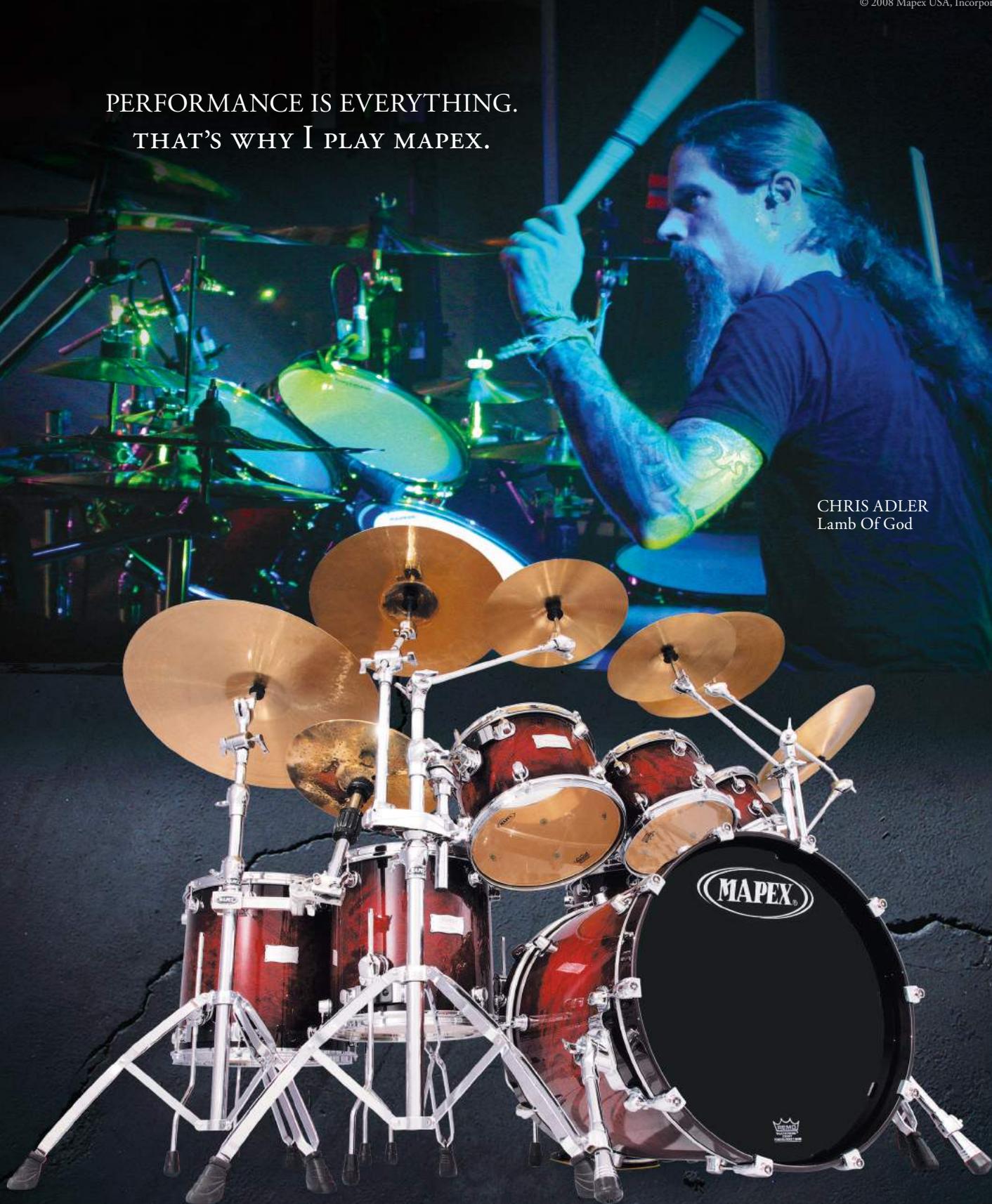
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LARS ULRICH

able to pat myself on the back. James Hetfield is the most effortless musician I have ever known. He can play the history of modern music on the guitar effortlessly. Somehow the two of us just connect in some language and understanding. Fuse that with a complete disregard for rules

There were times when the drums were an afterthought. And there were times when I was more into drumming, pushing and experimenting. It comes and goes after twenty-eight years. In the last couple years I've felt more challenged, more inspired to step it up. On *St. Anger*, I was more into



and musical absolutes or limits or logic. There's also an element of rebellious energy, because we've always had a tough time being told to do something a particular way. Says who? I'll find another way to make it work. Throw in the "X factor," planetary alignment, the tides and the moon and stars, and you're left with something that works.

Sideways Signatures, Weird Counts, And Odd Fills

MD: Regarding what drumming is to you, is it about finding a greater means of expression, or is it simply about being the drummer in Metallica?

Lars: Probably more the latter, if I have to pick one. Certainly as I get older, making records, writing songs, and the entire creative process is increasingly satisfying and rewarding. Over the years, I've had different relationships with where my drums fit into that process.

patterns and rhythms and less into fills. Now I'm back to square one, '80s-style, with sideways signatures, weird counts, and odd fills. It's fun to revisit that stuff. **MD:** So with this new album do you feel you've reinvented the Metallica wheel? **Lars:** Ask me in six months. People are gracious enough to tell me that this album is going to connect with a lot of people. By nature, I am more cautious. You make a record, and six months later you think, "What the...?" But we always try to be true to the moment and leave the extensive analytical processes out of it.

I like to think that every record we make, for better or worse, is the best we could do at that time. Then six months later I formulate my own opinion. But I would be lying to you if I didn't say that a lot of people feel really good about the new Metallica music they've heard, and I'm one of them.



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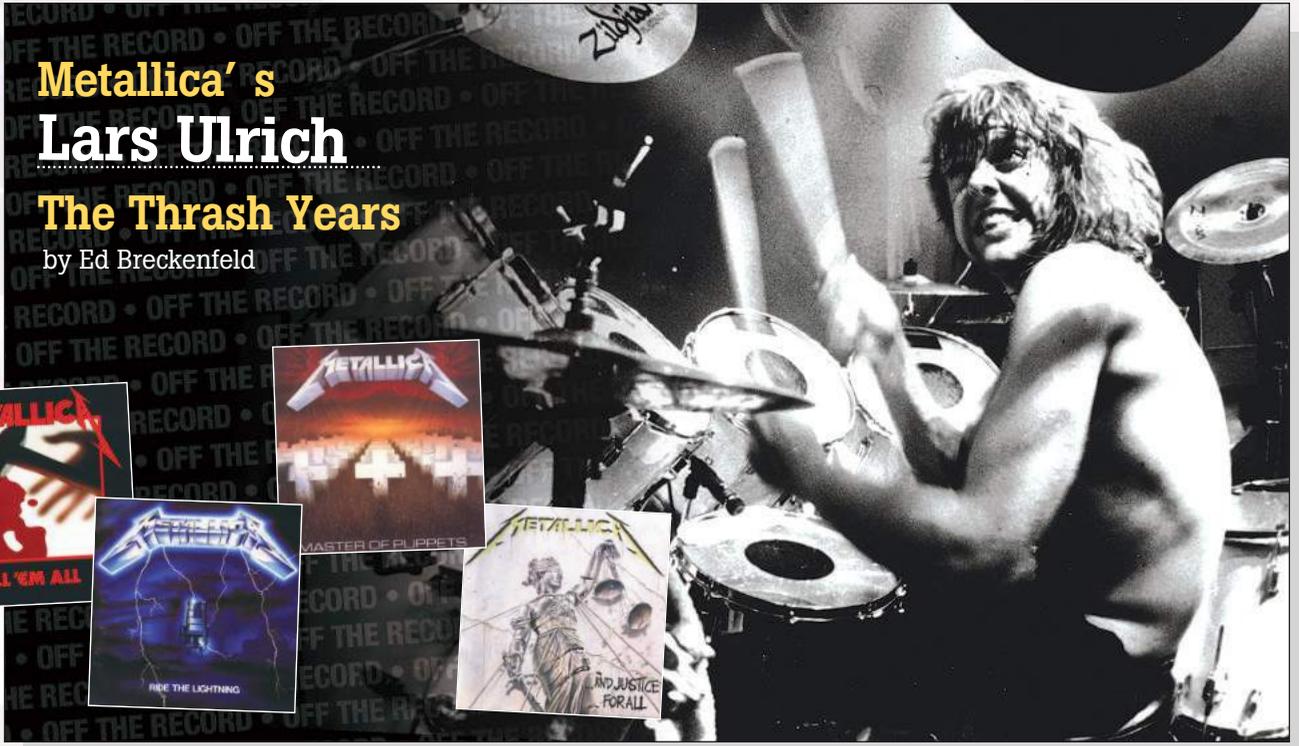
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Metallica's Lars Ulrich The Thrash Years

by Ed Breckenfeld



MUSIC KEY

open	O	R.C. Bell	C.C.
H.H.	●		●
T.T.	○		○
S.D.	×		×
FT	+		+
B.D.1	⊗	B.D.2	Add 1
H.H.	⊗	T.T.	
w/ foot	⊗		

Over the last quarter century, Metallica has grown from a cult metal band to one of the biggest rock acts in the world. Long-time fans hold a special place in their hearts for the group's early years, when Metallica was setting the bar for a generation of thrash bands. The boundless energy and powerhouse drumming of Lars Ulrich has been a major force in the band since day one. This month's Off The Record takes a look at Lars' playing on the band's first four albums, uncovering some of his best grooves and licks from these influential releases.

Kill 'Em All (1983) "The Four Horsemen"

From the very beginning, Lars eschewed the traditional drums and bass guitar codependence, locking instead to James Hetfield's rhythm guitar patterns. The following speedy triplet double bass groove is a prime example of the band's drums/guitar foundation. (0:20)



"Motorbreath"

Ulrich gets a rare solo spot on the opening of this track. He works quads around his six toms in descending cascades, finishing with three crash-cymbal accents to set up the start of the song. (0:00)



"Metal Militia"

Here's a drum beat that served Lars well in Metallica's thrash era. This groove is all about speed, power, and endurance. (0:17)



Ride The Lighting (1984) "Fight Fire With Fire"

Metallica ramped up the intensity on their second album, while moving in a more progressive direction. Ulrich one-ups his drumming on the first album with the following all-out double kick thrash groove. (3:29)



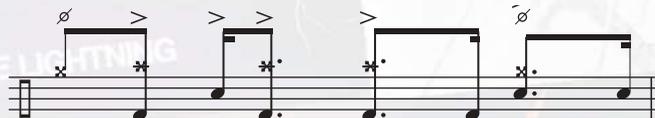
"For Whom The Bell Tolls"

Check the tempos of the four examples above, and then look at this one. At the time, Lars talked about having to really work to be able to play this slow. Nevertheless, he drops in some quick triplet ruffs in verse 2 of this fan favorite. (3:23)



"Escape"

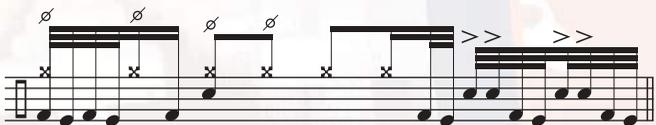
In the half-time middle section of this track, Ulrich keeps the energy flowing with his ever-present double bass flourishes. (2:25)



Master Of Puppets (1986)

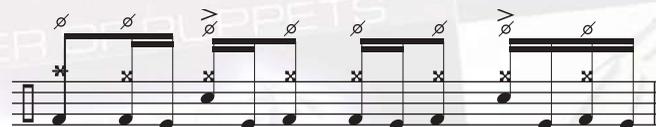
"Master Of Puppets"

Widely considered a metal masterpiece, Master Of Puppets is the band's most highly realized album of their early years. The title track contains this rumbling floor tom/double kick groove. Lars' snare accents punctuate the variations in the song's guitar riff. (5:15)



"Leper Messiah"

The middle of this song features another double bass groove designed to match a fast guitar lick. (3:38)



"Damage, Inc."

When this album closer switches from blazing speed to a half-time section, Lars' two-handed thirty-second-note hi-hat pattern ensures that there's no drop in intensity. (3:28)



..And Justice For All (1988)

"Blackened"

Metallica's last album of the '80s is their most progressive, mixing extended complex arrangements and odd time signatures with their signature speed-oriented sound. Ulrich's triplet double kick fill is a highlight of the opening track. (3:40)



..And Justice For All"

Lars uses his toms to punctuate the title song's guitar riff in this fourteen-beat repeating pattern. (1:11)



"One"

Here's one of Ulrich's most famous drum beats, echoing like automatic weapons fire to underscore the anti-war message on this hit single. (4:35)



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





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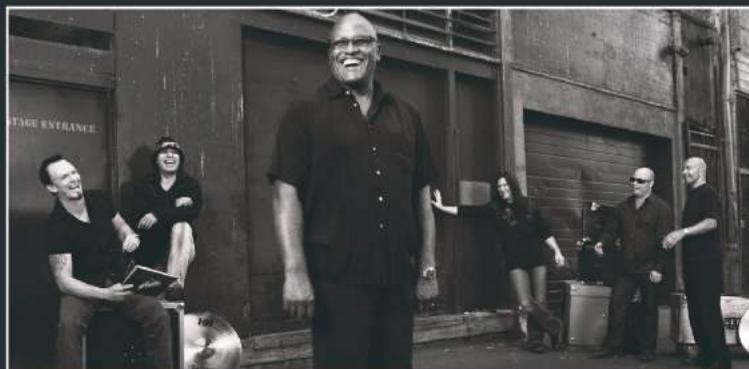


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BECAUSE SOUND MATTERS

The Yellowjackets' MARCUS BAYLOR

Story by Paul Wells
Photos by Alex Solca

TOTAL AWARENESS

The Yellowjackets are a bit of a mystery in a jazz world that likes to conveniently categorize its various styles. You can't describe them as smooth jazz or fusion, but they're certainly not a revisionist bebop group either. At times, they sound like a classical chamber group or a grooving funk band. Echoes of Gospel and world music are prevalent, too. All of these influences blend together into a natural, sleek, and unpretentious style that seems to speak to listeners in a way rarely found in today's corporate music scene.

It seems that the bandmembers simply write the way they want to. The only restrictions on their playing styles are that they have to play to fit the music. It sounds like a simple and logical concept, but ask yourself how many groups, especially in jazz, are able to be this free?



It makes perfect sense that these same words can be said about Marcus Baylor, The Yellowjackets' drummer since 2000. It would be a disservice to simply describe him as a virtuoso, although he certainly is. Like his band, Marcus has cultivated a style of playing that transcends restrictions such as genre and category. He's listened to and soaked up every style of music and is able to play whatever fits the song.

Especially influential to Baylor were his formative years playing in his family's vibrant Pentecostal church, as well as his time in New York studying jazz at The New School. His drumming is simultaneously assertive and following. Most impressively, Marcus has matured into an intriguing soloist. Many drummers who are gifted with an abundance of chops have little sense of musical phrasing and drama. Marcus, however, has an innate awareness of space, which makes his solos unique and very listenable.

Check out his short solo on "Double Nickel," from The Yellowjackets' latest release, *Lifecycle*. Marcus plays short spurts of impressively "chopsy" activity, but always has the taste to leave a bit of space after each phrase to let the listener digest what was just heard. This type of respect for the music and the audience is rare these days, and shows the kind of care, selflessness, and maturity that Marcus's family worked so hard to instill in him. The fact that he does this while still managing to make an artistic statement is even more impressive.

This year has found Marcus and The Yellowjackets teaming up with jazz guitar firebrand Mike Stern and recording the aforementioned *Lifecycle*, one of their finest collections of music. Along with keyboardist Russ Ferrante, saxophonist Bob Mintzer, and bassist Jimmy Haslip, Stern blends into The Yellowjackets' sound seamlessly, contributing his distinctive playing and writing style. Marcus keeps the aggregation grounded, grooving, and inspired throughout.

The band is hitting the road in serious form as well, having completed a run of the major European jazz festivals and the vibrant clubs of the American West Coast. Next they head back to Europe before hitting Asia and the Pacific. *Modern Drummer* caught up with Marcus while he was decompressing in between tours. We discussed his recent activities, as well as his experiences studying and playing jazz and how that helped shape his style.

MD: You were just in Europe for a month with The Yellowjackets. Is that a typical length for one of your tours?

Marcus: Usually we do about three weeks, but not at this time of the year. July is intense, because you have all the European festivals happening during the same month. You may have a gig in Italy one day, and then the next day you have to go to Spain. We average two or three hours of sleep a night, get a wake-up call at 4:00 or 5:00 A.M., catch a flight or two, show up at

the next venue, soundcheck, and play the gig. When you go to Europe, it's a great experience and great exposure, but at the same time, you're really hitting the road.

MD: Not much time for sightseeing?

Marcus: I try to exercise every day, so my sightseeing consists of jogging around the town.

MD: Was Mike Stern on this tour with you?

Marcus: Yeah. Mike brought out a whole other side of the band on *Lifecycle*.

MD: Have the dynamics and volume levels



MARCUS'S KIT

Drums: Yamaha Maple Custom Absolute

- A. 3 1/2x14 piccolo snare (David Garibaldi signature model)
- B. 5x10 custom snare (made by Marcus at Yamaha in Japan)
- C. 7x8 tom
- D. 7x14 snare (Elvin Jones signature model)
- E. 7 1/2x10 tom
- F. 14x14 floor tom
- G. 16x16 floor tom
- H. 16x20 bass drum

Cymbals: Sabian

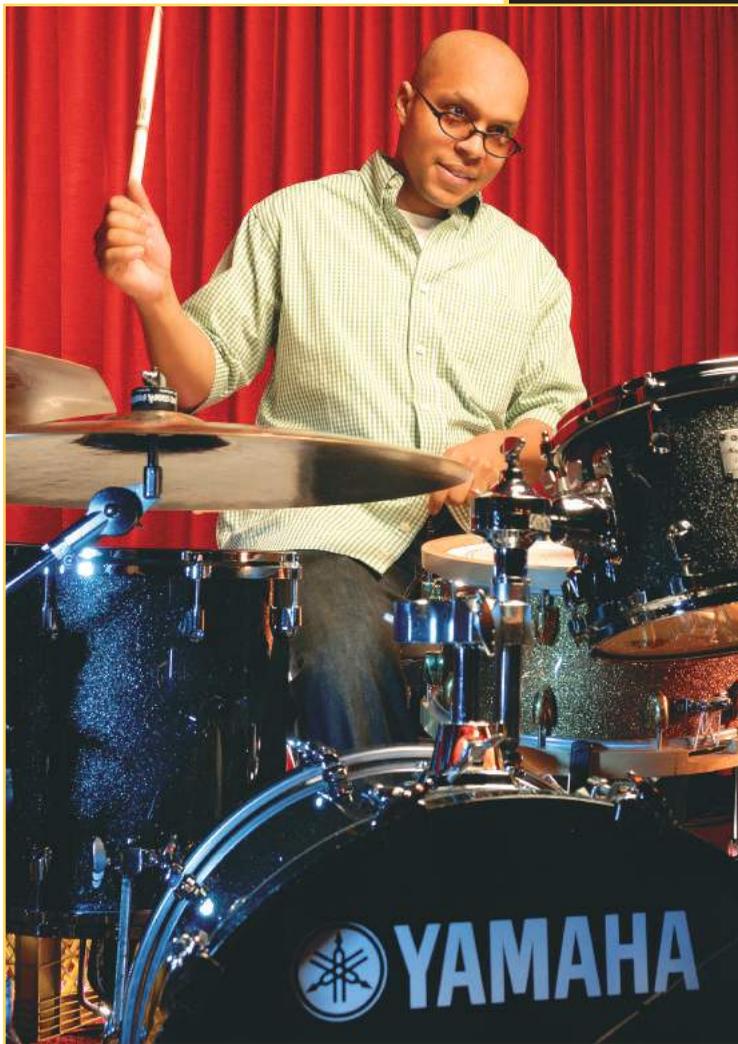
- 1. 14" HH Groove hi-hats
- 2. 16" HH Duo crash
- 3. 22" HH Raw Dry ride (with Pro-Mark Rattler chain)
- 4. 18" AA Rocktagon with 12" AA mini Chinese underneath
- 5. 16" HHX Evolution O-Zone crash over 20" HHX Evolution O-Zone Crash (with Pro-Mark Rattler chain)

Percussion: Toca cowbell (mounted on the cymbal stand in front of the main snare drum)

Hardware: Yamaha, including an FP-9315 single pedal with double chain drive (tight spring tension) with standard Yamaha beater

Heads: Remo coated Powerstroke 3 on main snare batter, coated Ambassadors on secondary snares, Ambassador snare-side (all tuned medium tight for "a nice snap and pop sound"). Marcus uses coated Ambassadors on tops of toms with clear Ambassadors on bottoms. ("I find the range of each tom. The bottom head controls the tuning sound, tone, and range. Then I tune the top head a little tighter than the bottom. This gives the tom a nice tone.") On the bass drum, Marcus uses a clear Powerstroke 3 on the batter (medium tension) with a Yamaha logo head, on front tuned a little tighter. As for muffling the kick drum, "I don't like to put too much stuffing in the drum because it muffles the sound too much. I like it kind of open, but not so open that it rings. I use an EQ Pad or two towels for muffling."

Sticks: Pro-Mark SD-9 model (maple with wood tip)



changed for you, having a louder guitarist like Mike playing in the band?

Marcus: The Yellowjackets started in the late '70s with Robben Ford playing guitar, so I look at Mike Stern coming in as being a part of what we already had been doing. Stern has a lot of different sides to him. When you hear him play a ballad, it's very sensitive. But when he rocks, he really rocks.

The first time we hooked up was at the Montreal Jazz Festival. Mike was the artist in residence, and he chose us as one of the bands to play with. After we did that gig, we realized we needed to do a record together.

MD: When you were putting the album together, did everyone collaborate on writing? Or did each member bring in their own material and then you put it together at rehearsals?

Marcus: Most of time we get together and jam over the music that someone brings in. Basically, you bring in your music one way, but when you leave, the original element

is still there, but we do what we call "Jacketizing." When we get done, your song has been "Jacketized"!

MD: So Stern became part of the process—he brought in his tunes, and they became "Jacketized"?

Marcus: Yeah, and he "Jacketized" our songs too! [laughs]

MD: How would you characterize the different writing styles of each bandmember?

Marcus: The band is made up of Gospel, classical, jazz, and world music influences. Russ grew up with a lot of classical music, but he also played at church with his dad, and his harmony is incredibly musical. Bob grew up playing in big bands, concert bands, and orchestras, and all of that is a major part of his writing. He's been composing for years. He played in Tito Puente's orchestra, but he was also in Buddy Rich's band for a while, and that's where he started writing big band charts.

"Marcus is one of the most innovative drummers I've ever worked with. He brings an extremely fresh approach to the music of The Yellowjackets. We knew he was special from the first day of rehearsal in 2000, before our first gig together at Sculler's Jazz Club in Boston. Then, that night, he brought the house down. Marcus *continues* to push the envelope with every project and gig." — **Jimmy Haslip (bass)**

"Marcus Baylor is one of the most fearless musicians I've ever worked with. He's never afraid to take chances, and he thrives on putting himself out on the proverbial ledge! It keeps his playing fresh and exciting, and pushes all of his bandmates to get out there on the ledge with him." — **Russ Ferrante (keyboards)**

"Marcus is a musician who isn't afraid to step out on a limb and try things that push the envelope. At the same time, he's also a serious team player who listens and interacts while coloring the music in a really spontaneous way.

"From a saxophonist's perspective, I feel Marcus knows how to create an aural palette that allows me to do what I do without cluttering up the timbre zone occupied by the tenor saxophone. And playing with Marcus always feels fresh and connected, plus he swings like crazy. He definitely knows how to make a soloist sound good." — **Bob Mintzer (sax)**



MD: He wrote some of Buddy's hippest charts, and he wrote some great stuff for Mel Lewis's band when Thad Jones left.

Marcus: That's right. And Jimmy Haslip grew up checking out a lot of Latin music and a lot of rock—Jimi Hendrix to Sly & The Family Stone—as well as Miles Davis and Ron Carter. All of that is part of him as a composer, and he's also an amazing producer.

MD: When you recorded *Lifecycle*, was everyone in the same room in the studio, or did gobos or isolation booths separate the various bandmembers?

Marcus: My drums were in the main room along with Mike, Russ, and Jimmy. Bob was in a booth, and Mike's amps were in a separate room. They also built a shell to isolate the piano. That setup made it feel like a live gig, so we could really vibe off of one another. We recorded using Pro Tools, so we could go back and do repairs or overdubs, but everything I played live in the



MARCUS BAYLOR

room is basically as is.

MD: Did you record Lifecycle using a click?

Marcus: There is a song called "Lazaro," and I think that's the only song with a sequence or a click of any sort. Jimmy Haslip programmed the percussion part.

MD: Did you have to change your dynamics at all to not bleed into the piano mics?

Marcus: I was really comfortable. I played the way I usually play. My dynamics were there to shape the composition, but bleed wasn't an issue at all. I believe in playing to fit the room. If I'm

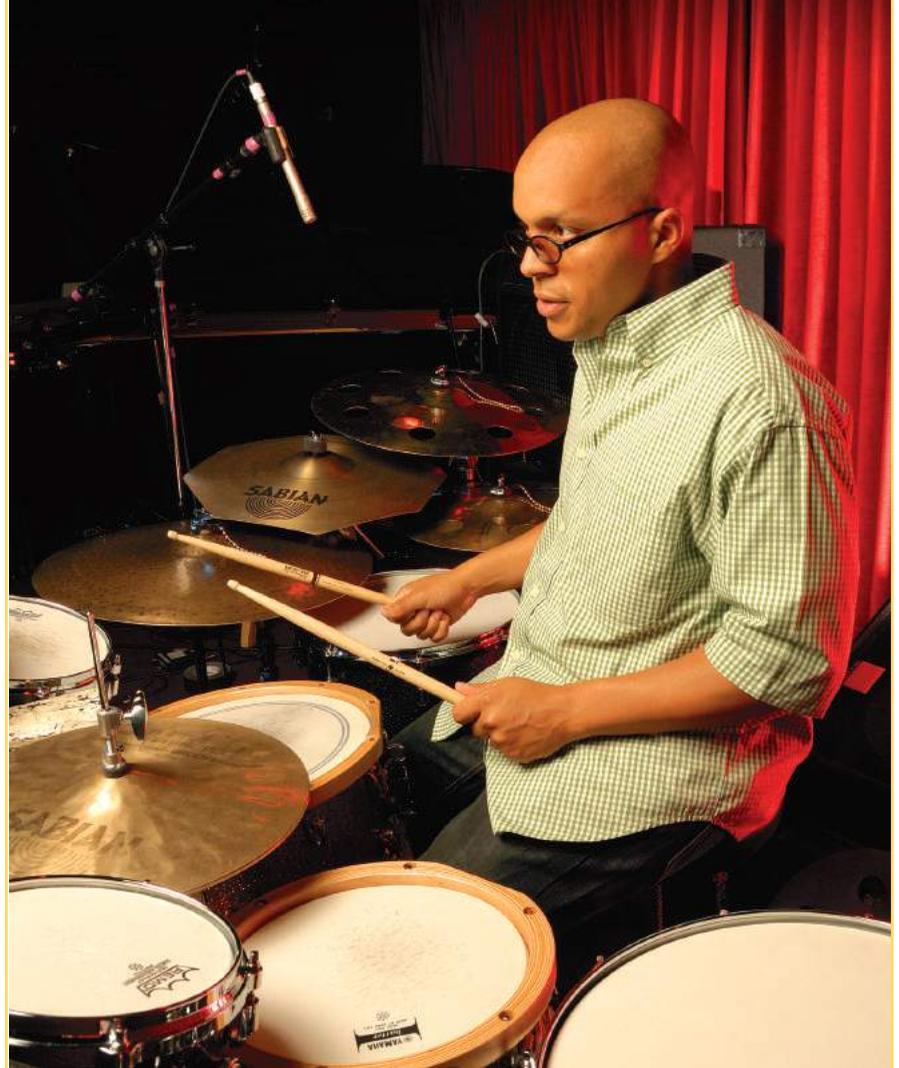
BUZZ DRUMMING

MARCUS BAYLOR'S BEST RECORDINGS

ARTIST	ALBUM
Kenny Garrett	Happy People
Cassandra Wilson	Traveling Miles
Matthew Von Doran	In This Present Moment
Yellowjackets	Mint Jam (Live CD)
Yellowjackets	Time Squared
Yellowjackets	Altered State
Yellowjackets	Twenty Five (Live CD/DVD)
Yellowjackets	Lifecycle

HIS FAVORITES

ARTIST	ALBUM	DRUMMER
Commissioned	On The Winning Side	Michael Williams
Kenny Garrett	Black Hope	Brian Blade,
		Ricky Wellman
Miles Davis	Four & More	Tony Williams
Sonny Rollins Trio	Live In Europe '65	Alan Dawson
Joe Henderson	Four!	Jimmy Cobb
John Coltrane	Complete 1961	Roy Haynes, Elvin Jones
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MARCUS BAYLOR

in a hall, I play whatever the music is calling for to fit the hall. Some things call for you to rock out, but I want the sound to be pleasant for everybody. If you see me play in my living room, I'm going to play the volume to fit the living room.

MD: What kind of monitor mix do you use live?

Marcus: I keep it basic. I use two monitors and I have a little bit of piano, bass, guitar, and hi-hat. Sometimes the hi-hats get lost if you're playing outdoors. I also added a little sub-woofer for my kick drum. These days I'm try-

ing to play more precise and not hit as hard.

MD: Have you ever tried in-ear monitors?

Marcus: I was talking to Mike about that, because Dave Weckl uses them. I haven't tried them yet because I'm afraid of losing that live feeling and nuance—I don't want it to feel like a studio setting.

MD: What gear do you bring with you when you tour?

Marcus: I bring my cymbals and sticks, and my Yamaha Elvin Jones model snare. When we fly, I check my cymbals and my suitcase and use my snare as my carry on. In Europe,

you're now only allowed to check one bag, so I have to pay an extra charge.

MD: I noticed you use a few different snares in your setup.

Marcus: To my left I have an 8" tom and a couple of different piccolo snares. For the Lifecycle recording session, I used a snare that was given to me by Pogie Bell, who plays with Marcus Miller. Pogie and I went to the Yamaha factory in Japan, and he made a custom snare, an 8x13. I made a 10" snare with wood hoops, which is also on the record. I feel really blessed to have the opportunity to play all these great instruments.

As a kid, I played all kinds of different drumkits, but it was always my dream to play Yamaha drums. I grew up in St. Louis, which is Dave Weckl's hometown, and he was the first guy to get me into Yamaha. Their drums sound great, and they're easy to tune. Also, when you're playing every night, you need hardware that is simple to set up.

MD: I'd like to talk about your jazz background. When did you start studying jazz?

Marcus: Most people don't know this, but the person who turned me on to straight-ahead was Tom Kennedy, who plays bass with Weckl's band. I was taking classes at Southern Illinois University, and I signed up for private lessons with him. I said to Tom, "Man, I want to sound just like Dave Weckl! I want to get all that stuff together!" And he said, "Here's what you need to do: You need to buy some records with Jimmy Cobb and check out that stuff."

So when I would go to lessons with Tom, he would play upright and I started to develop my jazz playing. This isn't to knock Weckl at all, but in order to understand what Dave was doing, I had to trace Dave back. I had to listen to where he came from before I could comprehend what he was doing with Chick Corea.

MD: In a previous MD interview, you talked about how you weren't allowed to listen to secular music when you were growing up. Was there a point when you confronted your family and told them that you wanted to broaden your perspective and listen to other kinds of music?

Marcus: My family was trying to do the best they could to shelter me. It makes sense if you look at the history of music, not just jazz or rock, and you see the lifestyle that many

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MARCUS BAYLOR

musicians have led. Even today, I live in a suburban community and people ask, "What do you do?" I tell them I'm a musician, and they say, "No, what do you do?"

MD: Right, "What's your job?"

Marcus: They automatically assume that I go to bed at 2:00 A.M., when in fact my wife and I wake up early in the morning and pray every day. We live a normal, structured life. So I think that my background taught me that you can be a Christian and love God, and still be able to play music and have influence.

I think kids need to see that you can live a

clean, drug-free life. It hurts me to see how some of the greatest musicians passed before their time. I want to be the musician who lives to be a hundred years old and is physically fit and stays together mentally and spiritually.

Hopefully I'll be able to pass this on to another generation, so maybe somebody will say, "I want to follow in Marcus Baylor's footsteps."

MD: It sounds like your parents were confident that you had your head on straight and you were ready to enter the music world. Did you leave for New York right after high school?

Marcus: That's right. My family was really

great, and they were able to release me when the time was right. Sometimes you can get out there too early, but they nurtured and molded me to make sure I could survive and stay focused in a place like New York.

I took some lessons with Lewis Nash and Kenny Washington when I got there, but my main teacher was Michael Carvin, who taught me a lot about life as well as music. He knew I had the gift to play music, but there were other things I needed to survive. He helped restore discipline in my life as a musician, and taught me what it meant to put in time practicing your rudiments and reading, as well as being reliable.

It's important to really study. There's a scripture in the Bible that says, "Study to show thyself approved." To me, that means you should be a craftsman of your instrument. When I started playing in different jazz situations and having to learn a lot of music, I found that using my memory combined with reading could take me a lot further. I would sometimes work with four or five different artists during the same time period. Being able to memorize songs is a great thing, but you need to be able to read if you're working with a bunch of different artists who each have fifty tunes you need to know.

MD: Did you finish school before starting to work as a jazz musician?

Marcus: I had made a commitment to my mom that I would finish. My first two years of school I just watched a lot of different drummers such as Ali Jackson, Eric Harland, and Eric McPherson. By my junior year of college, I started doing local gigs. I happened to do a gig with bassist Lonnie Plaxico, who was the musical director for Cassandra Wilson. He told me she was putting together a band, and the funny thing about it was, I didn't even know who Cassandra Wilson was. This was around 1997 or 1998—after she won a Grammy and everything! I went over to her house, got the gig, and started learning the music. My first gig with her was at a beautiful theater at Princeton University, and afterwards we hopped on a tour bus, and I was like, "Wow! This is who Cassandra Wilson is!" [laughs]

What this shows is that whenever you do a gig, you should always play the best you can. I played that gig with Lonnie in a park somewhere in Brooklyn, and the next thing you know, I got the phone call to audition for Cassandra Wilson. I did that gig for about a year, and then I graduated college in 1999. My mom had a talk with Cassandra and she

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was really cool with me finishing up school.

MD: Were you planning at this point to be a full-time New York jazzer?

Marcus: I knew that I always wanted to be a full-time musician and that things were leading towards jazz. I played a lot of straight-ahead gigs, and there was a buzz going around town about me. Jazz is a style of music that God blessed me to be exposed to, but at the same time, I can do a rock session or a Gospel session. That's why I tell people my style is a mixture. Gospel gave me the groove and the feel, but jazz started teaching me how to caress the music, how to play with touch, and how to hear song forms. Jazz was my introduction to looking at a chart and understanding what the different sections of a song may be.

If I'm learning a tune, no matter what the style is, I'm thinking, "How many bars is the A section? How many bars is the B section?" That's how I learn and memorize new music. Also with jazz, you get taught how to hear polyrhythms, and how to hear phrases over the barline. So when I went back to playing Gospel and groove stuff, I felt like the possibilities were endless. I could finally understand what drummers like Dave Weckl and Tony Williams were doing.

I don't hear music in categories; I hear music as a sound. I believe God has blessed me to have an open mind, and I think music is much bigger than something you can narrow down to a style. I love Art Blakey and Philly Joe Jones, as well as Steve Jordan and Michael Williams from the Gospel group Commissioned. Because of all the different styles of music I've been able to check out, there's a huge library or catalog of drumming that's stored up in my head. When I hear new music, I just think, How should this composition be played? Maybe this is an approach I can take to the music. Perhaps I need to tune my snare down deeper for this type of thing, or maybe I need to use a 10" snare to get a certain type of snap for a particular groove.

MD: I think it's healthier to have that type of attitude towards music. Many of the best musicians just want to play good music, regardless of the genre.

Marcus: One thing that people have to realize—and this goes for any instrument—is that when you see or hear certain people play, you'll know they're skilled. For instance, if you hear "Spanky" play [George McCurdy, who works with Diddy and Snoop Dogg], I don't care if he's playing rock, jazz, fusion—this guy is skilled. Regardless of what style he's in, God has blessed him to play the way he plays. Same thing goes for when you hear Eric Harland, Chris Dave, or Bill Stewart—these guys are all skilled on the instru-

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MARCUS BAYLOR

ment. I try to listen and grab stuff from all these guys. Keith Carlock—man, that's skill! You can tell from looking at his hand technique that he has proper training. I love his touch and his sound.

MD: I'm curious what elements of your jazz background could influence your sound in other styles. You've always used a 20" bass drum with The Yellowjackets. Is it a compromise between the bebop tone of an 18" and the more contemporary sound of a 22"?

Marcus: Yeah, you called it—I love a 20". When I was on the jazz scene in New York with Kenny Garrett and others, I would use

an 18". I still like that for straight-ahead stuff. But the 20" kick gives me that happy medium between an 18" and a 22". It's not too big and it's not too small. It has a nice acoustic sound, but it still has punch and enough power to blend with electric instruments.

MD: You also like to use riveted cymbals. Is that something you took from your jazz experience?

Marcus: Oh, absolutely. I would never have known about rivets if it weren't for my straight-ahead approach. A lot of cymbals that are made today are catered towards one

sound, which is kind of a pingy sound. That's cool for certain things, but my ride cymbal can't just be pingy. One of the things I love about Sabian's ride cymbals is that they give me a bell that I can groove on, but the cymbals still have a texture reminiscent of a straight-ahead sound. I can get a happy medium between both worlds.

Sabian still make cymbals that are soft, that resemble some of the old historic cymbals that Elvin, Tony, and Jack played. I've played the same ride cymbal with The Yellowjackets since I started with them. And I got one of their Rocktagons when I saw Jeff "Tain" Watts use one years ago. So jazz has definitely influenced my setup and sound.

MD: Tell us about some of the other projects you've worked on.

Marcus: Currently I'm working with my wife, Jean Baylor. She was part of an R&B group on Motown called Zhané which was very popular—they had a hit called "Hey Mr. DJ." She's coming out with her first solo record, and we worked on that together. I did a lot of the programming, and she plays keys as well. There are no live drums, but it's really good music. That's going to be coming out in the near future. If anyone wants to check it out, you can download the album at a site called dajams.com. Jean also sang on a few Yellowjackets records as well. She was a jazz major at Temple University and was planning on going into jazz, but she and her partner at the time ended up recording a song and putting it on a compilation. It hit, so they had to make a record right away for Motown.

Also, I just recorded Anita Baker's Christmas record and Kenny Garrett's Happy People record. There's another record that I'm pretty proud of, guitarist Matthew Van Doren's *In This Present Moment*. Peter Erskine, Gary Novak, and Terri Lyne Carrington played on that as well. But right now, my main focus is my wife's record—when I'm not working with the Yellowjackets.

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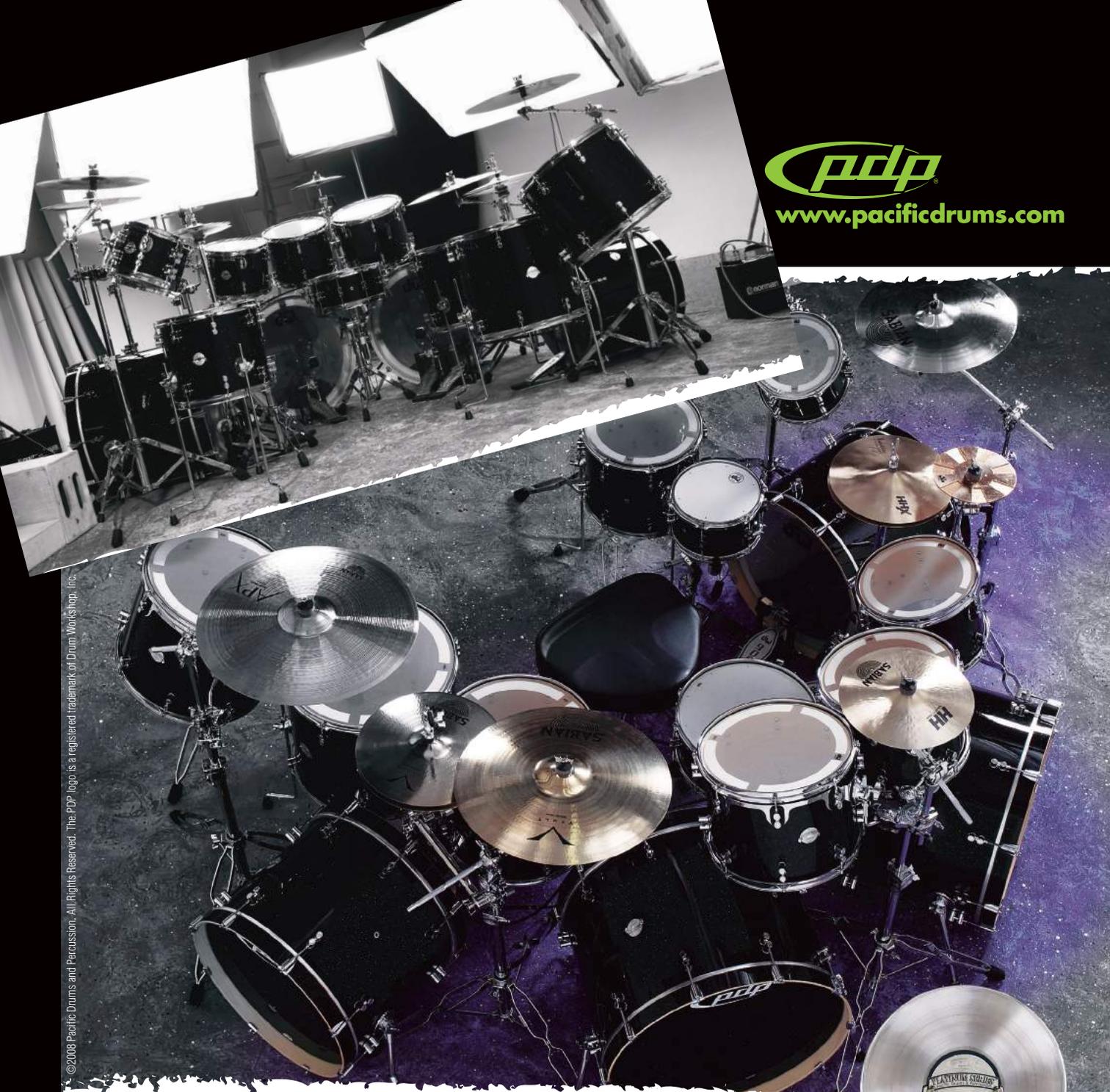
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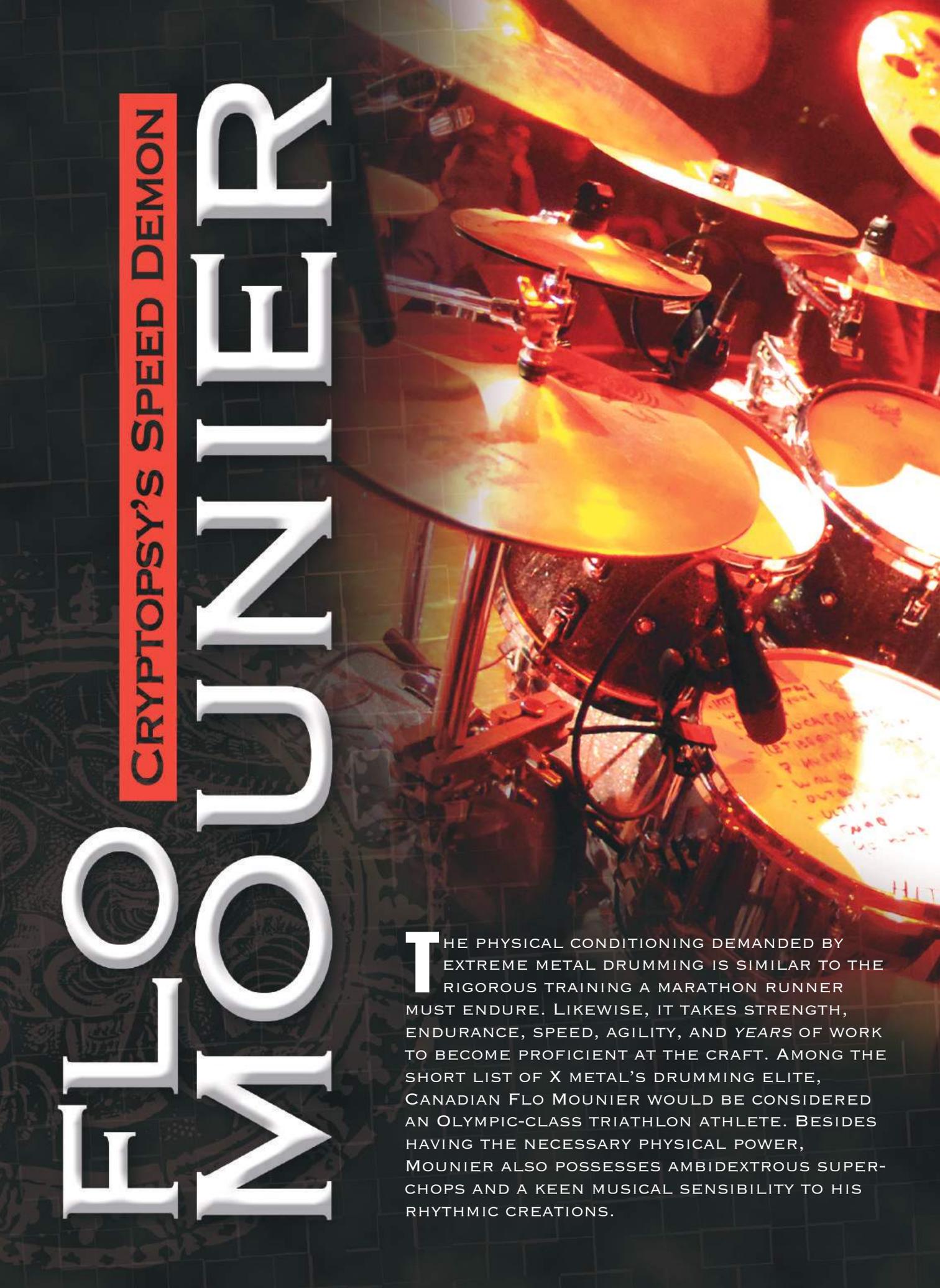
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MD: You've been hammering out extreme metal drumming with Cryptopsy for sixteen years. How has this affected you physically, and what have you had to do in order to maintain the physical demands of extreme metal drumming?

Flo: Rather than concentrating on using nerves, I focus on developing the muscle groups necessary to perform this type of drumming on a regular basis. I also work on developing techniques to make it easier to play faster and hit harder, and also to play more dynamically.

from nerves, you're stiff, tense, and your muscles are tight. Nerves are designed for quick short-term reactions. When you continually play from nerves, you wear your body down with consistent stress on the nervous system. Repeated use of nerves will affect your muscles and brain, and the link between them, in a negative way. So I've made a serious effort to understand and develop my muscle groups with the proper exercise, technique, and nutrition that allow me to consistently improve my playing.

MD: What are some of your warm-up and

play only from the wrist. I begin with single and double strokes, incorporating my fingers more as the tempo gets faster, until the tempo is so fast that the fingers take over completely. When I play a show I use a combination of arms, wrists, and fingers. When it's extremely fast, it's all fingers. At slower tempos, the wrists and arms take over with larger motions.

MD: How about for your feet?

Flo: I use a similar technique for my feet. At slower tempos I use mostly leg and ankle muscles. At faster tempos, it's all ankle. My

“THERE'S REALLY NO SECRET TO BECOMING A GOOD METAL DRUMMER. IT'S ALL ABOUT PRACTICE, REPETITION, AND ENDURANCE.”

MD: Discuss the difference between playing with nerves versus muscles.

Flo: A lot of my drum students use technique generated from nerves instead of muscles. I used to play from nerves too. When you play

muscle development techniques?

Flo: I warm up about thirty minutes before each show, using a practice pad or just my knee. I start with my wrists by keeping my fingers loosely gripped on the stick, and I

legs don't move. I've learned to conserve energy by developing a technique using the shin and calf muscles to add power to the ankle. It allows me to kick the pedal harder with less energy, similar to the way you

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- 4. 10" Max Stax
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- 6. 10" AA splash
- 7. 18" O-Zone crash
- 8. 16" HHX crash
- 9. 21" HH Raw Bell Dry ride
- 10. 19" Paragon Chinese

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Sticks: Vic Firth F1 (signature stick)

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Microphones: Beyerdynamic



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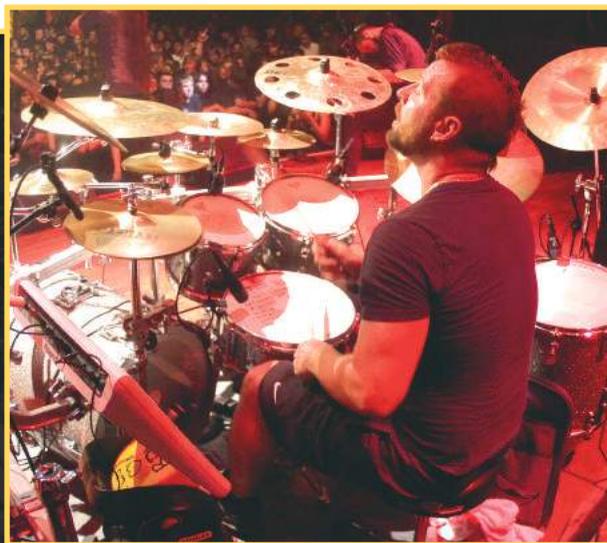
Here are the discs that inspired Mounier:

Artist	Album	Drummer
Led Zeppelin	Houses Of The Holy	John Bonham
King Diamond	Them	Mikkey Dee
Slayer	South Of Heaven	Dave Lombardo
Dave Weckl Band	Synergy	Dave Weckl
Cynic	Focus	Sean Reinert

"All of these different recordings affected my outlook on playing at various points in my playing career," says Mounier. "For example, Slayer and King Diamond influenced my metal playing, challenging me at the very beginning to play faster and with interesting ideas. Cynic made me realize that jazz and metal could be a great fit, so adding that element inspired me. This led me to listening to more jazz and The Dave Weckl Band.

"I've listened to Led Zeppelin since age thirteen," the drummer continues, "and I came back to it at a moment where touch, groove, and feel were the most important things I wanted to incorporate into my playing. There are many more examples like this. I just used five that were at the top of my mind.

"As far as a discussion of my discography," Flo says, "it's really hard to know what frame of mind I was in at the time that our recordings were made. What I can tell you for certain is that our latest recording, *The*



Unspoken King, is one of my favorites. It's played so well and smooth that it sounds effortless, but in reality it's very complex and technical. I was so surprised listening to it again recently. It seems that all of the parts fit perfectly into one another. I think that's a sign of maturity. I'm quite happy with it."

For more on Flo Mounier, including a detailed discography, lessons, and info about his amazing educational DVD, *Extreme Metal Drumming 101*, visit www.flomounier.com.

whip your wrist to get a powerful stroke with your hands.

So it's a combination of all these techniques and exercises that I use to warm-up and get the blood flowing. After I do these warm-ups using the rudiments, I stretch a little and then I'm ready to hit the stage.

MD: You have some of the fastest feet in the business. How tightly do you tension your bass drum pedals?

Flo: I use a pretty standard tension. There's a trend in metal drumming to use very light pedals—with the beater position close to the

head and lots of tension on the spring—and to tune the bass drum batter head tightly.

The combination of all these things allows the drummer more speed with less work. But I don't use any of those techniques. My bass drum batter head tension is fairly loose. I use the Pearl Eliminator pedal with a medium spring tension and standard beater positioning. I also play heel-up, but with my foot barely off the ground. I slide my foot back on the pedal a little when I play fast blast beats.

MD: It seems standard procedure for most

metal drummers to trigger their bass drums. Do you?

Flo: The reason I use bass drum triggers, especially on a tour like Summer Slaughter, where there are several bands playing, is that we don't have our own sound engineer on the tour. If mics were used, there would be a good chance that the bass drum sound out front would be muddy with too much low end. This causes the articulation of the fast double bass patterns to get lost in the mix. The triggers will cut through the mix with the clarity that allows the audi-

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ence to hear exactly what I'm playing. When we headline a tour, we have our own sound guy and we'll use a combination of mics and triggers. Triggers also help me to hear exactly what I'm playing in my monitors.

MD: There are fans of metal drumming who feel triggers are an easy way out of building foot technique, and, in a sense, cheating to achieve the goal.

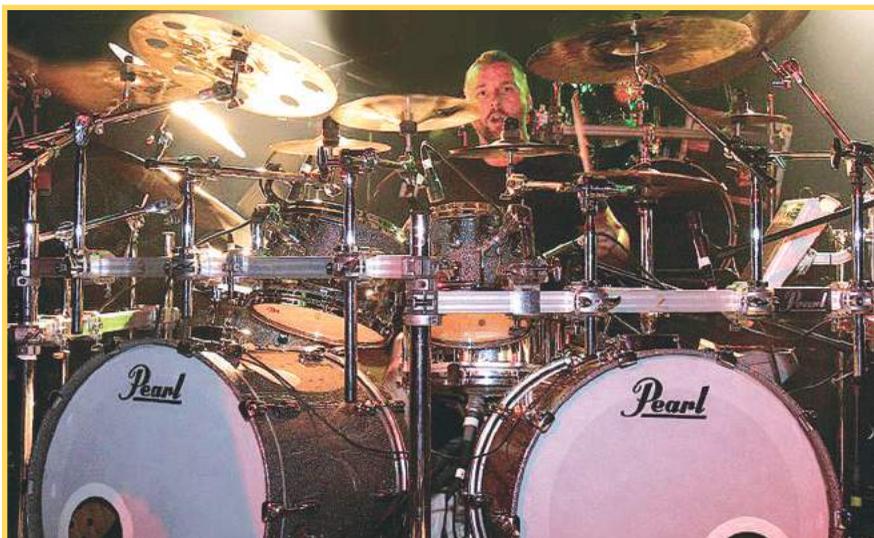
Flo: I can understand the logic, but you can't cheat much with triggers because they're still going to register the bass drum stroke only when you hit the drum, just like a mic would. So the need for speed and accuracy is still there. On the other hand, a lot of drummers will use triggers to play as fast as they can. This method sacrifices dynamics and intensity for short strokes and speed. We call it feathering the bass drum.

MD: Do you change your stick grip when you play a super-fast blast beat?

Flo: Yes. When I'm blasting, I use a French grip with my thumbs pointed up, using only my fingers to create the stroke. The stick will teeter-totter between my thumb and the index finger while my other fingers move the stick.

When I play grind beats and slower tempo beats, I use a standard matched grip combining arm, wrist, and fingers. I use a snapping motion combining wrists and fingers, and I'll use my arms for more power at slower tempos.

I change my stick position a lot throughout the course of most songs, depending on the tempo. The tuning of my snare drum is fairly tight to create fast rebounds for blast-



ing. But my toms are more loose than tight because I like a big, deep, open tone from them.

MD: What's your double-stroke technique?

Flo: I use a combination of wrists and fingers with the same snapping motion as I described with the matched grip. The technique is to open the hand with the fingers to let the stick drop and then pull back with the wrists.

MD: You're also known for a technique called the "gravity blast." Can you explain how it works?

Flo: A lot of guys today claim that they developed this technique, but it's been around for a long time. The early jazz drummers developed it. It's a stick technique that allows you to play a quick single-stroke roll with one hand. I use this sometimes to play very fast blast beats. It's basically one motion that creates two beats.

You use mostly your forearm muscles

while holding the stick tightly between your thumb and index finger. It's a short, quick stroke that allows you to strike the head and the rim at the same time and then follow through with the stroke moving below the rim and then pulling the stick back up to the starting position. It takes a lot of energy, and I don't use it very often.

MD: Do you use this technique with both hands when playing the gravity blast beat?

Flo: What I like to do is use this technique with my right hand on the snare playing 32nd notes along with my feet. I have a crash cymbal just above my hi-hats, so I'll use the gravity blast technique also with my left hand, bouncing back and forth between the crash and hi-hats to create a 16th-note groove on the hi-hat.

MD: Do you ever play double strokes with your feet?

Flo: I don't play double strokes with my feet in Cryptopsy, and I've never recorded

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FLO MOUNIER

using double strokes with my feet. But I do practice that technique.

MD: I noticed in one of your most recent solos on YouTube that you incorporated the left-foot clave into your playing. Do you plan to use this technique in your metal drumming and future recordings?

Flo: I've been working on left-foot clave for about five years. I started using it as an ostinato pattern while incorporating melodic ideas on top of it. I sometimes use it in my solos, but not very often. I've experimented with using the gravity blast along with the left foot clave to try to create something more Latin-sounding.

MD: Derek Roddy is also incorporating left-foot clave into his drumming and using different sound textures to create more interesting metal grooves.

Flo: Yes, and Derek is doing a great job with it. I've noticed a big progression in his playing over the last few years in terms of incorporating new ideas into metal drumming. He's one of the great metal drummers on the scene.

MD: You use much lighter cymbals than most metal drummers. Why do you choose to use the thinner, lighter Sabian HHX Evolution and O-Zone cymbals?

Flo: I prefer the HHX and O-Zone cymbals simply for their sound. They never sound abrasive or annoying, and they have a short sustain, so they don't drown out the other cymbals.

MD: Cryptopsy's music incorporates rhythms and changes that are unique among extreme metal bands. You also feature melodic vocals along with the typical metal growl, which is rare for death metal.

Flo: The musicians in the band come from diverse musical backgrounds, and we like to reflect that diversity in our music. I felt that we should also incorporate a singer who had diversity in his vocal abilities, to add a different dimension to the music. Creatively, I feel that this opens a lot more doors for our music and keeps things fresh.

I don't play guitar, so I don't write any riffs. But I do add creative input to the rhythmic aspects of the music, and we all work together to come up with interesting songs. My job is really to properly bridge all of these rhythmic ideas together. With all of the tempo and time-signature changes that

occur, I have to create parts that bridge these ideas in a cohesive way and that make sense musically.

MD: Your ability to shift tempos several times throughout the course of a song and still hold the groove is very impressive. How much time have you spent practicing this type of tempo shifting?

Flo: About seven years ago, I would spend four to five days a week practicing for two to three hours a day. I focused on developing the muscle groups I mentioned earlier to



increase my muscle control, endurance, and speed. I would start with my feet, practicing one foot at a time at a tempo of 140 bpm, for one minute. Then I'd progressively increase the tempo by 10–20 bpm, keeping the one-minute time frame for each tempo. After working both feet individually and then together, I would do the same routine with my hands. That was the turning point in my technique that gave me my endurance and control.

MD: Do you find it harder to keep up the pace of extreme drumming as you get older?

Flo: I've been playing the Cryptopsy music for many years, and I love to play. I love to sit behind the kit, or else I wouldn't still be out here doing it after all these years. I have a real passion for playing and creating new ideas. Because I've been playing some of these songs for so long, I'm comfortable experimenting with different techniques, like switching lead hands and using other challenging concepts, within the songs. There's really no secret to becoming a good metal

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FLO MOUNIER

drummer. It's all about practice, repetition, and endurance.

MD: Do you think about how much longer you can physically keep up with the demands of extreme metal drumming?

Flo: I do. But what's funny is that it's gotten easier for me to play this music. So I continue to challenge myself even more to hit harder and try new ideas.

MD: How do you cope with the physical and mental demands of touring?

Flo: Touring is difficult. You don't always eat healthy, and there's always free beer. [laughs] I try to keep in good physical condition. Luckily, I get my cardio workout every night on stage.

MD: You explain and perform your personal exercise routine on your DVD, *Extreme Metal Drumming 101*—which, by the way, is an excellent tool for learning blast beats and grind beats. Have you added any other exercises to your routine since then? You look even stronger and more physically fit now than you do in the video.

Flo: I've been working out much more than before, and I've changed some of my stretches, but I think it's more for personal reasons than it is for drumming. What I mean is, you don't have to work out to play better.

MD: You seem to live a pretty clean-cut lifestyle. I didn't notice any tattoos either. How did you end up playing this style of music and avoid the look and lifestyle of this typically dark scene?

Flo: I do have one tattoo on my back. I've had long hair in the past, when I was much more into the metal scene. But things evolve and people grow up. [laughs] I like change, so from one album to the next I always try to look different.

MD: Have you found any specific food or drink that has helped your focus, concentration, and/or stamina and energy for drumming?

Flo: Yeah, for sure! I eat clean, high-protein meals and good carbs. For protein I eat chicken, turkey, tuna, or lean red meats. For carbs, I eat potatoes, whole-wheat pastas, brown rice, or whole wheat bread. As far as drinks go, it's simple—tons of water! When I'm on the road I eat more protein for muscle recovery and fewer carbs.

MD: Please talk about your concept of biomechanics and drumming.

Flo: Drumming is all about biomechanics and how muscles function. Each individual's muscles function differently, so you

can't take one specific example and apply it to everyone. But you can analyze the way your body functions and pinpoint things to improve your performance.

For example, I used to have trouble finding my balance when playing double bass. I was constantly adjusting my position on the drum throne, trying to keep my body balanced. Then I discovered that by simply moving my bass drums a little further away from me, my legs had to extend and my knees had to drop a little lower. Suddenly, my back straightened right up and my balance problem was gone.

I feel it's important for drummers to take the time to pay attention to their biomechanics behind the drumkit and discover ways to make their entire bodies more comfortable and relaxed. That way they can use their body's optimum power for drumming. Just as there's a "sweet spot" to hold the drumstick to create the most rebound, there are also sweet spots for your body and different muscle groups to get the most out of your drumming skills. You just have to take the time to find them.

MD: Do you have any words of advice for aspiring extreme metal drummers?

Flo: Your focus for drumming should not be all about speed. There are tempos on the new *Cryptopsy CD, The Unspoken King*, that push the 300 bpm mark. But I find that once you reach a certain speed, it all becomes white noise anyway, so what's the point? I feel that the most important task to becoming an extreme metal drummer is to pay special attention to your basic rudiments and to your feel. Speed is important, but don't jump the gun. It will come naturally if you practice correctly. And make sure you can play a solid double-stroke roll. That will open up many ideas in your drumming technique.

Extreme music is made up of a variety of styles that are blended together in a heavy and powerful way. In order to play these styles, you need a strong foundation of drumming basics. Knowing how to play a slow 4/4 groove with style is more difficult than learning how to play a fast blast beat, because the blast beat is nothing more than a repetition of single strokes.

Overall, proper technique and practice will get you started on the good foot—no pun intended.



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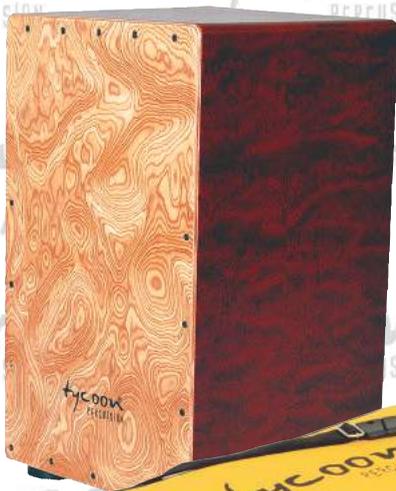
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OSCAR

SEATON

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When you've earned a nickname like “Seatpocket,” there's a reason—it's because you're all about the groove. So it is with drumming great Oscar Seaton. Oscar got his first major break playing with Ramsey Lewis, and he hasn't slowed down since, touring or recording with such luminaries as Grover Washington Jr., Phil Upchurch, Don Grusin, Dave Grusin, Boz Scaggs, George Benson, Lionel Richie, Lee Ritenour, David Sanborn, Kirk Whalum, Brian Culbertson, and Queen Latifah. All of this work has left him little time to concentrate on his own project, 13 Curves, an exciting rock group that spotlights the drummer.

Seaton is the perfect example of talent, motivation, and commitment equaling success. He was never schooled, but his passion, discipline, and direction led the way through his church experience and his self-taught lessons.

If you want to give a listen to some of the fine work Seaton has laid down on CD and DVD, check Don Grusin's *The Hang*, Spike Lee's *Inside Man*, Lionel Richie's *Encore*, Chris Standring's *Groovalicious*, or Lee Ritenour's *Overtime*. Those will provide you with a strong dose of this man's deep-pocketed talent. And if you *really* want to give yourself a treat, go to YouTube, type in Oscar's name, and just watch the cat play!



GIGS

Lionel Richie

Queen Latifah

George Benson

Grover Washington Jr.

Boz Scaggs

Lee Ritenour

Story by Robyn Flans
Photos by Alex Solca

MD: So many drummers over the years have said, "It all began with pots and pans." How about you?

Oscar: That was the case with me, too, from

years. I played patterns, with my feet tapping away on the floor as I played that snare drum and ride cymbal.

I started playing in my mother's church

enough money to buy my first kit, a Pearl Export, when I was twenty-one. I played that kit until I was twenty-four, when I bought my first Yamaha kit.

"The pocket can be about practicing to a metronome, or it can be about the space you leave. But it's *really* about your heart."

about the age of five until I was nine, when my dad bought me a little ride cymbal and snare drum, which I played on for about five

when I was about twelve, and I'd go down there and practice on their drumset every two or three days. I did that until I saved up

MD: So you didn't take any lessons?

Oscar: No. I'm a church guy. My mom went the whole church route, so we couldn't even listen to James Brown or Earth, Wind & Fire. I listened to church music, Gospel. I learned how to play from listening to Gospel players like Walter Hawkins, The Winans, and those kinds of groups. On Saturdays they would play Gospel music all day, from 9:00 A.M. until 10:00 at night. I would practice along to what they played, on my snare and cymbal. There were no DVDs, no videos—none of that.

MD: The church thing is really interesting. From what I gather, if you didn't play everything you knew in one bar...

Oscar: ...then you get off the drums. That was because there were always five or six other drummers ready to play. So either you did it or another guy would jump on the drums.

After playing in my mom's church, at about age nineteen, I played in a Gospel group called The Soul Children Of Chicago, which was a kid's choir that traveled all over the world. They had a record deal, and working with them gave me my first experience playing on a record. It was all live.

At that time, I was playing a lot of Gospel chops. There were two or three other guys in Chicago who were pretty well known, and since I was playing with this Gospel group, I was also pretty well known. At that time, guys would come over to my house with their drums and practice.

At that time, I was living with my father. When he would go to work, I would take all the furniture out of the living room and we would bring four or five drumsets in and play. We did that for years. My young guys would look at me like a guru; I had my own camp of guys, and just about every young guy who could play Gospel came over to my house.

Teddy Campbell was one of those guys. I remember him from when he was fifteen years old. The first record he was on was with The Chicago Mass Choir, and I was on it too. He used to come by my house on the bus



OSCAR'S KIT

Drums: Yamaha Oak Custom with Nouveau style lugs

- A. 4x14 maple snare
- B. 5 1/2x14 Maple Custom Vintage snare
- C. 8x8 rack tom
- D. 9x10 rack tom
- E. 10x12 rack tom
- F. 14x14 floor tom
- G. 16x16 floor tom
- H. 16x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1. 14" K Custom Session hi-hats
- 2. 9" A splash
- 3. 9" Oriental China splash
- 4. 17" K or A Custom crash
- 5. 19" A Custom crash (or K Custom Hybrid)
- 6. 7" A Custom splash
- 7. 21" A Custom Projection ride
- 8. 18" K Custom crash
- 9. 12" Oriental China splash on top of
10" A Custom splash (mounted on X-Hat)

- 10. 19" K Custom Hybrid China
- 11. 19" A Custom EFX crash (not shown)

Percussion: LP Mambo cowbell

Hardware: Yamaha, including a custom HexRack and a Flying Dragon double bass drum pedal (medium spring tension) with old-style Yamaha beaters; Drum Tech DTS tuning system, S-Hoops

Heads: Remo coated Ambassador on snare batter with Ambassador snare-side (minimal muffling—a little duct tape), clear Ambassadors on tops and bottoms of toms (no muffling, medium tension, each lug even), clear Powerstroke 3 on bass drum batter (very low tuning, two towels for muffling) with Head First logo head on front

Sticks: Vic Firth 5A (wood tip)

Electronics: Hart Dynamics

Microphones: Shure

and practice. So many of those guys have done great things, like Felix Pollard, Donald Barrett, Khari Parker, and Calvin Rodgers. All these guys came from my camp. We played a lot of stuff, and that was Gospel—it was all about expression.

There are no boundaries in Gospel music. You give your heart and you give your soul—it's a spiritual thing. You feel free to express yourself, and while you're expressing yourself, the choir is expressing itself, too. And everybody in the church is expressing themselves, too. It's like a party. So it does mess you up, because there are no boundaries. I mean, I learned a great deal playing Gospel. I learned to express myself, and I learned how to play behind people. But one thing about me was I always wanted to play other kinds of music. I wanted to play jazz.

MD: But if you couldn't listen to other kinds of music, how did you really learn about it?

Oscar: That all started when I was out of my mom's house and living with my dad. But even when I was with my mom, when she would go to work, my sister would turn on the radio and we would listen to whatever the music was. We knew that at 5:00 P.M. my mom would come home from work, so we had to make sure she wouldn't hear it coming down the street or she would say, "Were you listening to that devil music?"

When I was with my dad I started playing the blues a lot because I knew I didn't want to be pigeonholed as just a Gospel drummer. I started learning how to sight-read a little, and I began listening to Elvin Jones and Roy Haynes. I also began to practice and get into that language of music.

MD: All by yourself?

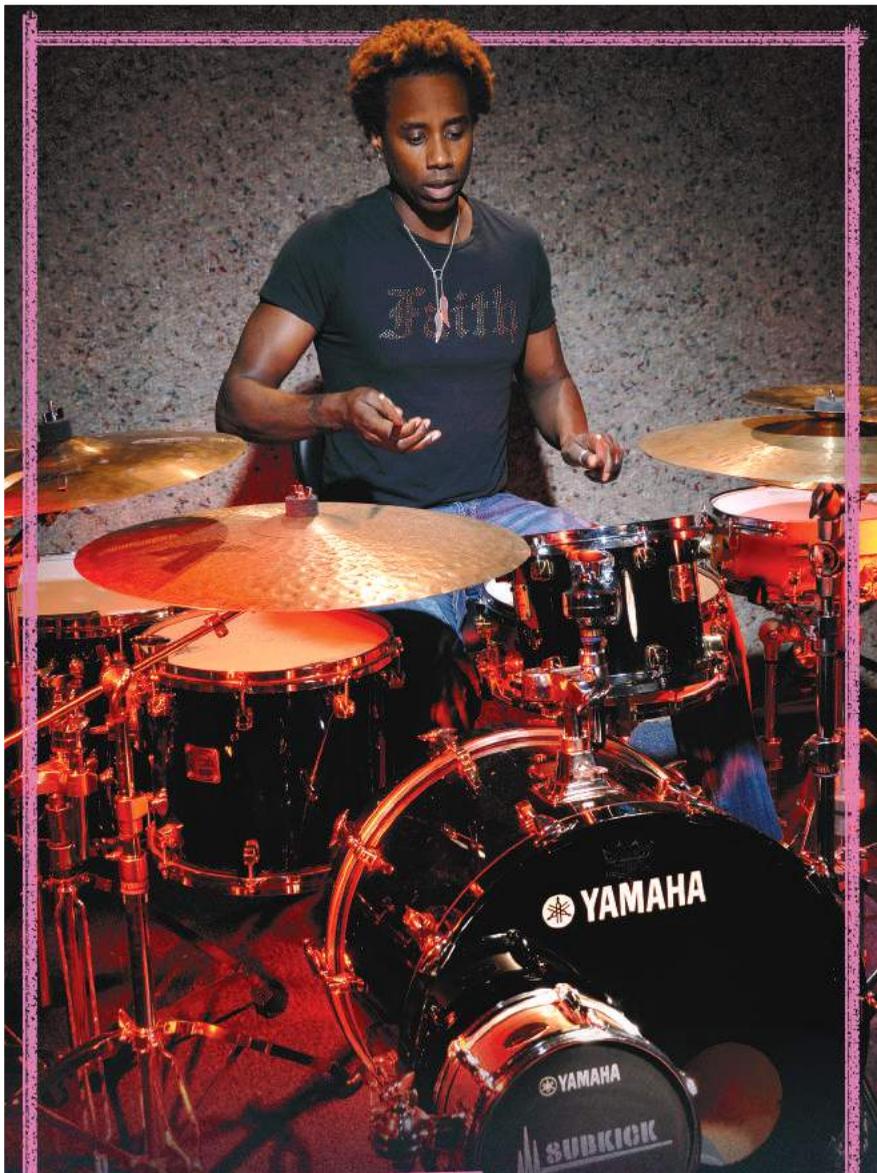
Oscar: All by myself.

MD: And you were teaching yourself to read?

Oscar: I taught myself. A friend of mine said, "Reading is easy. Just count. If you can count, you can read." I'm not saying I wouldn't love to have had a guy to look up to, but I was always the guy everybody looked up to. I kind of learned on my own as I went along, and it was just a God-given talent. After I started playing the blues in Chicago, it just mushroomed. I started getting calls for jazz gigs, and I started playing around town with different groups.

MD: So listening to more secular drummers taught you how to hold back more and about musical boundaries?

Oscar: I'm always a bass player's drummer. Even when I was playing with the Gospel choir, I would always listen to the notes between the bass drum and what the bassist was playing. I would always copy what he was playing on the bass to make it feel good. So I began to get that language of groove and pocket early on, whereas a lot of Gospel guys were just going everywhere.



OSCAR ON RECORD

RECORDINGS

ARTIST

13 Curves
Lionel Richie
Lionel Richie
Lee Ritenour
Lee Ritenour
Brian Culbertson
Ramsey Lewis
Yolanda Adams
Dwayne "Smitty" Smith

ALBUM

Underground
Live In Paris
Encore
Overtime (DVD/CD)
Smoke 'N' Mirrors
A Soulful Christmas
Dance Of The Soul
Yolanda Live In Washington
This Is Me



FAVORITES

ARTIST

Miles Davis
Stevie Wonder

ALBUM

Kind Of Blue
Songs In The Key Of Life

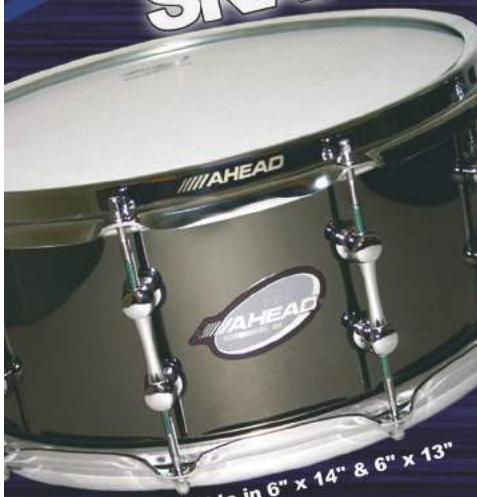
DRUMMER

Jimmy Cobb
Raymond Pounds,
Greg Brown,
Stevie Wonder
Andy Newmark
Ignacio Berroa
Jeff "Tain" Watts
Spanky
Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson
Fred White
James Gadsen

Sly & The Family Stone
Gonzalo Rubalcaba
Branford Marsalis
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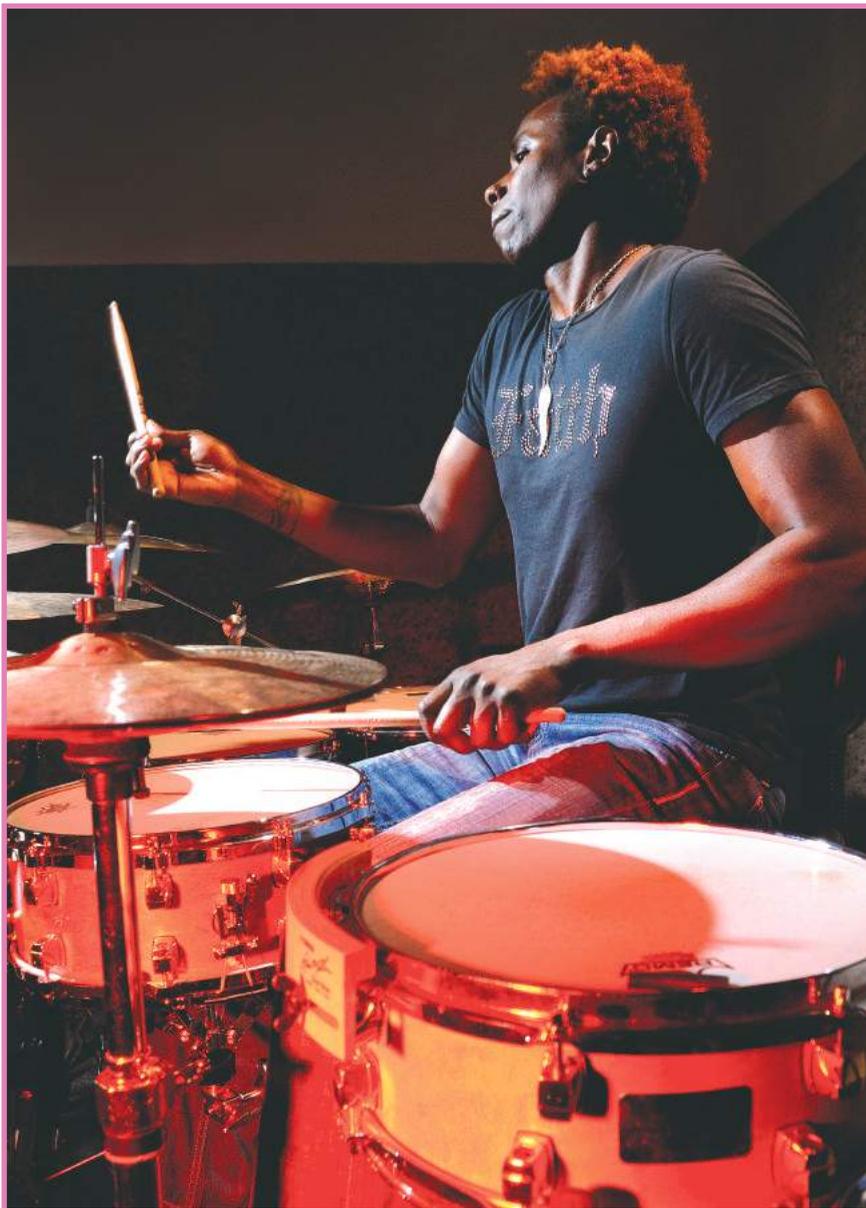
OSCAR SEATON

I started evolving from there, and when I started listening to a lot of R&B and that kind of music, I saw the pocket of the bass drum and the bass player. They would make the groove. That was one of the keys to the groove, locking the bass drum and the bass player together.

MD: How did you find your niche in jazz? Usually that comes from a schooled place.

Elvin Jones and Philly Joe Jones, Roy Haynes, and even Jeff "Tain" Watts. I don't know how, but jazz was always a part of me. Even when I played Gospel, it sounded jazz-influenced, and I don't know why. My mind was already there. People were always saying, "He's a jazzier."

I started learning how to play the swing ride, the hi-hat, and the snare by just lis-



Were you in any of your high school bands?
Oscar: Our high school band was so bad that there was no way I was going to stay after school for it. I hated school anyway, because I was a church boy. I was at church four days a week. The music program at school was terrible. No one at school even knew I played drums, while the whole Gospel world knew.

I started buying cassettes, and I was into

tening—no one taught me. I then started playing with some jazz guys around town. Listening is the key to life, in everything. Ramsey Lewis was my first jazz gig, and everything opened up for me after that. He homed everything in.

MD: How did you get the gig with Ramsey Lewis?

Oscar: By this time I was twenty-six. I'd played a lot of Gospel and had done a lot of

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OSCAR SEATON

records. I was known around Chicago and was doing different things. The bass player for Ramsey at the time used to play with me with a female piano player. We would do a large variety of music. One night he said, "Hmmm, you have a good swing feel." He never said he was going to recommend me, but one day there was this message on the machine, "Ramsey Lewis calling for Oscar," and I almost passed out. My dad said, "Is that the Ramsey Lewis?" I called back, and he said I came highly recommended. He told me to learn the music and that he'd see me in the bandstand.

Well, I learned the music, and Ramsey said, "Oh yeah, man, that swing is great. But that ride cymbal isn't swinging like it should. Go listen to these records." He told me to listen to some old Miles Davis records with Jimmy Cobb playing, some real simple swing. The Kind Of Blue record really homed me in because the swing wasn't like Elvin Jones. It was simple, but it was swing. I really learned the pocket of swing from that record, and to this day it's on the top five of my record list.

I played with Ramsey for four years and did three records with him, but eventually he stopped playing swing and started play-

ing a lot of pop stuff. I then learned more about pocket, and everything got better. He used to tell me, "Man, you have a great feel, but learn how to play dynamically." We would play a song and he'd turn around and drop it way down, but it was still grooving. So I really learned how to play dynamically on that gig. I learned a lot on that gig, and we're still in contact. Ramsey's a great guy.

I then played with Brian Culbertson, a smooth-jazz guy. Then his bass player, who also worked with Boz Scaggs, tried to get me on David Sanborn's gig. But I was just too young and not experienced enough. But then, when Boz needed a drummer, the bass player told him, "This is the guy." I sent him some CDs, he heard my group, and he came to Chicago and we played for about a half an hour. Then he stopped and said I had the gig.

I went on tour with Boz opening for Stevie Nicks in '97, and on the first gig we played the tune "Some Change." After the gig, Boz pulled me aside and said, "The only person to ever shuffle like that on that tune was Jeff Porcaro." That blew me away. He said, "I haven't felt that since Jeff." I played with Boz for about three years, and I

had the best time. I learned another pocket-sized lesson. I really learned to home in on the pocket even more.

Then my career really took off after that. It opened up like Moses parting the Red Sea. I came to LA, and I have to be honest, I don't think there's been a busier drummer than me. Last year I was on tour for eight months. I went on tour with Lionel Richie for five months, then I took a break and tried to put my own rock band record out. But then Queen Latifah called, and I went on tour with her for three months. Then I went back on tour with Lionel for a month. I was so worn down from all of the work that I had to go to the hospital for a week.

MD: What happened?

Oscar: I'd been on tour with Queen Latifah for six weeks, and one day the bass player and I were walking out of a restaurant and I felt like I was having a heart attack. It eased up, so we walked to the hotel, but I asked them to send an ambulance. They did a bunch of tests at the hospital, but they didn't find anything. They did say I was dehydrated, because I never did drink a lot of water. But they figured I'd had a panic attack.

I play hard, so I have to be careful about dehydration. But the positive side to all of this is I haven't had to worry about work because the phone hasn't stopped ringing. If you think positive, you can have anything you want.

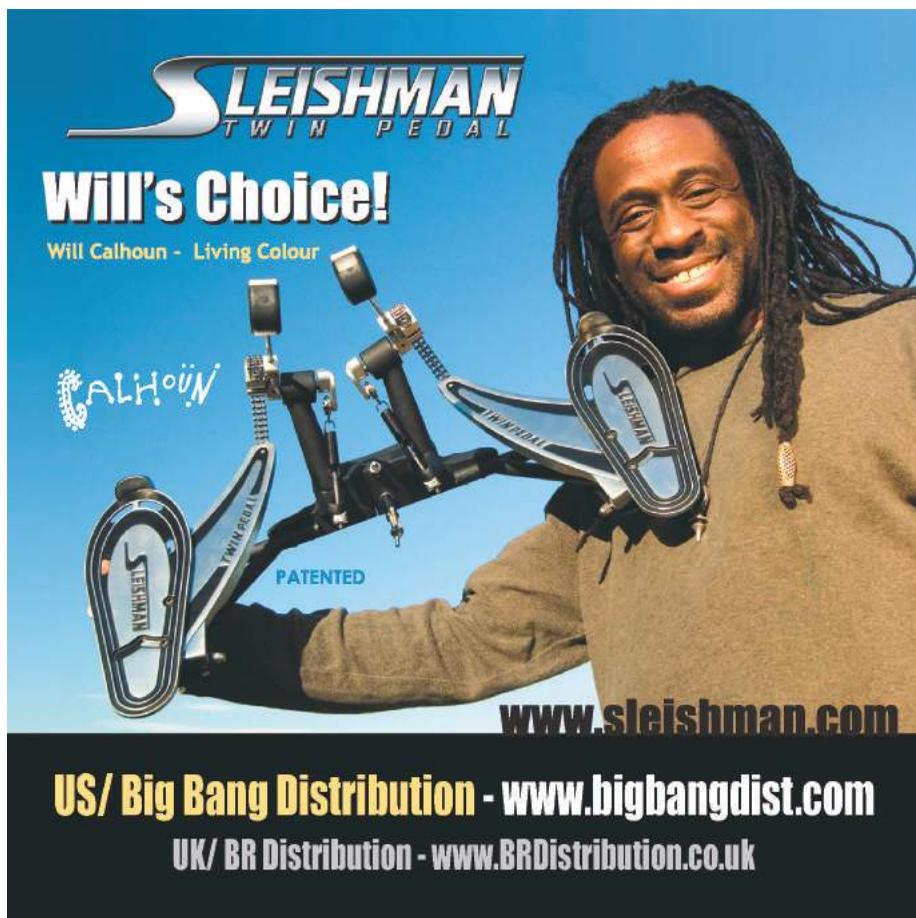
MD: You've had some amazing gigs—like George Benson.

Oscar: I've played with him for about four years. I love playing with George because of the openness, the freedom to just play—not freedom to go wild, but freedom to play the song the way it's supposed to be played. George's Give Me The Night album—you're talking about amazing players who worked on that record. So it was great to try to duplicate that. He let me do my thing within the confines of the music.

George is a jazz player. He's one of the greatest guitar players of our time, and he can sing like Donny Hathaway, so what can you say? It's a great gig. I'm very blessed. And it's another pocket gig to express what the groove is about, because it's all about groove. It's always going to be about groove, I don't care what you're going to play in life.

MD: Do you play any jazz gigs with brushes?

Oscar: Yes. John Beasley, Queen Latifah's musical director, is a friend of mine, and he



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OSCAR SEATON

had me do her jazz record. I would say four or five songs were with brushes.

MD: Where did you learn to develop your brush chops?

Oscar: I listened to Ed Thigpen a lot. He's one of my favorites, Philly Joe Jones too. The first time I saw brushes played was twelve years ago in a video by Clayton Cameron. He's one of the modern-day greats. Jeff Hamilton, too.

MD: Were you a practice-aholic?

Oscar: There was a point where I practiced all the time. I moved to LA in 2000. In 2001, I ended up doing a couple of gigs with David Sanborn. It had been ten years since I was told I wasn't ready to play with David. But he had since heard me on different stuff. I did about four shows with David, and he wanted me to do more, but then the George Benson gig came along.

MD: Going back to that rejection you had ten years prior with Sanborn, were you crushed when you didn't get the gig?

Oscar: I cried like a baby. My girlfriend at the time said, "You'll get more, it's just not your time." That was going to be my first big gig. I flew to New York, I did the audition, he liked me, management called back the next day and said, "David wants you to go on tour with him," and I was so excited. They said they were going to send me the itinerary and that I should get my passport together because he was doing a tour with Al Jarreau, and Terri Lyne Carrington was playing with him. I was excited. The next day, management called and said, "Hold off, he's looking at another guy." My heart dropped. I knew I wasn't going to get it.

MD: How awful. But I suppose, everything's for a reason.

Oscar: You are so right. I wasn't ready. Michael White got the gig, and he had already played with David and was a known entity. I still had work to do on my groove, and that was a big gig.

Omar Hakim is one drummer people say my playing is patterned after, and I love him to death. He had done that gig. He was my hero, and there I was, twenty-two. But ten years later, I played with Sanborn, and he was a great guy.

MD: What about working with Lee Ritenour?

Oscar: He was another guy like Boz who was amazing to work with. Like George Benson, he's an open and free guy who lets you express yourself within the music. We did a DVD a couple of years back called

Overtime, which Harvey Mason and I each played half of. Harvey is one of the guys I put at the top of my list too.

MD: What do you consider your most challenging gig?

Oscar: Every single one is challenging. Lionel Richie's gig is challenging because I play the same thing every show. It's not jazz. But it's challenging to make those songs feel like the songs that he wrote.

What's really challenging to me is playing different kinds of music and bringing art to whatever the music is. If it's pop, bring the art to it. Lionel Richie sold over a hundred million records. You can't jack those songs up. It's important to me to play those songs the way they're supposed to be played and to give him the feeling to sing them the way he sung them when he did the record. That's the challenge—to make every music sound the way it's supposed to sound.

MD: Is there an artist you're dying to work with?

Oscar: I used to think like that, but not anymore. I'm into whatever the universe wants me to do. It's about God. He puts me where he wants to, and when he does that things go smoothly. When I say I want to do something and it's not really for me, it's chaos.

I would like to do my own stuff. I have a band called 13 Curves. [Check out www.13curves.com.] The guitar player is from Lionel's band, and we have a song from our record, Underground, that will be in a film called Soccer Mom. Hopefully it will take off.

MD: Can you give some tips for creating a great pocket?

Oscar: It's the conviction. The pocket is the passion. Learning how to play, you basically put your life into learning how to make music feel good. Everybody's pocket and groove is in different places, but it's about the feeling of it.

The problem for a lot of young drummers is that they don't commit to making the music feel good. The pocket can be about practicing to a metronome, or it can be about the space you leave. But it's really about your heart and your conviction to make the music feel good. You can feel the difference between the playing of people who have devoted their lives to it and those who haven't. If you don't have that, the music won't go anywhere. But if you do, your phone will ring constantly.





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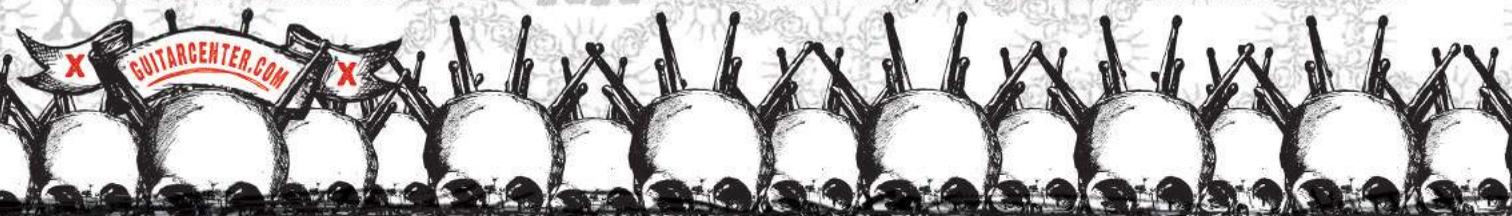
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Stanton Moore On

Johnny Vidacovich

by Mark Griffith



S Stanton Moore has established himself as one of the busiest drummers of the new millennium. His drumming is the creative spark plug in Galactic, a groove-based band that's always pushing their creativity to new levels while expanding the realms of funk and jazz. On their most recent recording, *From The Corner To The Block*, Galactic enlisted various guest hip-hop MC's to add a different seasoning to the mix. But it's not only Galactic that keeps Stanton busy. These days his schedule is split between his side project Garage A Trois, various sessions, and his stellar work as a bandleader.

For his contribution to our Reflections series, Stanton has chosen to talk about his mentor, Johnny Vidacovich. Vidacovich is a legendary New Orleans musician who has taught many of the best young drummers in the Big Easy. His recordings with Professor Longhair, The Astral Project, John Scofield, Alvin "Red" Tyler, Mose Allison, Tony Dagradi, and many more are virtual encyclopedias of modern New Orleans drumming.

The Beginnings

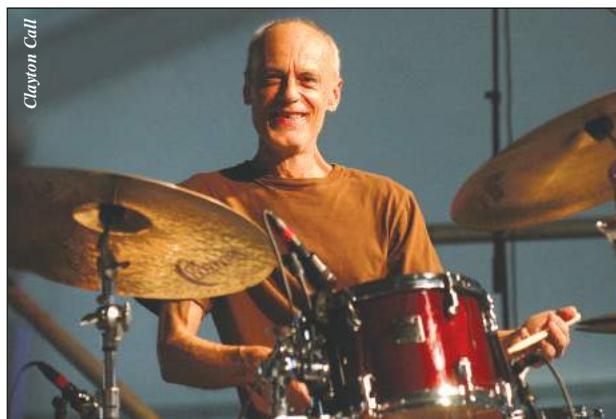
"When I was young I listened to Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, and Deep Purple," Stanton begins. "In my late teens, I began listening to Miles Davis and John Coltrane, then The Meters and James Brown. As I grew up in New Orleans, I went to a lot of parades with my mom, and I was always hearing Professor Longhair and Dr. John. But when it came to the drumset, I was usually listening to classic rock and jazz. Then I began to really get deep into funk. I went to see Russell Batiste [drummer with The Funky Meters] play a lot, and I was carrying his drums around for him. So musically, that's where my head was.

"But then I saw Johnny Vidacovich, and everything changed," Moore continues. "The first time that I saw Johnny play was in 1989. I was seventeen or so, and he was playing at Tyler's Beer Garden. I had to watch him through the window because I was too young to get in. He was playing an 18" bass drum, a 14" floor tom, a snare, and two cymbals, and he was getting an enormous amount of music out of that small kit. I was absolutely floored by what I saw. I began to get to know him through going to the Young Peoples Jazz Forum at Tipitina's. I saw him play every Sunday afternoon from 1:00 to 4:00.

"I learned a lot from Johnny, and I'm still learning from him. When I was a kid, he would always give me useful pointers and advice about playing, as he did for all the young musicians who were around. So I started taking lessons with him right before I enrolled at Loyola."

Magnetism And Expressiveness

"I was instantly drawn into his approach," Stanton goes on. "His drumming had a magnetism about it. I'd never seen anyone play like that, and I've never seen anyone play like that since. He was grooving so hard that I just couldn't believe it. His groove was so funky that you couldn't stand still. But it was his expressiveness on the drums that really floored me. After I started studying with him, that sense of expressiveness really helped me open up my own playing approach. There are no musical lines; there's only the expression of musical ideas. That's a really important point. But because of that, at first Johnny's playing seemed very foreign to me. It was slippery and greasy, and it was so expressive.



"I had a hard time assimilating what Johnny was doing into my own playing," Stanton admits. "He was using a lot of different stickings, and I couldn't tell what they were. But he eventually broke it down to make more sense. During our lessons he had me learn melodies on the drums and solo over them while keeping the form. When Johnny plays, you can always tell where he's at in the form of the tune. When he teaches, and when he plays, it's always about music. People call Johnny for gigs and lessons because he's so creative, and so musical. He also has a great attitude towards making music and teaching. He never gets aggravated or angry. He's known for his wonderfully laid-back attitude that makes him easy to work with."

The Legato Touch

"Johnny has always gotten a unique sound from his snare drum," Moore says. "I came from a very rudimentary background, and I was really playing through the drum. He began to emphasize to me that it was important to try to pull the sound out of the drum to get a more legato sound from the instrument. He had me experiment with playing on different parts of the



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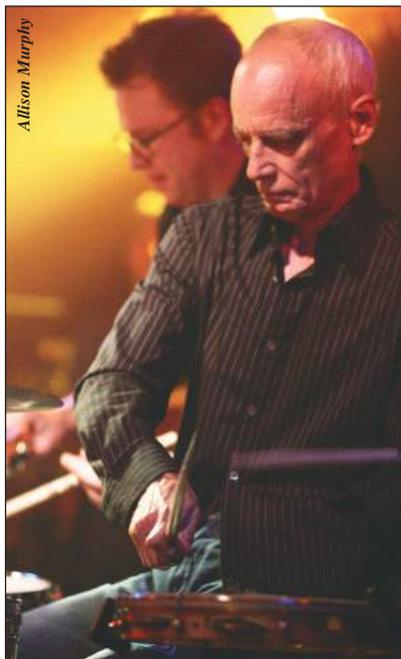
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drum and using different strokes like drags and rolls. The way he uses rolls on the snare drum has influenced my own approach to use more buzz-roll sounds. He can get hundreds of sounds out of the snare drum.

"Johnny also encouraged me to study timpani," Stanton reveals, "to help me develop my touch on the drums. So I began studying with a great timpanist at Loyola named Jim Atwood. We focused on that same concept of pulling the sound out of the drum. We spent a lot of time just playing single notes on the timpani, trying to get them to sound as legato as possible. That process took me closer to where Johnny was coming from, because he had studied some timpani as well. [You can hear Johnny's timpani playing on his recordings Banks Street and Mystery Street.] I recently learned that John Bonham studied some timpani as well to develop his touch at the drums. No one got a bigger sound than Bonham, and he didn't hit as hard as some people think he did.

"It wasn't just me that was entranced by Johnny Vidacovich," Moore suggests. "There were a lot of us who were learning from him. Brian Blade, Kevin O' Day, and many other young drummers were all regu-



Allison Murphy

lars at Johnny's gigs. Whether he was playing at a blues club, a jazz club, in a tuxedo at a hotel, or at a festival, we were all there checking him out. Those experiences showed us how the things that Johnny taught us could be applied to rock, funk, jazz, and even heavy metal. Johnny wasn't teaching us about jazz; he was teaching us about music.

"Later on, Johnny began to use more drums and cymbals, so he could get more tones and pitches from the drums. It wasn't more or less musical; he just had more tonal choices. But regardless of whether he's playing a three-piece kit or a five-piece set, he's always über-hip."

Recordings

"When I hear Johnny's groove on 'Cissy Strut' from John Scofield's Flat Out, I'm always inspired," Moore enthuses. "I also still listen to him on the Professor Longhair recording Crawfish Fiesta. There's a record that he did with guitarist John Mooney called Testimony that's amazing, too. George Porter plays bass on it, and he and Johnny play great together. I also really like Johnny's first solo record, Mystery Street.

"When I was taking lessons with Johnny," Stanton goes on, "he was always very inquisitive with me; he was always asking me questions about music. He's a very curious person, and he has a really youthful enthusiasm towards new music. He was always looking to check out something new. But on the other hand, he would often pull out the old Bill Evans recordings with Paul Motian and have me listen to them. With those recordings, he emphasized how



all of the instruments were interweaving, and he always pointed out the expressive musicality of that group. Then he would put on the Professor Longhair record that he was on, and have me try to play the grooves. After I played them wrong, he would show me what he was actually playing. That was a great way to learn!

"I always asked him questions about what I saw him do on gigs from the night before," Stanton recalls. "New Orleans is a great town. There are a lot of drummers around that will let you sit in and pick their brains about drumming and music. That's where I got a lot of my education, by going out and seeing guys and asking them questions. I still do that today. Whenever I'm in town, I make it a point to go see drummers like Shannon Powell, Russell Batiste, and Herlin Riley. They have me sit in, and I ask them questions."

Blurring The Lines

"Another thing that I learned from Johnny," Stanton shares, "is how he blurs the lines between his funky approach and his jazz playing. That's what I'm striving to do today. He used to do this cool thing where would play a rock groove on the bridge of a jazz tune, or play reggae behind

one of the soloists. As a young drummer I tried to do that as well, but I found that it wasn't as 'accepted' when I did it as when he did it. Now I do it in a more subtle way. In a funk tune I might play something that's a little more Mardi Gras Indian-based, or a buzz-roll idea that comes from the brass band tradition, but I'm not really consciously thinking that way, it just comes out. I owe that to Johnny.

"When I'm trying to develop my vocabulary on the drums," Moore continues, "instead of drawing ideas from other drummers who are playing in the same style of music, I'll look elsewhere. For instance, I might try to pick up some funk fills from Elvin Jones or Brian Blade. I will take things that they do and figure out a way to incorporate them into a funk approach. Elvin had this little flourish that he put everywhere; it starts on the snare and goes to the floor tom and ends with a huge crash. I do that in funk a lot, and it usually works. Of course you have to figure out where it's appropriate. If I'm in a big room, laying it down for an MC with Galactic, I might not do that, because it would probably get in the way of what's happening vocally. But with my trio, we can make the tunes sound different every night, and really get inside the music.

We can blur those lines a little bit more. The last thing that I want people to think when they hear me play is that I sound like a funk drummer, or a jazz drummer, or any specific type of drummer. I just want them to think that this drummer is killing it!"

School Is Still In Session

"After a long time of learning from Johnny, we began doing a double-drummer gig with George Porter and Rich Vogel (from Galactic) on keys. That was really cool because we would set up facing each other. We would trade on some tunes, and I would find myself trying to come up with things that were as musical as what he had just played. Sometimes I would get so drawn into what he was playing that I would almost forget that we were playing a gig. He just draws you in."



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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Steely Dan's Walter Becker Just For The Feel

by Ken Micallef

Jeff Porcaro adored their music. Bernard Purdie referred to them as “good cop, bad cop.” And Steve Gadd graced their record *Aja* with one of the greatest drum solos ever recorded. Since the early 1970s, Steely Dan has produced some of the most instrumentally clever and lyrically cryptic music in all of rock. Their ability to blend jazz, pop, funk, R&B, soul, and the occasional reggae rhythm under a cool-school banner is practically unparalleled. And even when the William Burroughs–inspired duo of Donald Fagen and Walter Becker isn’t working together in the same room, they make majestic music.

Following the lead of Donald Fagen’s recent solo project, Morph The Cat, Walter Becker’s *Circus Money* features the talents of long-time Steely Dan (and former Wayne Krantz and Sting) drummer Keith Carlock. Steely Dan has shown immaculate taste in choosing drummers, from their own Jim Hodder, to Porcaro, Gadd, and Purdie, to such masters as Ed Greene, Jim

Gordon, Rick Marotta, Jim Keltner, Paul Humphrey, and Hal Blaine. Rhythm is obviously their thing, and never has that been clearer than on Becker’s *Circus Money*.

Becker’s long-awaited follow-up to 11 Tracks Of Whack, *Circus Money* is nearly an all reggae/dub riddim fest, featuring Carlock’s best work since Oz Noy’s *Oz Live*. Sinewy, sly, dark, and agile, *Circus Money* floats rather than stings, reflecting Becker’s Manhattan-to-Maui residences. But Carlock’s rhythms burn, from the itchy Al Jackson–styled funk of “Downtown Canon” and the all-out dub damage of “Bob Is Not Your Uncle Anymore” to the full Steely assault of “Upside Looking Down” and the second-line grumble of the album’s title track. Carlock usually reserves this level of interplay and activity for live gigs, but here he’s given freedom to let fly.

“When I originally started working on this record,” Becker recalls, “I’d been listening to a lot of Jamaican music. [Producer] Larry Klein and I ended up writing songs that had references to some particular Jamaican tunes, that, after they were finished—and depending on the treatment—didn’t actually sound Jamaican.

“The thing about Jamaican music,” Becker continues, “as opposed to American soul music, where the drummer is playing a fairly routine part and the bass player is blowing around that, with early ’70s Jamaican music, it’s the other way around. You have the bassist playing the characteristic figure, which is the determining figure. The drummer is free to blow around it and leave out beats or lay weird anticipations.”

On Steely Dan’s ’80s swansong, *Gauche*, they raised the level of playing to a click track to an art. Long before clicks were standard, Steely Dan created their own computerized “Wendel” (the group’s electronic sequencing machine), and made every



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WALTER BECKER

drummer conform to its beat. So when Becker tells you that the click was nowhere in sight for Circus Money, your ears perk up.

"As [guitarist] John Herrington once said," Becker recalls, "when you're playing with the click, you're playing along with stupid. Then you listen back and stupid isn't

much difference.

"We recorded the tunes with a full rhythm section of drums, bass, piano, and guitar," Becker continues. "I want the musicians who are playing the basic tracks to think like they're playing a real melody, like they weren't making tracks but music. I

which is not always the case with musicians. And he also cares about what you're trying to do. Keith was the first guy I showed the tunes to, and we started rehearsing and developing ways of playing them. We spent time trying to evolve different things and going back and forth on

"I was sitting right between Jeff Porcaro and Jim Gordon. I felt like I was in between the tracks and trains were going by on both sides."

there. So somebody else takes the fall. There was a track or two on Circus Money where we didn't get it and we would try it with a click, but it was inevitably worse sounding and had less groove than before. Once that click turns on, it changes what everybody is doing.

"These guys play really well and steady; they don't need remedial tempo assistance. Now, I believe Keith had a little Roland tempo box that he used to count off tempos. The box had a blinking light on it, which he could glance at to see if we'd strayed from the beat. But if you do that, it doesn't make

particularly wanted the situation to be such that Keith and everybody could really play out and not be listening to a click."

Here are Walter Becker's thoughts on some of the drummers he's put to the test over the years.

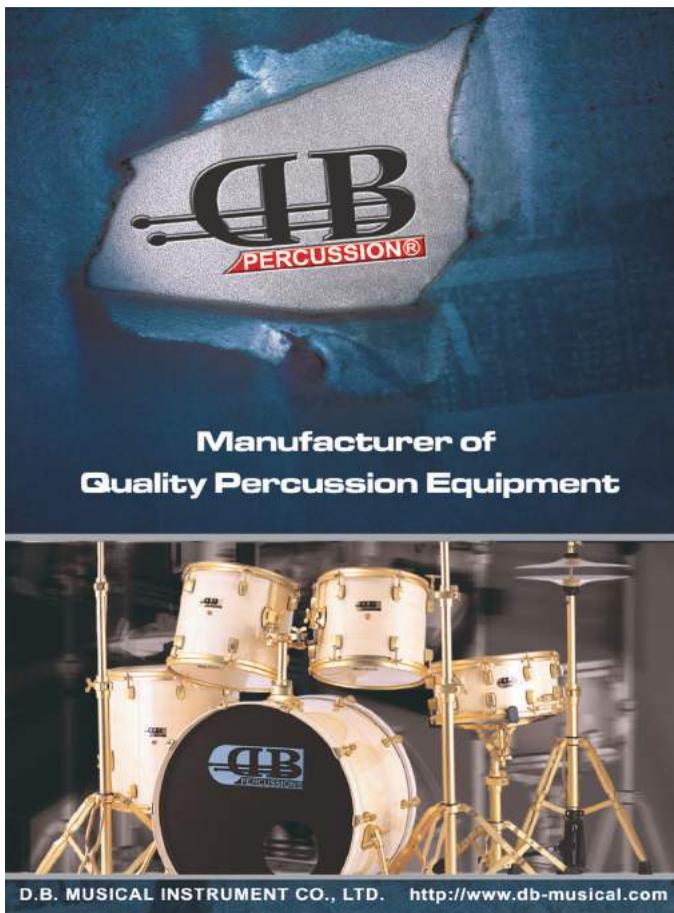
Keith Carlock

(Steely Dan's *Everything Must Go*,
Donald Fagen's *Morph The Cat*)

One of the things about Keith that you've sussed out by now is that he's very, very smart and really understands what you're trying to do musically on a profound level,

ideas. Some of the treatments came out to be quite different from what my demo thoughts were.

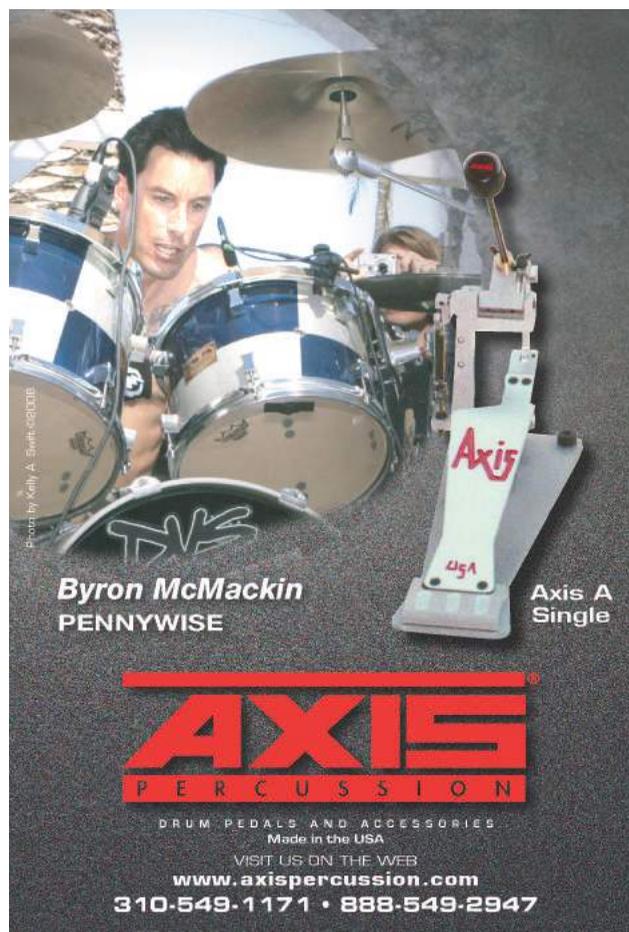
Loose playing is what I wanted, and Keith is such a great musician to play with because he listens and reacts, and things happen. He's always giving a hundred percent. If an approach doesn't work out, he's not discouraged; he'll try something else. If you describe something to him in a more or less coherent way, he's willing to try it. Not every musician has that talent.



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Jim Gordon

(Steely Dan's *Pretzel Logic*)

Pretty much everything Jim did was great. His time was rock solid, and the center of his beat was always in the nicest place you could imagine. Like Keith, he was smart, he learned the tune, he grasped the intention of the tune, he put together parts well, and you could make suggestions to him and he would do everything possible to make them work. And Jim was a lovely guy—a nice soulful guy and great to work with. He had great energy.

Jim was a strong drummer. He could do takes, and his sound was fantastic. His touch on the drums was great. If you cut a trio or quartet track with Jim and the song was any good at all, it already sounded like a hit because of how well he played it. He's on "Rikki Don't Lose That Number" and "Parker's Band" with Jeff Porcaro, as well as "Pretzel Logic," "Any Major Dude"—all of *Pretzel Logic*, in fact, except for "Night By Night."

Jim was a fast study. Also, he had a well-defined style. We'd heard him many times, so we knew what he sounded like playing different beats. He was good to work with, very attentive. There was no

indication of the voices in his head then.

[Gordon was eventually diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic.] But later on, by the time we were working in '76, his mood was a little darker. He seemed a little depressed and I would hear a story later on about odd behavior at a session. He still played great, though. I never had a bad moment with Jim Gordon.

When we did the session for "Parker's Band," I was sitting right between Jeff and Jim. I felt like I was in between the tracks and trains were going by on both sides. Exciting. When they played together, they grooved together. That was the only time I did that with them, and I would say there was a big difference between Jeff's approach and Jim's approach: Jeff's was a little more popping, more high energy, while Jim was more relaxed. But when they double drummed, they played together.

I can't remember exactly why we wanted two drummers on that song, but I just couldn't resist. It seemed like too much fun not to try. We had heard a lot of good two-drummer drumming with Frank Zappa's early band. It was something that we later started doing on the road with Porcaro and Jim Hodder."

Jeff Porcaro

(Steely Dan's *Katy Lied*, *Pretzel Logic*, *Gaucha*)

Jeff was a totally "up" guy, totally into the music. Forget about his drumming, he would just come and hang out while we were recording and overdubbing. He was totally into the music, he had a wonderful energy, and he was a great guy to be around and a great musician.

Jeff was probably the first guy we found who could play soul and rock beats and who also had jazz techniques available. We were moving in that direction, and [guitarist] Denny Dias said, speaking of Jeff, "There's this drummer you guys should hear." And he was right.

Jeff did the whole *Katy Lied* album, and that was pretty fine. Regarding his outro on "Doctor Wu," he was one of those guys to whom you could just say, "Take it!" and he knew what to do. That was no problem for him. He didn't need to be told very much. He knew what to do, and if that meant doing something other than what we had in mind, before you could finish the sentence explaining it, he would say, "Oh, I've got it," and he had it.

When we cut the title track to *Gaucha*, it was Jeff and the band, and Chuck Rainey

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WALTER BECKER

and Victor Feldman were there, too. We played this tune all day, and at about ten o' clock Donald and I said, "This isn't happening, let's knock off," and we left. But Jeff said, "No, we're not leaving 'til we have this track." So they stayed there without us, cut the track, and did a bunch of edits with [producer] Gary Katz. They would not accept that we weren't going to get a rhythm track that we were going to use.

Well, we came in the next day and they said, "Check it out," and there it was. Jeff had seen us in action enough times to know that at a certain point we would bail. He wasn't always convinced, and he didn't like to go home without having cut a track. Nobody does. So they just stayed there and did it.

Bernard Purdie

(Steely Dan's *Royal Scam*, *Aja*, *Gaucha*)

There are some musicians who don't have an idea of how fantastic they are. But most of these guys we're talking about do. Jeff knew, and Steve Gadd knows—they know who they are and what they can do. That's part of the magic of what they do, the confidence and their willingness to bring their conception to the music.

Bernard has so many great qualities. The only thing different about him was that he heard the tune the way he heard it a little more strongly. And that's the way he wanted to play it. But what was fantastic was the way he played and how quickly he put the chart together in his mind and turned it into a song.

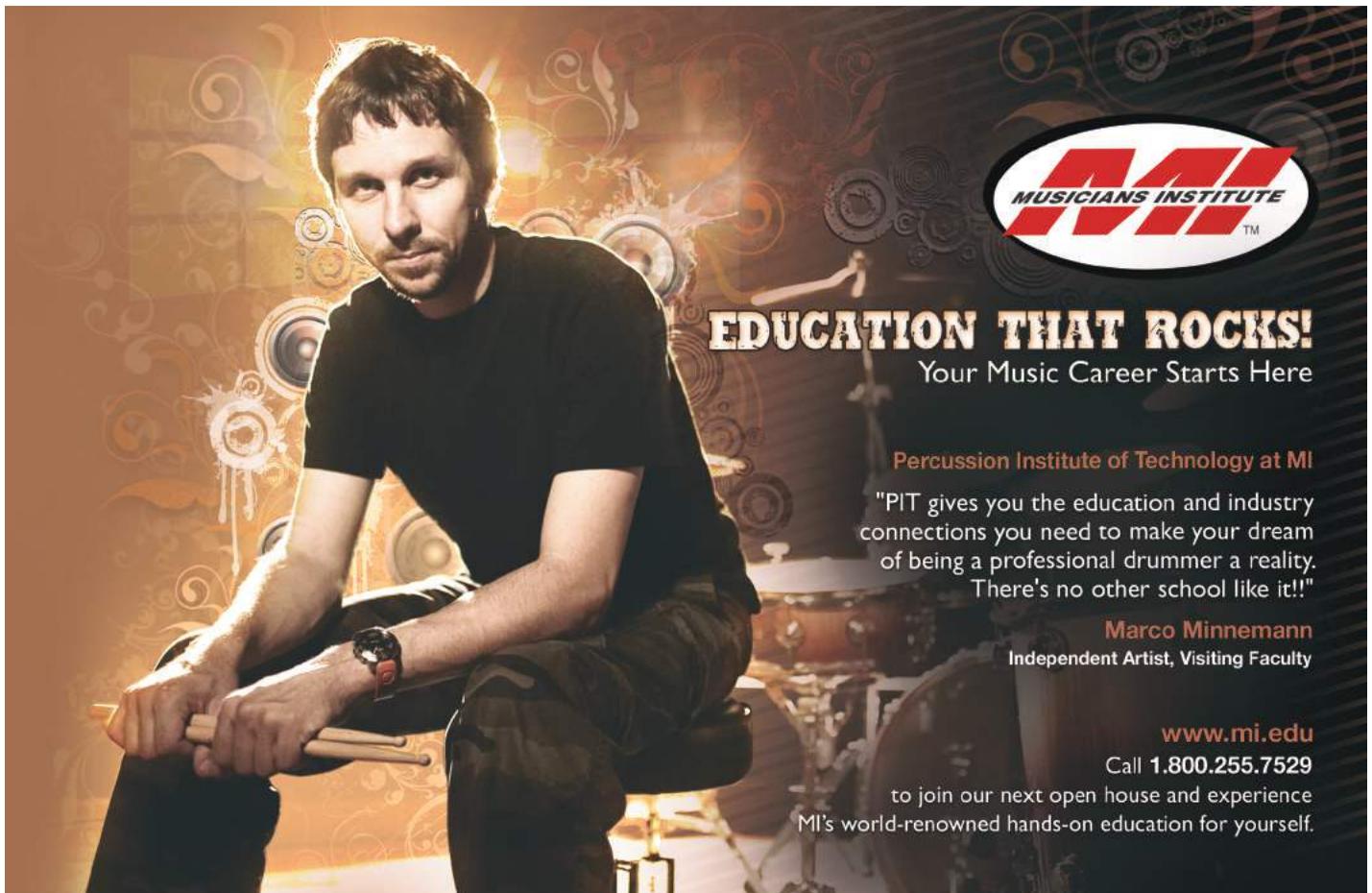
If you're cutting rhythm dates with band members and drummers, usually it takes a while before they figure out the relationship of the song to the chart. The charts are written in a condensed form using second endings, repeats, and the like. That can be confusing in terms of the dynamics of the tune.

With most session musicians, there's a time when they're trying to figure out the relationship between the chart and the piece of music. Then they know when to play excited, where the fills go, what the groove is, and when they should come back to a recurring groove. At every session, Bernard was always the first guy to learn the chart. By the first or second take, the drum part already had the structure of a record, the fills were in the right places, the dynamics were there that reflected verse, chorus, bridge, instrumental, and other interludes. And, in fact, Bernard would often point out to the other musicians the error of

their ways. It was a good thing in a way. He knew looking at the chart what he understood and what musician "X" at the date hadn't figured out, and he would point that out.

Basically Bernard was more of a stylist and more of an original. He was less impressed with our "brilliant ideas" of what the drum part should be. If I were Bernard Purdie, I would have probably felt exactly the same way. It took us a while to figure out the best way of working with him on those rare occasions when he wasn't already doing a certain thing. There were times when he liked our ideas and he would make them sound better. These guys are from New York, and that's how they're used to working. If there was a misunderstanding, they were willing to argue about it, either with each other, with you, or whoever. "Kid Charlemagne" is impressive drumming, and, of course, so is "Babylon Sisters."

All that said, if I could play with anyone, any drummer, I would like to have played with Al Jackson, Grady Tate, and Earl Palmer, just for the feel.



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Buzzing Is No Drag

Ideas For Left-Hand Comping

by Albe Bonacci

MUSIC KEY

open	O	R.C.
H.H.	●	
T.J.	○	
S.D.	○	
F.T.	○	
B.D.	○	
H.H.	○	Add 1
w/ foot	○	T.J.

I think we all like to listen to great music and great drummers, but what interests me the most is a drummer's utilization of space. Space can be used to help us define our style and make us sound unique or more recognizable.

Along with time, feel, and sound choices (tuning, cymbal selection, etc.), it's what happens between the main notes that makes us individuals. Things such as ghost notes can make a beat more fun and more developed, and they provide an opportunity for uniqueness. Just keep in mind that when we use devices like ghost notes, it doesn't mean we're disregarding the effective use of space or simplicity.

I like to play small drags or buzzes within some rhythms. In jazz, this kind of embellishment happens all the time. In fact, you almost never hear jazz time playing without snare drum comping/interplay.

In this article, we're going to apply that jazz mentality within straight 8th- and 16th-note patterns.

Here are the basic strokes and stickings:

- 1) The 16th note-triplet half drag.

1

R LL R R LL R

- 2) The 32nd-note half drag.

2A

R L R LL R L R LL

2B

R LL R L R LL R L

- 3) The buzz stroke (multiple bounces close together). Use the same sticking as the previous examples.

3A

LLL... LLL...

3B

LLL... LLL...

Here are the three drag types within a basic groove. Count the triplet groove like this: "1 & 2 &-ti-ta." The 16th-note groove should be: "1 e & a, 2 e & a," with two lefts being played on the last "a." Make sure to count the rhythms. These embellishments sound similar and are close in rate, which makes them easily misplayed.

4

5

6

As with most new concepts, there are some technical considerations. With the drags, we want to keep them lower in volume than the backbeats. So a drop/squeeze or drop/pull technique might work well.

For the buzz strokes, I recommend moving the stick more to the edge of the drum, where the head is tighter. Then push the stick into the head lightly, keeping the bounces close together and controlled. The drags are only two notes, and the buzzes are multiple bounces. It's important to not just drop the stick and hope for the best.

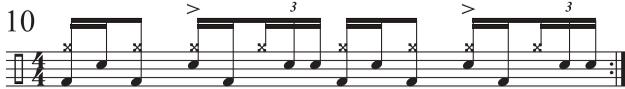
Buzz-stroke lengths can vary depending on tempo and the note value they are placed on. Sometimes buzz strokes sound best when played with a German-style palms-down technique, so that the thumb, forefinger, and middle finger can press the stick into the head.

One last tip: Tempo is very important. At fast tempos, it can be difficult to hear the rate difference between 16th-note triplets and 32nd notes. So concentrate on slow to upper-mid tempos.

Here are some grooves that use each of the three drag types.

7

8



Buzz strokes also work well in samba-type grooves.



Here's a half-time shuffle and a 12/8 groove containing triplet drags.



Here are two more advanced grooves that incorporate left-hand drags. Have fun!



Albe Bonacci is a session drummer and clinician in Los Angeles. He's currently working with Michelle Tumes and Tomasina Abate.



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Building Rhythmic Vocabulary...

Over a Five-Note Ostinato

by Chris Pennie

MUSIC KEY

open	○	R.C.
H.H.	●	×
T.T.	●	×
S.D.	●	×
F.T.	●	×
B.D.	●	×
H.H. w/ foot	○	Rim-click

Combining repeated patterns, or **Ostinatos, from different styles of music can produce a limitless world of ideas. Once you successfully surpass the technical challenges of a repeating pattern, turning them into musical ideas is only limited by your own imagination.**

An ostinato can consist of something as short as a rudiment or as long as a ten-bar phrase. The only requirement is that it repeats. The following exercises demonstrate some ways to strengthen your rhythmic vocabulary over a five-note ostinato in the feet.

Piece By Piece

When playing advanced patterns, the most important thing is to learn the parts individually before playing all of them together. It's paramount to listen to and feel how each limb locks with the others, but also pay attention to how each part feels separately. Playing these ostinatos on different instruments will help you create more melodic ideas, which can help you internalize what you're playing a lot faster.

This first example is a RLRL foot pattern between the kick and hi-hat. Focus on feeling the time, while also concentrating on the feeling of the foot pattern.

1

Hand Over Foot

In Example 2, we're adding the hands over the feet. The hands alternate, with the left on the snare and the right on the floor tom, with the right hand leading the pattern. This might not sound too musical, but be patient.

2

Now play double strokes (LLRR) between the hands. Keep the right hand on the floor tom. As you add different stickings, the feel will change and you'll have to overcome different coordination problems. This feel in particular will create a polyrhythm of four against five.

3

Next, play a paradiddle over the five ostinato. This sticking (RLRR, LRL) will take a little longer to resolve back to beat 1, since the paradiddle is a two-measure phrase.

4

Here's a sticking in five, over the five ostinato. The hand pattern is RLLRR LRLRL. Notice that this sticking flips from leading with the right to leading with the left.

5

Move Things Around

Once you're familiar with how these patterns feel and sound, the next step is to move the hands around the kit to develop melodic ideas between the cymbals and toms. In the following examples, we'll move the right hand from the ride to the mounted tom, then back to the ride, and then to the floor tom. This is just one of the many shapes you can use to build a melody. This particular musical passage will take a little longer to resolve, but it's pretty easy to remember because you're playing different sounds on the kit.



6

You can do the same thing using doubles. Listen to how everything sounds as you move the right hand around the kit, and focus on the individual parts as well.

7

etc.

Once you have the double strokes under control, try moving the paradiddle and five-note stickings around the kit. Example 8 shows you one way to move the five-note sticking between the toms and ride cymbal.

8

Cascara Over Five

For our final exercises, we'll be playing a traditional cascara pattern over the five-note ostinato in the feet. Begin by playing the basic cascara pattern on the ride cymbal. Interestingly, this phrase consists of three groups of five 8th notes and one single 8th note. So when we start playing cascara against the five-note ostinato, you'll hear how the patterns lock in at first, and then slowly come apart. This makes for a really cool effect.

Here's a basic cascara rhythm combined with a syncopated cross-stick in the left hand.

9

Here's the cascara pattern over the five in the feet. This phrase will take ten measures to resolve back to beat 1. I kept this example in 4/4 time to coincide with the ride pattern. Notice how the feet permutate and move against the cascara. (The foot pattern has been modified to start with the left foot: LRRLLR.)



10



Chris Pennie is currently touring and recording with Coheed And Cambria.





Ari Hoenig

"I Mean You"

by Joe Nero

MUSIC KEY

open	○	R.C.
H.H.	×	×
T.T.	×	×
S.D.	×	×
F.T.	×	×
B.D.	×	×
H.H. w/foot	×	×
	×	Stick-shot

Rhythmic illusionist Ari Hoenig has made a name for himself on the jazz scene as an incredibly creative drummer, constantly developing unique ideas that take the drums to new sonic realms. This article will take a look at the first two choruses of Ari's solo on the track "I Mean You," from the drummer's appropriately named record *The Painter*.

This performance can also be viewed on the DVD *Kinetic Hues*, which was recorded live in 2002 at Greenwich Village jazz club Fat Cat, where Ari held a steady Monday night gig with his band. Hoenig's amazing solo is a lesson in the history of drumming, while also stretching towards the future. Ari has digested the playing of Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones, Roy Haynes, and countless others, mixed it up, and transformed it into his own sound.

Hoenig has blazingly fast hands and extreme rhythmic precision. Each of his ideas flows into the next in a clear, musical way. Although he uses many patterns (or "licks") throughout, they all have the specific purpose of connecting together thematic material. Ari's use of rhythmic illusions, beat displacements, odd groupings, and extreme dynamic shifts makes for an exciting musical journey.

Ari makes clear use of a theme as he constructs his solo, which adheres strictly to the song's thirty-two-bar AABA form. His first statement of the theme is a three-note phrase, which starts on beat 3 of measure 6.

1

Ari often starts the theme on different beats of the measure to add contrast and variety. Notice how the same rhythmic pattern takes on an entirely different personality when it's played at different rates and when it's shifted to different parts of the measure. Here are three examples from the solo.

2

Jean Michele Pilc, the pianist in Ari's band, adds emphasis to these thematic references by accenting the third note of the phrase. It's a game that the two musicians play with one another. Pilc always knows within a split second where the third note is going to fall.

It's a great exercise to manipulate Ari's material into something new and unique. Try starting a thematic phrase of your own on different beats, changing the rhythmic duration of the phrase (play it faster or slower), applying the phrase to the drumset in a different way, etc. There are plenty of filler "licks" throughout Ari's solo that you can use to come up with new ideas. To check out the solo, go to modernrdrummer.com.

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Chorus 1

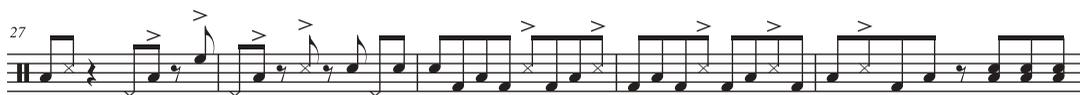
(4:52) 
R L L R L R L

6 
L R L L R R R

11 
L L R

16 
R L R L R L L R L R L

21 
R L L R L R *sfz*

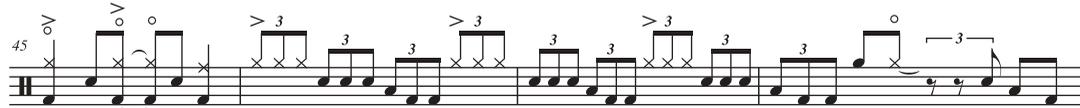
27 

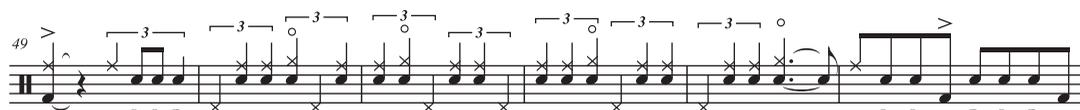
Chorus 2

32 
R L R

38 
R R R R L R L R L R L R L L

42 
R L R

45 
L R L R R L R

49 
L L R L L R L R

55 
L L L L

60 
L L L L R R R L R L L



The Percussion Kit

Creating A Hybrid Setup For Sonic Variety

by Ben Meyer

MUSIC KEY

Tamb.	Shaker
Open Tone	(X)
B.D.	Slap
H.H. w/ foot	Mute Stroke
	Rim-click

As a drummer in rock/pop bands over the past ten years, I've been asked to play quieter, unmiked, or to use some kind of volume-reducing stick, such as brushes or multi-rods, more times than I can remember. I'm sure this is a situation that you can relate to as well. After all, the drums are a pretty loud instrument.

Thankfully, the percussion industry has responded with all sorts of gadgets and special implements to help us play a traditional drumset more quietly. Throughout several years of playing duos with singer/songwriters, I've been encouraged to use a percussion-only setup including bongos, congas, and shakers, or only a hi-hat and snare drum. Each time I tried this setup, I felt uncomfortable with the emptiness in the sound. Plus, not using my feet seemed like a waste, since I'd spent years working on my four-way coordination and independence. In response, I came up with what I call my "percussion kit." The kit includes a bass drum played with a normal bass drum pedal, a hi-hat, one conga drum, and assorted shakers, tambourines, and small percussion instruments.

The Big Idea

The basic purpose of the percussion kit is to provide solid, drumset-like accompaniment that doesn't step on the other player or create too much volume. I avoid using crash cymbals for this reason, though I will occasionally use a very dry sizzle cymbal in larger rooms. Otherwise, I create all of my "crash" effects by splashing the hi-hat with my foot and letting the cymbals sizzle together. It'll take some practice to be able to produce a foot sizzle with maximum decay, but it can be used to great effect in many different musical situations. So spend time working on your left-foot control.

Sometimes when I use a ride cymbal, I'll also play time with a stick or a multi-rod on the hi-hat. But I generally avoid this because of the tendency to play the cymbals partially open as the dynamics build, which creates too much wash. Also, because I sing backup vocals on most of the gigs on which I use this setup, not using washy cymbals helps me hear my monitor without having to crank it too loud.

Can I Get A Ride?

Rather than cymbals, I use either a shaker or a tambourine to fill the role of the "ride" instrument. I also use a jingle ring on the hi-hat to add color to backbeats or upbeats. If you play the hi-hat heel-down, it's possible to not activate the jingle ring and still



produce a hi-hat "chick." Then you can use a heel-up technique to incorporate the jingle ring and the "chick" together.

If I'm playing tambourine with my left hand, I'll sometimes just play backbeats against my left thigh during the verses, so I can switch to a 16th-note pattern for the choruses. I always try to vary my patterns between the different sections of the songs in order to create texture changes like you would by switching between closed hi-hats and the ride cymbal on a normal drumkit.

Here are two examples of how I play the tambourine within a pop/rock groove.

Verse Pattern With Tambourine

Chorus Pattern With Tambourine

More With Less

Besides providing soft and "dry" accompaniment, my goal with the percussion kit is to play drumset-oriented grooves, rather than traditional percussion parts. Because most of the music I play with this set-up is contemporary rock, pop, or folk, I use closed slaps on a conga for backbeats and open or muted tones for more typical conga rhythms. One advantage of a hybrid setup like this is that

I have a music stand covered in a black towel and placed on the left side of my setup, which keeps my tambourine, shaker, and conga wrench close at hand during gigs.



you can pull off authentic pop, rock, folk, and Latin rhythms with the same set of instruments.

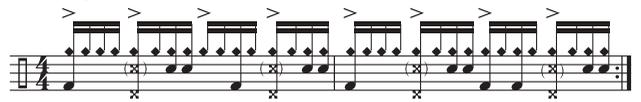
One crucial piece of equipment for this setup is a set of rubber conga "feet." These allow the conga to sit a few inches off the floor, so that you don't have to hold it between your knees and tilt it forward in the traditional manner. By having the conga secure on feet, your legs and feet are free to play the bass drum or hi-hat.

A hidden benefit of using this setup is that, as a right-handed drummer who crosses his/her hands to play the hi-hat, you'll most likely have to learn to play grooves open-handed because it's usually easiest to play conga slaps with the right hand. After playing accented shaker and tambourine parts for long periods of time with my left hand, I've noticed that I have a lot more strength and stamina in my left arm.

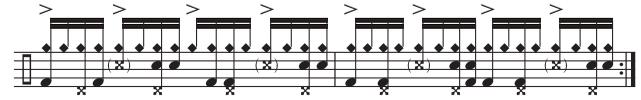
I encourage you to consider developing your own percussion kit and playing as a duo with other musicians. Reducing the personnel to two people has obvious financial and travel benefits, and you'll most likely be able to find more "casual" gigs at bars and restaurants than you would with standard rock band instrumentation, creating a niche in your town that no one else is filling.

The following examples are several grooves that I like to use on my percussion kit. Good luck, and happy drumming!

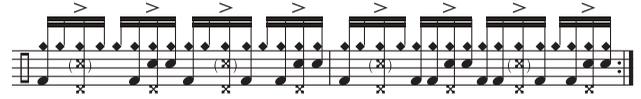
Half Time Pop/Rock Verse



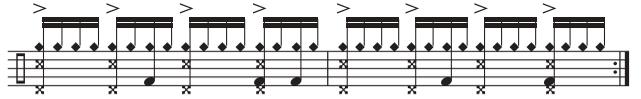
Half Time Pop/Rock Chorus



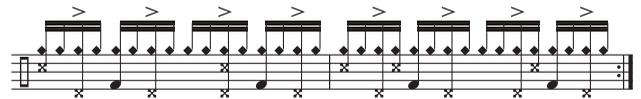
Double Time Pop/Rock



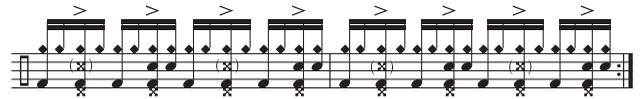
Downbeat Cross-Stick-Groove (Cha Cha)



1-Drop (Reggae)



Shuffle (swing feel)



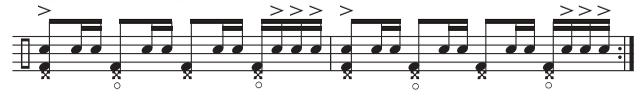
Calypso



Soca



Merengue (Both hands on conga)



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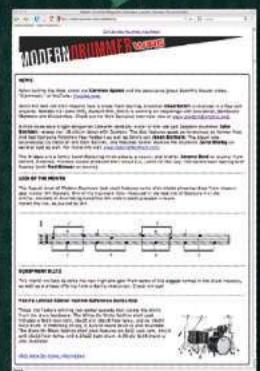
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Tycoon Percussion

You Might Not Know The Name, But...

by Rick Van Horn



Had a look around the percussion department of your favorite drumshop lately? If you have, it's likely that you've noticed some attractive new gear from a brand you might not recognize: Tycoon Percussion. But far from being a Johnny-come-lately in the percussion market, Tycoon has actually been a significant player for more than a generation.

Tycoon Percussion is the American arm of Tycoon Music Co. Ltd., a Thailand-based company established twenty-five years ago by a Chinese businessman named Stephen Yu. The company initially manufactured guitars for world export, but they eventually expanded into percussion. "We spent two years in

experience in making guitars, and finishing was a very important part of that process. That expertise really helped us when we tried to create some colorful conga finishes."

By 1993 Stephen Yu was manufacturing percussion instruments for established brands worldwide. By 1996, he was ready to launch his own brand. "Because we're based in Thailand," says Stephen, "I wanted a name that would begin with 'Thai.' And since our factory's name is Tycoon Music, 'Tycoon Percussion' was the best choice. Besides, everybody wants to be a tycoon, right?"

"We're trying to think outside the box in order to make owning and playing Tycoon instruments as easy as possible." —David Kelley

the R&D stage learning how to make congas and bongos," says Stephen. "At that time, most other Thai factories were making congas with very limited finishes. We had many years of experience

Tycoon Percussion products enjoyed success in Europe and Asia. But establishing a presence in the US market involved setting up a US company. So Premium Sound, Inc. (doing business

A Tycoon Tally An overview of Tycoon Percussion's product line

TIMBALES

Note: All full-size timbale sets below include a heavy-duty, height-adjustable tilting stand, a cowbell mounting bracket with a TW-60 bell, a pair of sticks, and a tuning wrench.

Ralph Irizarry Signature Series Timbales

These timbales were designed in collaboration with the noted timbalero and bandleader. The 6½"-deep, 14" and 15" stainless-steel shells feature a black satin finish and Ralph's signature nameplate. List price is \$599.

14" & 15" Stainless-Steel Timbales

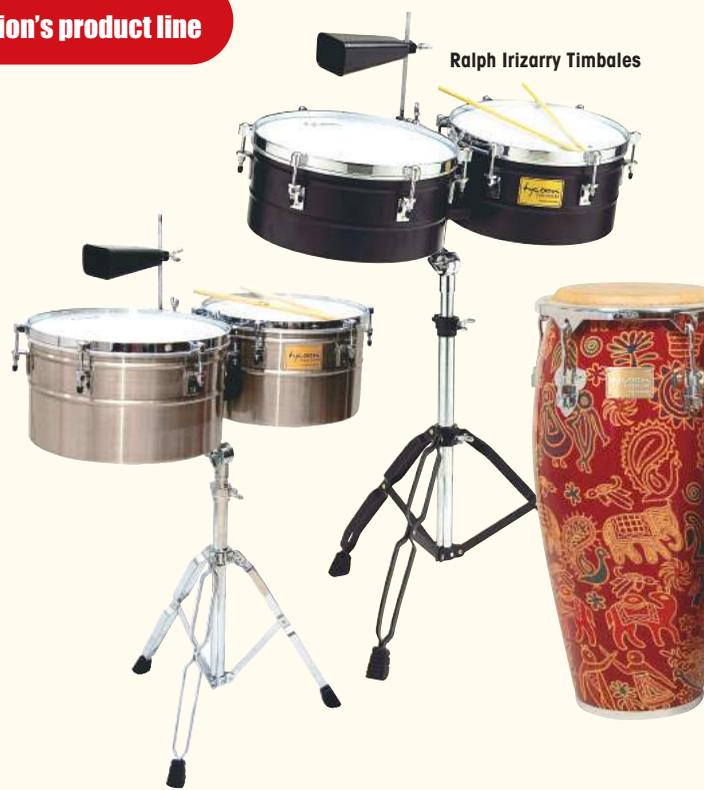
These professional-quality timbales feature 14" and 15" shells available in 6½"-deep (\$459 to \$489) and 8¼"-deep (\$529 to \$579) versions. They're offered in gold, chrome, brushed chrome, and antique copper finishes. ▶

13" & 14" Stainless-Steel Timbales

This timbale set is designed to offer authentic sound for the intermediate player. The 6¾"-deep shells are available in chrome and black powder-coated finishes. List prices range from \$399 to \$429.

Mini Timbales

The 6" and 8" mini-timbales have chrome-plated steel shells for a bright cascara sound. List price is \$249.



◀ SIGNATURE SERIES CONGAS

Signature Grand

Signature Grand congas feature hand-selected American ash shells specially finished to display the natural grain. The 30"-tall shells have a traditional Cuban wide-body shape to enhance bass tones.

Drums are available in 10", 11", 11³/₄", and 12¹/₂" sizes, with a naturally beautiful matte finish. List prices range from \$869 to \$899.

Signature Classic

Signature Classic congas are identical in design to Signature Grand models, but are constructed of hand-selected Siam oak wood. List prices range from \$599 to \$629.

MASTER SERIES

All Master Series congas are outfitted with premium water buffalo-skin heads. Drums are available in 10", 11", 11³/₄", and 12¹/₂" sizes. Each drum includes a single basket stand, tuning wrench, and lug lube.

Matching 7" and 8¹/₂" bongos, as well as a 22"-tall by 12"-diameter djembe with goatskin head, are available within each Master sub-series.

Master Grand Series

Signature Grand Series congas are constructed of hand-selected American ash specially finished to display the natural grain. List prices range from \$829 to \$869.

Note: All of the following Master Series drums are constructed of hand-selected Siam oak.

Master Handcrafted Series

Original models feature a hand-carved "scallop" shell surface; Pinstripe models feature an engraved striped pattern. List prices range from \$669 to \$719.

Master Tour Series

Shells are given a rugged, textured finish to help them withstand the rigors of the road. List prices range from \$629 to \$659.

Master Antique Series

Shells are given a special polishing process to create an antique look, with hoops and hardware in an antique copper finish. List prices range from \$629 to \$659.

Master Platinum Series

Drums come in three distinctive sparkle finishes: Sunrise Fade (with gold hardware), Tri Fade (blue, silver, red, with chrome hardware), and Platinum Fade (with brushed black chrome hardware). List prices range from \$639 to \$669.



Master Grand Series

Master Fantasy Series

Shells are wrapped in three unique print finishes: Siam, Bali, and Tiger. List prices range from \$589 to \$629.

Master Diamond Series

Tiny specks of shiny grains are applied to the shells, creating diamond-like sparkling reflections. List prices range from \$629 to \$659.

Master Classic Series

Drums feature all Master series construction elements and appointments, and are available with high-gloss finishing. List prices range from \$529 to \$559.

CONCERTO SERIES

Concerto series congas are designed for professional sound at a moderate price level. Their Siam oak shells are available in Natural, Red, Mahogany, and Red Pearl finishes, in three different size combinations. List prices range from \$699 to \$829.

Matching 7" and 8¹/₂" bongos, as well as a 22"-tall by 12"-diameter djembe with goatskin head are available.

ARTIST SERIES

Artist series congas are designed for good sound at a modest price level. The Siam oak shells are available in Hand-Pointed Brown, Hand-Pointed Red, Natural, Red, Blue, and Metallic Black finishes, in two different size combinations. List prices range from \$629 to \$649.

Matching 7" and 8¹/₂" bongos, as well as a 22"-tall by 12"-diameter djembe with goatskin head, are available.

SUPREMO SERIES

Supremo series student congas feature 28"-tall Siam oak shells, and are offered as a 10"/11" set on a heavy-duty double stand, in natural, red, and black high-gloss finishes. List price is \$439.

Matching 7" and 8¹/₂" bongos, as well as a 22"-tall by 12"-diameter djembe with goatskin head, are available.

JUNIOR CONGAS

Junior Congas are 8" and 9" drums sold in pairs on a double stand. Constructed of Siam oak, they are available in natural, mahogany, and Puerto Rican flag finishes. List price is \$399.

RITMO SERIES BONGOS

Ritmo series 6" and 7" bongos are designed for young percussion students. They're available in natural and mahogany finishes at \$79.

SMALL PERCUSSION

Tycoon offers an extensive selection of professional-quality hand-held and mounted percussion instruments and effects. These include agogo bells, cowbells, wood and plastic blocks, temple blocks, cabasas, castanets, bar chimes, energy chimes, triangles, claves, frogs, rainsticks, rattle-claps, guiros, maracas, shakers, caxixis, shekeres, and tambourines. ▶

◀ ACCESSORIES

Tycoon's accessory line includes Professional, Deluxe, and Standard bags as well as a wide variety of drum stands, percussion trays, a pedal percussion mount, and rubber conga protectors.



CAJONS

Box Cajons

▶ Tycoon's line of box cajons offers a variety of sizes and wood types. Featuring fully adjustable snares on their front plates, these instruments are designed to provide deep, loud bass tones and sharp slap sounds. Models include hardwood cajons in three sizes, ash cajons in two sizes, Siam oak, solid-wood Siam oak, makah burl, and zebrawood cajons (each in one size), and Siam oak Fantasy cajons in one size and three finishes. List prices range from \$199 to \$339.

Hybrid Cajons

Hybrid cajons combine elements of different drums to create unique new instruments. They include ashiko cajons, djembe cajons, and bongo cajons. List prices range from \$169 to \$269.



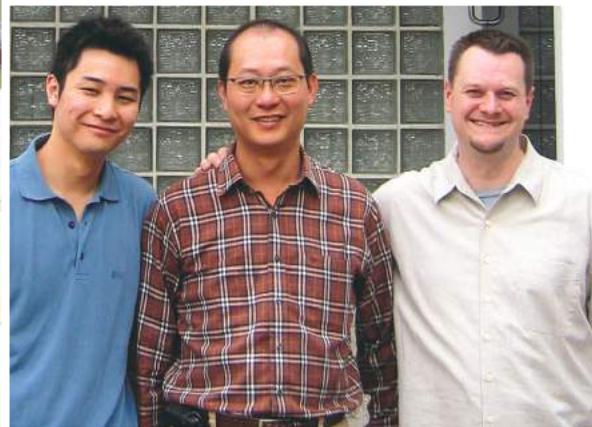
▲ WORLD PERCUSSION

Tycoon offers a full line of world percussion, including rope- and key-tuned African-style ashikos, mango-wood djembes, and talking drums, Thai Klong Yao and Rum-Wong drums, and Dominican tamboras. List prices range from \$139 to \$249.

DANCING DRUM SIGNATURE SERIES

The Dancing Drum Signature series was created in conjunction with percussionists and drum-circle facilitators Steve and Lindsay Campbell. The line includes 9", 11", and 13" rope-tuned djembes with goatskin heads, 10", 12", and 15" djun-djuns with cowhide heads, a rope-tuned ngoma, specially designed portable stands, and bags. List prices for drums range from \$270 to \$475.





Clockwise: Tycoon's main factory contains a variety of custom-designed machines to turn raw wood into finished drums. Quincy Yu, Stephen Yu, and David Kelley. This machine uses heat and pressure to create the contour of conga staves. Conga heads of water buffalo hide are individually pre-tucked prior to installation on the drums.

as Tycoon Percussion) was established in 2006. Vice president David Kelley oversees the US and South American markets from his office in Miami. He also assists with worldwide marketing and distribution efforts.

Stephen Yu's son Quincy is general manager of Tycoon's US operation. He supervises distribution from the company's warehouse in Chino, California, while also being heavily involved with international sales and factory operations.

Not Really New

When asked what gave Tycoon Percussion the confidence to think that they could break into a market already populated with several established brands, Quincy Yu responds, "Even though Tycoon Percussion hasn't been in the US market for very long, products made in our factory have been. They were just being marketed under a differ-

" Basically, what it boils down to with a lot of people is: You already know us, you just don't know that you know us." —Quincy Yu

ent brand name. Those products were well received by customers. So we were never concerned with putting our own brand name on a product, because it's still the same high-quality product. We just needed to build up the brand recognition in the US to the same level as the rest of the world. Basically, what it boils down to with a lot of people is: You already know us, you just don't know that you know us."

Calling Their Own Shots

Operating as both manufacturer and distributor gives Tycoon several advantages. One is the ability to respond to special orders. Quincy Yu comments, "We're open to almost any idea. Tell us what you'd like your drums to look like, and it only takes us about ten minutes to decide whether or not we can do that."

David Kelley adds, "Owning the factory lets us control production costs, which in turn allows our dealers to sell our products for lower prices than those of our competitors. For example, in the US, the consumer price of any of our top-of-the-line Master Series products can be \$100 to \$200 less per drum."

David is quick to point out that Tycoon's lower prices come at no sacrifice in quality. "It was never Stephen's intent to build a company trading purely on price," says David. "Instead, his idea was to make high-quality products for

the best price we can, and thus create a value equation. And that idea is really paying off."

Production

The main Tycoon factory is located just outside Bangkok. There, more than 150 workers create the extensive range of wooden drums and other percussion instruments in the Tycoon catalog. Metal drums and parts are made in a different facility.



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TYCOON PERCUSSION

Most Tycoon drums are made of Siam oak. It's indigenous to Thailand, which makes it an economical material to use. Says Quincy Yu, "The wood is grown on plantations, with a life cycle of five to seven years. It's important to us that we're using a renewable resource in an environmentally friendly process. Tycoon Percussion is the first and only company in the industry to use certified sustainably harvested Siam oak wood to produce their instruments. The only drums not made from Siam oak are our Signature and Master Grand Series models, which are made from imported North American ash."

Drums are fabricated on a variety of computer-controlled woodworking machines, most of which were designed by Stephen Yu. Many of the instruments also receive handcrafting steps—such as hand-sculpted surface finishes and engraved "pinstriping" on certain conga models, and hand-tucked natural skin heads. Though it's as modern as any in the world, the Tycoon factory also retains elements of traditional ethnic craftsmanship.

When asked why Tycoon makes drums of wood and metal but not of fiberglass,

Stephen replies, "Some companies make fiberglass congas because they're cheaper to manufacture and sell than wood congas. But most musicians like the richer, warmer sound of wood. However, the main reason we don't use fiberglass is that it's not an environmentally friendly material. Working with it causes a lot of pollution. We consciously chose not to do that."

Out Of Africa

In order to be successful in today's percussion market, a manufacturer needs to make more than just congas and bongos. Accordingly, Tycoon offers a wide variety of Latin, Afro-Cuban, and other ethnic instruments—including the Dancing Drum Signature Series of African-style djembes and djun-djuns.

Quincy Yu explains the origin of this unique line, saying, "The Dancing Drum Signature Series is a collaboration with Steve and Lindsay Campbell, who are drum circle facilitators based in Santa Barbara, California. They lived in Africa for years, studying the music and learning from the craftsmen who made traditional djembes. They came to Bangkok for a month, visiting

the factory daily to help with the design and testing of prototypes. Their knowledge and our production capabilities were a perfect marriage, which you can see in the final product. It's probably one of the best, if not the best lines of djembes and djun-djuns available today. And the highest-priced drum—the 13" djembe—is around \$299. That's a great price point for a high-quality djembe."

Tycoon Artists

As a new company, Tycoon has been actively developing a roster of artist/endorsers. Says David Kelley, "We want working percussionists who understand that an endorsement is a give-and-take relationship. We're going to help them get the tools of their trade, and in return they're going to participate in our advertising, as well as helping to promote the brand via word of mouth."

"Another part of an endorser's role" David continues, "is to help us with R&D. Stephen doesn't want 'yes men.' He wants our artists to tell him the truth so that he can make every product sound and feel right. If these top musicians are happy with the sound and quality of our products,



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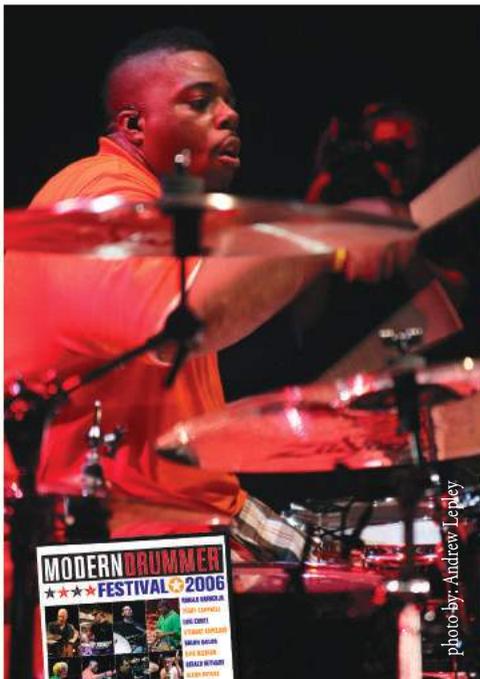


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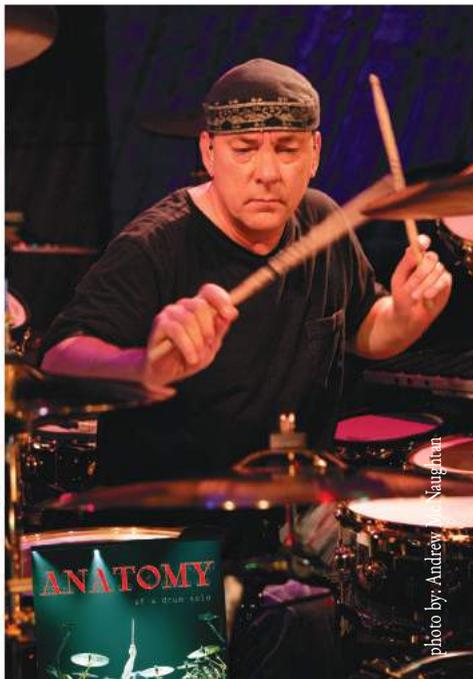


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TYCOON PERCUSSION

that's going to translate into other players wanting to buy those products. So we spend a lot of time with our artists refining products."

The product-refinement process is explained by artist relations manager George Balmaseda. George, who is originally from Cuba, is a busy percussionist in the Los Angeles area. "Our products cater to working musicians," says George. "For example, a lot of companies make cowbells that sound good when you bang on them by yourself. But once you get on stage with a ten-piece band, that sound can be lost completely. When I first heard our cowbells, I knew they had potential, but they needed some work. I told Stephen, 'Steve, these bells sound good, but they can definitely be better.' So Steve went back to the drawing board. Believe me, it wasn't an easy process for him."

Describing that process, Stephen Yu says, "In trying to get a cowbell sound, everything is involved: the shape, the thickness, the angle, how big the mouth of the bell is, the welding.... It all makes a difference, and when you change one thing, that changes everything else. Getting the high-pitch bell

that George wanted took me more than three months and a hundred prototypes."

George Balmaseda cites another example of an artist-suggested design. "Claves are key instruments in Latin music," he explains. "Most are made of solid wood—sometimes with a little area carved out of one—and they often don't cut through. I told Steve, 'Why don't you drill holes down the center of the claves, making them tubular for better resonance?' He did that, and those claves really carry, making them easy to play. It's little things like that that working players are going to appreciate about Tycoon instruments."

Thinking Outside The Box

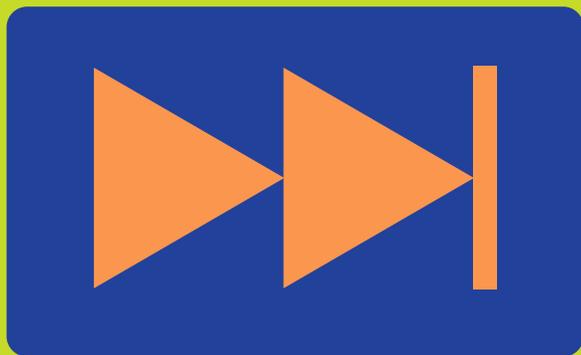
When it comes to reaching customers, Tycoon takes full advantage of the Internet. "Because we're new," says David, "we needed to get the word out. We've set ourselves up on most search engines so that when people use key words like 'Latin percussion,' 'conga,' or 'bongo,' our name shows up among the sponsored links. As people search through our own Web site, they find audio clips, high-resolution

images, product features, specs, and so forth. There's also a 'where to buy' feature that brings up links to different dealers that are stocking specific products. And while we don't sell direct to consumers, we have a program in which a consumer can buy the drums from a given dealer, and we ship direct to that consumer on the dealer's behalf. Nobody has really done that before.

"Our biggest challenge," David continues, "is to have as many consumers as possible see and touch our products. We're trying to think outside the box in order to make owning and playing Tycoon instruments as easy as possible. And, despite a less-than-desirable economic situation, we're gaining new customers all the time. As for who's buying the drums, it seems that there's always a demand, no matter how tough times are. Fortunately we're getting more of that demand than some of our competitors are. That's good for us."



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When One Door Closes...

Overcoming Crisis With Opportunity

by Eric "Baron" Behrenfeld

Nothing in life prepares us for a crisis. However, when we get physically injured, mentally overwhelmed, or simply just fired from a gig, the pain of recovery can eventually be conquered by the will of the person. But what happens to the drummer who can't play anymore because something is forced upon him or her without any warning? What do you do when what you love to do is no longer practical, or when you're forced into a time-consuming commitment?

This happened to me when my wife succumbed to brain cancer, which left me with a two-year-old boy to raise on my own. To complicate matters, my son was diagnosed with autism. In my mind, my nights spent playing gigs were over. But—as I soon discovered—this couldn't have been further from the truth, as all of the sorrow eventually gave way to inspiration.

New doors were cracking open, and there were opportunities all around me that I'd just never considered or noticed when I was a busy working drummer. Over the years, I had pigeonholed myself without even knowing it. So I started over. I went from player to teacher, from live-show sideman to starting my own studio projects. And I went into the woodshed and became a student again.

..Another One Opens

What options do you have when you can't be the player you once were? Well, writing songs, stories, or articles like this one is an option. Writing words and lyrics helps tap into your creativity beyond just playing the drums.

You can also satisfy your musical cravings in other areas of "percussion" beyond physically playing the drumset. For example, try playing a different instrument. I've found the strumming technique used on ukulele [a guitar-like stringed instrument] to be very percussive and rhythmic. This joyful, fragile, and happy instrument sets a mood that's opposite the vibe I used to communicate as a

Looking Further Out

You could also get involved in various team and individual sports. The different muscle movements associated with sports will develop strength and open your body to new movements. I've gained tremendous power from punching a heavy bag. Boxing uses a lot of stomach muscles, which is very complementary to drumming. Bicycle riding is also good for improving double bass speed and stamina. The main thing is to push yourself to develop a new skill until you can go back to drumming full time. As you excel in this new activity, the feelings of bitterness about what has happened to you will eventually fade.

Saying things like "If only I wasn't stuck at home with the baby, I would be out there playing" are excuses for a lack of commitment to the entire craft of being a musician. Your child can be your greatest audience—even if you're just playing on a practice pad—as long as you have a good attitude. Your perspective must change somewhat in order to revalidate your drumming pursuits in a completely different setting. It's very hard for any professional to accept a forced resignation from his job. Just don't let the difficulties in your life contort your perspective of why you started playing music in the first place—for the pure joy of it!

Keep Your Head Up

Adversity gives rise to change. If you keep focused, life-altering circumstances eventually become blessings. The death of a close family member or a prolonged illness of a loved one can make gigging impossible. And financial commitments can force musicians to have to get the dreaded "day job," which makes it tough to keep your drumming skills sharp.

These types of things can have you thinking, "What am I going to do now?" In order to overcome these challenges, you have to think beyond your previous musical successes. Consider

Opportunities that I'd never even noticed when I was a working drummer were popping up all around me.

drummer in Chicago's gritty urban blues scene. Playing a different instrument might make you feel like you're betraying your drum craft. But you'll actually be expanding your musical palette, which will affect your approach when you get back on the drums. I also started playing more hand percussion during this time, which led me to a new gig with a Hawaiian band.

Constructing, collecting, or selling drums can also be very fulfilling. Try upgrading an old drum with new parts. Just because you can't play your drums doesn't mean you can't work on them. This keeps you in tune with your passion for drumming, and it could even become a new career.

teaching drums privately, or playing at the local retirement home, or playing for children at a daycare center. Seeing the joy on the faces of people that normally don't have access to your talent can be more rewarding than the monetary or commercial success you might have previously experienced. Sometimes becoming a great drummer means becoming a great person first.



Eric "Baron" Behrenfeld is the owner of Slug Percussion Products. He's been a professional drummer and percussionist in Chicago for over twenty years. Eric can be reached through his Web site, www.barondrums.com.





Exploring Opportunities

Working With Marching Percussion Groups

by Tim Wimer

Fifteen years ago, I took a job as a drum teacher at a local music store in order to work my way through college. One afternoon, a teenage student who was also in his high school's marching band mentioned that his music teacher, Ms. Johnson, wanted to speak with me. I contacted her and she asked me to work with her marching band drummers. She explained that her budget didn't allow for me to be paid much, but it would be an opportunity to help young percussionists. I agreed to work with her students, and then set out to learn all that I could about marching band.

Though I had participated in my school's marching band some years earlier, as well as the Army's 82nd Airborne

Division Band, I realized that the world of marching percussion had changed significantly. No longer did the percussion section simply march up and down the fifty-yard line playing a cadence. High school marching bands had now been greatly influenced by the drum corps style of marching and playing.

Looking back, I made many mistakes and gave students wrong advice that year, but I was successful in teaching the students to read notation and use proper technique. I also learned a great deal from the experience and was forced to broaden my horizons as a musician and teacher. Ms. Johnson was correct; at the end of the season, I was given a check for only \$100, but I did feel that it was a rewarding experience.

Several months later, another local band director asked me if I could work with his group, explaining that he could pay \$500 for the season—still not a lot of money for the time I would spend at band camp and marching band competitions, but definitely an increase in salary. I'd never met the director, but he had heard good things about me from Ms. Johnson. During the next two years, five other directors called to invite me to work with their groups.

Eventually, I had more groups than I could effectively schedule, and working with drum lines became a part-time business. I was able to negotiate prices for rehearsals, and I now make close to \$8,000 per year working with school band programs. As an added benefit, I'm able to attract more private students from these groups. (Students are much more likely to sign up for private lessons once they get to know you and your teaching style.)

In truth, none of my drum lines won many trophies or did anything extraordinary. But the directors knew that their percussionists were getting a solid musical foundation and being challenged to improve. Most band directors are not percussionists and have had very little training in percussion, so they often welcome help from those who are able to speak the language and understand the concepts of percussion notation, sticking patterns, and technique.

There's an increasing demand for marching percussion instructors, and those of you who enjoy working with young people and would like to earn extra income might want to try it. If you think you'd like to teach marching percussion, there are a few things you should keep in mind. Let's take a look.

Be Professional

Band directors are accountable to a higher power, namely the principal. Ultimately, the director is responsible for everything that happens during a rehearsal, and if anything inappropriate occurs, the principal speaks with the band director, not the percussion instructor. The director must view the instructor



Illustration by Jeff Harriety



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as someone who is professional, responsible, and knows how to interact with teenagers. Of course, an instructor must be skilled at reading notation and conveying key concepts, but most band directors don't care whether the instructor is the most talented player or teacher; they're seeking an adult leader who can be trusted with their students, is on time to rehearsals, comes prepared with daily goals, and sets a good example.

Consider Finances

Working with school bands is more of a calling than a way to earn a living. However, being compensated for one's time and effort is important. When interviewing with a director, be clear about what your responsibilities will be and how much and when you'll be paid. In some cases, you might only be asked to attend an after-school rehearsal each week, and would not be required to attend Friday night football games. In other cases you might be asked to attend all rehearsals, ball games, and band competitions—a substantial commitment.

Most band directors don't care whether the instructor is the most talented player; they're seeking an adult leader who can be trusted and set a good example."

Many groups will have a band camp for a week or more each summer, and instructors are expected to be there, so be realistic

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about how much time you can give and what your time is worth. A written contract that specifies the number of rehearsals and the amount you'll be paid can be a good thing to have in case there is any confusion later.

I've worked with school systems that paid in a timely manner—as well as ones where it took six months and numerous phone calls to get my check. Some instructors are now asking to be paid before services are rendered, but the bureaucratic nature of school systems precludes this option in many cases. Instructors are sometimes paid through a band booster's account, and I've found this to be a good option since this private account allows for greater flexibility.

Since instructors aren't on the school division's payroll, they're considered to be subcontractors, which means they must pay self-employment taxes. Be sure to take into account the money Uncle Sam will ask for if you don't make quarterly installments. In addition to the self-employment tax, you'll likely be charged penalties and interest.

Making Contact

A great way to get started as a marching percussion instructor is to phone local band directors and let them know that you're available to work with their students. It's best to phone before or after school to avoid disrupting classes, or you can ask the school secretary about the director's schedule and phone during his or her planning period.

Don't discuss money during the initial call, but rather, explain that you would consider working with his or her percussionists and schedule a time that you can attend a rehearsal to simply observe the group and meet the director in person. During the rehearsal, you'll get a feel for the students' attitudes and work ethic, as well as the director's personality.

Marching band competitions are an ideal place to meet many directors. The time before a band performs is hectic and stressful, so wait until after the performance to introduce yourself and discuss your intentions. You'll also be able to see which groups already have a percussion instructor, as well as the ability level of the groups. If you're new to the marching band arena, seek a group that needs basic instruction on technique and reading notation. The group will not likely become state champions, but your efforts will be appreciated and you'll feel more successful about your contribution.

The Big Picture

Working as a marching band instructor is not for everyone. It's hard work that involves a commitment of time and energy. Those who try it, however, often find it to be a rewarding experience. I'm convinced that there are many drummers who have the musical and leadership skills required to work with drum lines, but many just haven't considered it. Today, perhaps more than ever, the marching band is a vehicle that allows young people to develop a passion for drumming, and giving students the knowledge needed to develop their craft is well worth the effort.



Tim Wimer is the author of several instructional books and DVDs. He currently lives and teaches in Virginia.



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Byron McMackin

Pennywise's Beachfront Rehearsal Space Is Small—But Effective

Story by Waleed Rashidi • Photos by Alex Solca

Some drummers pour a sizable chunk of their earnings into their home-studio setups. Heck, we've seen spare rooms and garages turned into mini recording and rehearsal palaces that just about rival some of the commercial facilities. However, many others piece together a few items and run a basic package that suits their needs. For the past decade, Pennywise drummer Byron McMackin's setup has leaned toward the more humble side of the spectrum. But that doesn't mean it's any less functional or useful than some musicians' professionally constructed jam pads. And his punk band's rehearsal and demoing space has something most others don't—an ocean view from its front door.

McMackin is somewhat of a construction pro, having worked in the trade in the past. Together with guitarist Fletcher Dragge (who had worked as an electrician), he's built a cozy, quaint jam room out of a one-car garage that's situated mere minutes from the shores of the Southern California beaches. Sure, it may

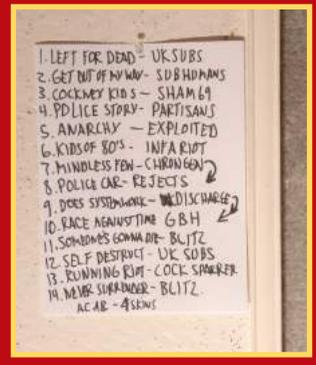
lack polished hardwood floors, fine-tuned acoustical walls, a fancy Pro Tools rig, and room for more than four tightly packed bodies. But this decade-old spot located at the residence of 98 Mute drummer Justin Thirsk (brother of the late Pennywise bassist Jason Thirsk) has been woodshed central for Pennywise for several albums.

"It doesn't look like anything fancy," McMackin admits, "but it works for rough demoing and stuff. It's kind of different because it seems like everyone has these great, elaborate rehearsal spots. Don't get me wrong, though—I'd love to have one of those!"

McMackin says that he doesn't write many of his drum parts at the rehearsal studio, which is informally referred to as The Dungeon or The Cave due to its lack of outside light, low ceiling, and cramped quarters. That's all taken care of on the Roland Pro-V electronic drumset Byron keeps at his home, which is within "skateboarding distance" of The Cave. Only when he's called to join his Pennywise cohorts does he use the rehearsal



SCENES FROM THE DUNGEON



room—but use it, they do. In between album and touring cycles, the band's been known to spend several hours there each day, writing and hashing out material for future releases.

Entering the former garage, the first thing one notices is the fact that it's small. With Dragge's full-stack guitar rig, bassist Randy Bradbury's amps, and McMackin's five-piece Pork Pie drumset (shared with 98 Mute's Thirsk) placed squarely in the middle, there's really not much room left for vocalist Jim Lindberg. In the process of conversion, the garage was dry-walled and soundproofed, with new electrical wiring and air locks built in between the walls. On the inside, yards of carpet adorn the floor and walls, and the ceiling's acoustical tiles are covered with scores of posters and flyers from rock and punk bands.

Plenty of demoing happens in the room—and again, though the setup is simplistic, McMackin notes that he's satisfied with the results achieved. The heart of the recording setup is an old TEAC console that was originally installed as the soundboard for The Forum, which was used by Los Angeles Lakers announcer Chick Hearn. The drawing of the venue's layout is still taped to the board, as are tags for various faders ("Upper Concourse," "Arena"). "That thing is, like, famous," says McMackin. "This was his board. It's amazing, because it actually sounds really freaking good."

All mics are routed through the TEAC board (located in a "control room" built out of an extension at the rear end of the garage) and monitored with Mackie speakers. Many of the band's demos have been mixed down to 1/2" tape. However, McMackin notes that lately they've been mixing it down straight to the computer. "We switched out of convenience," he says, "but we think the tape sounds a million times better."

The mics on the kit include a pair of old Shure SM59s as overheads, dangling by their cables from the ceiling using hooks fashioned from old wire coat hangers. "We got those from a garage sale for . . . I don't even know how much. But they totally work," he insists. There's one SM57 for both of the rack toms and another for the floor tom, with a snare/hi-hat combination mic and a kick drum mic rounding out the stripped-down affair. McMackin's setup includes 12" and 13" Pork Pie maple snares, with a 12"/14"/16" tom configuration and Zildjian cymbals (often A Custom series crashes varying in size from 17" to

19").

Because the studio's kit rarely leaves the premises, all the mics are already set in place. "The cool thing is that it's good to go," says McMackin. "When inspiration strikes, the band can just go for it. It saves time and stuff, although spending more than a couple hours in here gets a little old. I mean, it's just you and me in here, and it's not that big. It's really not that fun, but it works. It's just a sweatbox."



Getting ready for a tour or a show, this place is great," McMackin insists, "because you can come in and hammer it out. Writing in here, it gets a little much, because it's so small. Two records ago, when we were working with [producer] Joe Barresi, he'd come in and kneel down with his little pad, and we'd spend four hours a day in here."

So, what does the room sound like? Predictably, it's quite dead. And McMackin notes that in competing with Dragge's amplifier, it's also really loud. Still, he says, "You'd be surprised. In here, it's all compressed. Everything is like right on. Some of the demo stuff we have on tape, it sounds like, if we wanted to, we could make a record in here."

"What you see is what you get," Byron adds. "This is definitely guerilla-style, but it's also definitely rad because it works for us."



RECORDINGS

Ratings Scale

- ★★★★★ Classic
- ★★★★☆ Excellent
- ★★★☆☆ Good
- ★★☆☆☆ Fair
- ★☆☆☆☆ Poor

ZAPPA ALL AROUND

ZAPPA WAZOO

★★★★★

Recorded live in 1972, this previously unreleased two-CD recording features **JIM GORDON** playing "electric drums" within a large ensemble featuring six brass and six woodwinds. (This lineup foreshadowed the fabulous Ensemble Modern, which would record FZ's *Yellow Shark* symphonic work twenty-one years later.) *Wazoo* is a landmark recording, demonstrating what can be achieved with extremely proficient musicians and a genius at the helm. This is also a high watermark recording for Gordon, the major studio drummer of the era, performing Zappa's complex rhythms and seriously demanding dynamic and stylistic range with the skill of a classical percussionist and the improvisational fire of a Roy Haynes. Essential! (www.zappa.com) **Ken Micallef**



ZAPPA PLAYS ZAPPA

★★★★★

DVDS (2) LEVEL: ALL \$25

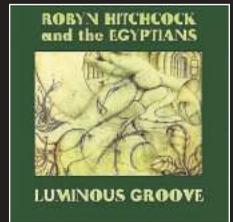
Frank would be proud of his protégé son, Dweezil, for his creation of the ZPZ project, which honors the innovative, challenging, satiric, multi-genre music of his father. These well-documented ZPZ 2006 performances from Portland and Seattle confirm the strength of Zappa's legacy with ecstatic sold-out crowds and a band of serious musicians who treat Zappa's arrangements with respect and passion. Outstanding guest appearances by former Zappa alumni **Napoleon Murphy Brock**, guitarist **Steve Vai**, and drum god **TERRY BOZZIO** seal the certificate of authenticity by joining the band on several classic tracks including Bozzio's signature "Black Page." ZPZ drummer **JOE TRAVERS** deserves major kudos for his interpretation of the challenging drum charts from the original Zappa master drummers. Young drummers take heed: This is the music that shaped the talents, and catapulted the careers of, Aynsley Dunbar, Ralph Humphrey, Chester Thompson, Terry Bozzio, Chad Wackerman, and the mighty Vinnie Colaiuta. Not for the drumming faint of heart, but a *must* for Zappa fans. (www.zappa.com) **Mike Haid**



ENCORE

by Adam Budofsky

ROBYN HITCHCOCK AND THE EGYPTIANS LUMINOUS GROOVE



Robyn Hitchcock's thirty-year musical output is typically oversimplified as that of an eccentric British singer-songwriter, or some such thing. But that's a fraction of the story. Robyn's beloved late-'70s band The Soft Boys was more muscular than his off-mentioned Bob Dylan/Syd Barrett/John Lennon fixations would suggest. And when that band broke up and then reconvened as RH's backup band The Egyptians, Softees drummer **MORRIS WINDSOR** was on hand to add oodles of precise energy and a beguilingly open approach to rhythmic support.

Luminous Groove, the second of three planned Hitchcock box sets, collects his great early studio albums *Fegmania!* and *Element Of Light*, the live album *Gotta Let This Hen Out*, and two discs' worth of rare or unreleased live and studio material. Windsor is a delight to listen to throughout, from his alternately skittery and slamming approach on "Egyptian Cream" and "Goodnight I Say," to his deceptive and odd beat on "The Fly," to the intense rim click-clack of "The Cars She Used To Drive." And the copious live tracks will enlighten even the most ardent Egyptians fans, hopefully resulting in some serious reevaluation of this under-reported drummer.

ROBYN HITCHCOCK ON MORRIS WINDSOR

What do you remember of your first meetings with Morris?

He was living in a turret in one of the old colleges of Cambridge. His roommate used to flip out after speed binges and throw LPs out of the window and into the river. Morris was much calmer than that, outwardly. He was a very respected drummer; it took a year before I could get him in a group.

What did Morris bring to The Soft Boys and The Egyptians that other drummers might not have?

Intuitive intelligence. He also sings beautifully, especially when he's drumming. I've worked on and off with Morris for years, so by now our voices really seem to complement each other: Carl Wilson and John Lennon in our dreams. He can play in many time signatures, and at heart is a swing/funk drummer, I reckon. But he was a big fan of Ringo too.

Morris played stand-up electronic drums live in the early '90s. What were you going for then?

We were trying to play quietly enough onstage for our voices to be in tune with each other, as if we were singing 'round a table. Amplification seemed to blunt our beaks.

Finally, have you kept in touch with Morris, and is he still involved in music?

Oh yes, he plays in my current UK band, The Psychedelic Trams—we were at Glastonbury recently in the mud. Morris also sings on the upcoming record with [Hitchcock's current band] The Venus 3. He's one of the greats!

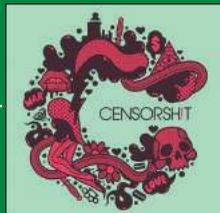
ELECTRO-DRUMMING

by Zach Danziger

GENJI SIRAISSI CENSORSHIT

I really dig how well this album is produced. It's one thing to be a drummer, and another to be a producer. Genji Siraisi shines on both counts. The more I delve into programming and production, the more I realize how deceptively difficult it all is. Subtle elements like finding the "right" bass sound or shaker pattern can take hours and can really make or break a track. This CD plays like a mix tape, with each song smoothly transitioning into the next. There isn't a ton of "live" drumming in the traditional sense here, but rather tastefully cut-up samples/breakbeats in the chillout, broken beat, nu-jazz, and ambient genres. Much of it reminded me of stuff on the Ninja Tune label.

What struck me about Genji's drumming when I saw him play live with Groove Collective was how lightly he hit the drums. He achieved a "produced" live drum sound, so it's no surprise that it would carry over to the studio production end of things. Good stuff! (Expansion Team)



Zach Danziger is a sought-after drummer/composer steeped in the marriage of acoustic and electronic drumming. He's played with Wayne Krantz, Mariah Carey, Primal Scream, and Michel Camillo, among many others, as well as at the Modern Drummer Festival, and has worked on a number of high-profile soundtracks such as Oceans 11, Iron Man and Sex And The City. This is the first in a series of exclusive reviews he'll be writing for Modern Drummer on albums that have a heavy electronic drum/production element.

Photo: Neil Ziozower

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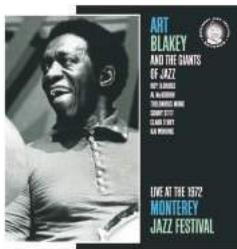
Masters MCX shell packs start at an incredible street price of around \$1500 at Pearl dealers everywhere. The price of your exact configuration choice may vary.

ART BLAKEY AND THE GIANTS OF JAZZ LIVE AT THE 1972 MONTEREY JAZZ FESTIVAL

★★★★★

Dreamed up by jazz impresario George Wein as a traveling jam session, the "Giants" boasted an ensemble famed as leaders (except one) in their own right.

ART BLAKEY deserves lead billing for spontaneously driving the star lineup, kicking up sparks whenever multiple-chorus fatigue looms. **Roy Eldridge, Clark Terry, Kai Winding, Sonny Stitt, Thelonious Monk,** and **Al McKibbin** shine, swinging while proudly under-rehearsed in true "blowing session" style. When, at mid-set, the danger of ballad-heaviness looms, Blakey suddenly erupts into a thom-thundering nine-minute "A Night In Tunisia," topped with a solo and a how-the-heck-do-we-end-this explosive finale. As it should be. (MJF) **Jeff Potter**



BILLY COBHAM FRUIT FROM THE LOOM

★★★★★

BILLY COBHAM's forty-fourth album explores past successes and ambitious new terrain with a decidedly Caribbean bent. The fusion legend's supple grooves and miraculous hand skills are in full force, as he casts a wide stylistic net. Steel drum melodies grace practically every tune, giving the album a lighter-than-air feeling that perfectly matches the music's carefree mood. Cobham's drumming pops and prowls throughout, most notably in the 7/4 spittfire of "Spectrum," practically a note-for-note remake of the 1973 classic. Funky Hammond organ replaces Jan Hammer's screaming synths, while nothing can replace Tommy Bolin's searing guitar work (though a violin solo comes close). (Creative Multimedia Concepts) **Ken Micallef**



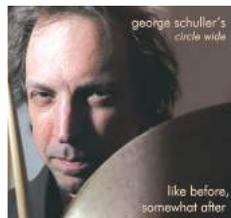
GEORGE SCHULLER'S CIRCLE WIDE LIKE BEFORE, SOMEWHAT AFTER

★★★★★

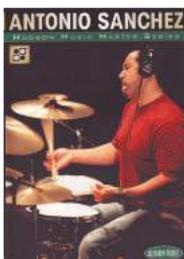
On *Like Before...*, New York-based drummer **GEORGE SCHULLER** and his working group Circle Wide pay tribute to Keith Jarrett's American Quartet, the pianist's somewhat under-appreciated 1970s group.

Like original Quartet drummer Paul Motian, Schuller's playing is loose and elastic on the freer tunes ("Dew Point") and positively swinging and propulsive (nice brush work throughout) on the more temporal material ("Common Mama"). Percussionist **JAMEY HADDAD** and Schuller lock into a slinky backbeat on "De Drums," and "Encore, b" finds the drummer's ride weaving in and out of Jarrett's rich changes. It also features a whirlwind solo spot full of rumbling crescendos and power. (Playscape Recordings)

Ilya Sienkovsky



MULTI-MEDIA



ANTONIO SANCHEZ HUDSON MUSIC MASTER SERIES

★★★★★

DVD LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED \$29.95

Pat Metheny skinsman **ANTONIO SANCHEZ** imparts technical knowledge and personal anecdotes in a question-and-answer clinic format for this three-hour video. Sanchez gets quizzed on a variety of topics, such as applying rudiments to the kit, playing broken swing patterns, and approaching odd times (which he demonstrates with 5/4 clave rhythm patterns). Clearly, this DVD wasn't meant to be a step-by-step drumming tutorial for beginners, but Sanchez's performances and subsequent explanations seem, unfortunately, geared only toward serious students rather than the casual drumming fan. While Sanchez's musical creativity is certainly evident here, his personal observations resonate on a deeper level—one of the project's strengths. (Hudson Music) **Will Romano**



STUFF LIVE AT MONTREUX 1976

★★★★★

DVD LEVEL: ALL \$14.98

The cats to call, Stuff was a collective of 1970s NY studio aces who brought distilled rhythm section power, sans vocals, to the fore. This 1976 time capsule live set from Montreux (also available on CD), catches **STEVE GADD, Richard Tee, Cornell Dupree, Gordon Edwards,** and **Eric Gale** in the zone, faces focused in trance. In a continuous hour-long medley, the band maintains their unrelenting R&B-based groove with a grail pocket. Gadd, styled in full-bearded/afro mode, is a locked-in dynamo, occasionally unleashing chops barrages in spotlight moments. Although Stuff was over-dependant on cover tunes, that wasn't the point: The groove surpasseth all. (Eagle Rock) **Jeff Potter**



DRUMMER'S GUIDE TO FILLS BY PETE SWEENEY

★★★★★

BOOK/CD LEVEL: BEGINNER \$19.95

Sweeney, a faculty member of the National Guitar Workshop, has put together a straightforward and occasionally tricky instructional guide to the art of the fill. These exercises might not be the most exciting in the world, yet some certainly require your undivided attention and will aid in building better hand-foot coordination and timing. This book also clearly demonstrates the importance of orchestrating different patterns and rudiments (such as the Swiss army triplet and flam) by splitting your strokes between the toms, snare, and kick to garner a multitude of sounds through an economy of motion. That's not a bad place for the beginner drummer to start on the road to rhythmic inventiveness. (Alfred) **Will Romano**



A STEP FURTHER (OSTINATO DRUMMING)

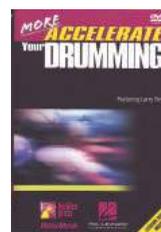
BY PANOS VASSILOPOULOS

★★★★★

DVD LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED

RETAIL PRICE AVAILABLE AT WEB SITE

Designed as a sequel to his DVD *Ostinatos And Polyrythms*, the new *A Step Further* shows Greek drummer **PANOS VASSILOPOULOS** diving headlong into super-advanced independence and multi-pedal clave. (Yes, he plays an El Negro-style foot clave with his left foot and another foot clave with his right at the same time, while soloing on top with his hands.) Practical? Maybe not, but Vassilopoulos is part of the new crop (à la Marco Minnemann) pushing the kit to new heights. Other topics include bass drum double-stroke rolls, and applying traditional Greek rhythms to drumset. For players in need of a challenge. (www.panosonline.com) **Ilya Sienkovsky**



MORE ACCELERATE YOUR DRUMMING FEATURING LARRY FINN

★★★★★

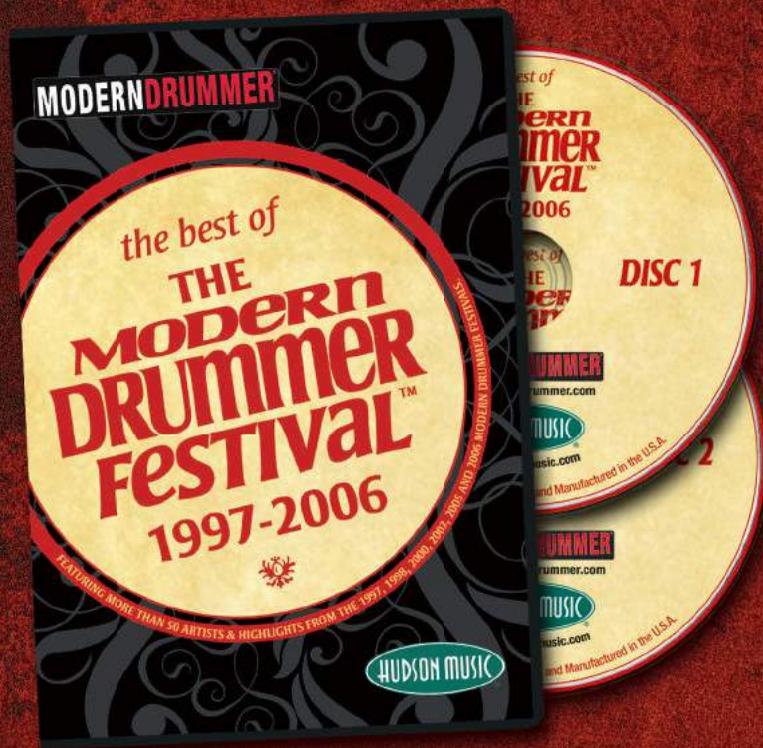
DVD/BOOKLET LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED \$24.95

Larry Finn, while efficiently building upon themes featured in his previous video (*Accelerate Your Drumming*) in just over half an hour, cuts out the fat here, keeps talking to a minimum, and offers economical lesson plans. If you like instructors to guide you at every step, look elsewhere. (Your introduction to each pattern is left, generally, to the bulky seventy-page lesson booklet that accompanies the video.) Invest your time, and you'll find that the shuffle, funk, and jazz independence patterns presented here have real-world applications. Ultimately, the general pace of this DVD is refreshing, and Finn's choice of exercises makes this a solid resource for any working drummer. (Berklee Press/Rittor Music/Hal Leonard) **Will Romano**



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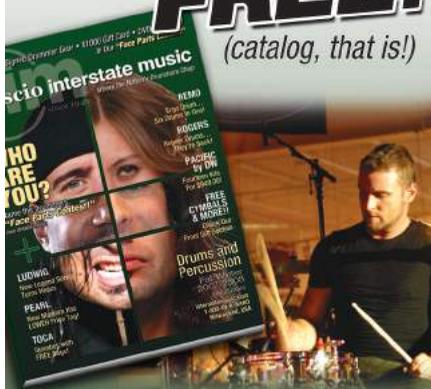
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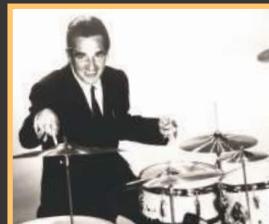


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BACKBEATS



Above: The Phantom Regiment's battery was the best on the field during the 2008 season. Below: The Blue Devils' program was titled "Constantly Risking Absurdity."

2008 DCI World Championships

The 2008 Drum Corps International season was an exciting one for fans and competitors alike, with several corps in contention for the title. Throw in a venue change—from the uncompleted Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis to the newly renovated field on the Indiana University campus in Bloomington—and no one knew exactly how the season would end.

But on August 9, The Phantom Regiment's amazing performance of "Spartacus" gave the Rockford, Illinois corps its first (solo) DCI championship title in the closest of finishes. The Blue Devils (who The Regiment tied with for first place in 1996) placed second, separated by just 25/1,000 of a point! In addition to placing first in the World Class division finals, The Regiment also won the Fred Sanford Best Percussion Performance Award (aka "High Drums") for the second time in three years, the Spirit Of Disney Award—which recognizes entertainment value—for the second time in four years, and Music Effect and Music Ensemble captions.



"The emotion from our alumni has been amazing," admits Paul Rennick, percussion caption head and arranger for The Phantom Regiment. "The depth of how much they are there for the organization and how this program summed up the history of this corps...it was a very symbolic year, and I'm happy for everybody involved. And I'm so proud of the kids and staff."

"We knew that we couldn't just repeat what had been done, or it wouldn't be accepted," Rennick summarizes. "We did a great combination of old and new; the modern contemporary stuff was just the right spice in the show. I think the alumni were very sup-

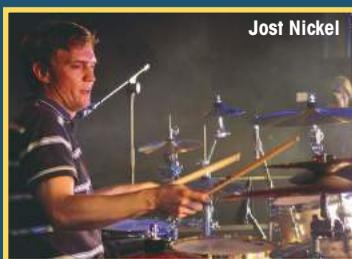
9th PPC Drum Night

The PPC Drum Night took place this past August 29 in Hannover, Germany for an audience of nearly 700 people. The show opened with a performance by Alex Vesper, and he was followed by Alessio Guadagnoli, Wolfgang Haffner, Liberty DeVitto, Jost Nickel, and Tommy Clufetos. More info can be found at www.ppc-music.de.

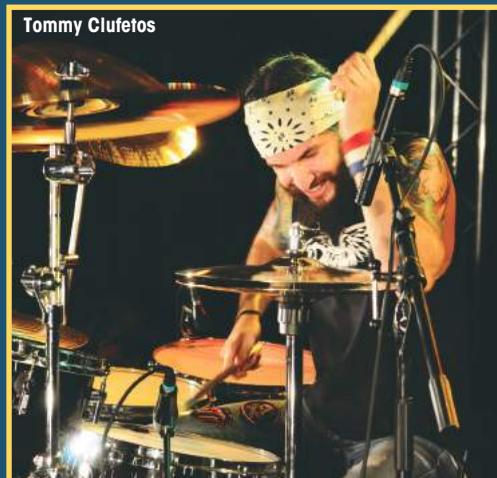
Photos by Heinz Kronberger



Liberty DeVitto



Jost Nickel



Tommy Clufetos

portive and totally in favor of the show, and that was the stamp of approval that we all needed." The judges and the audience agreed.

The Blue Devils (from Concord, California) were undefeated most of the season, losing only to The Cavaliers in Allentown, Pennsylvania on August 1 and to The Regiment at finals. Their "Constantly Risking Absurdity" program featured music from Stephen Sondheim's "Sweeney Todd" and Ennio Morricone's "The Untouchables," among others. The Devils won Visual Effect and Ensemble as well as Color Guard and Brass, and placed first in the quarterfinals and semifinals.

The Cavaliers, the only corps to beat The Blue Devils during the regular season, slipped to third place with their Japanese-themed show "Samurai." The original music—by staff arrangers Richard Saucedo (brass), Jim Casella (battery percussion), and Erik Johnson (front ensemble percussion)—provided a musical background to the pageantry

of the program. Six large taiko drums were prominently featured in a strong front ensemble, helping the drumline place second.

Carolina Crown (from Fort Mill, South Carolina) placed fourth—its highest finish ever. Two Wisconsin corps, The Blue Stars (from LaCrosse) and The Madison Scouts (from Madison), returned to the elite "Top 12." In another surprising finish, The Santa Clara Vanguard Cadets beat Blue Devils B for only the second time all year to win the Open Class finals.

On August 6, S.O.M.E. (Sponsors Of Musical Enrichment) hosted the individual and ensemble competition. Two soloists from The Blue Devils won their individual categories, while members of The Santa Clara Vanguard (from Santa Clara, California) won two of the three ensemble categories. (The I&E winners are shown below).

For more information, visit www.dci.org.

FINAL SCORES

CORPS	TOTAL SCORE (out of 100)	DRUM SCORE (out of 10)
1. Phantom Regiment	98.125	9.925 (1st)
2. Blue Devils	98.10	9.50 (5th)
3. The Cavaliers	97.325	9.775 (2nd)
4. Carolina Crown	96.80	9.55 (4th)
5. Cadets	94.75	9.40 (6th)
6. Bluecoats	93.175	9.675 (3rd)
7. Santa Clara Vanguard	93.025	9.275 (7th)
8. Blue Stars	90.425	8.625 (10th)
9. Blue Knights	88.25	8.95 (8th)
10. Boston Crusaders	87.275	8.875 (9th)
11. Glassmen	87.20	8.60 (11th)
12. Madison Scouts	85.225	8.475 (12th)



To enhance their "Samurai" program, The Cavaliers' front ensemble featured Japanese taiko drums.

INDIVIDUALS & ENSEMBLE COMPETITION/WINNERS

BEST INDIVIDUAL SNARE

Emmanuel Deleon (age nineteen)

- Second-year member of The Santa Clara Vanguard
- Played original solo "Marah Gussah," winning score 92.0
- Attending Bakersfield College



Santa Clara Vanguard's Emmanuel Deleon (left) and Academy's Wes Anderson.

BEST INDIVIDUAL MULTI-PERCUSSION

Wes Anderson (age twenty-one)

- Won this category for the second year in a row
- Fifth-year member of The Academy (from Tempe, AZ)
- His original drumset solo was called "Movement 2," winning score 95.5
- Studies music at Arizona State University



BEST INDIVIDUAL MULTI-TENOR

Matt Bowers (age twenty-one)

- Second-year member of the Blue Devils
- Played original solo "Quadzilla," winning score 95.5
- Studies actuarial science and statistics at Purdue University



BEST INDIVIDUAL TIMPANI

Montana Malbrough (age 21)

- Second-year member of The Blue Devils
- Played original composition "Good Times," winning score 96.0
- Attending Riverside Community College



BEST INDIVIDUAL KEYBOARD

Bojan "Bo" Hoover (age twenty-one)

- Third-year member of The Cavaliers
- Played "Ultimatum 1" by Nebojsa Jovan Zivkovic, winning score 95.5
- Studies music performance at the University of Minnesota



BEST PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Santa Clara Vanguard quad line:

- Jake Achterhoff, Mike Carlson, Al Cleveland, Levi Cooper, Drew Ramey, Ronnie Valles
- Performed original composition "There Is A Limit," winning score 96.0



BEST BASS DRUM ENSEMBLE

Blue Knights: Aaron Capers, Jakup Euler, Emmanuel Flores, Ryan George, and Scott Mayer

- Performed original composition, "Circus Of Bass," winning score 97.5



BEST CYMBAL ENSEMBLE

Santa Clara Vanguard: Nithin Kumar, Brandon McVeigh, Nick Richards, and Tim Rorke

- Performed original composition (under the guidance of cymbal instructor Leo Sanchez) called "RTL," winning score 93.3

Meinl Drum Festival

This year's Meinl Drum Festival, which took place September 6 and 7 at the company's factory in Gutenstetten, Germany, consisted of two full days of performances and workshops.

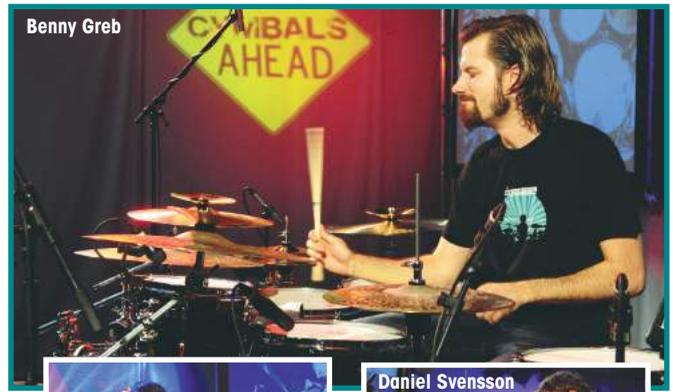
Saturday's events were limited to small (350 people) masterclasses. German drummer Benny Greb started the day with some lesson material from his upcoming DVD. Benny was followed by Jost Nickel and Johnny Rabb. Both did an excellent job, and the audience got plenty of practice material to study. The day ended with an open discussion between Jost Nickel, Benny Greb, two German journalists, and Meinl's Norbert Saemann, who talked about the Internet and its influence on the music scene.

Sunday was a "performance day," and Jost Nickel kicked things off with a great show. This was Nickel's first drum clinic, and he offered some inside stories on his experiences as a heavy metal drummer. Between each performance, attendees could check out additional masterclasses that were held in a separate site of the factory ground. Those classes were held by drumset player Felix Pollard, percussionist Stephan Maass, and drum circle facilitator Charly Böck. Factory tours were also held throughout the event.

After Jost Nickel's main-stage performance was Jaska Raatikainen from the band Children Of Bodom. Jaska was followed by Felix Pollard, who grooved hard and received a standing ovation. Then Thomas Dürrfeld entertained the audience with his juggling drummer routine.

When Benny Greb took the stage, the tent was packed, as over 2,000 people tried to see his performance. Greb was followed by Daniel Svensson from the band In Flames. The day ended with a drum duet between Johnny Rabb and Benny Greb. Next year's Meinl Drum Festival will take place in Moscow, Russia. More information is available at www.meinldrumsfestival.com.

story and photos by Heinz Kronberger



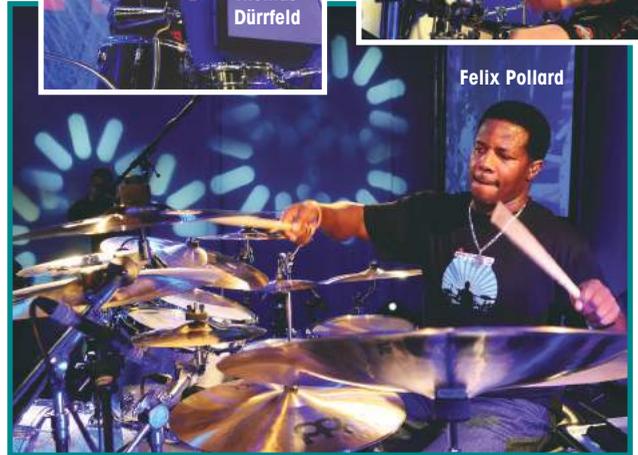
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Junk-Pile Drumkit

This unusual suitcase drumkit is a hand-made creation by Kirk Barron of Dubuque, Iowa. Rather than try to describe this bizarre setup ourselves, we decided to let Kirk give you a little tour. Here's his explanation of how he put together the kit's various components:

"I realize that suitcase kick drums are nothing new," says Barron. "But I thought I'd step it up a bit and also make it tunable. After making a trip to my basement to go through some bits and pieces from my drum junk pile, I found an old suitcase that turned out to be the perfect size to be made into a bass drum. All I needed to do was spend a few dollars at my local hardware store for some nuts and bolts, and I could begin putting it all together.

"The 5x14 snare and the cut-down 2x13 tom are from vintage Star drumsets. The tom's hoop is held in place with shortened bass drum claws and lug inserts. The kick was made by gluing a 2" piece of an old trashed 16" floor-tom shell onto the suitcase, with non-slip nylon-insert nuts and carriage bolts serving as T-rods.

"The cymbal stand is just a simple threaded rod. The hi-hat stand and throne are pieced together from various scrap pieces of hardware. Everything is made to fit inside the 11x18x18 suitcase bass drum."

So what was the point in building such an unconventional drumset? "My goal was to build an inexpensive, portable, and fun drumkit," says Barron. "I also wanted something that would fit behind the seat of a pick-up truck. That way, I'd always be ready for a party or an impromptu street-corner jam!"



Is Your Drumkit Something Special?

Of course it is! Now how about sharing your cool creation with thousands of fellow *Modern Drummer* readers. Simply send us some photos and a brief description of your unique set, and we'll consider it for inclusion in *Kit Of The Month*. And if we do pick your pride & joy for coverage in *MD*, we'll send you a cool MD Drum Bag/Cooler—for free! Just follow the simple directions below.

Photo Submission: Digital photos on disk as well as print photos may be sent to: Kit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Hi-res digital photos and descriptive text can also be emailed to miked@moderndrummer.com. Show "Kit Of The Month" in the subject line of the message. Photos cannot be returned.



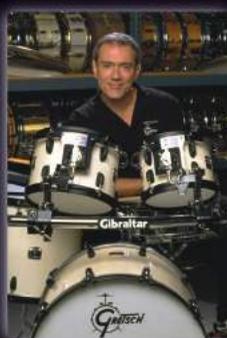
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Cindy Blackman



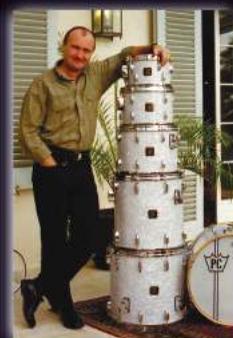
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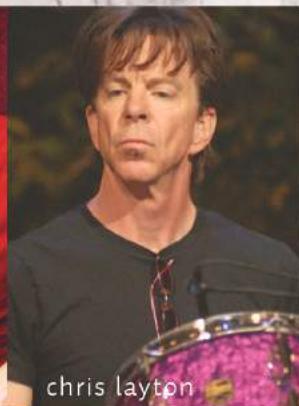
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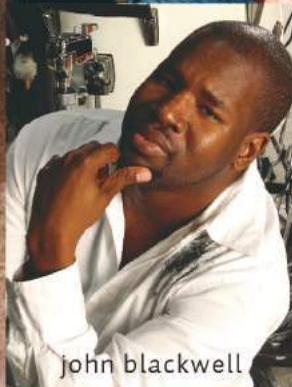
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