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Much has been made of his being the grandson of drum god Roy Haynes. And not without reason—he grew up as a drummer at Mr. Snap Crackle and Pop's knee. But he's indisputably defined his own space on the jazz landscape by aggressively looking to the future while obsessively drawing inspiration from the original sources of our art.

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# Nuggets of Drum Wisdom

In addition to interviewing some of the most cutting-edge drummers on the planet—such as two of the featured artists in this issue, modern-jazz prodigy Marcus Gilmore and forward-thinking electro-funk artist Louis Cole—we also like to check in with some of the living legends of our instrument, those unique personalities who paved the way for us years ago and continue to inspire future generations via their ageless artistry and sage teachings.



This month we caught up with the one and only Ra Kalam Bob Moses, who cut his teeth in the 1960s with legendary jazz saxophonist Roland Kirk, fusion guitarist Larry Coryell, and vibraphonist Gary Burton, and who's since gone on to become one of the most respected educators and drum artists on the planet. Moses also authored one of the first conceptual drum method books, *Drum Wisdom*, in 1984. Although currently out of print, much of what Moses discusses in that book remains relevant today. I spent many hours reading, contemplating, and trying to apply the various concepts covered in those brief but dense fifty-one pages.

Since we have a modern-day interview with Bob in this issue, I thought it would be fun to complement that story with a few juicy quotes from *Drum Wisdom* for you to ponder. The first two come from the chapter titled "Attitude." "I always play from something; I never play from nothing," says Moses. I wish I could say that I understood this idea back when I first read it. There have been many times when I've sat down at the kit to practice and thought to myself, *I have no idea what to play*. But it doesn't take much to get the creative juices flowing. Sing a bass line, hum a melody, beat box a groove...anything will do.

Along the same lines, Moses adds, "There should be a musical idea behind everything you practice, just as there should be a musical idea behind everything you play." I'm going to print that one out and plant it right next to my kit.

Here's some food for thought, from the chapter "Internal Hearing," that's most applicable to times when we're playing behind a soloist and want to get in on the action: "Trying to play *with* the soloist is like two people trying to get into the same end of a canoe—it's going to tip over. Therefore, you must continue to play off of the basic melody even when the soloists have abandoned it." There are countless examples of this concept being applied on classic records. Even the most interactive players, like jazz greats Roy Haynes, Elvin Jones, and Tony Williams, are often heard hinting at the melodies while supporting soloists. This is the secret sauce, really.

This final excerpt is pulled from the chapter titled "The 8/8 Concept," and it's one that I felt was particularly relevant for the overzealous rhythmist living within each of us: "Some drummers get into the habit of filling up every possible space, because they practice by themselves and forget to think about the fact that there will be other musicians playing with them." So don't be selfish—space *is* the place.

Enjoy the issue!

*Mike Dawson*

**Michael Dawson**  
Managing Editor



# MODERN DRUMMER

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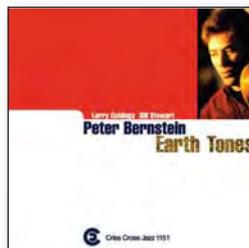
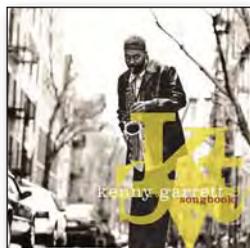
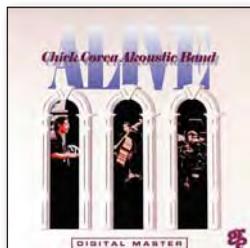
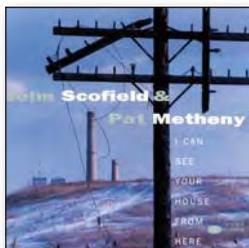


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# What's Your Favorite '90s Jazz Drumming Album?



We recently checked in with our readers and social media followers to find out which jazz records from the 1990s featured their favorite drumming performances. Here are some of the responses.

Kenny Garrett's album *Songbook* [1997] would be the one for me. This record has memorable original tunes by Garrett that introduced me to the powerhouse swing of Jeff "Tain" Watts on drums. The pocket Watts creates with bassist Nat Reeves throughout this album is as deep as groove can get. And what truly makes this my favorite is the rhythmic and melodic conversation between Tain's drumming and the solos of Kenny Garrett and pianist Kenny Kirkland. It's the first time I heard a band convey fire on record.

**Mike Walsh**

*I Can See Your House from Here* [1994] by Pat Metheny and John Scofield with Bill Stewart is one of my favorite jazz recordings. I can't get enough of it. Scofield's quartet records are also up there. I was blown away when Stewart came on the scene.

**Shilo Stroman**

I'd say Kenny Garrett's *Triology* [1995] with Brian Blade. Blade swings like hell, and the band plays with a lot of energy. I love this album!

**Maximilian Ludwig**

*Alive* [1991] by the Chick Corea Akoustic Band. Dave Weckl's performance on this album is legendary. In my opinion, this group set the standard for the modern piano trio.

**Keith Oltman**

Bill Stewart on Peter Bernstein's *Earth Tones* [1998]. Stewart's solos and comping blow my mind every time. And I also want to mention Joshua Redman's *Freedom in the Groove* [1996] with Brian Blade. How can Blade sound so good?

**M. Victor de Jhess**

John Scofield's *Meant to Be* [1990]. To my ears, Bill Stewart has a perfect combination of pocket and swing.

**Jon Greene**

Along with Chick Corea's *Alive* album, Dave Weckl's blazing debut, *Master Plan* [1990], was a real game-changer in the drum world. The opener, "Tower of Inspiration," was exactly that, and it still blows me away nearly thirty years on.

**Mark Youll**

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

## Drum Shop Props

Michael Dawson really activated my memory button with his Editor's Overview in the February 2019 issue about the value of good music stores. Many years ago, as a twelve-year-old beginning drummer, I'd ride the bus each week from my home in east Dallas to my drum lesson at the McCord's Music store downtown. I can still remember the exact sound and feel of my instructor's WFL snare, with a white pearl finish and calfskin heads.

After my lessons I'd hang around the drum department, always planning to someday be able to afford all the goodies that were showcased there. It was many years before I could afford the drums of my dreams, but when that time came, I followed the same path that was mentioned in the column and went straight to a walnut Premier Signia kit. Although [the Signia] series came out in the [early] '90s, it

wasn't until 2001 that I could make mine a reality.

Later that same year, I had the opportunity to visit the

Premier factory in Leicestershire, England. The management and staff there were so gracious. They treated me as if I were one of their famous endorsers, inviting me to play all the latest kits in their elegant showroom before giving me the grand tour of the plant. There I met the charming British woman who actually assembled my kit. I'll never forget her telling me, "Well, until today no one has ever come over from the colonies to thank me!" To say I was impressed by the friendly, professional manner of my hosts that day would be a gross understatement.

Keep up the great work, MD!

**Joseph Pilliod**  
McKinney, Texas



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## Matt Halpern on *Periphery IV: Hail Stan*

For a decade the prolific progressive metal drummer, educator, and entrepreneur has been powering Periphery's wild time signatures and blazing riffs. We asked the sticksman all about the groundbreaking band's first self-released title.

**MD:** Where was *Hail Stan* recorded?

**Matt:** Our guitarists, Misha Mansoor, Jake Bowen, and Mark Holcomb, recorded their parts at Misha's place in Dallas, Texas. Our singer, Spencer Sotelo, recorded his parts at his own studio in Maryland. And I recorded all the drums at Magpie Cage Studio here in Baltimore. I had our old bass player and producer, Adam "Nolly" Getgood, who's not in the band anymore but mixed our record and is still involved, fly out here and engineer the drums. It took eight days to record the drum parts. We took our time to get it right.

**MD:** What was the writing process like?

**Matt:** We took off all of 2018 from touring in order to really take our time writing this record. We'd schedule sessions every other month or so, so that everybody had time to develop ideas. We'd never taken off a year to write together without a deadline. Now that we own our own record label, 3DOT

Recordings, we felt relieved to not feel any pressure. Having enough time to let the ideas marinate was the best thing possible.

**MD:** Is there a philosophy behind some of the more complicated time signatures or patterns in the band's sound?

**Matt:** I think that often with students of music, they'll try to apply theory or concepts to writing. They may say, "I really want to create something that has syncopation, an odd meter, or a modulation," because they really enjoy that concept. That's awesome, and I think that's great. With our band, no one is truly classically trained in theory, so those concepts aren't at the forefront of our inspiration. But our band has been lucky to have friends who've exposed us to music that allows us to go way outside the 4/4 box. We're all big fans of different styles that have different meters and feels, and our ears have just grown accustomed to

it. So just through being music fans, and with the lack of theory, I think when we write the parts initially, whatever comes out is based on prior influences that have inspired us. If it ends up being in an odd meter or syncopation, it's truly just by chance. And we're all okay with that.

**MD:** Do you listen to any specific instrument when writing your parts?

**Matt:** When we're writing these songs, I really focus on the guitar parts and the melodies. Those parts allow me to memorize the song and figure out what rhythm is going to be best.

For a lot of drummers, if they're learning, say, a cover, they might only focus on what the drums are doing to build their performance. There's nothing wrong with that per se, but I think it can be very limiting. I always encourage people to learn a song two-dimensionally. Rather than just learning the drum part, learn the



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melodies, too, so that although you have the original drum foundation to build upon, you're learning the melody, which allows you to expand on the rhythms within the boundaries of that melody and be more creative.

**MD:** You have a very crisp yet huge studio drum tone.

**Matt:** I owe a lot of my studio sound to Nolly. He's as obsessed with drumming and drums as I am. That's why we started the GetGood Drums sample library together with Misha. We loved challenging ourselves in the studio, trying to get that perfect combination of crisp sounds that are also huge at certain points. And with GetGood Drums, we spend probably way more time in the studio for those sessions to record our drum libraries than we do with Periphery. It's so much more granular, because we're capturing individual drums of specific sizes and tunings, and we have to maintain quality control, use the

right mics, and make sure that the drums are tuned properly for the size and type of wood.

**MD:** Was *Hail Stan's* sixteen-minute opener, "Reptile," done in one take?

**Matt:** No, none of the songs are done in one full take. One main reason is for quality control and keeping the drums in tune. I hit hard in the studio, so from section to section we check the tunings because we don't want the drums to slip from the start of the song to the end. But I'm proud to say that even a song like "Reptile," we were able to do that in two, three hours tops.

**Willie Rose**

**Matt Halpern plays Pearl drums and Meinl cymbals, and he endorses Promark sticks, Evans heads, Ahead Armor cases, Big Fat Snare Drum, Reflexx pads, and GetGood Drums software.**

Josefa Torres

# ON TOUR

## Jason Bittner with Overkill

The legacy thrash band hits the road on an international trek that runs through mid-May. To complement their well-established live bombardment and new 2019 release, a metal vet joins them behind the skins.





Glenn Butler

For their nineteenth studio album, *The Wings of War*, the seasoned thrash group Overkill recruited the established metal drummer who'd been backing them on the road since 2017, Jason Bittner [Shadows Fall, Flotsam and Jetsam]. Although this was the drummer's first studio experience with the group, which was founded more than thirty years ago, Bittner's history with Overkill goes way back. "I've known founding members Bobby 'Blitz' Ellsworth [vocals] and D. D. Verni [bass] since 1991," says Jason. "When Shadows Fall went on hiatus in 2013, I ran the trajectory of playing with all of my favorite thrash bands that I grew up with. Or most of them—the Slayer job wasn't open. [laughs] So I started filling in for Charlie Benante in Anthrax and played for two years with Flotsam and Jetsam. Then I got the call for Overkill."

With the band currently on an international trek that lasts through mid May, Bittner explains his live approach, which pays homage to some of the band's earlier material. "Basically, I'd been playing with all of these bands—Anthrax, Flotsam and Jetsam, Overkill—since I was in my teens in the mid to late '80s. This is the stuff I grew up on. These are also the songs that I played to build my double bass chops and thrash vocabulary and to be able to play this kind of music. So I'm really lucky that most of the material is in my DNA, just dormant. I'm like an elephant—once I learn a song, it's kind of in there. It might need some brushing up here and there, but for the most part it's there."

Besides being a thrash and metal mainstay, Bittner maintains a studio and private teaching career, and his 2008 educational DVD, *What Drives the Beat*, features many of his exercises and warm-ups. On the road with Overkill, the drummer still works from many of those same exercises. "I spend fifteen minutes at a pad warming up—that's it," he explains. "Maybe during the first week of a tour I'll add another ten minutes or so, just to really get into the groove of it. But I find that as I get more into a tour, I need to warm up less. We don't take many days off, so it's already there. And sometimes we do extensive soundchecks, where we'll do four or five six-minute songs, so you could be playing a half-hour set just in your soundcheck."

"I'm also spending more time in the gym and more time with the physical, health, and eating aspects, to try to keep my body in better shape as I get older," Bittner continues. "I'm going to be fifty next year. So I spend more time doing spring training and lifting light weights to get my body conditioned with the stress of touring and beating on my upper and lower body. And I really concentrate on doing yoga and my flexibility so I can keep things moving as much as possible. And when I come home, I don't stop playing, which helps me. I know a lot of drummers who as soon as they're off tour they don't touch the sticks. But that's not me, because I always feel like I'm going to lose it if I take too much time off. The most I'll take off is around ten days, and then I start getting stir crazy. So I'm always playing. I may not be in set shape, but I'm still in playing shape."

**Willie Rose**

**Jason Bittner plays Pearl drums and Zildjian cymbals, and he uses DW pedals, Remo heads, Promark sticks, Gator cases, drumART logo heads, and Cympad cymbal felts.**

## Also on the Road

**Steve DiStanislo** with David Crosby /// **Aric Improta** with Fever 333 /// **Tomas Haake** with Meshuggah /// **Tommy Aldridge** with Whitesnake /// **Alan Cassidy** with Black Dahlia Murder /// **Jon Rice** with Skeletonwitch /// **Nathan Price** with Broncho /// **Johnny King** with Conan



# Aric Improta

## “Creativity”

Showcasing the unique musical personalities of the fifteen drummers included in the project, “Creativity” is the latest addition to Aric Improta’s impressive collection of online content and the third in his Interpretation Project series.

Uninterested in merely showcasing his own abilities and the acts he plays in, Aric Improta has included a rotating cast of some of the most exciting up-and-coming drummers from around the globe in his Interpretation Project series, which includes the videos “Groove” (which was premiered on [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com)), “Chops,” and the video we talk to him about here, “Creativity.” One more installment in the series, “Intensity,” will be released in 2019, and Improta offers a host of other videos on his YouTube channel that document his own personal development, his work in the now-instrumental trio Night Verses, and punk-rock juggernaut the Fever 333, which features former members of Jetliive. and the Chariot along with collaborations with Travis Barker and others.

On the subject of how “Creativity” differs from the other videos in the series, Improta says, “I felt like the drummers had fewer preconceived notions of what they were supposed to do. Creativity is such a vague thing, and I think I got the most personality out of everybody.”

Directed only to submit audio and video of themselves playing eight bars at 120 BPM and to try to capture their interpretation of what “Creativity” means to them, each participant provides a glimpse into his unique musical world. Improta weaved the clips together with video editor Kevin Garcia based on what each participant had played, after which the drummer’s Night Verses bandmates Nick DePirro (guitars) and Reilly Herrera (bass) composed the accompanying music in response.

“A lot of Night Verses songs start with drums,” Improta says, “so I get to come up with ideas, and Nick and Reilly are happy to write around that kind of foundation. I don’t think a lot of drummers in bands have that. The videos are cool for me to be able to show off what Nick and Reilly can do, but also to let some of these people have someone else accompany them rather than having to fit the needs of someone else’s idea.”

None of the drummers had specific guidelines as to what they were expected to play nor any reference to what the others had done. “I did these videos for my own personal interest,” says Improta, “but the whole point of this series is to show people that there’s no ‘right’ way to do things. All of these people are extremely talented in their own right.”

On how social media has affected his now furiously busy career, Improta says, “I didn’t use social media in a professional sense until halfway through college. I was just playing in my bedroom with Nick and Reilly. Then I started meeting all of these people, and it was exciting for me to get to be around different playing styles and different personalities. I think that also gives you a sense of confidence, because you can go so far in one direction and you wonder whether you’ve spent enough time researching and practicing other genres. It’s inspiring when you see that people can be successful focusing on three or four things instead of trying to do everything.”

### Ben Meyer

**Aric Improta plays Tama drums and Meinl cymbals, and he uses Vic Firth sticks, Remo heads, and products from Spinbal, Woodland Percussion, Morfbeats, and Strymon effects pedals. Watch for upcoming videos on Aric’s YouTube channel and across his social media accounts.**



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## Vintage Beech Drumset

Boutique-style drums with the working drummer in mind.

**Barton is a relatively new California-based** company that, according to its website, makes “real, honest drums that you can keep for a lifetime.” In order to keep its prices within the working drummer’s budget, Barton limits its product range to a handful of finishes, configurations, and shell types, and it keeps the designs as simple and streamlined as possible. All Barton drums are handcrafted in Asia.

Shell packs are currently available in a bubinga/kapur hybrid, European beech, a poplar/African mahogany blend, and American maple. We were sent the Vintage Beech setup (\$1,049) with an old-school brown/black/orange Tiger Bartex striped wrap on 8x12 and 14x14 toms and a 14x20 bass drum. A matching 6.5x14 snare (\$299) was also included.

### The Specs

The Vintage Beech shells are made from 100-percent European beech. The toms have 7-ply shells, while the snare and bass drum are 9-ply. The lugs are the classic beavertail shape, and the bass drum comes with lightweight vintage-style gull spurs with rubber feet and spiked tips. All of the metal parts are insulated from the shells with plastic gaskets, and the bass drum features natural maple hoops with Tiger Bartex inlays.

The toms have standard triple-flange hoops. The rack tom does not come with any mounting hardware, so it needs to be seated in a snare basket, or you can add your suspension system of choice.

The supplied drumheads included Barton-branded Aquarian models (Textured Coated over Classic Clear on the toms, Texture Coated with Power Dot snare batter, and a Super Kick II system on the bass drum with a white-coated Regulator front). The side-action snare throw-off is simple and serviceable, and the floor tom leg brackets are bolted directly to the shell and come with well-fitting memory locks. While they echo the simple look and vibe of various American and imprint Asian drumsets of the 1960s, the Barton Vintage Beech kit felt more structurally sound and stable—

as if it was a vintage kit that’s been reinforced at all the necessary points to withstand the rigors of modern-day applications.

### The Sound

European beech is a harder timber than American beech; it has a Janka Hardness Scale rating of 1,450, which is on par with sugar maple and sweet birch. (For reference, American beech rates at 1,300, which is closer in hardness to white ash and red oak.) I felt that this Vintage Beech kit shared more sonic traits with birch. It was punchy, short, focused, and articulate, and it felt most at home in the middle and higher tuning ranges. At higher tunings, the 20" bass drum had a thumpy and round 808-type tone that wasn’t overly boomy. The toms were super punchy, with a very short sustain and rapid decay. The snare had a nice, cracking attack and dense tone with minimal overtone. To my ears, the thick attack and controlled tone of this kit at higher tunings would work best for playing classic Motown-type R&B gigs or modern fusion situations where articulation is of the utmost importance.

As I backed off the tension, the attack remained dense and punchy, but the drums started to sustain a bit longer and had a fuller and rounder voice while remaining tight and focused. At lower tunings, the toms took on a more rubbery feel, and the sound became punchier and less tuneful. By contrast, the bass drum could go quite low and still produce a nice thump. For a reference, check out the contained yet fluffy bass drum tones Steve Jordan got on the songs “Waiting on the World to Change,” “Vultures,” and “Belief” from the John Mayer album *Continuum*. That’s pretty much the vibe.

If you were looking to capitalize on the punchy, focused tone of a beech kit at lower pitches, I would probably go with the larger 13", 16", 22" configuration and keep the tuning in the middle register. But if you want a quick, dense-sounding, and snappy kit that has a touch of vintage flavor with a more contemporary thwack, this smaller Vintage Beech kit could be just the ticket. Visit [bartondrums.com](http://bartondrums.com) for more information.

**Michael Dawson**





**VIDEO DEMO**  
[modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com)

# Independent Drum Lab

## 5.5x15 RESoArmor Maple Snare

An oversized yet open-sounding drum with a nearly indestructible coated finish.

**Independent Drum Lab** (stylized as INDe) is the brainchild of designer/builder Josh Allen, who made his mark in the industry reinventing high-quality, low-impact, and cost-effective hardware for another brand before embarking on his own in 2015. Describing his approach to building, Allen states at the company's website, "It starts with the drums designed from the ground up with sound in mind. Every component is designed to allow our proprietary shells to sing freely and openly."

One of INDe's latest creations is the RESoArmor finish, which is more durable than a conventional wrap without impacting shell resonance. These finishes are hand-applied, and no two are exactly alike. Options include metallics, sparkles, translucent colors, and nearly any combination imaginable. We were sent a 5.5x15 maple snare with a cool blue/black/gray swirl RESoArmor finish (\$599).

### Shell-Making Philosophy

Allen considers the sound of a drum shell to be ultimately determined by three factors: stiffness, elasticity, and mass. Those attributes are influenced by the thickness of the plies, the grain orientation of the wood, and the glue type. Allen believes that the stiffer the shell, the higher the pitch, while a more flexible shell will have a lower fundamental. Similarly, a more elastic shell will sustain longer. Sensitivity is influenced by the mass of the shell because a lighter shell reacts more easily to drumhead vibrations.

Rather than offer a vast array of shell types with different thicknesses and of different species, INDe only offers one option that's designed for ultimate responsiveness and versatility. To that end, INDe's shell is composed of three thick plies with a horizontal grain direction to provide ideal stiffness, and two thin vertical-grain plies to keep the shell strong and stable.

### Innovative, Lightweight Components

Complementing Allen's approach to building shells that are versatile, lightweight, and visually striking, each piece of hardware on INDe drums is designed from scratch to have minimal mass, no dampening, and a sleek appearance. The lugs are bridged between two strategically placed screws to allow the shell to resonate fully, and a small spring clip is used to keep the threaded insert in place, rather than a typical rubber retainer that can dampen resonance.

Similarly, INDe's low-mass throw-off is bridged to minimize impact on shell resonance while still providing smooth on/off engagement and strong, stable wire tension. Drumheads are by Aquarian, and our review drum came with a Texture Coated Power Dot batter and a Classic Clear Snare Side. Twenty-strand snappy wires and a slick vent hole with an integrated INDe badge complete the build.



### In Use

We tested the 5.5x15 RESoArmor snare at a variety of tunings, from as high as it could go to as low, and we found that it retained an open, airy, and relatively dry tone across the entire spectrum. Snare response was crisp and quick, while sympathetic buzz was minimal, thanks in part to the deeply cut snare beds in the bottom



bearing edge.

If you like the singing sound of an unmuffled snare but often have to sacrifice some character in order to rein in the overtones for a more mic-friendly sound, check out an INDe drum. Even though the overtones were plentiful, they were evenly balanced and decayed swiftly so as not to overshadow the shell's strong,

punchy fundamental tone. This particular 15" version could be tuned down into floor tom territory for maximum thump without flapping out, adding even more versatility to an already impressively adaptable snare.

**Michael Dawson**

# Aston

## Origin, Spirit, and Starlight Microphones

A trio of cost-effective condensers designed to capture smooth, natural sounds.



**Aston is a UK-based company** that manufactures high-quality yet competitively priced condenser mics suitable for a wide range of applications, including on drums. At the moment, Aston's catalog comprises just four models: the broadcast-style, black-cased Stealth condenser (\$399.99), the Origin cardioid large condenser (\$299.99), the multipattern Spirit large condenser (\$449), and the laser-targeting Starlight pencil condenser (\$999.99 for a matched pair with a stereo bar mount). The latter three come in tumbled stainless-steel bodies, and those are the ones we received for review.

### Company Philosophy

Aston is careful to test each mic at various stages of the manufacturing process to ensure consistency in build and sound. The tumbled stainless-steel cases found on the Origin, Spirit, and Starlight are used to not only give these mics a cool vintage look, but to be resistant to chips and scratches. The model names and switch graphics are laser etched into the steel, so they'll never wear off.

While developing these mics, Aston brought in a panel of audio recording experts to compare them in a blind test to various industry-standard models. Once Aston's team found a combination of capsules and circuitry that outperformed competitors' mics in these tests, the prototypes were put into production.

Both the Origin and Spirit large condensers feature a large wave-shaped head that's designed to act as a spring to absorb shock and protect the 1" gold-evaporated Mylar capsule if the mic is accidentally dropped. There's also a built-in pop filter made from stainless-steel mesh, and both models feature a threaded receiver on the bottom for situations where you want to mount the mic directly to a stand without using the optional Swift shock mount.

### Origin

The Origin is a fairly squatty 2.13"x4.92" cardioid condenser that's designed to capture a smooth, natural sound with a balance of warmth and clarity. It features a switchable -10 dB pad and a low-cut filter that slopes off at 80 Hz. This mic has a fairly flat frequency response with a gradual slope in the high end that starts around 3.5 kHz and

has a 4 dB peak at 10 kHz before attenuating back to a nearly flat response around 20 kHz.

The primary use for Origins on drums would be as full-range overheads. We tried them positioned as a near-coincident pair placed 46.5" from the snare and over the bass drum pedal, and we tried them in a spaced pair configuration with one over the left side of the kit and the other over the right side. In both positions, the Origin captured a full and rich sound from the snare, toms, and cymbals with clean, warm articulation. For a minimal miking setup, a pair of Origin overheads combined with a bass drum mic will capture your drumset in a very natural, true way. The Origin is also an excellent choice for close-miking toms and the snare (with the -10 dB pad engaged). The body is small enough to be positioned within the kit without getting in the way while you're playing, but the large diaphragm does a great job of capturing the full frequency spectrum of the drums. It also captured a warm and natural sound when placed in front of the bass drum or when utilized as room mics for more ambient tones. At \$300, you really can't go wrong by adding one or two of these versatile Origin mics to your collection. They might even replace some (or all) of your trusted go-to models.



### Spirit

The Spirit is a slightly larger mic (2.13"x6.89") that also features a switch that can set the pickup pattern to cardioid, omni, or figure-8. The pad includes a more aggressive -20 dB setting in addition to the typical -10 dB. When in cardioid mode, the Spirit has a fairly flat frequency response, with a slight (3 dB) bump around 4 kHz and another wider boost between 7 kHz and 20 kHz. The frequency response in omni mode has a slight boost in the low end between 100 Hz and 250 Hz, a wide -2 dB scoop between 3.5 kHz and 7 kHz, and a fairly extreme (8 dB) bump that peaks around 10 kHz. In figure-8 mode, the response remains flat until 2 kHz, at which point there's a gradual slope that peaks at +6 dB at 5.5 kHz.

The Spirit is designed to capture a natural, transparent sound with a touch of high-end sparkle that accentuates the harmonics without adding harshness. We first tested the Spirit in cardioid mode, placed 12.5" in front of the bass drum, and we were amazed with the results. It captured the drum with big, beefy, but not over-hyped low end, smooth sustain, and an accurate amount of beater

smack. This isn't a pre-EQ'ed "instakick" mic, but rather an ideal choice for situations where you want to capture a warmer and more analog representation of your drum.

The Spirit also excelled as an overhead or room mic. And the different pickup patterns allowed us to try more experimental placements, like as a gritty lo-fi mic when put into figure-8 mode and placed between the bass drum beater and snare bottom, or as a distant room mic when placed far away from the kit in omni mode. While a little more expensive than the Origin, the Spirit provides a ton of versatility that far outweighs the extra \$150 in its price tag.

While testing these Aston mics, we discovered a new favorite minimal mic setup comprising a pair of Origin overheads and a Spirit in front of the bass drum. Unless you require extreme isolation of each instrument on the kit, just those three mics will reproduce the sound of your kit in a very accurate and satisfying way.

### Starlight

The Starlight is an innovative 1.42"x7.13" small-diaphragm condenser that features a sintered metal head that's created by heating thousands of tiny metal spheres into a porous form that enhances the acoustical properties of the mic while also protecting the gold-splattered 20 mm capsule. The pad switch offers 0 dB, -10 dB, and -20 dB of gain reduction, and the low-cut filter can be left flat or engaged at 80 Hz or 140 Hz.

Unique to the Starlight is the voice-switching feature that has three modes and sets the frequency response to warm and smooth with a subtle low-end lift and a gentle roll-off in the extreme highs



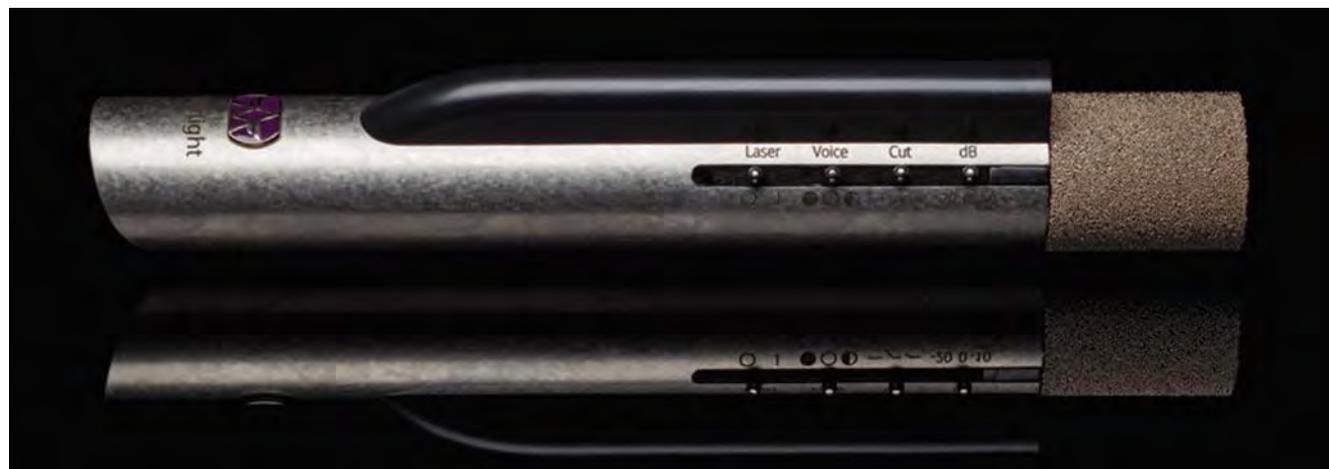
(Vintage), to the more airy high end of the Modern option, or to a fairly flat Hybrid setting with a touch of low-end boost. We inevitably ended up employing the Modern setting most often when using the Starlight as overheads—that mode captured the most sparkle and detail from the cymbals. But having the other two options literally at our fingertips was super convenient when we wanted to shift into a darker old-school vibe with the Vintage mode or when we wanted the overheads to have a flatter and more natural sound via the Hybrid setting.

The Starlight is available as a single mic or as a matched pair, which includes a lightweight but durable stereo bar that makes it easy to position the mics over the kit on a single stand. The Starlight also comes with a Class 2 laser that's driven via phantom power and can be turned on via a switch to help determine exactly where the capsule of the mic is aiming.

While some pencil condensers are generally reserved for capturing high-frequency instruments like cymbals, hi-hats, and small percussion, the Starlight

proved to be an excellent full-range mic, whether used to capture a complete drumkit sound as overheads or to capture a tighter image of snares, cymbals, and toms. All that we needed to do to fill out the sonic picture of the drumset was place the Spirit back in front of the bass drum. That setup had a great mix of full, warm, punchy tone, high-end shimmer, and clean, wide stereo spread. I said it before, but I'll say it again: get these.

**Michael Dawson**



# SledgePad

## Dampening System

A simple set-it-and-forget-it muffling device.

**Felt strips, blankets, pillows, shredded newspaper...** these are just a few of the many ways drummers have tried to control bass drum sustain. Enter SledgePad, a simple-to-install and effective foam-based dampening system designed to focus bass drum, tom, and snare tone.

The idea for SledgePad came about when inventor Mike Vermillion had to quickly tame his bass drum at a gig with a piece of acoustic foam. Today there are four types of SledgePad systems available in depths from 12" to 22": the original, the Vented Mini, the Vented Small, and the Vented Large models, of which the latter allows more air movement below and through the pad.

We put the Vented Mini model in a beastly 18x24 bass drum that's always been difficult to control. Installation was quick and painless, requiring the removal of only one drumhead. The pad is held in place by two small tape tabs found on each end that attach to the drumheads. The tape keeps the SledgePad in place and allows the foam to float a bit when the drum is struck.

The SledgePad Vented Mini did exactly what the company claims. It instantly gave the drum a focused and deep punch, with excellent attack, minimal sustain, and just enough "woof" of moving air. A sound engineer told me how easy it was to dial in the drum with the system installed during soundcheck. And when I listened to someone else play the kick from the audience's perspective, I was really impressed with the drum's attack, clarity, and punch.

I put the original SledgePad model in a 16x24 bass drum, and the drum sounded massive. It had excellent clarity, attack, depth, and punch, and it allowed for a pleasant pedal feel.

The tom and snare dampeners also come fitted with tape on both the sides. When mounted inside 16x16 and 16x18 floor toms, I found that they provided a decent amount of muffling and enabled a round, full drum tone. But they also changed the feel of the batter heads a bit. This wasn't an issue with the snare mufflers, probably



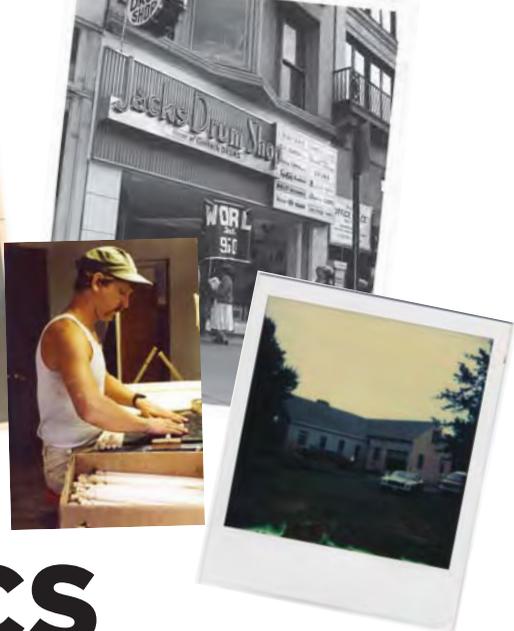
owing to their higher drumhead tension.

As for the positioning stability of the SledgePad, one of my drums that had the system installed lived in a trailer for months through hot and cold weather. The drum has also been dropped and tossed around like a giant hot potato by stagehands. The SledgePad hasn't budged. I had little trouble removing the tape from drumheads, but you'll want to be careful not to tear away the tape from the foam when you change heads. The tape retained tackiness, sticking solidly to the replacement head as if it were brand-new.

Street prices range from \$69.85 for a Vented Mini to \$92.85 for the original model. Four packs of floor tom strips are \$25.45. Visit [sledgepad.com](http://sledgepad.com) for more information.

**Nick Amoroso**





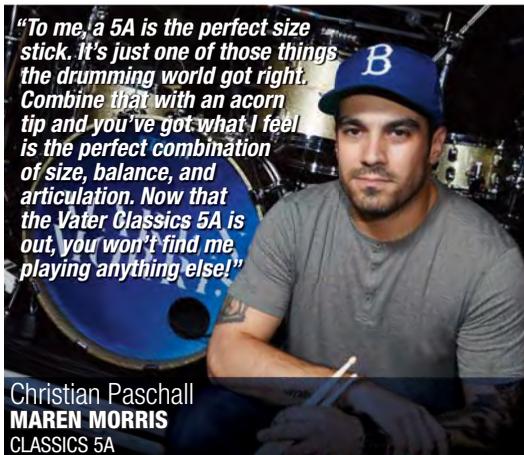
# VATER CLASSICS

These profiles and sizes have been some of the core models in the drumstick world since the birth of the “trap set”. Jack Adams [Alan & Ron Vater’s Grandfather] even hand-turned some of these drumstick profiles at Jack’s Drum Shop in Boston back in the 1950’s and 60’s.

Fast forward to the 1980’s, before the Vater brand was launched, the Vater Family found themselves lathe turning these same stick designs for their biggest customer who happens to now be one of our direct competitors.

We’re revisiting some Vater History with the launch of Vater Classics. 6 core models lathe turned to their classic specs and profiles, just like we made back in our barn in the 1980’s.

Try them out for yourself and see why that major competitor himself once called them “the finest hickory drum sticks in the world!” in a hand-written letter to the Vater Family which hangs on our wall to this day.



**Classics 7A**  
 L 15.5" • 39.37cm  
 D .540" • 1.37cm  
 Wood VHC7AW Nylon VHC7AN  
 7A made at traditional specs: A half inch shorter than our popular Manhattan 7A model and with a small acorn tip for a broader cymbal sound.



**Classics 8D Jazz**  
 L 16" • 40.64cm  
 D .540" • 1.37cm  
 Wood VHC8DJW Nylon VHC8DJN  
 A 7A grip but at a full 16" in length. The taper and acorn tip combination delivers a stick that plays effortlessly with warm but defined cymbal tones.



**Classics Big Band**  
 L 16" • 40.64cm  
 D .560" • 1.42cm  
 Wood VHCBBW Nylon VHCBBN  
 Just under a 5A in the grip with a gradual taper to a smaller sized tip that will make your ride cymbal sing with clarity.



**Classics 5A**  
 L 16" • 40.64cm  
 D .565" • 1.44cm  
 Wood VHC5AW Nylon VHC5AN  
 5A with an acorn tip for a nice and full sound from drums and cymbals. Solid and responsive model that practically plays itself.



**Classics 5B**  
 L 16" • 40.64cm  
 D .595" • 1.51cm  
 Wood VHC5BW Nylon VHC5BN  
 A little undersized in grip as compared to the popular Vater 5B. Classics 5B is very versatile in many musical applications and playing styles with its very comfortable grip size.



**Classics 2B**  
 L 16 1/4" • 41.28cm  
 D .630" • 1.60cm  
 Wood VHC2BW Nylon VHC2BN  
 A hefty but quick feeling 2B. Features a medium sized and slightly rounded acorn tip that delivers cymbal clarity and enough punch to cut through in louder music situations.

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Primus's

# Tim "Herb" Alexander

We had the chance to catch up with Tim Alexander towards the end of one of Primus's recent ten-week tours. When asked about his setup, Tim explained that his current arrangement stems from his recent heart surgery. "When I came back to playing," he said, "I didn't want to be reaching around; I wanted to have a little more efficiency and ease of playing. So that's why we moved the Octobans up front. They used to be raised up top and to the left side. I didn't want to reach up, and I didn't want to twist so much. Then we went with the 20" bass drum so the toms could sit lower."

When asked about his signature hi-hat sound, Alexander explained that oftentimes he's just playing on the top cymbal. "I like a wide-open hi-hat sound. It's more like a ride cymbal. I'll have them touching, but not that much."

Another interesting fact: Tim's Zildjian Amir ride cymbal is the same one he's had since he was a teenager. "I've had this since I first got a drumset. I was trying to get a Stewart Copeland cymbal, so I went into a music store in Scottsdale, Arizona, and they had this cymbal that was all dirty and kind of looked like Stewart Copeland's ride, so I grabbed it. It's unaltered. Everyone loves it, and it's been on everything I do. It's a pretty unusual sound."

**Drums:** Tama Starclassic Sugar Maple

- A. 5.5x14 stainless-steel snare
- B. 22x14 concert tom
- C. 21x6 Octoban
- D. 24x6 Octoban
- E. 14x6 Octoban
- F. 6x8 concert tom
- G. 8x10 concert tom
- H. 8x12 concert tom
- I. 16x18 concert tom (with legs)
- J. 18x20 bass drum
- K. 16x16 concert tom (with legs)
- L. 18x24 remote bass drum
- M. 12x14 concert tom

**Cymbals:** Zildjian

- 1. 13" hi-hats (Z Dyno Beat top and New Beat bottom)
- 2. 6" A China
- 3. 6" A splash
- 4. 10" Oriental China Trash
- 5. 17" A Custom Fast crash
- 6. 8" prototype bell
- 7. 13" hi-hats (Z Dyno Beat top and New Beat bottom)
- 8. 6" Zil-Bel
- 9. 22" Amir ride
- 10. 18" Oriental China Trash with a 10" A Custom EFX splash nested inside

**Drumheads:** Aquarian Hi-Impact snare batter and Hi-Performance snare side, Deep Vintage II tom batters, Modern Vintage Medium Octoban batters, Super Kick II batter on main bass drum, Modern Vintage Medium batter on remote bass drum (no muffling)

**Hardware:** Tama, including a Speed Cobra double pedal with skateboard grip tape, a second Speed Cobra double pedal with a 4' extension and Vater Vintage Bomber beaters, Iron Cobra two-leg hi-hat stand, 1st Chair Wide Rider throne with a cloth top and a sub kicker mounted underneath, and a Power Tower rack system with boom arm attachments

**Sticks:** Vater Tim Alexander signature sticks, stick wrap, T3 mallets, and marching stick holders

**In-ear Monitors:** Sensaphonics 3D Active Ambient model

Interview by John Martinez  
Photos by Alex Solca





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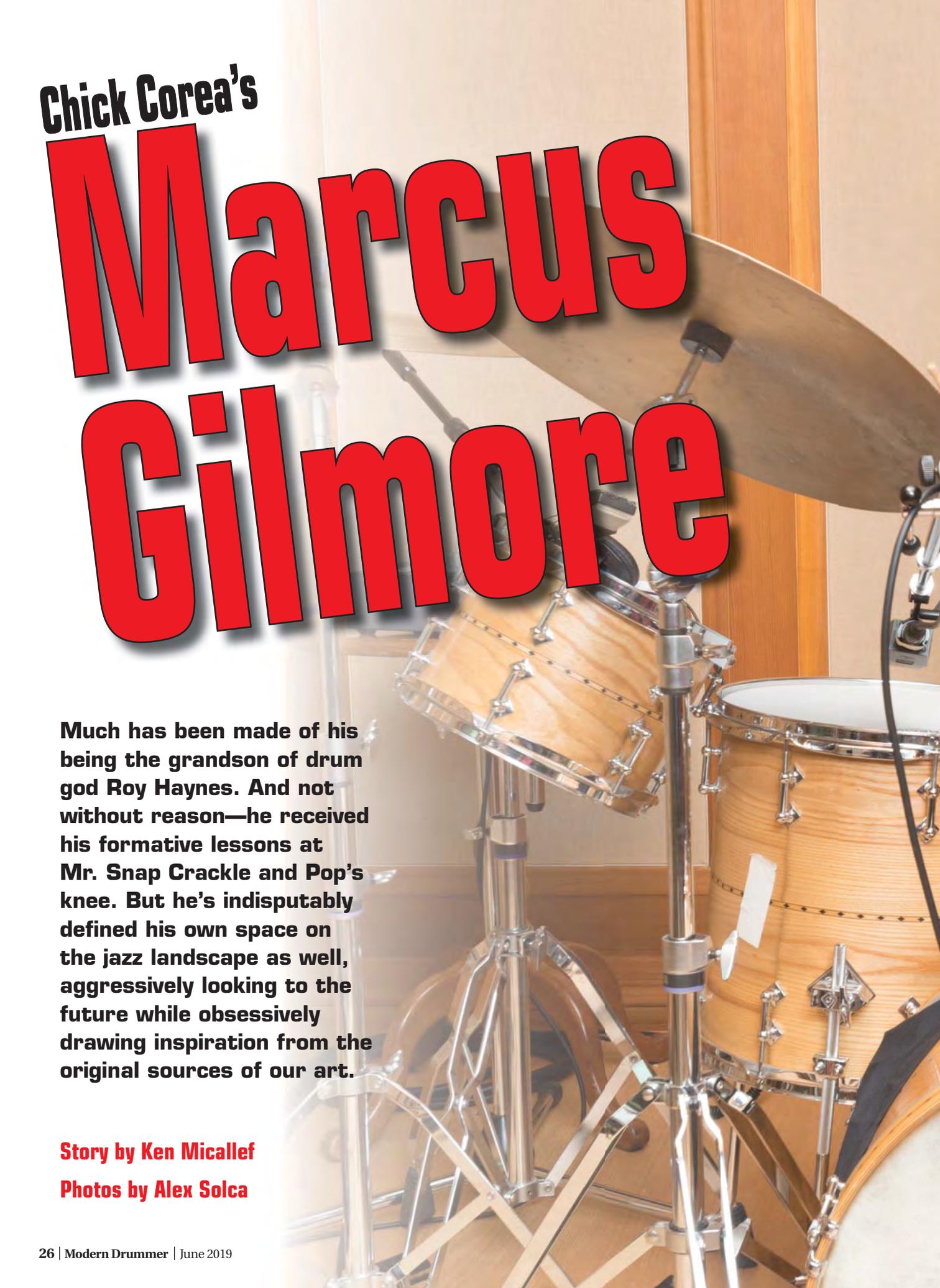
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**Chick Corea's**

# **Marcus Gilmore**

**Much has been made of his being the grandson of drum god Roy Haynes. And not without reason—he received his formative lessons at Mr. Snap Crackle and Pop's knee. But he's indisputably defined his own space on the jazz landscape as well, aggressively looking to the future while obsessively drawing inspiration from the original sources of our art.**

**Story by Ken Micallef**

**Photos by Alex Solca**



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Zildjian

When your grandfather is one of the most revered jazz drummers of all time, the notion “better get it in your soul” is something that happens naturally, like drinking water. Thirty-two-year-old Marcus Gilmore comes from a musical family, Roy Haynes being only the most celebrated member.

When Marcus was ten, Roy gave him one of his natural-finish Ludwig drumsets. Marcus had been driving his family mad with his incessant bongo playing, so his parents knew the time was right. The youngster had been asking Grandpa for the Ludwig set for many years, since his third birthday to be exact. Through his years at Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts, summer music camps, and early professional gigs, the big Ludwig set and drumming became Marcus’s focus.

Twenty-odd years later, Marcus Gilmore has created a singular drumming language that draws on his grandfather’s flowing and acerbic style, the multidirectional inventions of Jack DeJohnette and Rashied Ali, and the intricate rhythms of Lenny White, all joined to the esoteric metric mysteries of one of his primary mentors, Milford Graves.

Whether holding down the drum chair with jazz icon Chick Corea or gigging with one of the dozens of musicians who’ve employed him live and in the studio—beginning with 2005’s *Reimagining* by famed pianist Vijay Iyer—Gilmore embellishes everything he plays with his unique style. When focusing on Gilmore, no one rhythm is central, but all rhythms are essential, multi-directionally permeating his drums and cymbals like a wave built on spiraling, forward-motion groove-tentacles.

A recent duo performance with saxophonist Miguel Zenon found Gilmore on a small Craviotto set augmented by Sunhouse Sensory Percussion, various prototype Zildjian cymbals, and unusual percussion devices that Gilmore placed on or removed from various drums at will. The music drove fast and furious, bubbling over with flowing Afro-Cuban rhythms adorned with guttural, punch-like drum accents.

Gilmore’s long-term solo projects, *Actions Speak* and *Silouhwav*, are coming to fruition. Joining him on *Actions Speak*’s debut recording are Berniss Travis, bass; David Virelles, keyboards; Chick Corea, piano; Lionel Loueke, guitar; and Jasmine Mitchell, vocals. A 21st century polyglot of sounds and music, the album (which includes a cover of Max Roach’s “Garvey’s Ghost”) weaves a deep course through funky programmed sounds, experimental tableaux, solo drumming, sci-fi narratives, intense drumming redolent at times of ‘90s drum ‘n’ bass, velvety synth sounds, raw and uncategorizable rhythms performed over simple drum machine patterns, George Duke-worthy fusion, and lush soundscapes infused with Marcus’s knotty and sinuous drumming.

Some of Gilmore’s best work can be found in the rosters of the ECM and Pi record labels, including Steve Coleman’s *Weaving Symbolics* and *Synovial Joints*, Chick Corea’s *The Vigil*, Gilad Hekselman’s *Hearts Wide Open*, *This Just In*, and *Homes*, the Vijay Iyer Trio’s *Accelerando* and *Break Stuff*, Chris Potter’s *The Dreamer Is the Dream*, Gonzalo Rubalcaba’s *Avatar* and *XXI Century*, the Mark Turner Quartet’s *Lathe of Heaven*, and Ambrose Akinmusire’s recent *Origami Harvest*. And 2019 sees records by Chick Corea, Noah Preminger, Tayler McFerrin, and BIGYUKI.





**MD:** Your drumming shimmers, sparkles; it's almost pointillist, like a painting technique. You create a flowing rhythmic tapestry in every recording. What's your general rhythmic concept?

**Marcus:** It's stream of consciousness.

I've always seen the drums as a melodic instrument, because we have multiple limbs and we're able to create continuous melodies. [And drums can be] harmonic, because there's layers involved using our right foot, left foot, right hand, and

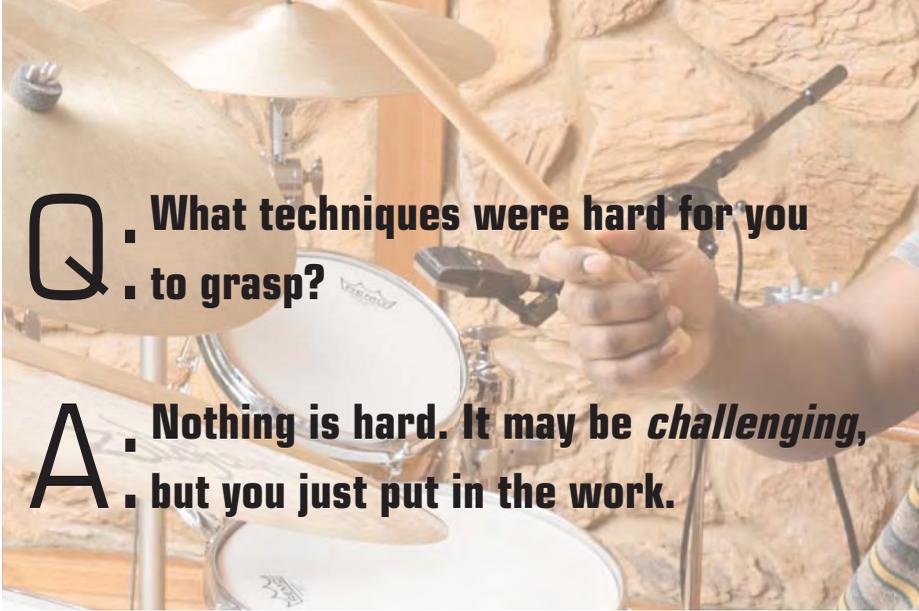
left hand. So it's more or less stream of consciousness, but always in the context of the music.

**MD:** The other night with Miguel Zenón your drumming recalled a merging of Elvin Jones and Jeff Watts, with some

graceful European jazz guy, Jon Christensen perhaps—all those full-set percussive sounds. What goes into achieving that?

**Marcus:** Practice. Ultimately, I like having different modes to go into, like musical modes. In all the musical situations I'm part of there's an underlying spirit that's similar with all of them. So even though the music I played last night with Miguel is not necessarily the same as if I was playing in a band with non-stop straight groove and no fills, there's still a connectedness between the two things. That's how I'm able to go from one situation to the next. It's all music.

**MD:** Your drumming refers to some of the older cats, such as your grandfather, Lenny



**Q.** What techniques were hard for you to grasp?

**A.** Nothing is hard. It may be *challenging*, but you just put in the work.

# Gilmore's Setup



**Drums:** Craviotto

- A. 6.5x14 snare drum
- B. 8x12 tom
- C. 7.5x10 tom
- D. 14x14 floor tom
- E. 14x20 bass drum (12x20 and 12x18 alternates)

**Cymbals:** Zildjian

- 1. Prototype 7" K hi-hats (based on Zil Bel)
- 2. Prototype 15" K hi-hats
- 3. Prototype 20" K crash-ride
- 4. Prototype 21" K flat ride
- 5. Prototype 18" K crash

**Heads:** Remo Coated

Ambassadors or Ambassador X tom and snare batters, Ambassador Clear or Diplomat Clear tom resonants, Ambassador Hazy snare side, and Ambassador Fiberskyn on the front of the bass drum.

**Sticks:** Innovative Percussion Marcus Gilmore Signature sticks (between 7A and 5A), brushes, and mallets

**Electronics:** Sunhouse Sensory Percussion with Resident Audio interface, Zoom products.

**Hardware:** DW bass drum pedal, Yamaha stands

White, Elvin Jones, and a European free jazz spirit like Louis Moholo or Han Bennink—but you're always playing yourself. You create a unique role in every situation, with real freedom. You'll play a traditional jazz ride cymbal beat, but always with that constant forward-motion energy from multi-directional drumming, as with Rashied Ali or Jack DeJohnette.

**Marcus:** I was exposed to certain music, and to specific musicians such as Rashied Ali and definitely Milford Graves. He's also a local hero for me because we're from the same neighborhood of Jamaica, Queens. Milford is a true renaissance man; he takes his approach to the music through all the different disciplines. He's a scientist, he deals with plant life. He deals with the heartbeat, he's a cardiologist. He's a martial artist. He does everything with a certain creative spirit. I've been influenced by him in a literal way, but also in a conceptual way, in how he approaches his life. The elders I look up to have a certain creative openness that I'm really attracted to and have a natural affinity for.

**MD:** How did you apply that "creative openness"?

**Marcus:** It was something that I'd already tapped into but didn't realize. Once I met Milford, it made so much sense. Then I wanted to dig deeper. It wasn't until I met people like Milford that I understood, and he's also very articulate. Once I had that kind of information, I realized, *Oh, that's where I'm coming from.* Prior to that I'd never thought about it that deeply.

**MD:** What specific things?

**Marcus:** A lot of Milford's playing deals with rhythm, but not in a very metric way—it's non-metric, a lot of waves. It's still melodic, even more so because it's very linguistic. Milford doesn't even really play snares. He keeps the snares off. His drumming sounds very melodic and very lyrical. It sounds like a



## Marcus Gilmore

language.

**MD:** And that's what you've done. You have your own language. There are so many variations and shadings and gradations in your drumming, which allude to funk and free jazz and bop and multi-directional drumming. How else did Milford influence you?

**Marcus:** The way he studies life, how he studies plants and different species, he sees the connectedness in everything. It's always a lesson when I visit Milford. You're learning more about yourself from other things that are just existing. We never have to talk about drums necessarily, we can talk about anything. I learn a lot from him.

**MD:** How did you develop your beautiful touch on the set?

**Marcus:** I try to get the optimal tone out of the instrument.

There are very literal things I do to bend the notes: sometimes I choke [the head] for a second to create some type of tension, then release it. I've always been into tone. I want to bring out the



natural vibrations of the instrument. I hear melodies even though I'm a drummer. In the West we think of the drums as a non-melodic instrument, but I've never seen it like that. I've been fortunate to be around legends and people I look up to who knew that that wasn't true.

**MD:** Which legends?

**Marcus:** My grandfather, Roy Haynes, is definitely one of them. Just to be around that type of greatness and wisdom, just seeing him play was enough. I got so much out of all the different elements of his playing. I was three or four the first time I remember seeing him play.

### Nature Meets Nurture

**MD:** When did you start playing?

**Marcus:** When I was ten. Piano and hand drums were my first instruments, when I was about four. My mom got me bongos. I had a natural affinity for them. My parents had a gospel group in the '70s and early '80s called New Creation. My older sisters were musical, and we all sang in church. One of my sisters went to Juilliard. I listened to everything. I also was very much into Tony Williams and Elvin Jones and my grandfather. I came up with all of it.

**MD:** What were the first rhythms you played on your drums?

**Marcus:** I freestyled in the beginning because I was so excited. My dad always wanted to be a drummer, so he would play a pocket on my kit. I was trying to get different ride cymbal beats together and learn how to play solos. I studied Elvin Jones on Wayne Shorter's *Speak No Evil*, and the Tony Williams Lifetime. I watched a lot of DCI videos and videos of Papa Jo Jones, Max Roach, and Buddy Rich. I'd specifically watch Buddy for the solos and his technique; he was uncanny with his speed. My dad was also really into Dennis Chambers, so I got into him very early on, and Omar Hakim.

**MD:** Did you study privately in high school?

**Marcus:** My mom found out about this program at Juilliard for young musicians, so I auditioned. That's where I learned to read music notation and studied European classical music. I started there when I was ten. It was called the Music Advancement Program, or MAP.

**MD:** You had full scholarships to Juilliard and Manhattan School of

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Music. After high school, did you complete your degrees at Juilliard and then Manhattan School of Music?

**Marcus:** No, I didn't go to Juilliard. My mom wanted me to, but I didn't go. So I never got the degree. Juilliard wasn't for me, and I went to Manhattan but didn't finish. By that point I'd been doing professional gigs. I'd been traveling with a lot of gigs that people know me for now. I got my feet wet at fifteen touring with Steve Coleman; there are recordings I did with him, such as *Weaving Symbolics*, when I was seventeen.

**MD:** You got one of your grandfather's drumkits when you were ten?

**Marcus:** Yes, and it was a blessing. I had to convince my grandfather that I was actually serious about it. I'd been asking for it for years, and it finally came through on my tenth birthday. Once I got bongos and began checking out more music, I knew I wanted to play drums for the rest of my life. The kit he gave me was one of his natural-finish Ludwig kits from the '80s. There's a photo of that set in the Village Vanguard. He had these old cases that had stamps from all over the world. The kit was really enchanted.

**MD:** Do you remember when Roy first heard you play?

**Marcus:** First he played the Ludwig kit for like ten minutes. It was amazing! The head on the snare drum was smooth and I couldn't get a sound with the brushes. But he sat down and somehow made it work. That's when I learned that anything is possible. Then he left and I played until I had to stop. That's basically all I did for a while. I

“The head on the snare drum was smooth, and I couldn't get a sound with the brushes. But my grandfather sat down and somehow made it work. That's when I learned that anything is possible.”

would do my homework first so I could play, so I could practice.

**MD:** What books did you go through as a youngster?

**Marcus:** My private teacher hipped me to some Tony Williams records. He'd studied with Tony, who said, “There's only three rudiments: singles, doubles, and flams. Everything else is a combination of that.” He showed me the official rudiments, so I practiced them, but mostly paradiddles, singles, doubles, and flams. In the beginning I'd play as long as I could, until my family said, “You

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## Marcus Gilmore

gotta stop!" I'd play for like six hours, with a ten-minute break for water.

**MD:** Did you focus on specific things within those hours?

**Marcus:** Singles, doubles, moving different melodies around the kit. I would try to transcribe things, anything I heard that was cool, or I would play along to specific Elvin Jones solos. I never got to see Tony, but I did get to see Max Roach up close, and I saw Elvin and my grandfather play back to back at a JVC Jazz Festival in Bryant Park.

That was definitely life changing. That was the first time I met Elvin. I would try to go to all of my grandfather's gigs in the mid to late '90s. Seeing Elvin and my grandfather play back to back made me realize how great they can make this music, but also how different they were. But the level of musicianship was so high. I realized it's a pretty open platform. Really, you can do anything if the musicality and level of musicianship is there, as long as you have that musical element. Anything can work.

Anything is possible.

**MD:** Did you study your grandfather's albums, like *Out of the Afternoon* or *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs* with Chick Corea?

**Marcus:** I sure did. *Out of the Afternoon* was one of my favorites because I love Rahsaan Roland Kirk. *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs* is another favorite. And Charlie Parker's *Bird at St. Nick's*. *The Amazing Bud Powell*, that one is incredible. And Thelonious Monk's *Misterioso* and *Thelonious in Action*. Everybody knows how great Roy Haynes is and how important he is to the music, to the legacy, to the culture, but a lot of people in positions of power were slow to acknowledge that. If it wasn't for him just living so long, I wonder if they would have ever given him his due while he was still alive.

**MD:** So much of this is in your blood, and then you were exposed to the music so early. What were some of your other early professional gigs?

**Marcus:** My first professional gig was with the Cadillacs, the doo-wop group from the '50s. My dad played tenor on the gig. Apparently there was another band on the circuit, another guy with his son playing drums, and I'm pretty sure it was Questlove.

### Get a Grip

**MD:** You play using matched grip most of the time. Why is that?

**Marcus:** I don't think about it too much. I play traditional grip sometimes, but often I don't. When I grew up watching all the older guys, I thought, *I have to play traditional because that's what they're doing*. But now I just do what feels right. So sometimes traditional grip, sometimes not. Playing matched, it's just a feeling that I like. And a lot of guys play matched grip, too. My grandfather does it a lot when he's soloing. Jack DeJohnette has been doing it for a while now.

**MD:** In your formative years, what gave you the biggest growth spurt? What made the biggest difference in your technique?

**Marcus:** I spent a lot of time by myself studying the music and finding a way to relate to what made sense to me. And I got to play with musicians that were so much more established than me, such as Steve Coleman and Clark Terry. I went on the road with both of them when I was fifteen. Steve also had drummers Sean Rickman and Dafnis Prieto then. Steve wanted me to play a gig at his residency at [New York club] Tonic, so I went to check out the vibe. I got to see Sean and Dafnis, and it was amazing,

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## Marcus Gilmore

it was all really new for me. It was great to see that, and then getting a chance to participate made a big difference.

**MD:** Regarding records, did you play along with them? How did you relate to them and find your own style?

**Marcus:** I played with Tony Williams' albums, such as *Life Time*. And I played with John Coltrane's records with Elvin Jones.

And I liked the Atlantic records with Art Taylor, *Coltrane's Sound* and *Giant Steps*. Those really spoke to me in a very harmonic and lyrical way, and I loved the band. I started listening to all that stuff at a very early age, before I got my kit. I was listening to Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* when I was seven. I was legitimately into it and really checking it out.

**MD:** Were there certain books or specific exercises that helped with your technique?

**Marcus:** Charley Wilcoxon's *Modern Rudimental Swing Solos*. I did the other books at Manhattan, but wasn't really into it. I developed my reading skills at summer music camps like Encore. I did those through junior high and high school. I was doing the European [classical] thing, but also jazz.

**MD:** What techniques were hard for you to grasp?

**Marcus:** Nothing is hard. It may be *challenging*, but you just put in the work. The idea of playing specific rhythms with

different limbs was challenging. But I ate it up because I was really into it and I saw the potential. Seeing certain guys that were known for that, like Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez, who had the clave and independence, I felt how powerful that was. I was attracted to that even though it was challenging.

I definitely checked out a lot of Afro-

"I like being able to read in musical situations—sometimes you have to—but I think it's more important to get the information directly from the source rather than going through a book."

Cuban musicians through Steve Coleman. He was very much into the diaspora, and what was happening with African-American people in America. But then at the same time he was very curious about certain traditions that were maintained with the Afro-Cubans and the music in Haiti, and Afro-Brazilian music. Steve was the first one to play me folkloric music. He went all over the world studying native cultures. I'm on Steve's albums *Weaving Symbolics*, *The Mancy of Sound*, and *Synovial Joints*.

**MD:** Is Wilcoxon something you shedded

heavily? Did you try to master those pieces?

**Marcus:** Not so much. It was really only a few compositions that I got into, "Three Camps" being one. I played "Rolling in Rhythm" for a recital. There's a few of them that I really spent time on, but I can't say that I spent a lot of time on the books. I like being able to read in musical situations—sometimes you have to—but I think it's

more important to get the information directly from the source rather than going through a book.

**MD:** And how would you do that?

**Marcus:** A lot of ways...if somebody is still around and you're fortunate enough to get a chance to see them play. Before YouTube, I would check out the archives at libraries to see what I could find. I probably listened to almost every recording at the Queens public library, at least all the jazz ones. I was really curious. There are certain tools you can use to get to the music, but often

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people get caught up in the tools and they don't get to the actual music.

**MD:** Did you play much straight-ahead jazz with musicians beyond Clark Terry?

**Marcus:** Yeah, of course. I was doing these summer programs, and some had big bands or combos. That's actually how I met a lot of musicians. I did those in my sophomore, junior, and senior years. That's how I met Justin Brown. One year he was in the combo and I was doing the big band.

**MD:** What do you practice now?

**Marcus:** These days a lot of my practicing is away from the kit. I'm always thinking about some kind of rhythm. I can practice independence things away from the kit, because that doesn't necessarily require me to be on the drumset. For hand strength or specific ideas, I'll take things slow. I did that with everything: play it as slowly as possible, then slowly increase the tempo.

**MD:** What's something you might practice off the drums for independence?

**Marcus:** You can play a halftime backbeat. Something like a slow 4/4, two quarter notes in the bass drum and then the third quarter note on the snare, the fourth quarter note is a rest. Then play a rhythm with your right hand that's double time or triple time if you're doing 16th notes. Let's say it's a dotted 8th note going to a 16th note. And then another dotted 8th note going to another 16th note. Then an 8th-note rest. And then the same thing over and over and over. You can add a hi-hat part

with your left foot, a quarter note on the hi-hat, then two 8th notes, an 8th-note rest, then another 8th note, and a quarter-note rest.

### Craviotto, Zildjian, Sunhouse

**MD:** Your setup featured in this *MD* story was photographed at Chick Corea's Mad Hatter Studios in Los Angeles.

**Marcus:** Yes, while I was recording *Antidote*, the upcoming album by Chick Corea and the Spanish Heart Band. It's a concerto for nine pieces, with hefty orchestration. I sight-read the charts, though Chick prefers that we don't. He wanted me to memorize the music so my head wouldn't be buried in charts during the recording. The arrangements were changing every day, so I read the charts and listened to the demos. When we get on the road I'll flesh it out.

**MD:** Is this the same kit you play live?

**Marcus:** This is similar to the kit I would play live. Sometimes I use a Rototom next to the floor tom. I like to have the contrast of the lower-sounding floor tom with the higher-pitched drum next to it. And it's close to the ride cymbal because sometimes I'll play a similar pattern on that Rototom to what I would play on a ride cymbal. I also have a 10x14 Craviotto snare and a 6.5x14 copper Craviotto snare.

I like my snares to have internal mufflers. I like to be able to keep a snare more open or have it more dampened if I want. And when you have an internal muffler it dampens it

but it also puts pressure on the head, which I like. It's a different sound, it's more punchy. If you're playing above the muffler it will feel different, but I generally don't play in that area. The rebound isn't that different.

I use the 10x14 snare drum a lot; even tuned up high, it has its own character, and a lot of body to it. The larger body gives the tone a lot of depth, whether it's tuned high or low. And it has Craviotto's baseball-bat edges. They're rounded, which makes the drum more punchy. I sometimes use Ambassador X single-ply heads. They're like Ambassadors but a little thicker. And I like to play Pearl Eliminator bass drum pedals sometimes.

**MD:** You're developing a line of cymbals with Zildjian's director of cymbal innovation, Paul Francis.

**Marcus:** Yes. I got extra hammering on the 15" hi-hats to bring out a more complex and darker tonal characteristic. The alloy is based on the K line. With Chick I always play a flat ride in the setup. That sound is a part of the music. Chick loves the flat ride, and my grandfather made it popular. It was his idea, then it became part of Chick's identity.

I knew I wanted a cymbal bigger than the 20", but not a 22", so we made a 22" and a 21". I wanted a flat ride that was a little bit heavier. Paul hammered it at the factory, then when I got it home and it cooled down, I still liked it but it wasn't perfect. Then I asked Paul to shave off some of the metal from the top and bottom, and I fell in

Marcus Gilmore  
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## Marcus Gilmore

love with it. It's my favorite flat ride. And I love the 18" crash—it sounds like water.

### Actions Speak

**MD:** What was the predominant approach to your debut album?

**Marcus:** I'm just trying to create sincere music that shows where I'm coming from. Some people ask, "Is it jazz?" But I'm not even thinking about that. I just want it to be

the most genuine music I can make at this moment of my life.

**MD:** Did you feature Sunhouse Sensory Percussion on the album?

**Marcus:** Semi-regularly, after trying to get into it. There's a learning curve, but it's always worth the time, because once you learn how to do specific things it becomes a stronger tool. It takes time. And every time you want to do something, there's a

new update, and you have to find your way around it. But the updates give you a little more power so you can be more nuanced with it.

**MD:** Your group is called Actions Speak, and there's another group, Silouhwav.

**Marcus:** And a solo project with drums and sensors. And a duo project with vocalist Silkka that's called Moment in Time. I don't really use the sensors so much in Actions Speak. It can go there electronically, but it's more acoustic, usually piano and upright bass. There's percussion in Actions Speak but not in Silouhwav. I also have a duo with dancer Savion Glover.

**MD:** You're so busy, but do you have long-term goals for your career?

**Marcus:** I'd love to travel more with my ensembles and compose for different types of ensembles, orchestras, vocalists, percussion ensembles.... I would love to just write more music and travel with it, maybe some cinematic-type stuff. I like all the early Spike Lee soundtracks because I'm a fan of his father, Bill Lee, who wrote the soundtracks. I like a lot of independent films these days. Way more creative. I'm a fan of all the *Twilight Zones*. I've always been intrigued by orchestrations.

**MD:** Who else?

**Marcus:** I'm a big fan of Oliver Nelson. I didn't realize how much film work he did toward the end of his life—so many pieces of music, and he only lived to forty-three. I didn't know he accomplished so much in that way. I like Alfred Hitchcock's film scores. Herbie Hancock's soundtracks for *Death Wish* and *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*. I like their sound, it's larger orchestrations. So it's the composer's concept realized in larger ensembles.

**MD:** What accounts for the dance-like feel in your drumming?

**Marcus:** I've always had a natural affinity for how rhythm relates to dance and also how it relates to contemporary culture, which is modern-day MCs. And the ancient art of griots and storytelling and the musical aspect of that and how it's tied into the drums. I'm a big fan of the MC Pharoahe Monch. All these things have influenced me and are part of my sound.

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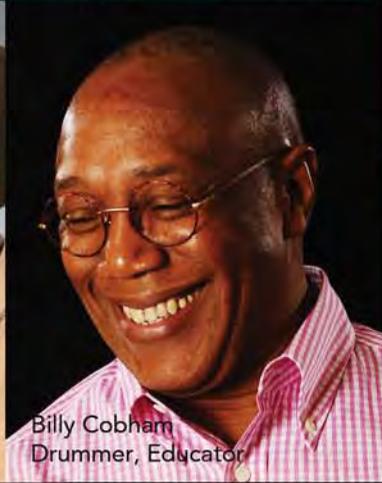
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# Ra Kalam Bob Moses

## On His Own Terms

Try this experiment: Mention the name Bob Moses to a drummer who's been around a while. You'll likely get one of two responses: "Bob who?" or something to the effect of "Oh, yeah, Bob's the man!" We at *MD* happen to fall into the second category; it's why we published his method book *Drum Wisdom* back in the day—and why we poached its title for our recent feature series on great drummer/educators. This month we catch up with the musician, who's never stopped playing, or thinking, or being a profound influence on the thousands of players who've fallen under his wonderful spell.

Since beginning his journey down the spiritual path, Ra Kalam Bob Moses has learned a lot about creativity, and even more about life. It's ironic that this journey has showed him how to cover his own tracks so well. He seems to have brushed aside the lasting traces of his own "self," or at least hidden them under the bramble and thicket that most of us are too busy to notice. His studies and practices have humbled him to the point where it seems unnecessary, inaccurate even, for him to acknowledge his original voice on the drums and his worldly contributions to music.

Today Ra Kalam will tell you that he doesn't think of himself as a great player. When he reflects on the period in which he played mainly jazz, he says that it only sounds like he knew what he was doing because the musicians he was playing with knew what *they* were doing. They were doing the heavy lifting.

That's likely not what those hearing his music would say. Ra Kalam began spiritual practice roughly twenty years ago with guitarist Tisziji Muñoz, with whom he also collaborates musically. But before that, Ra Kalam was "simply" Bob Moses: post-bop slayer, one of the great rhythmic forces in free jazz and fusion music of the '70s and '80s. He recorded his first album as a leader in 1968. He appeared on Pat Metheny's debut as a leader, *Bright Size Life*, in 1976, then in concert and on recordings with bandleaders Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Pharoah Sanders, Dave Liebman, Jack DeJohnette, and Larry Coryell, among many others. He's even taught at the highest academic level since the early '80s, serving as a professor

of jazz studies at the New England Conservatory of Music.

Maybe his spiritual studies have simply made him more aware of the world's profundity, and the miracle of expression. Certainly it has helped answer questions he's always asked about musical dogma—like the setup an improvising drummer should use, and even how one defines success.

Thankfully, his selflessness has yet to keep him from producing a lot of music. Like, *a lot* a lot: Moses has released seventeen albums since he launched his own label, Ra Kalam Records, roughly ten years ago. Most of these recordings are bold works whose genre is slightly tougher to categorize than his pre-spirit-path music. He takes influence from African tribal music, modal, spiritual, and straight-ahead jazz, singers on *The X Factor*, nature, the cosmos, kung-fu movies, windshield wipers...basically everywhere. And each album has its own identity. Yet they are connected by the current of his percussive flow: a rhythm-river, at once lyrical, melodic, torrential, dialogical, and floral. The music sometimes descends into cacophony, but Ra Kalam's soul and intent are always discernible in the (intentional) chaos. His spiritual journey has allowed him to harness abilities most musicians take for granted, like singing, dancing, or simply listening. It's taught him to be mindful of the swirling Foley—like skipped records and the sound of the wind rustling leaves—that surrounds us. Ra Kalam has his ears and mind open, and he's using these elements as a foundation for his evolved music.

Story by Keith Carne

Photos by John Fell



**MD:** What got you thinking about spirituality and its relationship to music?

**Ra Kalam:** My early exposure to Coltrane is what prepared me for Tisziji. I heard a spirituality in his playing that I didn't hear from other jazz musicians, great as they were. Coltrane in '61 was so radically different. It's hard for people to understand now, because so many people have copied that free, open, modal sound. It affected me in a way no other music had. It was

representative of the journey and of being free of the karmic caca of Bob Moses. [That's when] I think my music started changing.

**MD:** How does practicing meditation and spirituality help your playing? Is it necessary to open yourself to spirituality to be a great player?

**Ra Kalam:** Almost all great players are *not* doing that, and they're still great players. No, this is not about music, this is about your life. Let's face it: musicians and artists are some

that way. We all have that spirit-compassion.

**MD:** Years ago you were known more for playing jazz music, and you used a standard four-piece kit. But since, your music has become something less classifiable, and in turn you've evolved your kit into something more diverse—you've even called it "magical." Can you describe it?

**Ra Kalam:** It's kind of like a sculpture. Many times I just go into my music room to look at it and don't even play it. I can hear things coming from [the drums] before I touch them. They seem to already suggest music.

I don't think in terms of brand or symmetry—a Gretsch or Tama set, or whatever. I just go drum by drum: *Okay, I like this drum; it'll make it into the set.*

**Q:** Is it necessary to open yourself to spirituality to be a great player?

**A:** Almost all great players are *not* doing that, and they're still great players. No, this is not about music, this is about your life.



going somewhere beyond music, where the purpose was not musical. For a lot of musicians, they're just music fanatics. For me, if the music doesn't reach out and pull my heart out of my chest, I'd rather hear silence.

In one of these really down, dark times I called Tisziji and asked him if I could just come and sit with him. No guitar, no drums. I just want to sit. I remember, the first time I sat for eighteen hours straight. I was falling over, and he was sitting with perfect posture, totally relaxed but sharp—every word was perfect dharma. That began the process. Then shortly after, I got the name Ra Kalam—it's

of the most egocentric people on the planet. They're as removed from spiritual practice as you could possibly be! If they have a need for it, they'll gravitate toward it. If they don't, they won't. I definitely had a need for it. I was suffering.

There is a huge gap between Tisziji's reality and any normal human reality [because he is a spiritual master]. I'm trying to close that gap, trying to get closer to stillness. It's really like prayer. Prayer mode. It's really hard if you're not in prayer mode; then you get to the gig, and you have to be that way. 'Trane played the way he played because he lived

It happens that a lot of the stuff is made and invented by Remo. I have a high regard for Remo the company and Remo Belli the man. He was a great man and a visionary. Remo manufactured things I would have invented if I knew how to make things. For example, the snare that I use is from the Mondo drumset; it's half djembe and half snare. It's the only snare I use now. I use a 12" and a 10", which I call my "snapping turtle." It's also easy to play with your hands, which I've been doing a lot more of lately. Or sometimes I'll play with one hand and one stick.

I also use a 16" Remo djembe turned on its side as second bass drum. The bass drum that I play more with my right foot is a floor tom made by Eames.

I have a lot of different foot combinations with my set: two bass drums, three hi-hat-like instruments, tombaks to my left, and something Remo invented called a cluster drum, which is five heads in one drum. That goes next to where some people would have a rack tom; I have a timbale [instead].

Many of the cymbals are different types of Chinas. They're mostly used for effect—I don't ride on them.

**MD:** Do you bring all of that stuff out when you play a gig?

**Ra Kalam:** Generally I bring a 12" Mondo snare, an Eames 16" bass drum, an Eames



floor tom, a timbale, one hi-hat, and one ride.

*Editor's note: the ride is a '60s Zildjian K that Moses has had for more than fifty-five years. He recently acquired its "sister cymbal," another vintage K made by the same cymbal maker, Mikael Zildjian, that sounds and looks "almost as beautiful" as his original. Ra Kalam, who is not short of stories, told MD a great one in which he asked the elder of the two cymbals if "she" would mind if he "dated her sister occasionally." The cymbal responded, "Please! I could use the break!" But back to Ra Kalam....*

I bring out a very small kit. One, because I'm getting old and lazy. [laughs]. But also because the music doesn't call for [anything bigger]. One of the things Tisziji told me: "Sound like the cosmos with the smallest kit possible." That kind of infinity comes from you, not the drumset. So even with a small set I wind up getting as many colors as I can. The sound ultimately is in your head, so if you hear different tones, you'll find a way to get different tones. You could play one drum... I could get a melody on the desk here. [Moses proceeds to play a melody on his desk.] A lot of people are kind of amazed at the amount of sounds and colors I get with a small kit, but I learned early on that it's not only the drum... it's what you're hitting it with.

**MD:** It's funny you say that, because it looks to me as if you often play with broken sticks.

**Ra Kalam:** They're not all broken; they're all in the state of *becoming* broken. Like all living things, we all break down eventually. I make them that way. I go to a tree and find a

branch that has enough straightness to it and also one that won't mess with the integrity of the tree [if I take it]. I love and respect trees. Of course, because they're all handmade, each stick is different.

I have a different technique for the left hand and right hands because they have completely different functions in the music. Also, my hands aren't equal. I know some of these great drummers who practice every day, and their left hand and right are absolutely equal, but I'm not like that. My right hand is stronger because I'm right handed. I use it more. But they have different functions.

**MD:** You mention the importance of dance to your playing. Can you describe how you use it?

**Ra Kalam:** The way you listen to music is by dancing to it. I know how to listen. When you play with people [who know what they're doing], dance to it, see what it *really* is. It's like getting in a car that's already driving. You don't need to do anything. That's been my approach to all music.

It's interesting that all these kids who say they're into jazz know the three hundred sixty-third thing about it, but they don't know the *first* thing about it: It's not in four, it's in two! So they're not moving correctly. They have the wrong feel from the get-go. How do I know it's in two? I dance to every record. Some of the students get into it, start doing it. Others look at me like I'm crazy: "What—you want me to *dance*?" You want to be a

drummer, and that's such a far-fetched idea? I don't know, man.... [laughs]

**MD:** You say that you rarely gig anymore. Do you think you're less likely to be hired because you have such a specific sound?

**Ra Kalam:** I don't think it's only my sound. It's who I am as a person. I've always been a contrarian and a rebel spirit, and always try to be as unprogrammed as possible. I take full responsibility for that. What I learned from Tisziji, and from living long enough, is that not working very much, or not being part of the scene, is not a detriment—it's a blessing. In fact, I think it's enabled me to go deeper into the way I play because I don't care if anybody likes it. I don't care if it's useful for anybody else. I'm playing for my own spiritual healing, which means letting go.

My credo is "Learn it to burn it." In other words, learn it so you don't have to play it anymore. Most musicians learn it to show it, and then they spend the rest of their life showing it and proving that they've learned it over and over. "Look what I've learned. I'm great at it!" "Yes you are." "Okay, here again. I'm great at it." Over and over and over. And I'm not putting them down... that's their choice to make. My choice is different. What heals me is to play what I don't know, not what I know. And to play what actually can't be known in the intellectual mind. It's beyond the mind. That's a different process. It's letting go.

I'm about to turn seventy-one. Who knows how much time I've got. With any luck, ten

## Ra Kalam Bob Moses

or fifteen more years. So I don't want to spend even a minute dumbing down, going backwards, or redoing something I may have done before. That's where my joy comes in. If I were a working musician, it would be much harder to do it. I see working musicians, and they're stuck doing what they've already done because people like it, and that's how they make a living. That means they're attached to material success, and to being liked and understood. I'm not putting anyone down; these are all choices people can make. I choose to not be attached to any of that. The freedom is worth more than anything to me.

I hardly play gigs because no one calls me to play. I don't have a band or anything. I play in the house sometimes, but I like playing with people. For me, an hour of drums by themselves is enough. Maybe I'm a little lazy, too. But I'm getting better. I actually like my playing these days. Twenty years ago I wouldn't have said that.

**MD:** Most musicians constantly talk about how they have to just keep gigging in order to get by. How do you make your living if you hardly play gigs?

**Ra Kalam:** Man, it's a mystery to me how I make it. I don't owe any money. I put out seventeen records. I'm creating all the time. I teach one day a week at NEC, and even that's



only during certain seasons. But I live in a funky house. The ceiling is coming down. I have three roommates; I would love to live with myself, but nah.

I don't do any of the things people tell you are in the program: you gotta buy Christmas presents; Thanksgiving you gotta eat turkey. Nope. Not me. New Year's...New Year's? For me that's the spring. I don't have a smartphone. Vacation? I stay home, play the drums, paint some pictures, breathe. That's my vacation. These are choices that people

have to make.

I'm hardly a professional musician. Careers go up and down. Almost all the musicians I know are more materially successful than me. My *students* are more materially successful than me. But none of them seem happy. Nobody has any time. Everybody seems completely stressed; they're all running around like madmen. I have, like, no business or hussle chops. That's not good, and I'm not proud of that, by the way. But I know by now who I am.



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# Knower's Louis Cole A New Breed

For a generation of budding drummers and musicians, YouTube play counts might mean more than *Billboard* or iTunes charts. This multifaceted drummer found his own unique voice in that climate, thanks in part to a vast amount of talent and the help of a few friends. That voice would take him on a journey around the world.

Drummer, solo artist, multi-instrumentalist, engineer, mixer, producer, video director, camera operator, content creator, viral star.... The credits don't end there. But as a prolific solo artist and one-half of the core group of the indie/electronic/jazz group Knower, Louis Cole has built himself a substantial career utilizing them all, in ten action-packed years. International tours, millions of online views and streams via various platforms, and opening spots for the likes of the Red Hot Chili Peppers and collaborations with artists such as the prolific bassist Tim Lebevre and modern funk sensations Vulfpeck only add to his output.

It took Cole, now thirty-two, a few years to turn that talent into success after graduating from the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music in 2009. Shortly after throwing the cap and launching a solo career in L.A., the drummer joined vocalist Genevieve Artadi and formed Knower. Since then, Cole and Knower have built a substantial online and touring presence thanks in part to their infectious pop/funk-infused tunes, as well as the band's unique "live session" YouTube videos that are infused with '80s and '90s-inspired VHS homemade tape filters, Stanley Kubrick-ian aesthetics, and Nintendo graphics, all shot in Cole's home.

But beyond any forward-thinking marketing sense Cole brings to his group and solo material, his technique, feel, and distinct studio tone alone behind the skins would arguably get him hired in plenty of gigging situations. Check out Knower's YouTube video "Overtime (Live Band sesh)," where the drummer's open-handed style and Stubblefield/Jabo-inspired ghost notes bring a refreshing live funk and jazz vibe to the electro-pop studio version of the track. Or dig into the laid-back, groove-laden live version of Cole's "Bank Account," which finds him tearing it up from behind a keyboard and at the kit.

Most recently Cole has released his second full-length solo album, *Time*; was featured as a guest artist with Vulfpeck on the burning track "It Gets Funkier IV" from their *Hill Climber* album; and arranged big band versions of his solo material for a few unique groups—both home (literally) and abroad. We checked in with the drummer soon after he wrapped up a very busy 2018.





Story by Willie Rose  
Photos by Alex Solca

## From the Top

**MD:** What brought you to the drums?

**Louis:** I used to bang my head on a pillow and sing when I was a little kid. It used to drive my friends nuts. I had trouble going to sleepovers, because I couldn't sleep without doing that. And I think I just had to get rhythm out of my body. It used to be kind of a problem. But from there, I'd play on my mom's pots and pans.

I started getting obsessed with drums because they looked so cool. They had so many moving parts and pieces of metal. I had this book with pictures of drums, and I'd just stare at it. So my parents, to make sure I was serious, bought me one drum at a time. I had a snare at first, with a cardboard box bass drum and what was basically a plastic jug. But I started taking drum lessons when I was eight, so I guess that's when I really started playing for real.

**MD:** What was your lesson experience like?

**Louis:** My drum teacher showed me basic rudiments. But he'd also bring in beats from these New Orleans drummers—stuff from Stanton Moore, Herlin Riley, and Johnny Vidacovich. And I remember being really grateful that he showed me that stuff.

**MD:** What led you to USC?

**Louis:** I decided that I wanted to get more serious about music after hearing the Tony Williams Lifetime album *Emergency!* It was just so intense, messed up, and beautiful at the same time. It changed my life. I think after that point I decided I wanted to go to school for music.

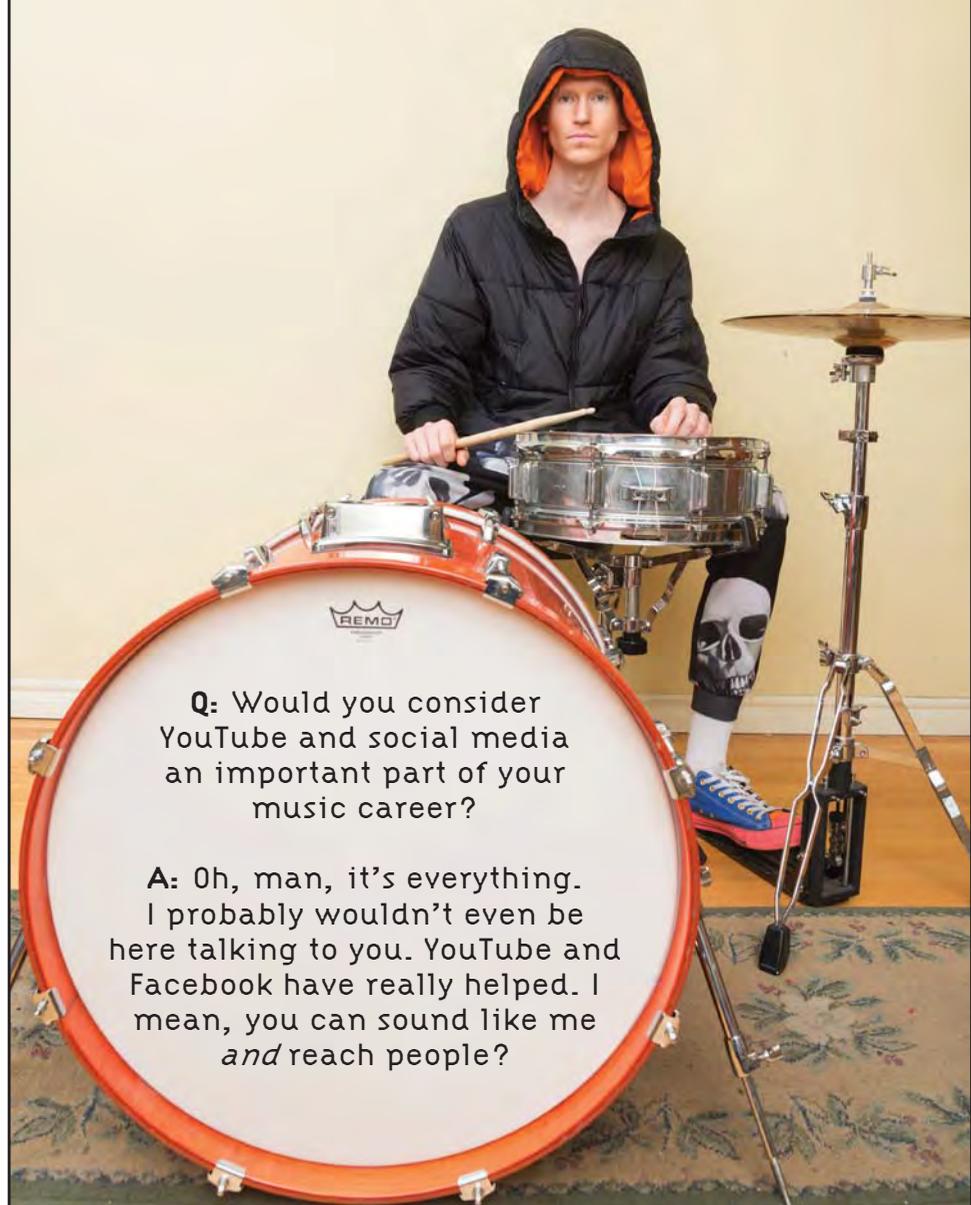
**MD:** You studied with Ndugu Chancler, Peter Erskine, and Aaron Serfaty at USC. How was that experience?

**Louis:** Ndugu was awesome, but scary at first. [laughs] He had a really intimidating vibe, but that was just his vibe. At first I was really intimidated to go to lessons. I had lower confidence in myself at that point. I hadn't really developed my thing yet. But eventually we became more comfortable, and it became more fun, and he realized that I was serious, practicing, and trying to get better and sound good.

The coolest stuff he showed me was about the sound of the drums, and how every note matters. Every backbeat or ghost note should be the same volume, along with the bass drum or cymbals. You could apply that to anything.

**MD:** How was studying with Peter?

**Louis:** He showed me some great stuff, but he realized at that point that I was on my own path. That was during the second half of my time there, and I had a vision of what I wanted to do and be. So he didn't try to get in the way or mess with anything. He showed



**Q:** Would you consider YouTube and social media an important part of your music career?

**A:** Oh, man, it's everything. I probably wouldn't even be here talking to you. YouTube and Facebook have really helped. I mean, you can sound like me *and* reach people?

me other stuff, just to show me, but he never made me spend all my time working on bebop fills or something if I didn't want to. That was cool of him. He let me do what I wanted to do.

But the guy who really helped me there was Aaron Serfaty. My technique was horrible, and I kept injuring myself. He showed me how to use a loose technique, and I think that was game changing for me.

**MD:** After USC, what was the plan?

**Louis:** Man, that was such a weird era for me. I knew that I loved music a lot, and at that point I just wanted to get better at drums. I was practicing every day. I didn't really know what I wanted to do with music. I think I was starting to slowly figure out that my favorite thing about music was writing. My first album comprises that era and before, when I would just mess around on GarageBand.

But my friend, Jack Conte, he's like a YouTube music pioneer. He knew that I loved writing, and he liked my music a lot. So he had this big pep talk with me, and he basically asked, "What are you doing with

your life? You should just release your own music and make your own career by making music videos and recordings of yourself on YouTube."

He had already done all that stuff, so I knew it was possible. I'd always thought about doing it. I just felt like I didn't deserve something that cool. [laughs] I didn't think that I could have a career like that, or that anyone would want to hear my music that much where I'd have a career. But he really encouraged me and said to do it. That talk changed my life. From that point on, I said that's my choice in life. I knew that was my passion, so if I could make a career out of it, then I'd be happy.

So that's what I did. That was around 2008 or 2009. And it wasn't until 2017 or so that I started to really break. After school I lived with my parents for about seven years, which was cool of them to let me do. They knew that I was working hard, so they never worried that I was going to be alright, even though it's not really a sure-fire thing to reach for. But they believed in me and let

me work my shit out while I got my career together.

**MD:** Would you consider YouTube and social media an important part of your music career?

**Louis:** Oh, man, it's everything. I probably wouldn't even be here talking to you. YouTube and Facebook have really helped. I mean, you can sound like me *and* reach people? [laughs] I don't know if it was like that before. I think you'd have to get a record deal or something first to make that happen. But I know that just being able to upload songs on YouTube and Facebook,

and do everything yourself, it's crazy and makes a lot of stuff possible.

## Knower

**MD:** What's the past year been like with Knower?

**Louis:** I've been traveling a lot, especially last year. Europe, Russia... But this year I'm making it a point to be able to stay at home and write music. I felt a little bit empty after touring so much, actually.

**MD:** Are you the primary writer in Knower?

**Louis:** Yeah, but right now Genevieve and I are working hard on writing lyrics and

melodies together. I've been doing a lot of the instrumental parts, but we work together closely on a lot of the parts that I've written, so she's a part of that process.

**MD:** How'd you guys form?

**Louis:** She sent me some ratty-sounding GarageBand demos. They were cool, lo-fi things that she wanted me to work on. I took them home and started writing and trying ideas.

Everyone else I've worked with before always wanted a safe-sounding track, or something that wasn't edgy. So I thought that maybe she'd want that, too. And then

# Inspiration...And Inspired Grooves

## Inspiration

### "Talking Loud and Saying Nothing" (John "Jabo" Starks)

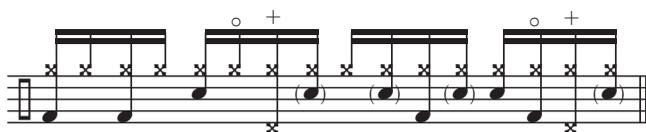
Check out this tasty groove Starks lays on James Brown's classic track off the 1972 album *There It Is*.

Swung:



### "Funky Drummer" (Clyde Stubblefield)

And here's the timeless groove Stubblefield played on the perennial James Brown groover, "Funky Drummer," from *In the Jungle Groove*.



## Inspired Grooves

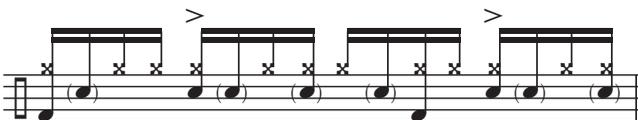
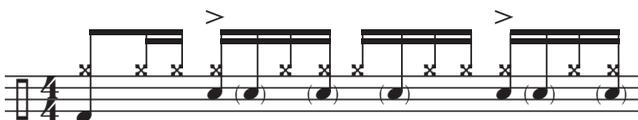
### "Overtime" (Knower)

The live-session version of this track, found on YouTube, features this killer pattern Cole plays just as the band explodes around the 0:34 mark.



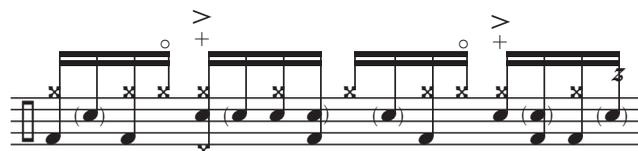
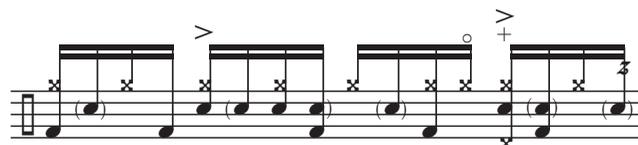
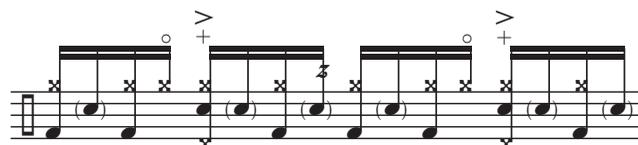
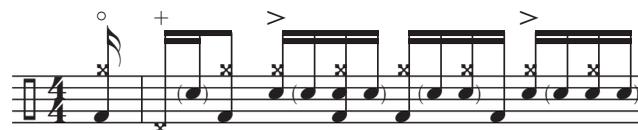
### "Bank Account" (Louis Cole)

In his video for "Bank Account," Cole plays this "Jabo" inspired groove between a cymbal resting on a floor tom and his crisp, dry snare.



### "It Gets Funkier IV" (Vulfpeck, Hill Climber)

And on his guest appearance with the modern funk darlings Vulfpeck, Cole lays down this blazing break around the 1:50 mark.



## Louis Cole

she was like, "What is this weak shit? This has to be crazy!"

After that, we decided we'd just go maximum, full-blast on everything we did. And I think we've kind of stuck to that.

**MD:** How was opening for the Red Hot Chili Peppers for six shows in Europe and Mexico?

**Louis:** Man, that was crazy. After we got into Rome, backstage in our trailer, we thought, *How the hell are we here? Why did they ask us?* About an hour before we were about to go onstage, maybe even less, someone came up to me and said that Anthony Kiedis wanted to talk to me. I went back to his trailer area, and he said, "Hey, I saw your video called 'Bank Account,' and so I wanted you to open for us." "Bank Account" is this tiny song that I released online where I'm just playing keyboard and singing about my bank account being scary. Just the thought that this little song got us an opening slot for Red Hot Chili

Peppers is really funny to me. But there were 40,000 people in some of those crowds. I think after that, no other show will be scary.

**MD:** In terms of your feel, I hear a lot of the James Brown—era drummers in Knower's material.

**Louis:** I used to practice to the "Funky Drummer" beat all the time when I was younger. I remember I used to build Legos all day and listen to James Brown constantly. And I think it just dug itself into my brain. All day, listening to James Brown on a loop, whichever album it was. I'd loop it the whole day.

I'd say probably my favorite drum beat of all time is that groove on "Talking Loud and Saying Nothing," which is John "Jabo" Starks on drums. I don't know how to describe how grooving it is. It's this four-on-the-floor funk beat. It's just this all-encompassing groove on this medium-tempo song. And it just blows my head off every time. It just surrounds you.

As far as feel goes, I definitely think those New Orleans guys that my drum teacher used to tell me to check out helped. They have a slightly swung, slightly straight vibe that feels awesome. And Jack DeJohnette has



Louis Cole typically records with a Ludwig Black Magic snare, as well as a 1969 Gretsch 18" bass drum and a set of Pearl toms (not pictured). He endorses Vic Firth drumsticks.

one of the coolest feels ever. I used to sound exactly like a bad Jack DeJohnette rip-off in high school, before I started to straighten out and work on my time. [laughs] I think once I started to write fast funk music that I thought I had to be really tight if it's fast—I mean it doesn't have to be, I just thought it sounded better like that—but I guess that's when I really started to practice metronomically perfect time. So I'd check out dudes like Nate Wood and Keith Carlock. They have insane amounts of control over the drumset, especially for this style.

**MD:** I noticed that you'll play these flurries of five or six notes on the snare or hi-hat with one hand when playing at faster tempos.

**Louis:** I'd say the first guy I got that from was Jack DeJohnette, and then Tony Williams. And Keith Carlock is a ghost-note machine. That guy is like haunted, dude. [laughs]

But I thought it was tight. You could play a bunch of notes, and it doesn't get in the way. It's still subtle and dictates where the time is. And Bernard Purdie, he's amazing at that.

**MD:** Are you mostly using a finger technique for those types of patterns?

**Louis:** I think I got better at those phrases, and then locked in with better time, when I

started just letting the stick bounce and not even trying to control it too much. But I'm still using my fingers to help those phrases stay in time.

**MD:** Are there any specific exercises you practice?

**Louis:** I mostly only practice trying to get my time better. Just time, not beats. And really, I'm trying to change my bass drum technique to make it better and less tense, and change my hi-hat technique. I'm right in the middle of this new mission of trying to get my technique looser, especially in my feet.

But in terms of my hand technique, I'll play along with a fast three- or four-minute song, and I'll try to play the entire track with straight, one-handed 16th notes without getting tense. And I'll try to do the same thing with my bass drum and try to play a bunch of notes in a row without getting tense. It's so hard, man. I haven't cracked the code. [laughs] But hopefully soon. And there was a while where I was trying to play a ton of ghost notes

with my hands and let them bounce freely while hitting my bass drum in random patterns without flammings [the two voices] at all.

I'm trying to build endurance, and I think that being loose is the key for that. If it's a studio track, I can just push through it and do it. But if it's a whole live show, I really have to try to make it through, unless my technique is perfected.

**MD:** How'd you develop your open-handed style?

**Louis:** I set up my snare wrong when I first got my bass drum. I didn't know where to put the bass drum at that point, because before that I just had a snare and the cardboard-box bass drum. At some point I put my bass drum on the wrong side—on the right side of my right leg. And I started playing like that. I think when my drum teacher first came over, he just said, "No, I don't think you should put it there." So I put the snare drum in the right spot, but I still kept my open-handed technique from then on.

## Studio Tones

**MD:** You have such a dry, unique, and almost vintage drum tone.

**Louis:** When I record, I really like using an 18" or 16" bass drum. I think it's easier to mix, and it cuts through more. And I kind of like my bass drum half-open. What I mean is, I don't put any muffling inside of it, and

## Recordings

**Knower** Louis Cole and Genevieve Artadi (2010), Think Thoughts (2011), Let Go (2013), Life (2016) /// **Louis Cole** Album 2 (2011), Time (2018)

I'll use a Remo Ambassador on both sides. But I'll completely detune the resonant head and put a big towel on that side. The batter head is tuned a lot higher, except three of the screws are completely loose. So it gives you a little bit of ring, but also enough deadness to control it in a mix.

Also, I'll put a microphone between the snare and kick drum, right near where the floor tom edge is. I got this piece-of-crap microphone from OfficeMax or Office Depot when I was eighteen. It's like one of these conference mics from Logitech that looks like a bent straw. That's all I had—it was the only microphone under twenty dollars. So I got it, and I've been rebuying those things because I realized they sound so amazing. And on a lot of the older Knower stuff, I just used one microphone. Lately I've been starting to bring more mics in, like on the last album. But I still put a microphone in that spot.

And if there's only one mic, I just put it between the kick and snare, and it has a lot to do with the sound. It makes the cymbals quieter, and it makes it really punchy, and it makes the kick drum and snare somehow have the same level of punch, so that they're not in separate worlds. They kind of sound like the same thing. So I think that setup has a lot to do with it.

When I met the guys from Vulfpeck, that's one of the things that Jack [Stratton] and I noticed the first time we hung out. I said, "I like to put my microphone there between the kick and the snare." He said, "Dude, I do that, too." [laughs] And he gets *amazing* drum sounds. So I guess that's the spot, man.

**MD:** Where do you record?

**Louis:** At home in my garage and living room. I don't like going to studios, because I just don't feel comfortable. I like being at home and by myself. Even when I've done collaborations with bigger artists, I'll be in the studio, and I'll say, "Alright, sounds great. I'm going to take this home and work on it by myself." I just like being at home next to my stuff and my windows and my kitchen.

**MD:** How has producing and mixing influenced your philosophy behind the kit?

**Louis:** Trying to get better at those two roles made me better at drums in terms of coming up with parts. When someone else is playing something, I'm able to play something that fits in the moment. It's helped me and opened my mind to thinking about drum parts and sound in a different way, or a better way for me at least.

## Onward

**MD:** What's the plan for 2019?

**Louis:** I want to get better at drums, definitely. But I think my goal is to try to write the best music I could possibly write. In 2018, I was a little stressed out. I wasn't able to write enough music because I was touring so much. But so far, I'm writing stuff that I'm really happy with. So I feel really alive right now.

In 2017 I released three really short songs. It was just this little series of three songs that were mostly around two minutes or a minute and a half. But I think I might do that kind of thing again instead of making my next full-length album or EP. I already have one of them done, and I'm working on another one.

**MD:** You recently released two videos with a big band in your living room playing your material. Are you planning on expanding on that?

**Louis:** That was just with a bunch of friends that I know from L.A. And recently I went on a tour and had a professional Swedish big band play with me, and that was really cool. I definitely want to do more stuff with that. Playing live with that amount of power onstage is so fun. It's fun to arrange my music for those groups, because it's a whole new sound and inspiration for me. So I'm definitely going to do more. I want to go bigger in the future. [laughs]



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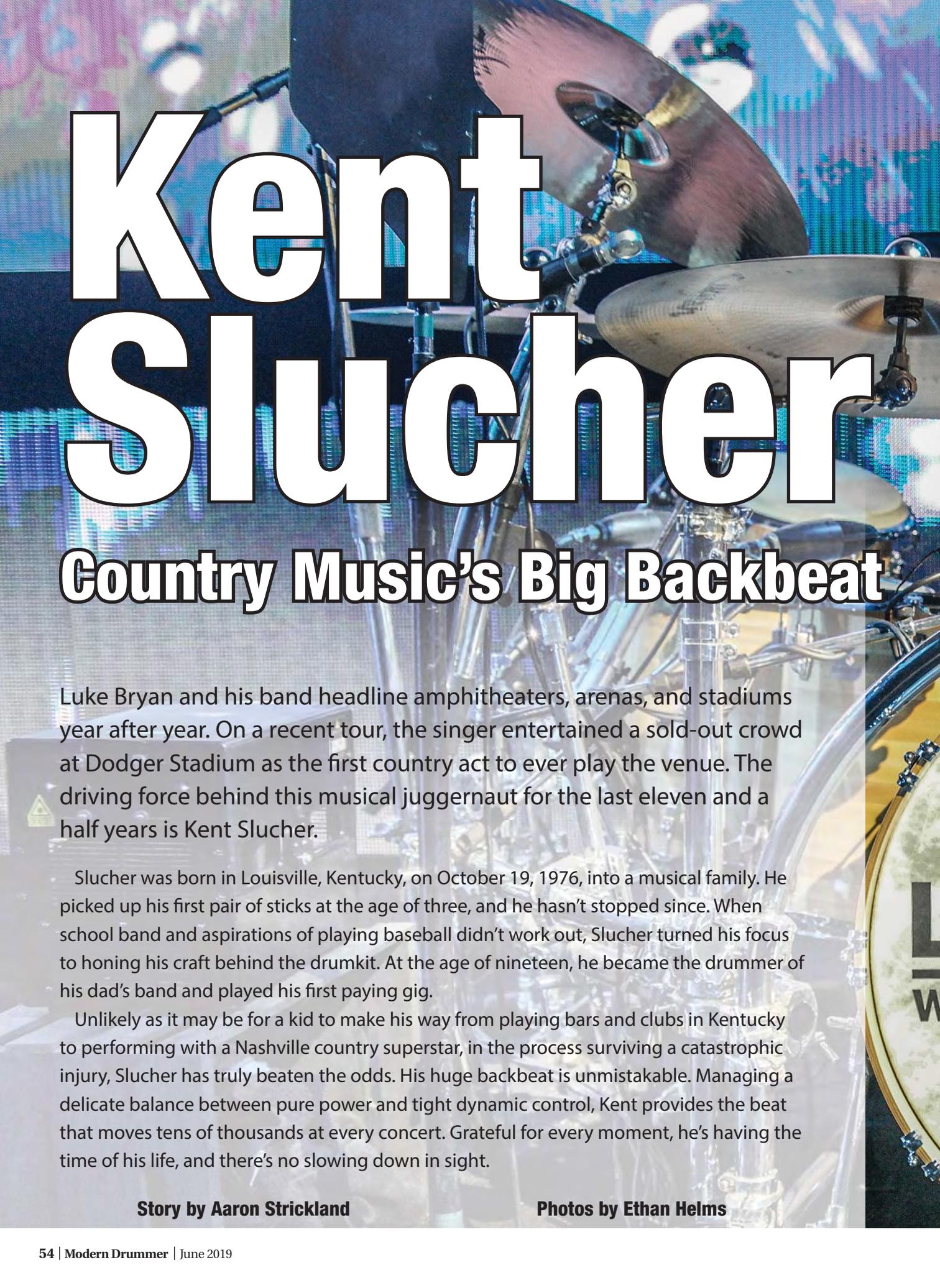
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# Kent Slucher

## Country Music's Big Backbeat

Luke Bryan and his band headline amphitheaters, arenas, and stadiums year after year. On a recent tour, the singer entertained a sold-out crowd at Dodger Stadium as the first country act to ever play the venue. The driving force behind this musical juggernaut for the last eleven and a half years is Kent Slucher.

Slucher was born in Louisville, Kentucky, on October 19, 1976, into a musical family. He picked up his first pair of sticks at the age of three, and he hasn't stopped since. When school band and aspirations of playing baseball didn't work out, Slucher turned his focus to honing his craft behind the drumkit. At the age of nineteen, he became the drummer of his dad's band and played his first paying gig.

Unlikely as it may be for a kid to make his way from playing bars and clubs in Kentucky to performing with a Nashville country superstar, in the process surviving a catastrophic injury, Slucher has truly beaten the odds. His huge backbeat is unmistakable. Managing a delicate balance between pure power and tight dynamic control, Kent provides the beat that moves tens of thousands at every concert. Grateful for every moment, he's having the time of his life, and there's no slowing down in sight.

**Story by Aaron Strickland**

**Photos by Ethan Helms**

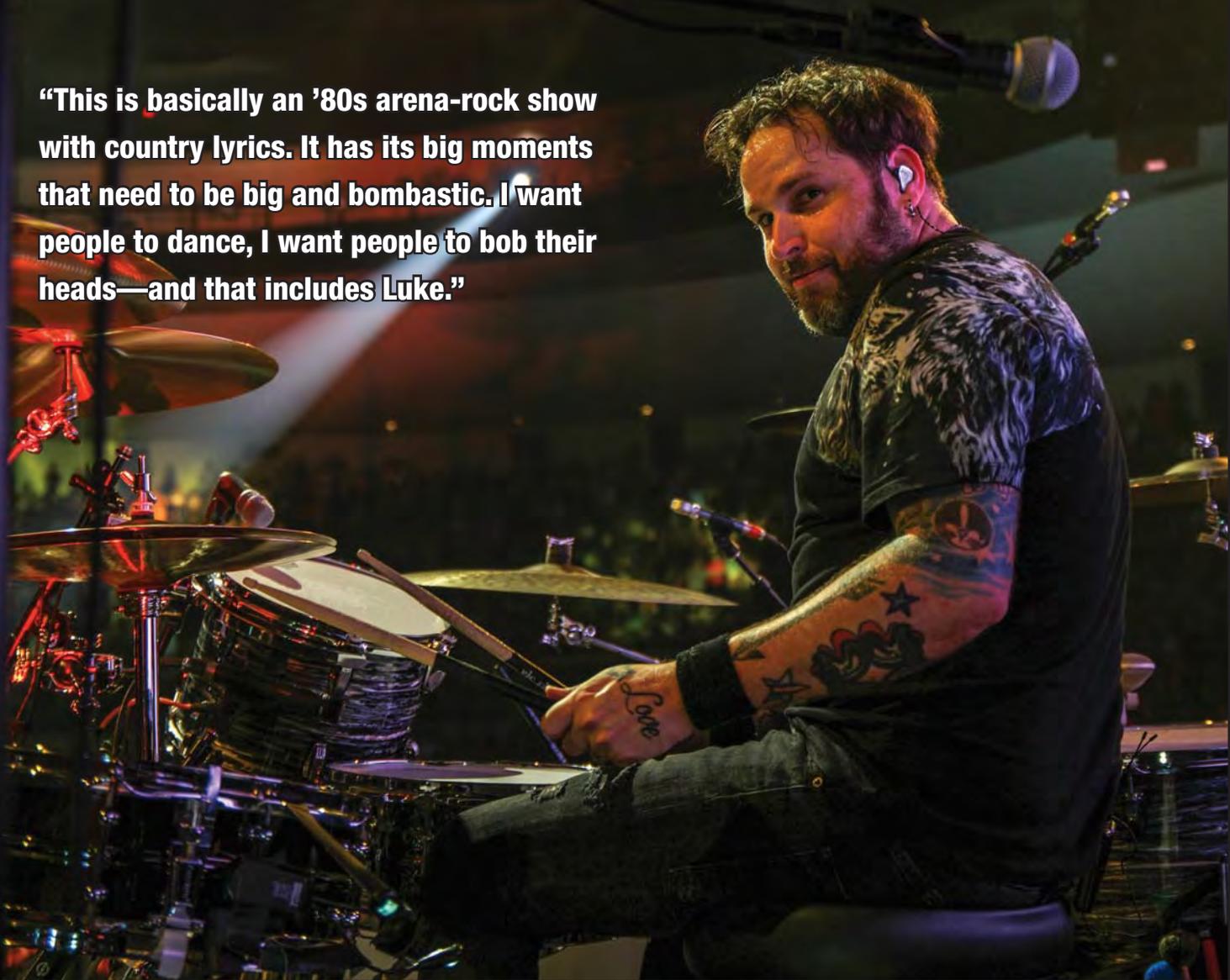


# LUKE ★ BRYAN

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## WHAT MAKES YOU COUNTRY

**“This is basically an ’80s arena-rock show with country lyrics. It has its big moments that need to be big and bombastic. I want people to dance, I want people to bob their heads—and that includes Luke.”**



**MD:** Kent, you play to sold-out crowds in amphitheaters, arenas, and stadiums night after night. Describe that experience.

**Kent:** You dream of it as a child. It's something that you've always wanted to do, something you pray for. And, lo and behold, I'm living my dream. It's still surreal every time I walk onstage. The energy that I get from the crowd and from the whole thing is pretty overwhelming. I love it as much today as I did the day I started.

**MD:** You grew up in a musical family.

**Kent:** Yes. My dad is a very accomplished guitar player and singer. My mom is a great singer. My cousin, who lived right next door to us, played bass in a rock band. My aunt and uncle sang in church. My grandfather was a great musician. He could play anything with strings on it. So it's kind of in my blood.

I took to the drums at a very early age. My dad groomed me to be the best musician I could be. I think he kind of knew something that I didn't at the time. Maybe he knew that I had the goods and the drive to become a road musician. He encouraged me. He

bought my first metronome, and he said that if I was going to play in Nashville, I'd need it. He told me I'd need to work on my time. I was kind of offended, as most young players would be. But it's the best thing that happened to me, because 95 percent of what you're seeing and hearing today is played with a click or tracks. So, like I said, maybe he knew something that I didn't at the time.

When I graduated high school, I had dreams of becoming a baseball player. After that didn't work out, my dad's drummer of many years retired. Dad asked me to be his drummer. Rather, he pretty much told me, "You're playing the drums in the band." He called me up and said, "We need to go buy you a drumset." I financed one through the local music store there, and I started playing Top-40 music with my dad. I was probably nineteen at the time. That led me to where we're sitting right now, on this bus.

**MD:** What would you consider to be your first "big break"?

**Kent:** My first big break was with an artist

named Anthony Smith. He's an amazing singer/songwriter. I was working at a music store at the time.

A local DJ in Kentucky, a gentleman named Karl Shannon, used to come and watch me play at this club. I was with a different band at the time. Karl went to CRS (Country Radio Seminar), which is held in Nashville, and he saw Anthony and thought he was going to be really great. Karl gave my name to Anthony, saying, "There's this kid in Kentucky who's really hungry. He wants to get on the road, and I think he could pull it off."

So I owe a lot to Karl Shannon for doing that. I owe even more to Anthony for taking a chance on some drummer kid from Kentucky who nobody in Nashville had ever heard of. He tells me now that he just had this feeling in his stomach to give me a try. I went to Nashville and tried out for him.

Later that night after the rehearsals/audition, I was playing his record release party with some of the best musicians in Nashville. It gave me confidence to know

that I could play with these guys. I was still very green, but I knew that I had the ability to do it. I just kind of had to refine it. And I got hired to play with Anthony. So the reason I'm sitting here, besides my father and my mom, is because of Karl Shannon and Anthony Smith.

**MD:** After Anthony, you were with country legend Pam Tillis for five years, and that led to Luke Bryan. How did that happen?

**Kent:** Word of mouth. The bass player that I played with in Anthony Smith's band dropped my name to the bandleader, management, and Luke. They were going to make a change at the drum position, and the bass player called me and asked

if I'd be interested in playing with a new artist named Luke Bryan. I said "absolutely," because we had to take about a year off with Pam. I went and auditioned, hung out, and jammed, and here we are. It came in right when I needed it most, mentally and physically. The timing was great on this gig.

**MD:** Since you don't record with Luke, describe the process of adapting the recording to the live setting.

**Kent:** I do my own thing and make it mine. Obviously live it's gonna be more powerful and just bigger. I play pretty aggressively on this gig. Backbeat-wise I play pretty hard. But if there's a signature drum part, like the fill in the song "Light It Up," I try to keep close

to what Greg [Morrow] did. He really went out on that one. It's a tricky drum fill. It was the first time in a while when I had to sit down and dissect a drum fill and try to do it correctly, while at the same time making it my own. How would I have played that lick if I had been in there?

So if it's a signature drum part, I keep it true to what it is. Obviously, over time the songs morph into something different live. We kind of do our own thing to it—segue-wise or ending-wise, it's going to be different. We try to change it up from tour to tour and make it fresh as far as intros and outros go.

Luke definitely lets me be me, which is



## Slucher's Setup

**Drums:** Ludwig Classic Maple In Butcher Block finish

- A.** 6.5x14 Black Beauty snare
- B.** 6.5x14 Supralite Steel snare
- C.** 9x13 tom
- D.** 14x16 floor tom
- E.** 16x18 floor tom
- F.** 12" LP djembe
- G.** 14x24 bass drum
- H.** Roland Octapad

**Cymbals:** Zildjian

- 1.** 17" A Mastersound hi-hats
- 2.** 20" A Medium Thin cash
- 3.** 20" A Medium Thin crash
- 4.** 24" A Medium ride (custom tattoo logo by Chris Achzet)
- 5.** 21" K Custom crash-ride
- 6.** 20" K Dark Thin crash

**Heads:** Remo, including Emperor X snare batter and Ambassador Hazy snare side, Emperor Coated tom batters and Ambassador Clear resonants, and Powerstroke P3 Coated bass drum batter and Custom Graphic front (Woodshed Stage Art)

**Sticks:** Vic Firth Custom 5B black sticks, Adam Argullin mallets

**Accessories:** Clear Tune in-ear monitors, Tama Rhythm Watch metronome, Cympad cymbal washers, Drumtacs, QwikStix stick and beverage holders, Big Fat Snare Drum dampeners, Danmar beaters, Gator cases, Kelly SHU mic mounts, Rockwell Time wristwatches

**Hardware:** Gibraltar Rack with custom bar by Chris Achzet, Gretsch G3 legless hi-hat stand and G3 double bass drum pedal, Carmichael throne

## Kent Slucher

great. But like I said, I want to do it justice like the record. The songs were written or tracked like that for a reason. So if it was good enough to get by the producers and go to final mixing and mastering like that, then there's a reason for that, and I should play it as close as possible.

**MD:** Do you play with a click?

**Kent:** Yes, we play to a click, loops, and tracks. So there'll be a shaker, a tambourine, strings, or something like that going on. Obviously we don't have an orchestra behind us, so that stuff will be on tracks. It's also automated to the lights and the video, so it's all time-coded with all of that stuff.

The click is generated through Ableton. We have two Apple computers—two iMacs, so if one goes down we have a B-rig. It's nice to have a backup, because you never know. The click is triggered from a Roland Octapad. We've got about four banks full of stuff that we can scroll through and pull out at any time. It's ever-changing, but once we get the tour up and rolling, it's usually the same every night because of the size of the production.

**MD:** Has the perception of country drummers changed?

**Kent:** I think it's changed, because people take Nashville drummers more seriously



now. I think they know that there are some amazing players in Nashville that have been long overlooked. There's Pat McDonald. You're not going to find a much better player than Pat McDonald. There's Kevin Murphy, Jim Riley, Keio Stroud, Seth Rausch, Hubert Payne—I could list drummers for a full day. Those are guys that I respect. I think we're taken more seriously, and people know that

we're not just country drummers.

**MD:** Your tech, Tony Adams, says that one thing that sets you apart from other drummers is your powerhouse style of playing. Describe this energy.

**Kent:** I think a lot of the energy comes from the venue size. I want Luke to feel where 2 and 4 are at. Because at a lot of these venues, like stadiums, he's fifty yards out from where

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## Kent Slucher

we're at. I want the band to be comfortable with the pocket and to know without question where the beat is. So I play pretty aggressively on the snare and the kick.

My backbeats are pretty strong on this gig, because I want them to have no question where the time is. Obviously I play to the room. If we play a smaller venue, I'm not going to play as loud. I rimshot everything, so that gives the illusion that I'm playing a lot louder than I am. With the Pam gig it was a much more dynamic thing. But this gig is basically an '80s arena-rock show

with country lyrics. It has its big moments that need to be big and bombastic. There are lasers, fire, and a lot of lights. And I think the style of playing that I bring to this gig fits what Luke's doing right now. I want people to dance; I want people to bob their heads—and that includes Luke. I want him to feel comfortable. That's what I try to bring to the table every night. I think what sets me apart more than anything is my heart—my love for what I do after going through what I went through medically. I loved it before, but I really love it now.

**MD:** So, you're referring to seven years ago, when you suffered an accident onstage during a tour-prep day. What happened?

**Kent:** Without getting into too much detail, I'll put it like this: it's something that we, as drummers, have thought about and feared. Well, it actually happened to me. I suffered a freak accident at rehearsals behind my kit. It was a catastrophic event that was just a split second in time. I had to have emergency surgery. Later, I became septic and almost died. It caused a lot of problems, but I came out on top. Needless to say, it really changed my outlook on life.

**MD:** How so?

**Kent:** Just in general. You should never take life for granted. Life is precious. It makes me appreciate each day differently, because I know for a fact how quickly it can change. You can go from laughing, smiling, and cutting up with your buddies to being in an emergency room within minutes. It makes me love people. I'm a people person anyway, but I try to stop and smell the roses. And after the injury, I didn't even know if I could have kids. Now I have two beautiful children. So, that makes me appreciate the smaller things in life. Life is good.

**MD:** You and the bass player from Luke's band, James Cook, also conduct clinics. What kind of material do you cover in those?

**Kent:** A lot of what we cover is attitude, how to play a song, how to play with a click, how to play with other musicians, how to get along with people, and how to play with loops. We talk about our gear and things like our day-to-day process. When we take questions, we get things from what do we eat for breakfast to how do you hold onto a gig. We try to make our clinics to where you can take what you learned and apply it anywhere from the local V.F.W. or church to Madison Square Garden. It's all-encompassing. It covers any gig that you're doing. It's our way of giving back to the local musicians in that area.

**MD:** Any parting advice?

**Kent:** Play each gig, no matter where you're playing, as if somebody's watching you, because you never know who's out there in that audience. It could be a producer, manager, or artist. It could be the next big thing, so don't mail it in. Play as if it's the last time you're going to play a gig. Go out there and own it, no matter where you're playing. In my case, that's how it happened. Never say never. Follow your dream. Put in the work, put in the time, have a good attitude, and just do the best you can. Attitude is gratitude.

*"All the power,  
half the pain."*

*Kent Slucher*

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# Kent Slucher Live

Digging into some of the country and rock



# With Luke Bryan

## powerhouse's grooves and approaches.

**MD:** There are two great fills you play at the end of the guitar solo in "Light It Up." You mentioned that you really sit down and dissect Greg Morrow's parts to make sure you get them right. Take us through that process. Did you slow this section down, call Greg for sticking tips....?

**Kent:** We usually get a rough setlist idea before rehearsals for the tour start. I'll sit down with it and mentally go through the songs if it's stuff we've done on past tours. But if it's a new album cycle, we get new material to learn. In the case of "Light It Up," I listened to the song several times. That drum fill came around, and I was like, "Whoa! Back that up!" I can typically learn the tune by listening several times, but that one was tricky. I actually texted Luke's producer and asked him if he could send me Greg's isolated drum tracks, which he was kind enough to do. One of the first times we were going to play that song was on an award show, so I didn't want to mess it up in front of millions of viewers.

**MD:** You said it was tricky. How so?

**Kent:** The trickiest part of that fill is trying not to rush it and laying it back to make it feel right. The space between your hands and foot on that one means everything. I'd spend time in my drum room with a click playing that fill over and over, because it's easy during the live show with the adrenaline pumping to rush it. So that's what I'm most conscious of.

Check out Slucher's first tasteful, syncopated tom fill around 2:29 in "Light It Up."

R L R L R R R L R

And here's a nasty lick coming out of the guitar solo that Slucher plays live around the 2:36 mark. Dig into the alternating combinations between the snare, toms, and bass drum, which are reminiscent of a classic Buddy Rich or Tony Williams lick.

R L R L R L R L R R R B R R

**MD:** Do you have any preferred warm-up routines?

**Kent:** The two main things I do to warm up nowadays are getting mentally prepared and stretching. I don't want to spend too much time right before the show on a pad or anything. I like it to feel nice

and fresh when I sit behind the kit for the show. During the day, if we don't soundcheck I'll sit behind the kit and play a little bit. Or I practice on my pad during the day, but not before the show. Lots of stretching, though. My body doesn't recover as quickly as it used to after three or four shows in a row.

**MD:** Your live playing exhibits great dynamic control. Could you explain how you're able to do that in arena or stadium settings?

**Kent:** On this gig it goes from loud to louder. But honestly, I try to be conscious of lifting the energy from verse to chorus in each song. So even though I'm playing hard during the verses, I leave room to lift the energy during the choruses. Now, on a song like "Strip It Down," which is nothing but sidestick, I'm laying back considerably. On the original recording it's just a drum loop, so to give it more energy live I'm basically mimicking the drum loop with the live kit.

Here's the laid-back, 16th-note groove Slucher plays live throughout "Strip It Down."

Open H.H. every 4x: (o o)

**MD:** Could you explain the pattern that you play during the third verse/bridge of "Country Girl (Shake It for Me)"?

**Kent:** When I listened to the original version of that song, I tried to get it as close as I could to what Greg played while making it my own. I'm basically playing a cadence-type pattern on the floor tom, and on beat 4 I hit the snare. But I'm also keeping the floor tom groove going at the same time. And I keep the quarter-note pulse going on the kick.

Check out the opening floor tom pattern Slucher plays during the bridge.

About halfway through this section, the drummer adds a snare accent on beat 4 while maintaining the previous rhythm.

R L R L R L R L R R R B R R

Interview by Aaron Strickland

Transcriptions by Willie Rose





# Eights and Sixes

## Part 3: Sextuplet Groupings and the “Pu-Du-Du”

by Bill Bachman

**This month we’re going to modify** our eights and sixes exercise with some “pu-du-du” stickings and paradiddle-diddle variations. A pu-du-du is onomatopoeia for a RLL sticking with the accent on the lead hand, and the paradiddle-diddle is found in the Percussive Arts Society’s list of forty standard rudiments. As always, when practicing the exercises in this series it’s imperative to set your metronome to an 8th-note subdivision, tap your foot, and count straight 8th notes out loud throughout all of the examples.

First we’ll play pu-du-dus within sextuplets. All of the 8th notes in both parts of the exercise should be played as high and loose rebounding free strokes, and be sure not to change the motion of the leading hands as you transition from measure to measure. The diddles should be played low and light using finger control with what I call a “drop/catch” or low “alley-ooop” motion. With these techniques, you should utilize a wrist stroke on the first beat of the diddle while the fingers catch the stick on the second. Pulling the stick into the palm on the second stroke adds velocity so that it can match the first stroke. At faster tempos, the wrist can get stressed out playing doubles, so relieve it by pumping the forearm to attack the middle on the second partial of the triplet. Whether the diddle is initiated with the wrist, the arm, or a combination of the two, be sure to maintain finger use and play the second note of each diddle low and light. You want to maximize contrast between the diddles and accents.

1

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

Next we’ll invert the pu-du-du into a “du-du-pu,” or RRL sticking. We want to maintain an accent on the first beat of the double stroke, but at most tempos there’s not enough time to play a strict downstroke on the first beat of the double before the following low tap. We’ll instead use what I call the “no-chop flop-and-drop” technique so that some of the energy from the accent will flow into the following tap in a natural decrescendo. Your fingers can help steer the rhythm, but don’t use your fingers in a way that would support or add velocity to the following tap. At faster tempos, the forearm’s pumping motion should be used on the doubles in order to relieve the wrist.

2

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

Next we’ll check out another variation, the “du-pu-du,” in which the lead hand plays a shuffle pattern. The previous inversions have only one accent, but for this sticking it’ll be more practical to have two so that we can smoothly shuffle through it. Be sure to use the alley-ooop wrist and finger motion on the diddles, in which the first beat is a higher and lighter stroke played mainly from the wrist, and the second is a lower, faster stroke played mainly by the fingers. Don’t just bounce these double strokes or play them tightly. As you count an 8th-note subdivision out loud, make sure that the second beat of each diddle that falls on the offbeat 8th notes is played as strongly as the first. The hand that plays the middle triplet partial should stay low and light.

3

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

In these next exercises we’re going to modify the 8th-note subdivision with different components of the paradiddle-diddle. The first sextuplet of each phrase will start with a paradiddle-diddle, followed by a series of diddles throughout the rest of the sextuplets. The extended low diddles should all be played low and light with the drop/catch approach, just like the low diddles in the pu-du-dus earlier. The 8th notes will be played with a modified triplet rhythm, with an accent followed by a low diddle, and we’ll vary this 8th-note figure as well.

When playing these rhythms at slow to medium tempos up to about 120 bpm, strive to play strict and concise downstrokes with clearly defined stick heights. Think about the downstrokes pointing down toward the drumhead at a 10-degree angle and the low diddle coming up to about parallel to the drum or pad. Also make sure that there’s complete separation between the downstroke and the following low diddle. Utilizing an American grip with the hand at a 45-degree

angle and the thumb on the topside of the stick is the most effective approach for concise downstrokes. In this position, not only can you squeeze the back end of the stick into the palm, but you can also hold the front of the stick down with the thumb. By using both the palm of the hand in the back of the hand and the thumb in the front, you have twice as many ways to stop the stick faster so that you can play lower and looser.

At faster tempos in which there's less time to control the stick, stop the stick less. Now some of the accent's energy will flow smoothly into the following diddle with the no-chop flop-and-drop technique. There's less impact on the accents since they have to flow into the taps. Strive to maintain decent stick height on the accents, but don't play them too loudly.

The no-chop flop-and-drop technique should also be developed at slow tempos—it as well as the strictly separated downstroke with clearly defined heights are beneficial and can be utilized in many musical settings.

4

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

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

5

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

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

6

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

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

7

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

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

**Bill Bachman** is an international drum clinician, the author of *Stick Technique* and *Rhythm & Chops Builders* (Modern Drummer publications), and the founder of [drumworkout.com](http://drumworkout.com). For more information, including how to sign up for online lessons, visit [billbachman.net](http://billbachman.net).



# Moving Around the Kit

## Utilizing Clockwise and Counterclockwise Motions in Fills

by Jost Nickel

In this workshop, we'll explore moving fills around the kit easily in two directions: clockwise and counterclockwise. Most right-handed drummers orchestrate fills in a clockwise direction. For example, they may start a fill on the snare, move it around the rack and floor tom, and end with a crash cymbal. In other words, it moves in a clockwise direction around the kit in a typical right-handed setup. Fills that move in a counterclockwise direction are relatively rare in typical musical settings.

Before exploring counterclockwise motion further, let's first take a look at a fill in a clockwise direction, which serves as the basis for the examples in this lesson. All fills in this workshop utilize a 16th-note-triplet subdivision, and the stickings will always alternate.

1

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

Now play the same figure in a counterclockwise direction without changing the sticking. To play the fill quickly, play an odd number of beats on the deepest tom. For example, play the first 16th-note-triplet partial on the deepest tom using your right hand, and then lead with the left hand as you make the motion to the rack tom, as demonstrated in Exercise 2.

2

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

The odd number of tom beats at the beginning of the fill will prevent your hands from getting mixed up with each other. Alternate playing this fill and the original figure as notated in Exercise 3.

3

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

For another variation, start with three 16th-note-triplet partials on your deepest tom, and then lead with the left hand in a counterclockwise motion around the kit.

4

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

This next example demonstrates a combination of Exercises 1 and 4. Play the first part of the fill in a clockwise motion just as you did in Exercise 1, and then reverse the fill in a counterclockwise direction around the kit.

5

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

Next we'll change the phrasing of the previous figures to create some interesting variations. Instead of playing quarter notes on beats 2 and 4, play 8th notes at the end of the seven-note phrases. Play clockwise around the kit on the quarter-note pulses, and utilize a counterclockwise orchestration when the fill starts on an offbeat. The counterclockwise orchestration starts with one stroke on the deepest tom just like in Exercise 2. Continue to utilize a single-stroke sticking.

6

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

7

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

Now let's add the bass drum. Fill each gap between the clockwise and counterclockwise phrases with two notes on the bass drum while keeping the hands' sticking the same.

8

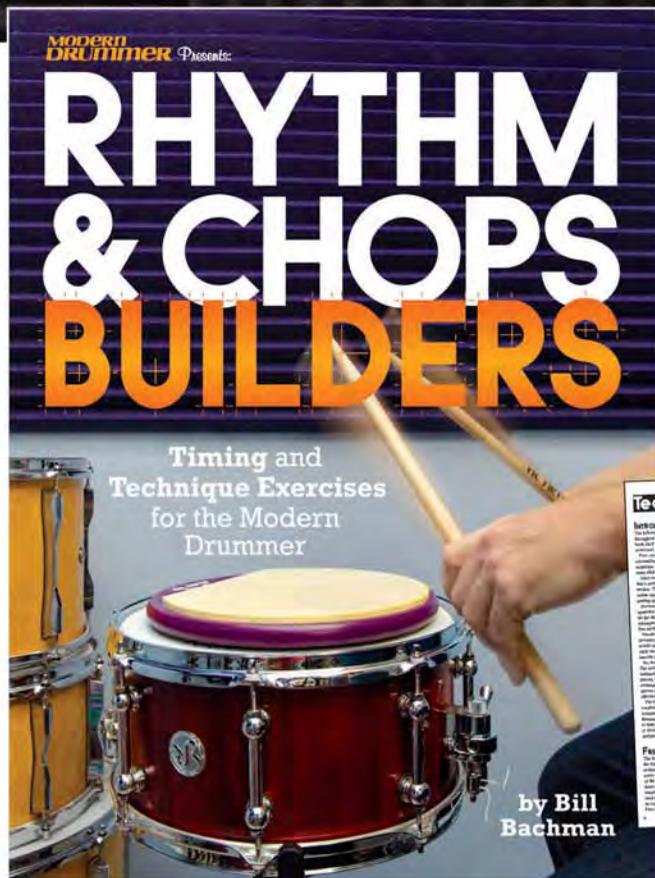
R L R L R L R R L R L R L R

For a video demonstration of Exercise 7 played at different tempos, head to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com). And if you're interested in more ideas on fills in general, check out my latest instructional method, *Jost Nickel's Fill Book*.

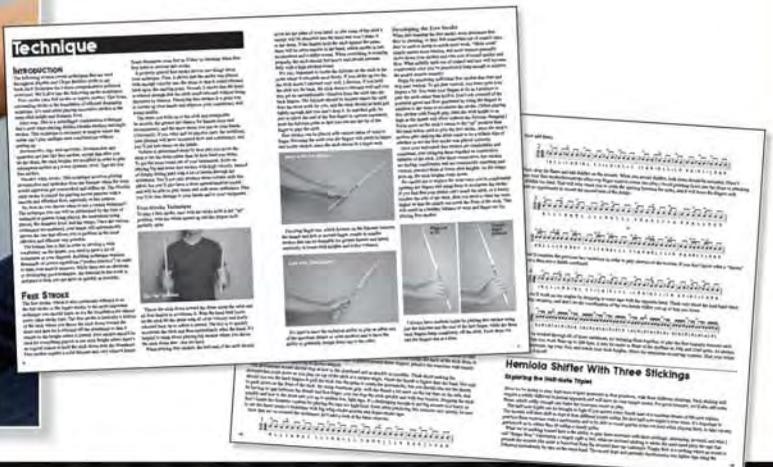


**Jost Nickel** is a top session and touring drummer in Germany, as well as an international clinician and author who endorses Sonor, Meinl, Remo, Vic Firth, and Beyerdynamic products. For more information, visit [jostnickel.com](http://jostnickel.com).

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# Glitched Beats

## Diving Deep into Displacements

by Aaron Edgar



**Most of us seem to be listening** to music digitally these days almost exclusively. And while streaming means never having to deal with a skipping record or CD anymore, those skips and glitches can provide a fun rhythmic effect to try to replicate on the drumset. There are several ways you can approach this challenge. In this lesson we're going to explore restarting our beats somewhere other than beat 1 within our pattern to simulate an unnatural skip in each example's rhythmic phrasing.

We can start exploring this idea with a simple beat that's based mostly in 8th notes, as demonstrated in **Exercise 1**, and then build upon it. Practice this groove until it's funky and comfortable to execute.

Once you have that source groove comfortable, let's create our first glitched beat. To do this we're going to restart our groove on the "a" of beat 3, where we previously played the first pattern's fourth bass drum note (**Exercise 2**). Because our beat starts over in the middle of the bar, the hi-hats are going to cut back to match the kick, and we'll continue through the displaced pattern until the end of the 4/4 bar. A small arrow pointing to the "a" of beat 3 marks the restart.

If you're having trouble feeling this pattern smoothly, try playing straight 8th notes on the hi-hats first to internalize how the offbeat kick and snare drum pattern feels. Then, snap the hats back to the glitched version that's notated in Exercise 2.

In **Exercise 3**, we'll ramp up the displaced skips by restarting our beat multiple times within one measure. First we'll restart it on the "a" of beat 2, and then again on beat 4 and the "e" of 4.

Another way we can increase the glitched feel is by adjusting the time signature after displacing the original pattern. Let's take one more look at our first source groove. Restart the phrase on the "e" of beat 2 and the "&" of beat 4, and chop off the final 16th of the measure to create a bar of 15/16, as notated in **Exercise 4**. This idea is especially effective if you use it sparingly.

Cutting or adding a 16th note to any bar will add to the glitchy character of these patterns. However, for the rest of the exercises in this lesson, we'll stick to a 4/4 time signature. If you're inspired, try adjusting the time signatures on any of these beats to create your own glitches.

Now let's start with a new source groove. When we begin with a busier or more varied note placement in our original beat and apply this concept, it can start to sound less like a typical displaced pattern. Also, we can make sure that the restart points are clear by marking them with an open hi-hat or splash cymbal. Try the next examples with and without the open hi-hat to see how the feel changes. **Exercise 5** demonstrates our new source groove, and in **Exercise 6** we restart the pattern on the "e" of beat 3.

Things start to get interesting when we incorporate different subdivisions within this concept. Before we start to get crazy, let's set up the feel we're going to be playing by using only a 16th-note subdivision. **Exercises 7 and 8** demonstrate the new source beat

and a glitched variation that restarts on the "e" of beat 2 and the "&" of beat 3. Feel free to quickly bark open the hi-hats on each restart point as a variation.

Once those two previous examples are comfortable, replace the ghosted 16th note on the "e" of beat 1 with two 16th-note-triplet partials, as notated in **Exercises 9 and 10**. Also, alternate between Exercises 8 and 10 to make sure the only things that sound different are those two ghost notes—the hi-hat and kick and snare accents should all remain consistent when you're transitioning between the two exercises.

Next let's apply different restart points to our new 16th and 16th-note-triplet source grooves. This time we'll restart our grooves on the "e" of beat 2 and the "a" of beat 3. First check out the 16th-note variation notated in **Exercise 11**.

Next, utilize the same restart points within our 16th-note-triplet variation to displace beat 4 by a single 32nd-note-triplet partial. So far everything has been notated within standard quarter-note groupings so that it's easy to visualize the pulses of each bar.

**Exercises 12 and 13** demonstrate the same pattern, only notated differently. In Exercise 12, beat 4 is marked with a dotted line. Thinking about it in this way can make it difficult to execute and may result in the groove feeling stiff. However, in Exercise 13 the notation is grouped according to each restart point (groupings of five 16th notes, three 8th notes, and another five 16th notes). This latter notation can look cleaner and might be a better way to think about the grooves when you're playing them.

Once you've got the hang of these patterns, alternate between Exercises 11 and 12/13 to ensure that the hi-hat and bass drum and snare accents all feel identical, whether you're playing the original ghost notes as 16th notes or as two 16th-note-triplet partials.

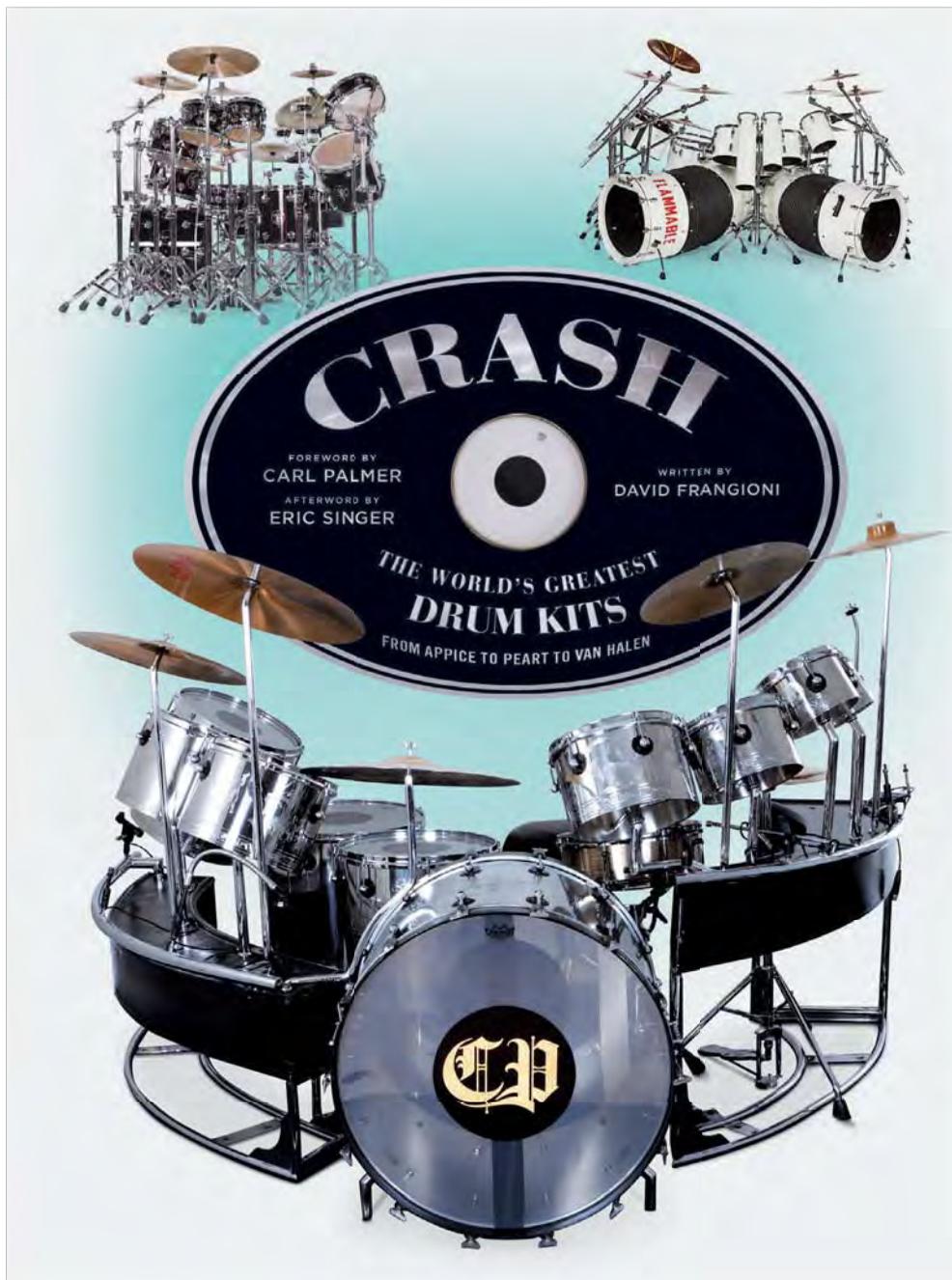
In **Exercise 14** we'll try another example in which our triplet ghost notes obscure one of the quarter notes—this time on beat 3 with the skip occurring on the "a" of beat 2.

**Exercises 15 and 16** add one more restart to Exercise 14, this time on the "e" of beat 4. Spend time internalizing Exercise 14 before moving on—you'll want to make sure the hi-hat pattern still feels like it's playing consistent 8th and 16th notes, even with the triplet ghost notes interspersed. The single 16ths at the very end of Exercises 15 and 16 can also be tricky to execute cleanly. You don't want the final notes sliding into each other on repeat, and the glitchy feeling will be lost if that rhythm isn't tight.

Beat glitching can be interesting when used as groove-based drum fills if your bandmates are aware that they're coming and can handle the feel. But this concept is even cooler from a compositional standpoint, and using these ideas within your band's overall writing process can yield exceptionally hip results. I used to jokingly say to my friends when we were listening to music and the CD skipped, "Man, this band is *tight!*" Hopefully the material here has inspired you to explore employing the glitch effect musically in your own collaborations.

Rock Perspectives continues on page 70

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# Rock Perspectives

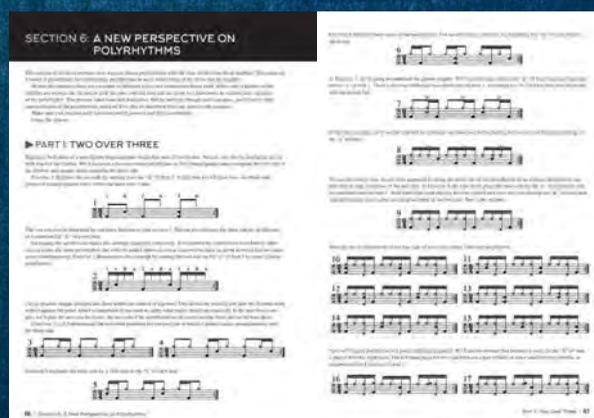
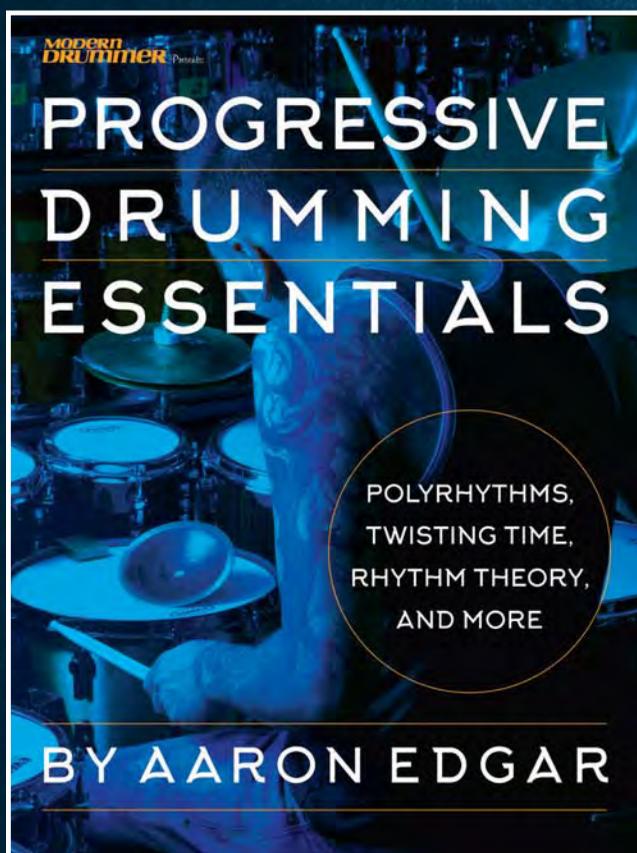
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

Beat 4

**Aaron Edgar** plays with the Canadian prog-metal band Third Ion and is a session drummer, clinician, and author. His latest book, *Progressive Drumming Essentials*, is available through Modern Drummer Publications.



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[dwdrums.com](http://dwdrums.com)



## Aquarian Ice White Reflector Series

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

## Gon Bops Fiesta Djembes

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[gonbops.com](http://gonbops.com)



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



## Pearl Primero Guiro Cowbell

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

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[cympad.com](http://cympad.com)



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[loscabosdrumsticks.com](http://loscabosdrumsticks.com)

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



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[lpmusic.com](http://lpmusic.com)

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[trxcymbals.com](http://trxcymbals.com)





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# CRITIQUE

## RECORDINGS Taking the Reins

### Mark Heaney *Drumscapes Vol. 1*

**The English drummer and composer, best known for his stint with Gang of Four, returns with a beautiful album of drum-centered music. We checked out the album—and took advantage of an opportunity to ask Mark about what went into it.**

Though Mark Heaney has considerable chops and can make elaborate beats with the best of them, the music on *Drumscapes Vol. 1* is decidedly less about flash and more a collection of hypnotic mood pieces. “The word ‘hypnotic’ sums it up perfectly,” Heaney recently told *Modern Drummer*. “I’m a big fan of drum grooves that repeat and just sit. I remember hearing Can’s ‘Halleluwah,’ which is a perfect example of that kind of thing. The drums just sit perfectly on that groove—the sound of them, just beautiful and so cool. I wanted to play the beats live and avoid any cut-and-paste. Each bar is slightly different sonically, so you can still hear that human element in there.”

The record features Heaney’s live drums, as he puts it, “against a backdrop of intricate soundscapes fusing music from jazz, trip-hop, drum ‘n’ bass, electronica, and other styles,” so rhythm lovers rejoice, because there’s much to dig into here. And while many before Heaney have set out to avoid a look-at-me technical display statement, few have succeeded in creating such a satisfying listen. There are funky, Stubblefield-esque chill-out numbers (“Sacrifice”), slow snare ruffs and hats patterns (“Light in the Darkness”), and ghost-note laden 6/4 head boppers (“Awakening”). The tracks are at once almost lo-fi hazy and well recorded, with ambient synth pads or electric piano used as beds for Heaney’s invention.

One can either transcribe the stickings found across the album, in drum geek fashion, or simply leave it on in the background as cool ambience. “It took me a long time to find sonically exactly what I

**“I wanted the drums to sound raw and dirty, and I was aware not to overproduce it, as it would have killed the essence of it.”**

was looking for,” says Heaney, describing the process of putting the album together. “I have a huge archive of samples and loops I’ve recorded over the years, so it was great to dig out some of that stuff and bring it to life. I wanted the drums to sound raw and dirty, and I was aware not to overproduce it, as it would have killed the essence of it. Once the album was out, I started work on how to perform the tracks live, which is the priority. Live, I’m using Ableton with either an Akai MPD32 or LPD8 controller to manipulate the audio, which gives me a bit more freedom. I can add delays or filters and not be stuck to just playing to a backing track. This year will see a *Drumscapes Vol. 2* album, and then it’s all about building the project and playing live as much as possible.”

When asked whether he came up with the music first or if he catered his compositions to the beats, Heaney replies, “A bit of both,



really. A lot of the time the drums dictate what the track will be, not just rhythmically but melodically. I would go into a room, record drums, come back, cut them up, and find interesting beats and patterns and build from there. Other times I would have an ambient pad or loop, and that would inspire a track. With the drums, I wanted to create very repetitive, trance-like patterns and then embellish on top of that. The music I make comes from emotion, life, etc. I had no interest in trying to make a clever drum album. That sort of stuff leaves me cold. It had to have heart and tell a story.”

Sonically, Heaney’s kit is tuned relatively high. The drum sound is not entirely the same from track to track, and the record’s scintillating production is one of its very best features. But the jazzy, tight drum tones create a lovely vibe, allowing Heaney’s patterns to cut through all the “noise.” And you don’t need a big kit for big sounds or big ideas. “I wanted the kit to sit alongside the loops on the tracks,” says Heaney. “I come from a jazz background, so generally I prefer my drums tuned higher. Also, I can get more sounds, tones, and melodies out of my drums if they’re tuned that way. It’s all about the touch on the kit. It was the same kit for all the tracks, but a different approach in the mix. I’m also trying to keep my kit as minimal as possible for the live shows. I much prefer playing a smaller setup in terms of musicality and creativity.”

And what’s the secret to getting that grimy sound? “I record my drums in Logic completely clean,” Heaney explains. “I then bounce them down into Reason, as it’s quick and intuitive. I work very fast and need to be able to access things instantly. I used a great plugin called a Pulveriser that’s fantastic for dirty drums. None of it can replace vintage analogue outboard gear, but that’s expensive and time-consuming. I also like to work alone. I would feel pressured and conscious in a studio with others, and I have to have total control over what I am doing. It’s a very personal thing.”

If too much textural stuff leaves you wanting to hear just a smidge of Heaney blazing, your wish is granted with a couple of almost traditional drum spots, “Reinstate” and “3am.” Were these blowing affairs an attempt to break up the grooving nature of the album with some free solos? “No, I didn’t think, *Okay, there’s a lot of grooves on here so I had better put in some chops for the drummers,*” says Heaney. “The solo tracks are more about a flow of expression, emotion, aggression, as opposed to a show of technical ability, and they work well alongside the other tracks. To approach a drumkit from a nonmusical point of view turns it into a piece of sports apparatus, and that’s something I have zero interest in. I studied and practiced those mechanical technique things to be able to say what I wanted to on the drums and still be able to play those patterns and beats as easily as possible. But for me the focus is and always should be on the emotion, flow, energy, and sound. Music should come from the heart and should be a reflection of life and all that that brings with it.” **Ilya Stemkovsky**

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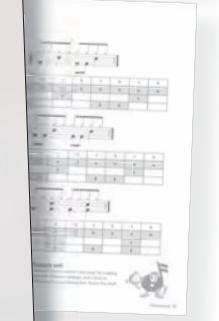
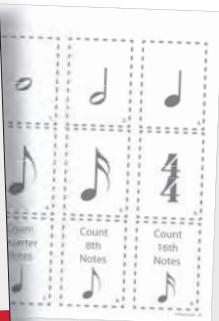
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## Critique

### Dream Theater *Distance over Time*

MIKE MANGINI and DT return with more notes for the willing.

Dream Theater have their “thing” down to a science three decades into a long and illustrious career, and while fans argue over which era is best, the prog-metal veterans keep trucking along. Now four records into his stint, Mike Mangini anchors the tunes with all the over-the-top fills and patterns he and the band are known for, this time with the added benefit of everyone having lived together and recorded in an upstate New York barn. That old-school vibe got the band members close and the music tight, with Mangini breaking up a 32nd-note snare roll between his kicks and splashes on “Fall into the Light” and accenting his ride bell on the snakey riff intro in “Barstool Warrior.” There’s also some weighty thunder toms in the verses of “Room 137” and incredible unison work between the drums and guitars in the instrumental section of “Pale Blue Dot” that’s classic Dream Theater. Mangini grooves and supports epic solos with brilliance, but his greatest strength continues to be how he sounds like a machine, in the best sense of the word. (InsideOut) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



### Dori Rubbicco *Stage Door Live*

Drawing on straight-ahead jazz, bossa with a hint of funk, and more, this singer’s album is a showcase not only for her but everyone here.

Live jazz brings an immediacy to it, as musicians interact in the moment. On Dori Rubbicco’s new album, the singer generously gives plenty of time over to her band, consisting of saxophone, guitar, piano, bass, and the fine drumming of **Yoron Israel**. This approach works quite well, as the group opens up in a relaxed, supportive way that frames the singer yet allows everyone to explore. Check the interpretation of “Imagine,” where familiarity meets rhythmic invention, or any of the numerous spots where everyone stretches out and things heat up. Israel is no stranger to the bandstand, and here he displays some of his best recorded drumming to date. With a variety of grooves and textures, he’s both supportive and driving, guiding the group through the charts, adding tasteful fills and dynamic solos along the way. (Whaling City Sound) **Martin Patmos**



### Huntertones *Passport*

The singer-less six-piece group features a trombonist who doubles on beatbox and a trumpet player who occasionally plays sousaphone, all anchored by **JOHN HUBBELL** on drums and **Snarky Puppy’s KEITA OGAWA** on percussion.



The Brooklyn-based Huntertones, who came together during the members’ time at Ohio State University, have been traveling a lot in the past few years, as the title of *Passport* suggests. In fact, the album’s compositions take inspiration from the band’s travels to Togo, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia during several U.S. State Department-sponsored tours. The group’s sound is a polished meeting of brass band traditions and world fusion with drum corps precision. “Clutch” features a three-beat groove with an Afrobeat vibe, “Togo” appropriately dances around a familiar 12/8 bell pattern, “Bad David” chugs along with a Tower of Power bounce, and “Bird Song” centers

around a convincing second-line groove of the Johnny Vidacovich school. John Hubbell shows expertise at the kit, navigating the globetrotting compositions with confidence and intensity, as well as at the mixing console. The drum sounds are varied and pleasing throughout, perhaps thanks to the drummer covering some engineering duties.

Despite the focus on instrumental pieces, the music here is not completely devoid of singing. Hope Masike, who the group met in Zimbabwe, lends lead vocals on the lush 6/8 ballad “Hondo,” which is peppered with mbira and shakers. Fusion heads will enjoy “Change,” with its mixed meters, clever syncopated accents, Wayne Krantz-ian guitar tones, and a 12/8 section that subtly ties it together with the global leanings of the rest of the album. And fans of Snarky Puppy will enjoy the guest spots from that band’s trumpet player Justin Stanton and the contributions of their percussionist Keita Ogawa. (huntertones.com) **Stephen Bidwell**

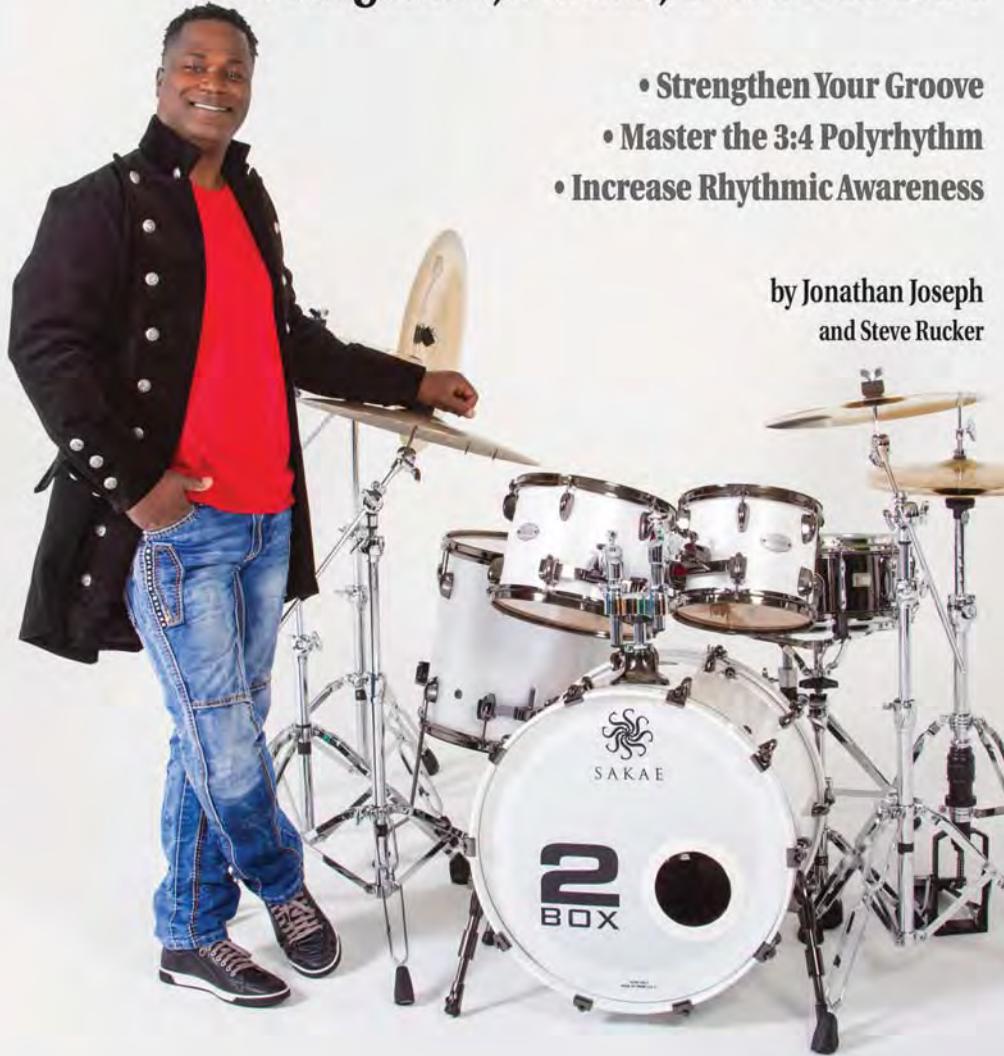


# Exercises in African-American Funk

## Mangambe, Bikutsi, and the Shuffle

- Strengthen Your Groove
- Master the 3:4 Polyrhythm
- Increase Rhythmic Awareness

by Jonathan Joseph  
and Steve Rucker



### Chapter 4: Half-Time Shuffle-Funk

In this chapter, we move the backbone of the shuffle groove over to beat 5. What this does is transform the shuffle into a half-time, triplet-based funk groove, which we'll call "shuffle-funk." The Pacific shuffle, made famous by the legendary R&B drummer Bernard Purdie, is one version of this type of groove.

The first hand pattern contains no ghost notes. The grooves become more and more dense as we add ghost notes. As in the previous exercises, the ghost notes should be played extremely soft. The primary focus of the groove is on the bass drum and the backbeat.

As mentioned before, it's very helpful in your practice to alternate between a simple groove and the more difficult exercises. For instance, you can switch between each line of the exercises and this traditional mangambe groove.



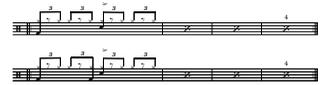
Although these exercises are written with six-note triplets for consistency, you might also conceptualize them as six-note triplets. That interpretation would put the backbeat on beats 2 and 4 of a bar of 4/4. So Hand Pattern 3 would look like the following.



As before, we'll start with a simple hand pattern and gradually add ghost notes. Practice the exercises between 70 and 120 bpm.



Here are some exercises that use Hand Pattern 1 with different bass drum variations.



### Chapter 6: Bikutsi

In this chapter, we introduce the African rhythm known as bikutsi. Bikutsi is a musical genre from Cameroon that features the 3:4 polyrhythm. It has roots in the traditional music of the Baka people, who live around the city of Yaoundé, along with various elements of the pop-rock idiom.

The characteristic rhythm of the bikutsi is a grouping of triplets in a four-note pattern. Elements of this chapter are directly related to Chapters 1 and 2. If you aren't clear on the 3:4 polyrhythm, please review those chapters.



Here's an example of a bikutsi-pop drummer rhythm.



By moving the snare accent to beat 3, we can create a simple bikutsi shuffle-funk pattern.



Here's a shuffle-funk variation with the bass drum on the first beat only.



We can also open the hi-hat where the accents occur.



Here's the same variation with the bass drum on the first beat only.



Written by renowned drummer Jonathan Joseph (Jeff Beck, Joss Stone, Richard Bona) and University of Miami director of drumset studies Steve Rucker, *Exercises in African-American Funk* is designed to introduce musicians who've studied jazz, R&B, rock, soul, and blues to a concept that applies West African rhythms to various genres.

The series of exercises contained in the book guide you through a fusion of African and American elements. On the American side, we have shuffle and shuffle-funk. On the African side, we have the rhythms from Cameroon known as mangambe and bikutsi. Mastering these exercises will strengthen your groove, provide you with an understanding of the three-against-four polyrhythm, give you an awareness of the second partial of the triplet, and introduce you to a fresh new way to hear and feel music.

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# The Lounge Lizards' Voice of Chunk

Dougie Bowne gave up a perfectly good regular gig with a world-famous artist to follow his muse. Those in the know have been thanking him ever since.

by John Colpitts

**D**ougie Bowne exudes harmony. He speaks with a gregarious enthusiasm, punctuating stories with an arm around a shoulder and a diffused buoyant laugh. That he's one of the greatest unsung drummers of the '70s, '80s, and '90s New York experimental jazz and rock scenes is not something about which he boasts. Bowne's modesty meant that during his busiest period, his prowess spread mostly via word of mouth among musicians and bandleaders. During his heyday he shared the studio and stage with a who's who of revolutionary musicians, including Laurie Anderson, Iggy Pop, John Cale, Jack Bruce, and Marianne Faithfull.

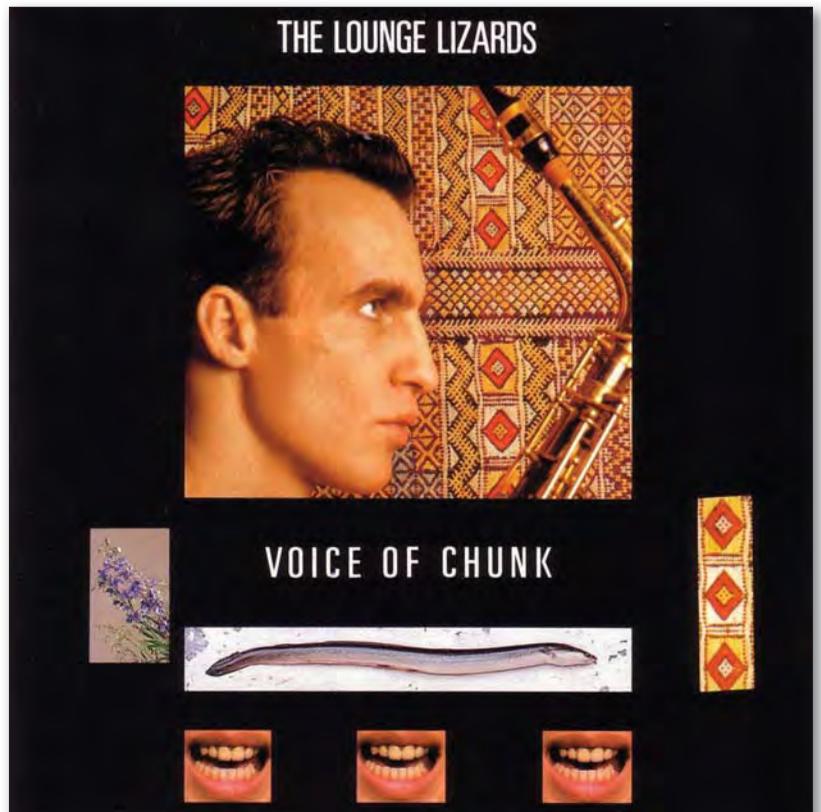
Today, living in North Carolina and tending to his health, he's still a man full of infectious energy, someone with whom you could imagine sharing a deep and abiding friendship. "He had a kind of light around him," Iggy Pop wrote, "the kind of guy who understood the importance of having a laugh." Recently, at Raleigh's Hopscotch festival, a delicate trio set with pianist Jil Christensen and saxophonist Bob Pence highlighted Bowne's sensitivity on the kit.

Back in the '80s, Bowne embodied a rare combination of touch and power. He was a mostly self-taught drummer, learning through a deep dedication to craft and lots of playing along to records. According to the Bronx-born, South Jersey-bred drummer, "I didn't have a pad or a metronome, nothing like that. I banged away on a telephone book, playing along with records. I had my kit set up in my room and just hit that shit every chance I could. I practiced, played along with recordings of the people I loved. I learned like most of my idols did."

## Tools of the Times

For the *Voice of Chunk* sessions, Bowne played a Pearl GLX series kit with maple shells featuring 8", 12", 13", 14", and 16" toms, a 22" bass drum, and a Pearl S-414D chrome-covered steel free-floating snare drum. He used a Pearl P-750 or P-880TW double bass drum pedal, and his cymbals included a 20" Paiste 2002 ride, 16" and 18" Paiste thin crashes, an 8" Paiste splash, 14" Paiste and A Zildjian hi-hat sets, and an old Zildjian China with a chunk sawed out of the edge, which was salvaged from the garbage at Matrix Rehearsal Studios.

Today Bowne plays a Gretsch round-badge set circa March 1964 featuring a 20" kick, 13" and 16" toms, and a 14" wood snare, which he's used on many recordings. ("Gray painted insides, of course," the drummer adds.) He also employs Roland TD-15 e-drums triggering Toontrack Superior Drummer 3 samples, with expansion packs including the new Custom Shop by Joe Blaney. He also triggers the Expansion BFD3 drums.



Bowne's ear for the wildest music led him to New York City in the late '70s, and after the drummer did a stint at the drum counter of the legendary Manny's Music, a guitarist in former Velvet Underground violist John Cale's band saw him walking down 48th Street with a stick bag. Thinking Bowne looked cool, he mentioned that Cale was auditioning drummers, so Bowne tried out. After a twenty-minute rendition of the Velvet's "I'm Waiting for the Man," he got the gig. He'd never heard of Cale or the Velvet Underground before the audition.

After a ton of touring and the release of Cale's live album *Sabotage* in 1979, Bowne was taken by his girlfriend at the time to see another artist he'd never heard of, Iggy Pop. "I freaked out and talked everyone's ear off for a week, so I thought it was joke when he called me." A few rehearsals later, he was on the road with Iggy. You can see a typically brilliant performance of "Dog Food" on Tom Snyder's *Tomorrow Show* on YouTube.

Bowne recorded the Iggy Pop album *Party* and then right before a tour opening for the Rolling Stones, he gave notice. "I loved [Iggy], loved playing his music, but I needed to play more and different music. My friends thought I was nuts."

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## Encore

"It's rough for a drummer to find the right situations creatively," says Pop today. "Doug was still searching, when we parted ways, for a style of life and music that he could commit to wholeheartedly. I was sad to see him go."

Bowne worked some day jobs—washing dishes, working in a clothing store and at the Strand bookstore—and played with a ton of people. "I was really fanatical," he says. "I wanted music to burn through people. Some people think [quitting Iggy Pop's band was] crazy, but I don't think so. The Lizards answered my desires."

The Lounge Lizards had been broken up for about a year before they reformed in 1982. Leader and saxophonist John Lurie was looking for musicians. Before Lurie hired Bowne, he'd heard his name many times. "I was looking for a drummer in 1982," says Lurie, "and I kept hearing, 'You have to try Dougie Bowne.' I went into Binibon [a long-gone diner on Second Avenue] at about three in the morning, and this tiny guy comes up to me and says, 'Hello, John, I'm Dougie Bowne. I'm thinking, *This little guy cannot possibly have the power I need for what I want to do.* I think I may have actually mentioned how small his hands were at the time. But we got together and played, and he had way more than enough power."

The reformed Lounge Lizards were a band in the true sense. It wasn't just a "gig" for the members; they didn't get paid for the

sweaty Westbeth Theater basement rehearsals. This, despite the fact that the band consisted of the cream of the downtown New York scene: Marc Ribot on guitar, Lurie and Roy Nathanson on sax, John's brother Evan Lurie on piano, Curtis Fowlkes on trombone, E.J. Rodriguez on percussion, and Erik Sanko on bass. The new version of the Lounge Lizards was creating music far removed from the ironic,

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**"John was clearly the leader, and his aesthetic made the band what it became. But the personalities were strong, and you can still hear the players' identities in the music."**

---

meta jazz commentary albums that the band released in the '70s. They began to create a music that was in a class by itself—muscular yet sensitive, masculine without the macho posturing. When asked about the band's new direction, Lurie explains, "I'd spent a long time in Morocco [acting in] *The Last Temptation of Christ*. [While there] I was introduced to these Gnawa musicians who were nomads, living in tents outside of Marrakesh. They would play every night, and I would go to play or just listen. They played for exactly the right reason. That hit me deeply. I tried to bring that back to the band, almost like we would be a tribe."

At band rehearsals, Lurie would bring in ideas, and the other players would help shape them into something unique, with Lurie having the final say on the arrangement. "The melodies that John would bring in were often kind of oblique," Marc Ribot tells *MD*. "We wouldn't try to match them; we would find things that were interesting juxtapositions. John would serve a kind of editor function on it. When the [parts] seemed like they were in the right relationship, he'd try his best to freeze them into shapes that we could repeat."

"We went into a room, ideas were forwarded, and we hashed shit out, trying tons of stuff," Bowne elaborates. "John was clearly the leader, and his aesthetic made the band what it became. But the personalities were strong, and you can still hear the players' identities in the music."

One very distinct element on *Voice of Chunk* is the multiple meters being played by each musician on top of each other. Lurie describes how Bowne helped him open up that aspect of the composition process: "I was becoming more and more interested in odd time signatures. But the writing was getting a little stuck on some things. Dougie said, 'You know, you can have more than one time signature playing at the same time.' This hadn't occurred to me. It freed me up in a wonderful way. We would be playing sections of 5/4 against 7/8 against 6/8, and it created a sea of rhythm that became very organic."

The band began touring constantly, and were selling out rooms all over Europe, but they weren't getting interest from record labels. Everyone in the band could feel that the new material had a kind of rare magic, though, and Lurie was worried that if they didn't capture their performances immediately, it was in danger of going stale. "I'd inherited money from my Uncle Jerry," Lurie recalls, "way more money than I'd ever had before. So I paid for us to go into the studio, feeling sure that a label would pick it up and reimburse me. But that didn't happen. So then I started a label [to release *Voice of Chunk*]

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# INDUSTRY HAPPENINGS

## IN MEMORIAM

### Avant-Garde Jazz Drummer Alvin Fielder

The jazz and experimental music world lost a giant this past January 5 when drummer, pharmacologist, drum historian, and founding member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) Alvin Fielder passed away near his Jackson, Mississippi, home. The drummer was known for his encyclopedic knowledge of the history of drumming styles, as *MD* was told by David Dove, the Houston, Texas-based Fielder collaborator and founder of the philanthropic educational organization Nameless Sound. "He could break down the origins of every technique, innovation, and gesture in jazz drumming," Dove says.

Fielder's interest in drumming was piqued in the '40s after hearing a neighbor playing an LP that featured Max Roach. When Fielder was studying pharmacology in the early '50s in New Orleans, he also studied with Ed Blackwell (Ornette Coleman, Don Cherry). Fielder cherished his relationship with Blackwell, and he owned a number of Blackwell's method books, which he returned to throughout his career.

Fielder's playing can be heard on jazz composer and saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell's 1966 free jazz album *Sound*, on recordings with trumpeter Dennis González and bassist Damon Smith, and on a 2007 trio record under his own name titled *A Measure of Vision*. González wrote, "Alvin's playing was a well-thought-out system of the old and the new, of the avant-garde and the very disciplined forms of which he worked together in a well-defined style of his own."

Bassist and Fielder collaborator William Parker tells *MD*, "Al was a beautiful, unique musician who had that fresh, classic, open sound



that was created by building layers of tones that were held together by textures of cymbals and speech-like drum patterns. Al was optimal when he played three sets—letting the music evolve and burst into flames."

**John Colpitts**

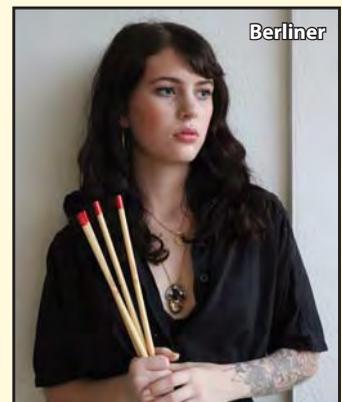


**Jonathan Moffett** (Michael Jackson, Madonna, Prince) has joined the Earthworks artist roster.

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# The Cherry on Top



**After growing up playing** an eight-piece Premier Resonator drumkit with a mere two cymbals, Alan Vincelette of Moorpark, California, decided to flip the script. "I now have a four-piece cherry Craviotto drumset with several cymbals," Vincelette explains. "I really like this set kit for its tonal and resonant sound, and the cherry wood is warm like maple but with even more attack and an all-around great vibe."

The 2013 Craviotto kit consists of a 14x20 bass drum, an 8x12 rack tom, a 14x14 floor tom, and a 5.5x14 snare, all featuring 45-degree bearing edges, plus a 3x12 A&F Rude Boy raw brass side snare. "I tune that high to contrast with the main snare," says Vincelette.

The drummer's Zildjian cymbals include a 20" K Constantinople

medium thin low ride, a 16" K Constantinople crash, a 17" K Custom Special Dry trash crash, a 10" Zildjian K Custom Special Dry splash, and 14" K Constantinople hi-hats.

Vincelette uses a combination of DW and Mapex hardware, and as a clever addition he drilled holes in some plastic decorative cherries and put them on top of his cymbal wingnuts, accentuating the kit's cherry shells. Vincelette uses his unique set to play covers and originals with the Los Angeles-based band Grest, "an oddball collection of a character actor, a fire chief, an electrical engineer, a property manager, and myself, a philosophy professor. We all have full-time jobs," says the drummer, "but we still make time to gig around for fun."

**Photo Submission:** Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to [kitoftthemonth@modern drummer.com](mailto:kitoftthemonth@modern drummer.com). Show "Kit of the Month" in the subject line.



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