

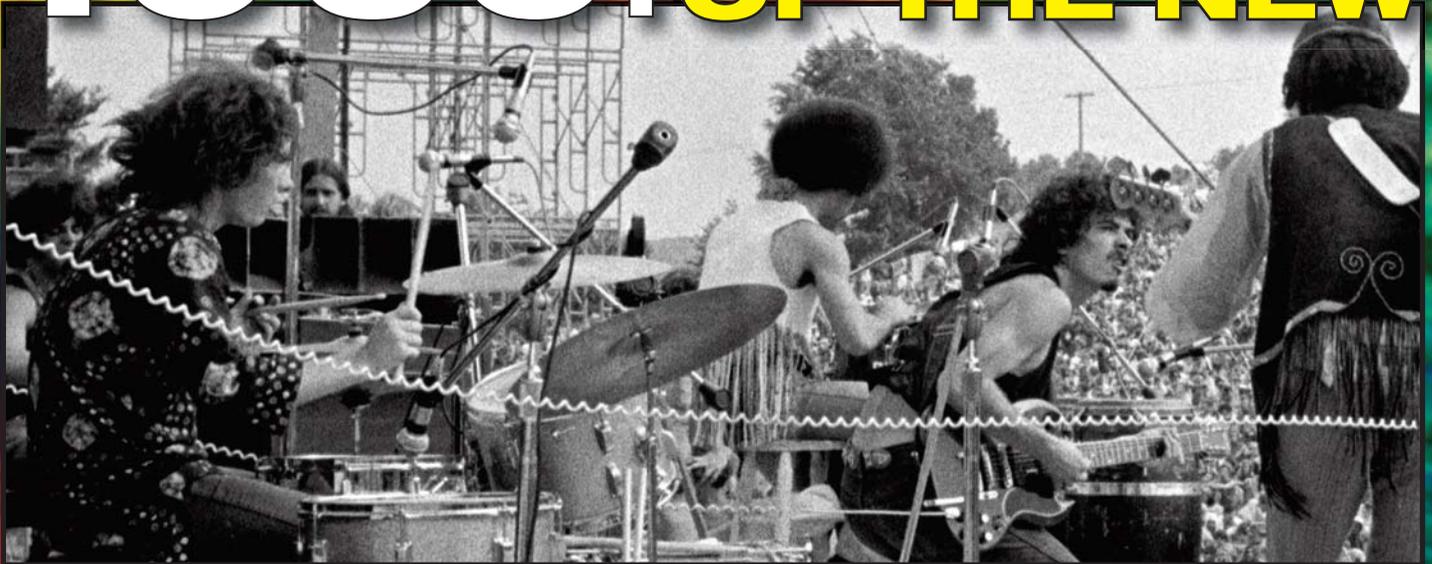
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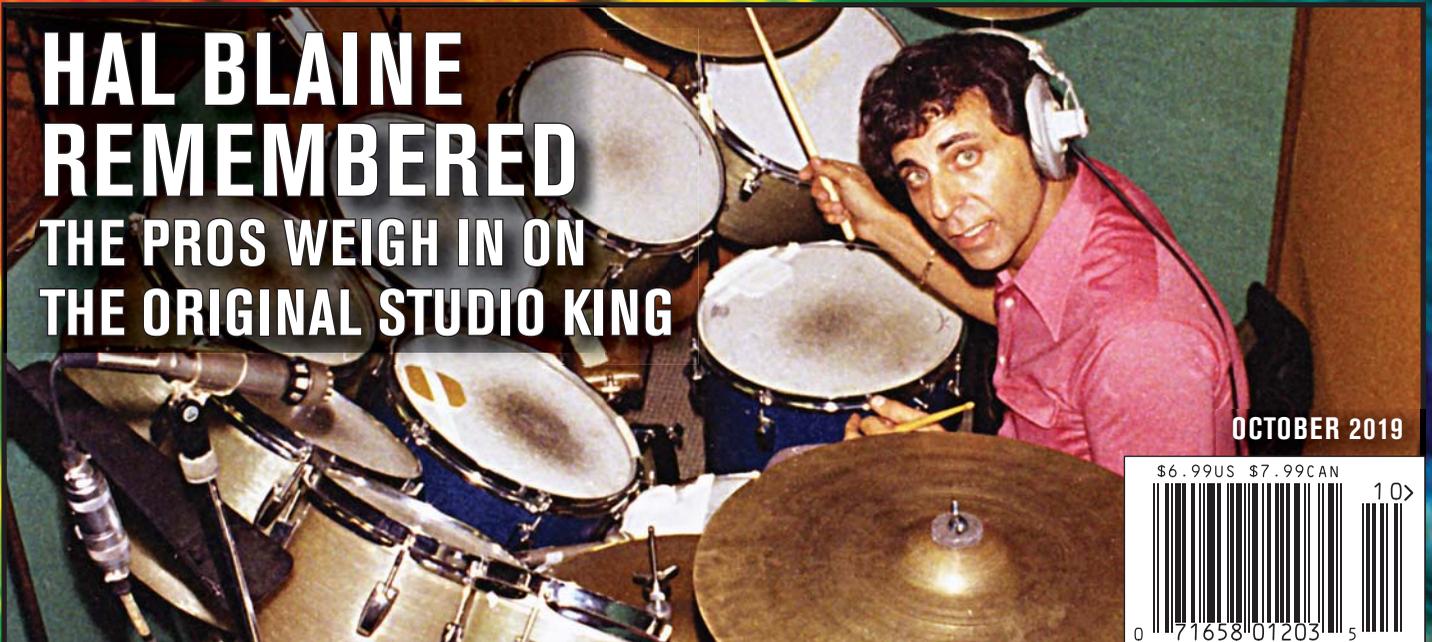
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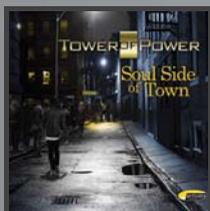
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46 HAL BLAINE REMEMBERED
He helped pave the way for every great studio musician who came out of L.A., and his influence extends to this very day. In this special tribute to the great drummer, Jim Keltner, Kenny Aronoff, John "JR" Robinson, Vinnie Colaiuta, Steve Gadd, Ringo Starr, Gregg Bissonette, Chad Smith, Rick Marotta, Paul Leim, James Gadson, Russ Kunkel, Narada Michael Walden, Peter Criss, Liberty DeVitto, Doane Perry, Slim Jim Phantom, Mark Schulman, Dennis Diken, and more pay their respects.

58 JD BECK
The Texas-based drummer is only sixteen years old, but he's already spent several years collaborating with a wide range of artists in the fertile Dallas, Texas, hip-hop/urban music scene. He's also wise beyond his years.

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Clemons Poindexter IV (Khalid)

CARVING OUT THE GROOVE

Clemons Poindexter IV is in charge of carving out the groove for musical chart topper and rising R&B star, KHALID. An ascending talent himself and longtime Starclassic B/B user, Clemons was recently introduced to the new **Starclassic Walnut/Birch** series and was astounded with the outstanding resonance and supremely balanced tone. He feels these kits are perfect for locking down the pocket and attacking the intricate rhythms required in today's contemporary R&B sound. Be sure to check out his video at tama.com



Satin Sapphire Fade

Talking About Our Generations

"Led Zeppelin II seems like it's miles beyond the first record," the Flaming Lips' Steven Drozd recently told *Modern Drummer*. "After the popularity of their first album, it's like they thought, *We can take any chances we want!* John Bonham's subtleties on 'Thank You,' his shuffly thing on 'Heartbreaker,' not hitting the snare on every 2 and 4 on 'Whole Lotta Love'...it's amazing he even thought of that stuff. I think he quickly evolved into doing those things in the year since *Led Zeppelin I* was recorded."



Jim Esposito

Drozd, who was born in 1969, spent the next hour or two talking about the music that he grew up being profoundly influenced by from this most revolutionary of times—you can read our full interview at moderndrummer.com—and the theme that seemed to permeate our chat was that of change.

Rock music and drumming had certainly grown up a lot in the previous few years, as our special 1967 theme issue from a couple years back made clear. But '69 was unique. Besides being the year of Woodstock, the ultimate symbol of America's youth-gone-wild in the best sense, it was an era when musicians were pushing boundaries in ever broadening ways.

This month we shine a light on some of the players who were in the middle of that whirlwind of activity: the above-mentioned John Bonham; former Miles Davis drummer Tony Williams, who in '69 returned to play with the jazz legend for the unexpectedly serene *In a Silent Way*, and three months later recorded his scorching Lifetime debut, *Emergency!*; Santana's Woodstock hero, Michael Shrieve; the criminally under-appreciated Bruce Rowland, who accompanied Joe Cocker on his own historic Woodstock performance; Creedence Clearwater Revival's groove machine, Doug Clifford; Ringo Starr, who in the Beatles' troubled *Let It Be* sessions could be seen for the first time on a five-piece Ludwiger Hollywood set; and Mountain's Corky Laing, whose year was weird and wonderful even by 1960s standards.

It's instructive to note that these drummers, whose playing in 1969 was as fresh-sounding as the music itself, were all still in their twenties at the time. In fact, most were still in their early twenties—and Shrieve was *just* twenty at the time of Woodstock. But sometimes, the shockingly new musical age was being ushered in by players who'd established themselves in pop music years earlier, including the subject of this month's other cover story, Hal Blaine, who passed away earlier this year at the age of ninety. As you'll learn from our interview with Smithereens drummer Dennis Diken, Blaine easily held his own among the precocious crowd of newcomers in '69, drumming on important releases from the 5th Dimension, Glen Campbell, and others, and proving that even in the most unstable of times, sure-handedness, style, and a sense of history will always be welcome at the highest levels of studio recording.

As earth-shaking as the late '60s were, however, we mustn't forget that music and drumming's evolution is far from over, a point clearly made by this month's feature on the sixteen-year-old JD Beck, whose command and creativity with modern drum approaches are undeniable, and fascinating to behold. It's a welcome reminder that, inevitably, our best friend as creative individuals is often the unknown—you can practically feel the headlong rush into the future in the work of Tony, Bonzo, Shrieve, and the rest from the class of '69, just as you can hear it in the playing of 2019's most adventurous rhythmatists. And aren't we the lucky ones to be a part of it all.

Adam Budofsky

Adam Budofsky
Editorial Director

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What's Your Favorite Hal Blaine Track?



"Indian Reservation (The Lament of the Cherokee Reservation Indian)," with the Raiders. This track shows off his big drumset, and Blaine is playing some intricate patterns throughout the entire song.

Steve Short

"The Night Has a Thousand Eyes" by Bobby Vee, because of the back and forth between the '60s surf/swing verse pattern and the Latin ride beat on the chorus. It has everything!

Kyle Martin

"Superstar," performed by the Carpenters. That track is a master class in playing for the song. Hal makes subtle changes to how he marks the time with hi-hats and cross-stick, and the energy of the performance ebbs and flows with his choices. It's a great lesson in restraint when composing a drum part. When he reaches for a backbeat or a tom fill, it really has an impact and propels the music.

Lawrence Nagel

While visiting with Hal at his home, he told me the tracks he recorded with the 5th Dimension were among his personal favorites. I agree with his choices, but I always cherish his dynamic and innovative performances with the Beach Boys.

Victor DeLorenzo

Hamilton, Joe Frank and Reynolds' "Don't Pull Your Love." This track encompasses so much of what made Blaine stand out all the time. Hal plays great fills using lots of toms that were so musical and tasty for the song. The sound of his drums on the track had great definition in the mix. Blaine's great time and feel shines throughout. And the question-and-drum-answer intro that sets it all up is brilliant. I could say the same things about so many of his tracks.

David Drubin

My favorite Hal Blaine performance has to be on Steely Dan's "Any World (That I'm Welcome To)" off *Katy Lied*. To me, it's the quintessential Hal Blaine drum track—it has all his trademarks and shows how even in the strict confines of Steely Dan his drumming is unbelievably effective.

Dominick Notaroberta

"Walk Like a Man" by the Four Seasons. It took some guts in the day to start out a tune with a drum solo. Rest in peace, Hal.

Cole Marcus

"Be My Baby" by the Ronettes. It's one of the most iconic drum intros ever and is instantly recognizable. That song and Hal's drumming on it inspired—and continues to inspire—so many people.

Steven Wolf

It's hard to mention only one, but pretty much anything from the Beach Boys era, because he's really so transparent.

Tony Esperanza

The Crystals' "Then He Kissed Me." It was the first Blaine track I ever heard, and it introduced me to the idea that drums didn't have to be just "boom-chick, boom-chick." My favorite tracks, though, were the ones he did with the Beach Boys—pure genius.

Josh Knoles, Skip's Drum Shop

I'd say Herb Alpert's "A Taste of Honey." Hal's playing sounds like he's having a blast. And it swings so much!

Joe Tymecki

"A Taste of Honey" by Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass has one of the simplest, most addictive drum fills of all time.

Pater Hartbarger

Tough call, but I think I'll go with "Good Vibrations." Those snare shots in the opening verses are like lightning strikes.

John Henry

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





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- Shannon Forrest, Toto

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- Dennis Chambers

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-Chad Cromwell

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Sam Durkes on Ezra Furman's *Twelve Nudes*

A drummer's raw ride through modern, dirty, and driving punk—with the genre's storied history in tow.

T*welve Nudes*, the eighth and latest release from the prolific singer, songwriter, guitarist, and bandleader Ezra Furman, borrows from classic punk rock like the Ramones but with modern-pop sensibilities and a seething production. Throughout the album, which was released on August 30, drummer Sam Durkes drives Furman's distorted up-tempo fervor with primal boom-bap kick and snare slaps, growling tom grooves, and a surprising avoidance of cymbals.

Durkes started playing drums when he was twelve years old, growing up on a steady diet of '70s punk and '80s hardcore including the Clash and Black Flag. The drummer tells *MD* that he landed the gig with Furman around seven years ago after having built his playing career in the Chicago area. "Ezra was a fan of one of my bands, the Canoes," Durkes says. "He needed someone to go on tour, so he called me about two weeks before the run, just after putting out his first solo record. Two weeks later we were on a support tour with Margot & the Nuclear So and So's. Also, his little sister is good friends with my partner, so there was that kind of connection as well."

In support of *Twelve Nudes*, Durkes will be on an international run with Furman that lasts through late November. We recently caught up with the drummer at his L.A. home via phone.

MD: Who are your influences?

Sam: I love Weezer's drummer, Pat Wilson, especially on their first two records, the *Blue Album* and *Pinkerton*. I also loved Topper Headon from the Clash. He's the man.

MD: Do you ever think about those players when you're playing with Ezra?

Sam: Definitely Topper Headon. You didn't notice him until you [paid attention to] him, which I always thought was cool. He's very robotic, and I love that. He's got these single-stroke fills that just ride all the way down the toms. The Clash song "Tommy Gun" was a huge inspiration for me because he was like a machine gun. I always thought that was so rad, powerful, and strong. I think about that song all the time.

I also took lessons from a guy named Chris Dye in Chicago. He was in a band called Chin Up Chin Up and a bunch of other bands. His drumming is phenomenal—super tight and simple, and that's what he taught me. He'd always say, "Stay simple, man." He'd write out beats and fills for me to practice, and I still think about them all the time. There's a song on Chin Up Chin Up's first record called "The Soccer Mom Gets Her Fix," and I play that beat at almost every soundcheck.

MD: Your drums have this dry, biting tone on *Twelve Nudes*.

Sam: I'm very specific about what I want, and I work with our engineer, Trevor Brooks, a lot. We talk about it on the road, because

in addition to being our studio engineer, he's our touring engineer as well. The easiest thing for me to do, and the thing that always sounds good, is to throw tea towels on the toms and snare. Mainly for this record we used an old Rogers '60s kit that was busted up. The heads were all so dented and taped up—they might not have ever been changed. But I threw tea towels on, and it sounded awesome. I'd use cinder blocks to prop up the kick drum to keep it from moving, too.

And we switched it up. Obviously something like "Rated-R Crusaders" is going to have something really tight that blends in. And that song just has a tom beat, but it blends in with the chugging bass. And then when you hit the last triplet part, it kind of opens up and gets bigger.

MD: Was the end of that song pasted in?

Sam: Yeah. Ezra and I will usually get together to do demos. He'll either fly down to L.A. or I'll fly up to Oakland. On the last record, he really wanted to do something a little more tricky with the production, such as pasting parts together. On this one, he kind of wanted to do something ridiculous like that at the end that was kind of groovy. It's funny, and it's a kind of juxtaposition. For a lot of the production that sounds like that, including on that song, we did it on a 4-track in some room, and we pasted it on.

MD: Are you two the primary writers?

Sam: Ezra writes all of the tunes, and he'll send us little phone demos. And then Jorgen Jorgensen, the bass player, and I get together with Ezra, and we'll arrange it and get vibes and tones down. Then we'll bring in either Ben Joseph, who plays keyboards, or another musician to lay something on top of the foundation, depending on what we need.

MD: Was *Twelve Nudes* self-produced?

Sam: It was basically produced by Ezra, Jorgen, myself, and Trevor Brooks, who is the engineer. The original idea was to do something quick, fast, loud, dirty, and get in there and get it done. The whole record was recorded in about ten days. And then we got John Congleton to mix it, and he does a lot of creative mixing. I can't speak highly enough about him.

MD: The cymbals seem sparse on the record.

Sam: Basically Ezra hates cymbals or anything that resounds too long. I tend to lean toward thinner, washier cymbals or bigger, wider cymbals. But Ezra definitely doesn't want that. Those cymbals take up a certain frequency range that I think just bothers him. I think if we never used cymbals, that would be ideal for him.

Then you have Jorgen, and he always says, "Man, you have to ride on this one. It sounds so good." [laughs] Jorgen was raised by a drummer, and he's an incredible musician. Working with him in Ezra's rhythm section is just awesome.

MD: Is there anything you practice to maintain your energy in the studio?



Sam: In the studio, my mind is more geared toward tone and less about stamina or precision. Regarding precision, the imperfections are what make the record real. Obviously I'll loosen up, but my head is more in a tone-world and finding whatever is going to sound best with the band.

MD: When you're writing, what are you paying attention to?

Sam: It's not just one thing. When I first hear a song, I'll say, "That guitar needs to sound like this song, and that song has these drums that sound like this." And I want to get a part down from those ideas.

Vocals are kind of the last thing I pay attention to. [laughs] I'll obviously pay

attention to the melody. But in terms of how Ezra is going to sing, he'll adapt very well if we take a song in a different direction before we get vocals on there.

MD: When you first started playing, did you imagine drums would take you around the world?

Sam: Initially I always thought that I was going to be sleeping in a van, and I never thought past, *I can't wait to go on tour as soon as I get out of high school*. I never thought past being in a band and touring the U.S.: eating crappy, drinking too much, not sleeping—or sleeping on peoples' floors.... But I'm happy to be where I am. It's a pleasant surprise.

Willie Rose

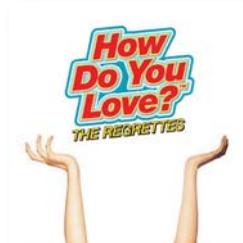
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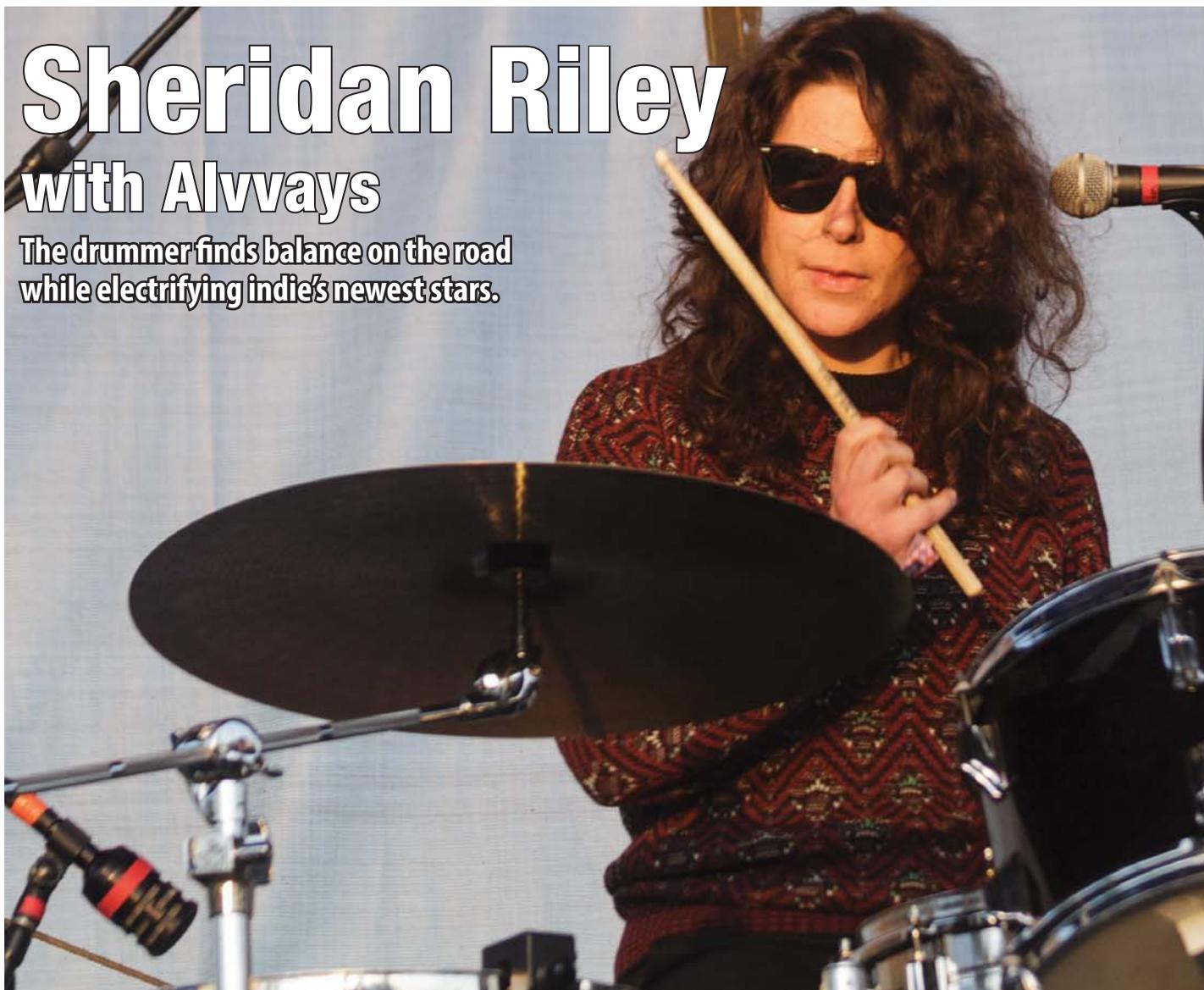
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Sheridan Riley with Alvways

The drummer finds balance on the road while electrifying indie's newest stars.



For nearly two decades, drummer Sheridan Riley has worked with the intention to lead a life fulfilled as a proactive musician. From aspirations that began in middle school jazz combos that led to DIY bands comprised of talented friends throughout high school and beyond, Riley hustled by maintaining a solid endurance of skill, will, and modesty.

Now she's proving herself to be a strong asset for the exceptionally popular Toronto-based indie-pop band Alvways, on a run that lasts through mid September. The group is currently finishing up the tour cycle for their second album, *Antisocialites*, which was released in 2017. Known for their uplifting melodies and solid rhythm section, the band creates an energetic live performance that anyone can move to.

After having been discovered while playing for Chris Cohen (solo, Deerhoof) in 2017, Riley was offered a trial show with Alvways at the Treefort Music Fest in Boise after only a few rehearsals. Since then she's locked in with the band, bringing forth a captivating flow of precision live. "They work with a lot of the same people," Riley says. "And they've all known each other

for a really long time. But it was interesting that they were willing to take this chance on someone they'd only seen play once."

Riley started her career on the road in her final year of high school with the Sub Pop indie artist Avi Buffalo, with whom she toured relentlessly in between classes and writing sessions for two full-lengths. Now settled in Seattle, Riley has been diligently working on a solo album for her project Peg, along with recording and touring with the L.A.-based band Dante Elephante and Seattle's Zen Mother. "I didn't really think I'd seriously tour until a few years ago, even though I'd already [done some] touring," she explains. "It's something you can do if you want to. But I'm still trying to figure out the balance of how to move through life as a musician."

Riley works to keep her creative flow consistent on the road. "When you're on tour you kind of just feel like this utility," she says. "You're playing the same parts every night. I enjoy it, but I also feel like there's a part of me that's sort of on hold as a musician. So almost in a manic way, I'd pursue as much writing and recording work as possible, but then I'd run the risk of burning myself out and not having enough time to read books or go on walks. [Now]



Will Oliver

balancing tour and work life is about trying to find creative outlets that keep those parts of me in overdrive, and also trying to nurture personal relationships, which really matters to me.”

Riley says that her practice routine depends on repetition, and that she can’t live without a practice pad on the road. “I always try to warm up for an hour or so a day,” she says. “Alvvays’ tempos are pretty fast, and I’ve had to play louder than I’m used to. I end up pushing the beat more than I need to, so I always have that in mind when I’m practicing.”

When you watch Riley play live, it’s clear that she focuses in the practice shed on factors that make a noticeable difference onstage. With each of the many instruments that she explores—lately Riley’s been learning tabla—she embraces the tenacity required to refine her movements. “You know, when there’s a tom hit, it’s supposed to be a *hit*,” Riley says. “It has to carry out to everyone in this really effective, momentous way. I want the relatively simple drum parts to feel like this really propelling force for an hour to an hour-and-a-half.”

Riley insists that the relationships she builds while touring are the prime reason she remains so dedicated to her craft. “There’s a very

deep level of love and support that can develop [on the road], and I think that can really inform the show, the performance, and the whole energy of the tour.” Indeed, Riley communicates a humble spirit with the power of her skills, yet makes sure you never forget that one, quintessential tom hit.

Lia Braswell

Sheridan Riley endorses Ludwig drums, Istanbul cymbals, Promark sticks, Evans heads, and Roots EQ accessories.

Also on the Road

Michel Langevin with Voivod /// **Rob Rolfe** with Enter Shikari /// **Larry Herweg** with Pelican /// **Gavin Harrison, Pat Mastelotto, and Jeremy Stacey** with King Crimson /// **Jay Weinberg** with Slipknot /// **Jeff Simon** with George Thorogood and the Destroyers /// **Andy Woodard** and **Jola** with Adam Ant



George Way

Aristocrat Acacia Drumset

Another five-star offering from one of the industry's most outspoken perfectionists.

The original incarnation of the

legendary Geo. H. Way Drum Company went dormant when founder George Harrison Way passed away in 1969. In 2006, modern percussion product designer Ronn Dunnett acquired the rights to the brand and set out to revive the company by building and expanding upon the innovations that Way created many years ago. The result is a perfect amalgam of flawless modern manufacturing with elegant, vintage aesthetics. The most recent addition to the Way catalog is the Aristocrat line of snares and kits, which debut a new version of the single-ended art deco-style lug George designed in 1953. We were sent a gorgeous Aristocrat kit with 4-ply acacia shells featuring 8x12 and 14x14 toms, a 14x20 bass drum, and a 5.5x14 snare.

The Specs

Aristocrat drums are available with acacia, walnut, or a blend of maple and poplar shells. The bass drum and tom shells are 4-ply with 4-ply reinforcement rings. Snares in walnut or maple/poplar are 4-ply with 4-ply reinforcement rings, while acacia snares come with 2-ply shells with 2-ply rings. Tom diameters range from 10" to 18" (all in traditional depths), bass drums are offered from 18" to 26", and snares are available in 5.5x14, 6.5x14, or 8x14 sizes. Our acacia kit featured a lustrous high-gloss finish that added a glassy shine without distracting from the deep, rich brown/tan/black grain structure of the acacia.

In addition to the newly reworked rounded art deco lugs, Aristocrat drums come with George Way's innovative double-edge/double-flange steel hoops, die-cast bass drum claws, rounded throwback-style T-handles, and vintage-style Waybest arch spurs. All of the hardware features AAA chrome plating and is manufactured to impeccable standards. Every tension rod, T-handle, and thumbscrew operated with velvety smoothness while also retaining tension under extended, heavy playing.

Our Aristocrat toms were outfitted with Dunnett's Remo-made single-ply Resotone heads, which are uncoated and have a smooth, opaque white color. The bass drum came with a Resotone batter head and a Resotone Felt Tone front, which has a felt strip that floats between the drumhead and an additional layer of Mylar on the underside. The snare featured a Remo Ambassador Coated batter and Ambassador Hazy snare bottom, plus twenty-strand snappy wires and a minimalistic beer tap-style throw-off.

The Sound

There haven't been many drumsets that have passed through my studio that I can honestly say had zero manufacturing failings or sonic shortcomings. This Aristocrat Acacia is one. Not only was it perfectly built and aesthetically gorgeous, but it was also one of the most musically inspiring modern kits I've ever played. I had so much fun grooving and improvising on this Way drumset that by the end of the review I was seriously considering selling off my beloved vintage 1968 Ludwig Downbeat outfit and getting one. At all tunings, it produced a warm, pure tone that echoed my Downbeats, but it had a more authoritative smack and a much broader dynamic range that extended from whisper-quiet ghost notes to swinging-for-the-fences accents. I quite literally couldn't make these drums sound bad, and they had no dead zones in the tuning range, which extended from deep and fat finger-tight funkiness to maximum-torque Max Roach-style melodicism. I could even coax convincing Bonham-like bombast from this 20" bass drum by simply tuning both heads as low as they would go and letting the beater bounce off the head with each stroke.

If your ears are most inspired by classic, vintage tones but your playing demands require utmost durability, versatility, and reliability, check out what Dunnett is doing with the George Way Drum Company. As cliché as it might sound, the new Aristocrat Acacia proved to be the textbook example of a "modern vintage" drumset.

Michael Dawson







The Sound

In my experience, most crashes labeled as “rock,” “heavy,” or “extreme” sacrifice some musicality and frequency balance in order to produce volume levels that can compete with cranked guitar amps and skull-shaking subwoofers. If you were to only assess these new 2002 Extreme crashes with a light, cursory tap, you’d probably dismiss them as more of the same. These cymbals spring to life, however, at dynamic levels well beyond where most “normal” crashes choke out. You simply can’t overplay these things, but at the same time they seem to have a built-in high-frequency attenuator that keeps the ultra-high overtones from becoming painfully harsh or piercing.

When struck with the appropriate amount of force, each

of the Extreme crashes had a punchy, midrange attack that opened up to the smooth, glassy shimmer that’s a hallmark of the 2002 series. The 18” was the most contained yet splashy-sounding of the three, and it had the least distinct bell tone. The 20” had the warmest and broadest crash and the cleanest ping. The 19” had a breathier attack and the most distinctive bell. For very aggressive applications, the 20” would be hard to beat; it can roar as loud as anything we’ve ever heard while retaining an unexpected amount of warmth and richness. The 18” would be the answer for playing styles or musical passages requiring sharper and faster crash accents. The 19” falls right in the middle, so it could be an ideal choice for a primary crash in most situations where you’re swinging for the fences.

Michael Dawson

Woodland Percussion

Black Out Birch Series Snares

Meticulously crafted stave-shell drums designed for maximum projection, clarity, and control.

Woodland Percussion originated as a summer project for company founder and mechanical engineer Allan Fausnaught. The goal was to build a snare entirely from scratch using the limited hand tools that were available in his family's garden shed in rural Pennsylvania. Allan's hobby soon turned into a small business that now offers a full range of handmade snares, drumsets, cajons, claves, and assorted hand percussion, as well as laser-etched kinetic art cymbals. For review, we were sent two Black Out Birch series stave-shell snares: a 5x13 (\$679.99) and a 6x14 (\$749.99).

The Details

With the Black Out Birch series, Fausnaught set out to design drums that yielded a high amount of attack for live applications while also producing great tone for studio recording. Birch was selected because it exhibits those qualities naturally, with an emphasis on high-end projection and low-end power. These drums have a matte-black finish to make them visually versatile as well. The hardware comprises black-chrome triple-flange steel hoops, tube lugs, and tension rods, as well as a black-chrome DW MAG magnetic throw-off and a 3P triple-position butt plate. Allan adds some subtle earthiness via brown leather badges, vent hole grommets, and lug gaskets. To enhance the drums' power and punch, Evans HD Dry batter heads are used, while top-quality Puresound wires ensure clean, crisp response. All Woodland Percussion snare drums feature offset 45-degree bearing edges with a slight 45-degree counter cut to create a sharp apex for minimal head-to-shell contact, which results in maximum attack and sustain.

Although aesthetically identical, the two Black Out Birch snares have shells of varying thicknesses. The 6x14 has a beefy .75"-thick shell, while the 5x13 is slightly thinner, at .5". Both drums possess explosive power, but Fausnaught likens the slightly more sensitive kick of the 13" to that of a firecracker while the 14" packs the wallop of a quarter stick of dynamite.

The Playing Experience

I would argue that there are no loud or quiet drums, only loud or quiet players. But some drums are built with a proclivity to favor one extreme or the other. I wouldn't go so far as to say that these Black Out Birch drums are designed exclusively for hard-hitters—they were amazingly sensitive and controlled at low volumes—but they definitely excelled when hit with a lot of force. Whereas a steel-shell drum might rely on brightness, ring, and high-end "ping" to cut through at high volumes, Woodland's stave birch shells exhibit their power via a dense, chesty, controlled punch. Even when tuned super tight, these drums sound full and balanced, with minimal overtone or discernable pitch. The 5x13 was a bit more articulate, as it took up a more focused band of frequencies and the snares responded with more immediacy. The 6x14 had a fatter tone while remaining very focused and punchy.

After sharing a demo video of these Black Out Birch snares with some drummer friends, one stated that they had the most definitive snare sound he'd ever heard. And that was with zero EQ, compression, or obsessive fine-tuning. Simply, they're just great snare drums that do exactly what they need to do to make every note heard clearly and strongly—nothing more, nothing less.

Michael Dawson





VIDEO DEMO
moderndrummer.com

Louson Drums

Standard and Pro Series CajonTab

Ultra-portable instruments with a ton of versatility.



Louson Drums is a small manufacturer in Pittsburgh whose primary products are the CajonTab and its related accessories. The CajonTab is a small, flat, lightweight cajon you wear on a strap. Louson makes several different styles and sizes. We were sent one of the standard 10" models with a birch ply frame and a mahogany/poplar top (\$179), as well as a Pro Series 12" model made of solid padauk (\$229). The standard birch model CajonTab is 3" thick, while the Pro Series drum is 4".

Construction

Each of our review models came with an external snare system that comprises a 10" sixteen-strand strainer attached to a flat piece of wood that's finished to match the cajon walls. The snares have elastic bands that slip over guitar pegs affixed to the side of the drum. This system allows the strainer to be rotated easily into or out of position. Additionally, each CajonTab is fitted with rotating port covers that allow you to vary the bass response.

Construction quality on both instruments was first-rate. Everything was smoothly finished with flawless joinery. The Pro Series model was particularly gorgeous, with the solid padauk timber providing a beautiful reddish hue.

In Use

You can wear the CajonTab over your shoulder like a guitar, but I preferred wearing the strap around my waist to put the drum in a more natural playing position.

The 10" drum had a musical Peruvian-style cajon sound when the port was open and the snares were rotated to the off position. It didn't produce massively deep bass notes, but there were some nice, round, woody-sounding tones centering in the lower-middle register. Slapping the upper corners elicited a crisp conga-like attack. When I closed the port, the tones tightened up considerably, echoing the timbre of a bongo. As I closed the port, the fundamental pitch lowered and the volume decreased, which provided a range of sound options for experimentation with different partially closed tones.

Engaging the snares, with the port open, yielded a useful sound similar to that of a traditional cajon but with less bass and volume and more responsive snares. This sound would serve you well whenever you need a snare cajon vibe in a much smaller and lighter package. Closing the port with the snares engaged produced one of the crispest snare sounds I've heard from any cajon.

The 12" Pro Series padauk model had about twice the volume and weight of its little brother,

plus a deeper and longer bass note. I generally preferred playing this model with the snare off, as it produced some really rich, organic tones. Again, closing the port tightened up the bottom end and brought out some resonant conga-like slaps when I struck the corners. Adding the snares gave a bright, responsive sound that was supported with some strong mid-bass tones. Closing the port while keeping the snares engaged added some extra snap.

Accessory Snares

Louson shipped the CajonTabs with a couple of accessories. The Shaker Snare (\$59) had a shaker built into the hollow wooden snare frame and produced a relatively subdued shaker sound. You could use this as a handheld shaker off the drum, or you could sway the CajonTab while playing to add an interesting rattle to your grooves. The Click Snare (\$49) had two pieces of hard maple attached to the front of the frame, which yielded a bright, cutting castanet sound when played.

Portable Bliss

I really enjoyed both of these CajonTab instruments. Their tones, with snares off or on, were surprisingly full for such small drums. For cajon players who want a really portable instrument, or for hand percussionists who want to add a cajon sound to their setup without having to transport a bulky regular version, these instruments would be a welcome addition. Visit lousondrums.com for more information.

Mark Parsons



CHERRY BOMB SYSTEM

VINTAGE
CONTROLLED
PRECISE

The Black Panther Design Lab Cherry Bomb system is a very unique sound for modern drums. Using all-cherrywood 1mm plies, the Cherry Bomb's focus is unmatched. High toms descend in 1/2" depths to retain their drive and punch in the music, producing an incredible vintage tone with the body of modern drums. The Cherry Bomb system is a hybrid of the classic sounds of beloved vintage drums, with modern hardware and cutting edge technology.



MAPEXDESIGNLAB.COM

Rancid's Branden Steineckert

We caught up with Utah-based drummer Branden Steineckert while he was on tour in Southern California with the legendary punk band Rancid. The snare on Branden's acrylic SJC tour kit—the same drum he used on Rancid's latest album—features Hoonigan Racing-themed custom wrap based on artwork used by professional rally car driver Ken Block. "I tend to like my snares to be visually fun," says Steineckert, "but I don't want it to compromise my sound at all. My favorite snares are usually metal, but SJC put a carbon-fiber shell on the inside, which makes it sound more like a metal drum."

Branden loves this kit so much that it's been his go-to for just about every project. "Why replace it," he says. "It sounds amazing, and I love the way it looks. I feel like I'm being greedy if I ask for new kits all the time, so I just roll with this one. And I have a hard time parting with my drums. They're like kids to me. I have a lot of memories and have done incredible things with each of them. The few drumsets that I've gotten rid of, I kind of wish I hadn't. But at the same time, you don't need to be a hoarder!"

If you take note of Steineckert's hi-hats in the photos, you'll see that they're positioned very high. The drummer even custom ordered an extra-long rod for his DW stand. "I always joke with people that they're not called 'low-hats,'" he says. This positioning goes back to how Branden learned to play, from watching his favorite drummers of the '90s, such as David Groh, who often kept his drums low and his cymbals very high. "It makes for more dramatic crashing," he says. "There's no such thing as a lazy day [with Rancid]. You've got to move and raise your arms above your head."

Having broken his tailbone when he was younger, Steineckert relies on the channeled Carmichael seat to relieve pressure on his spine. Branden was also in a car accident that caused injuries to both of his wrists, so he makes sure to put his hands in an ice-filled Yeti cooler after each show. "Yeah, it makes me feel old to have my gear revolve around my injuries!" [laughs]

Drums: SJC acrylic with frosted houndstooth pattern

A. 6.5x14 10-ply maple snare with 1-ply carbon-fiber drum on the inside

B. 7x12 tom

C. 12x14 floor tom

D. 14x16 floor tom

E. 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian

1. 14" A Custom hi-hats

2. 19" A Custom Projection crash

3. 23" A Sweet ride

4. 20" A Custom Projection crash

5. 20" A Custom EFX crash

Sticks: Vater Power 5B with nylon tips

Heads: Remo Emperor Coated snare batter and Ambassador Hazy snare side; Emperor Coated tom batters and Ambassador Clear tom resonants; Powerstroke P3 Clear bass drum batter and Ambassador Smooth White front. Snare and toms dampened with a single Moongel pad. Bass drum muffled with two Evans EQ pads on the inside.

Hardware: DW 9000 stands and pedals, Carmichael throne top on a DW base, Stanley fans, Yeti cooler, Vater stick holders, and a 25-ply "Never Give Up" Jeremy York tribute woodblock (mounted on bass drum hoop)

In-ear monitors: Ultimate Ears UE-11 Pro

Interview and photos by John Martinez





5

D

C

3

E

B

A

4

2

1

This Santa Monica Series DW Drumkit Could Be Yours!

Santa Monica Series

The original DW shell has returned. Hand-crafted from select North American Hard Rock Maple at DW's California Custom Shop and utilizing slightly thicker 1/32" veneers, these 6-ply shells are fitted with 6-ply reinforcement hoops and offer a resonant yet focused sound.

You could win this beautiful six-piece set in Butterscotch Lacquer Specialty finish with chrome hardware. The kit features natural satin bass drum hoops and comes with 8x10 and 8x12 toms, 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms, a 16x22 kick, and a 5x14 snare.

Enter today at
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Consumer Disclosure: 1. To enter, visit www.moderndrummer.com between the dates below and look for the DW Contest button (one entry per email address). 2. ODDS OF WINNING DEPEND ON THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE ENTRIES RECEIVED. 3. CONTEST BEGINS SEPTEMBER 1, 2019, AND ENDS NOVEMBER 30, 2019. 4. Prize Drawing: Winners will be selected by random drawing on December 4, 2019. Winners will be notified by phone or email on or about December 5, 2019. 5. Employees, and their immediate families, of Modern Drummer, Drum Workshop, and their affiliates are ineligible. 6. Sponsor is not responsible for lost, misdirected, and/or delayed entries. 7. Open to residents of the U.S. and Canada, 18 years of age or older. Void in Quebec, Canada; Florida; New York; and where prohibited by law. 8. One prize awarded per household per contest. 9. Prizes: One (1) winner will receive one (1) 6-piece DW kit with hardware as described above. Approximate retail value of prize: \$12,213.92. Approximate value of contest: \$12,213.92. Sponsored by Modern Drummer Publications, Inc., 271 Route 46 W, H-214, Fairfield, NJ 07004, 973-239-4140. 11. This game subject to the complete Official Rules. For a copy of the complete Official Rules or the winners' names, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Modern Drummer/DW/Official Rules/Winners List, 271 Route 46 W, H-214, Fairfield, NJ 07004. (Cymbals not included.)



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1969

The Shock of the New

One of the things that the vinyl resurgence has reminded us of is just how important LPs (or long-playing records) were to the evolution of music-making. Though the format was introduced twenty years earlier, it wasn't until the late '60s that contemporary musicians took full advantage of it, conceiving and recording music that benefitted greatly from the freedom that twenty uninterrupted minutes of listening time per side could bring.

As artists developed increasingly ambitious musical concepts, the challenges for instrument designers, engineers, composers, and instrumentalists increased as well. All these elements were pushing each other ever faster into the future, and by 1969, as societal changes raged in the background, full-length recordings were reflecting the remarkably broad and exciting range of ideas being generated by a fiercely exploratory generation of musicians.

A quick survey of albums released at the time gives us an immediate feel for the scope of creativity. Nineteen sixty-nine brought *Led Zeppelin II*, the legendary British band's still-fresh-sounding sophomore album. There was the Who's groundbreaking rock opera, *Tommy*. The Beatles' stunning *Abbey Road*. The

Temptations' psychedelic soul template, *Cloud Nine*. The Flying Burrito Brothers' country-rock Rosetta Stone, *The Gilded Palace of Sin*. Supergroup Blind Faith's sole, self-titled album. The MC5's unsurpassed musical detonation, *Kick Out the Jams*. The Meters' self-titled NoLa-funk masterstroke. The Rascals' double album *Freedom Suite*, which featured a *fourteen*-minute Dino Danelli drum solo. Frank Zappa's jazz-rock salvo, *Hot Rats*. Two albums each from Pink Floyd and the Grateful Dead (their most famously freaky releases, it must be said). *Three* albums each from British folk-rock pioneers Fairport Convention and San Francisco's swamp-rock kings Creedence Clearwater Revival. Debut albums by Santana, Chicago, the Allman Brothers, Johnny Winter, Can, Alice Cooper, Yes, Humble Pie, the Stooges, Neil Young, King Crimson, the Tony Williams Lifetime, and Crosby, Stills & Nash. And a slew of wildly experimental albums by Charlie Haden, Archie Shepp, Jan Garbarek, Chick Corea, Dewey Redman, John McLaughlin, and other jazz greats.

In the following pages, we'll look closely at some of the music and drumming from the period that has undeniably stood the test of time, and that continues to tweak the imaginations of players today.

Michael Shrieve

The Wunderkind of Woodstock

by Ken Micallef

Woodstock, the August 1969 rock festival that drew the largest audience for a concert event of that era, launched the careers of many music legends. San Francisco Latin-rock purveyors Santana, whose debut album had yet to be released before the event, practically became overnight sensations upon the release of the feature film immortalizing the festival.

Billed as “An Aquarian Exposition: 3 Days of Peace & Music,” Woodstock confirmed Santana’s reputation as a powerful live act owing much of its force to then twenty-year-old drummer Michael Shrieve and his kinetic solo

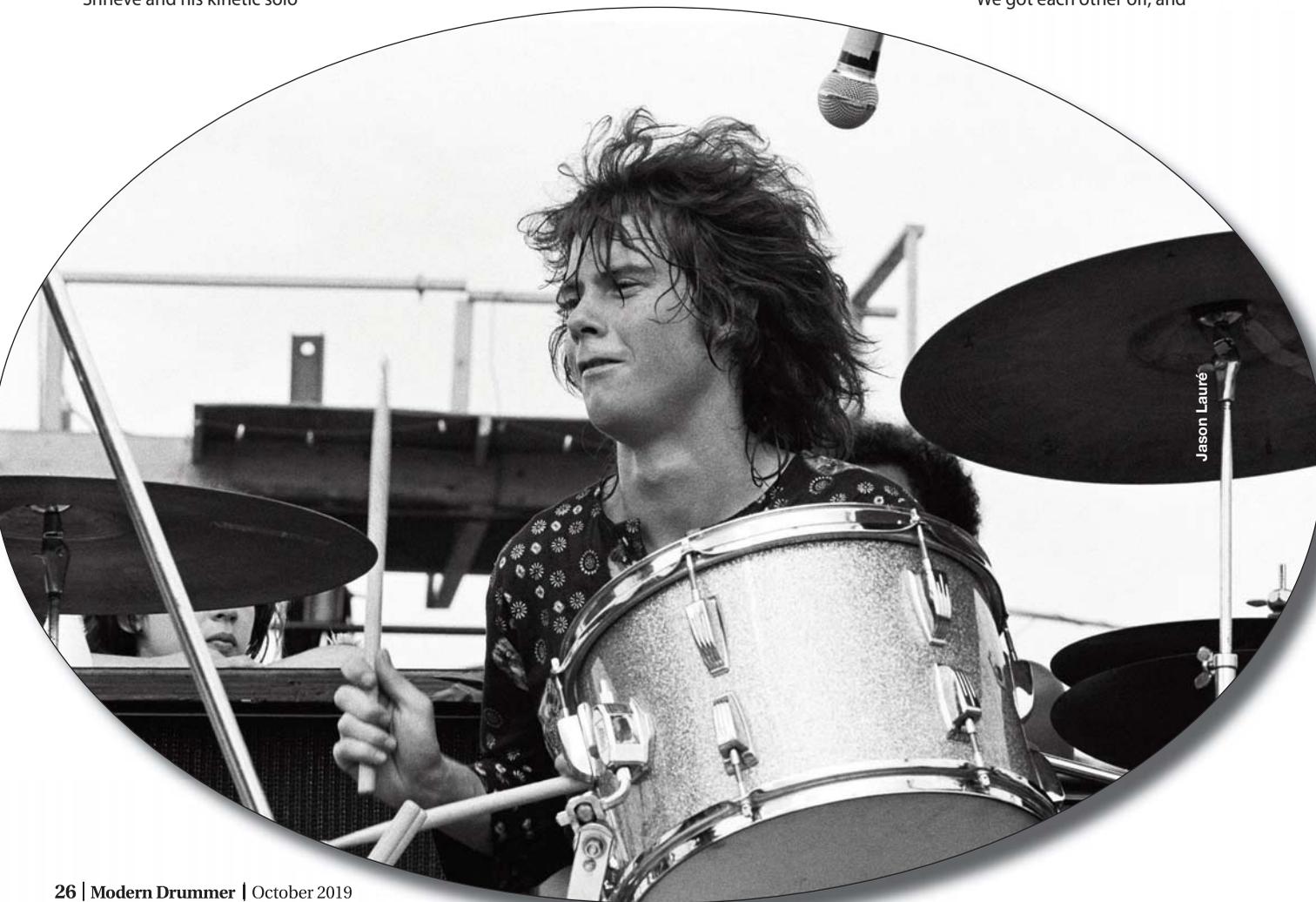
in “Soul Sacrifice.” Shrieve’s performance, even fifty years later, displays his palpable energy and extraordinary technique, as he blazes single-stroke rolls and fiery fusillades within a craftily arranged solo.

“We played a lot of festivals before Woodstock,” Shrieve recalls today. “When Woodstock came up it was... not to sound blasé... but it was just another festival, right? We had a week off before Woodstock, so we rented a house nearby and started rehearsing. Then we heard on TV about the incredible traffic on the freeways and interstates leading to the festival.”

Shrieve had logged time on the road in cover bands and in the San Mateo Community College big band before landing the drum chair with Santana. He purchased the 1967 champagne sparkle four-piece Ludwig kit featured at Woodstock while on the road out west. “Those were the first drums I ever bought,” Shrieve tells *MD*. “I had a couple Japanese snare drums, but my family couldn’t really afford a drumset. I went on tour with some band, and I bought those drums in North Dakota after saving up my per diem money. To this day I still love those drums. I auctioned them off a

couple years ago. [See sidebar.] Now they’re in the Musicians Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville, Tennessee.”

What was the vibe onstage at Woodstock playing to 400,000 music lovers, for which Santana received \$1,500 total? “Well, forget about the monitors,” he laughs. “Engineer Eddie Kramer told me it was crazy: there was no communication between the mobile recording truck and the musicians, and the miking setup was ridiculous. The thing that saved us sound-wise is that we were close together onstage. We always played to each other, and we were already a seasoned live band. We got each other off, and



that projected to the audience. It was perfect because we were a tribal band and the audience was feeling tribal. The percussion connected all of it. And the drums really helped those primal grooves. It was special for an unknown band to draw that kind of response from such a large audience."

Shrieve played most of his "Soul Sacrifice" solo with snares off, and then slapped them back on when the band returned to the song. "That's the sound that I wanted for that song," he explains. "I recorded it that way, and it blended with the two congas. Playing with the snares off made the solo more tribal. It was a very simple

to stand up and say, 'That's me!' and just sliding down in my seat.

"I was blown away," Shrieve continues. "The intensity of the band and the intensity of myself and the rapturous joy that I'm projecting and feeling... that's amazing. When I see the drum solo, I understand. But if I listen to it without the visual, I don't think much of it."

Shrieve continued to use his champagne sparkle Ludwig set for years, including at Santana's performance following Woodstock in Tanglewood, New York, where he played an even greater drum solo (viewable on YouTube). Did the smaller Ludwig kit and lighter hardware

of playing. I'm not a heavy rock drummer whatsoever. I have a lighter touch."

The original Santana band reconvened in 2016 and released the album *Santana IV*. The reformed band played only three shows, which Shrieve remains displeased about. Perhaps a better, more satisfying document is the Santana reunion record that doesn't feature the band's namesake guitarist, 1997's *Abraxas Pool*. Featuring former Santana members Shrieve, guitarist Neal Schon, keyboardist/singer Gregg Rolie, bassist Alphonso Johnson (replacing David Brown), and percussionists José "Chepito"

The seventy-year-old Shrieve has also recently recorded albums with Seattle-area band Spellbinder and freeform collective Trilon, and he recently toured with Estás Tonne, a Russian guitarist whose career has taken him from the streets of New York to international concert halls. "He's a beautiful player and sets a mood that I really relate to," Shrieve says. "We played together at Benaroya Hall in Seattle, and he's invited me to join him for performances in Moscow and Saint Petersburg."

Shrieve's jazz-influenced, world-focused drumming provided the rhythmic lift that gave Santana its spiritual center.

The Drums that Roared

On May 20, 2017, the Ludwig four-piece champagne sparkle drumkit played by Michael Shrieve at Woodstock garnered \$187,500 in auction at the Hard Rock Café in New York City's Times Square. Martin J. Nolan, executive director of Julien's Auctions, directed the event and sorted out the details. "Woodstock had a huge impact on the auction value of [Shrieve's] drums," Nolan states, "but bidders also considered that it was Santana and that Michael Shrieve, at age twenty, was the youngest artist to perform at Woodstock on August 16, 1969. Shrieve's ten-minute drum solo during Santana's 'Soul Sacrifice' has gone down as legend in music history."

Did the condition of the drums matter in this instance? "Bidders always consider condition," Nolan says, "but in this situation they flocked to this auction for the opportunity to own an amazing piece of pop culture history. It was so amazing to have Michael Shrieve in the auction gallery reflecting on how he worked so hard to be able to purchase this drumkit in North Dakota in the late '60s, enabling him to create so many happy memories for fans worldwide to this day."

Shrieve's champagne sparkle Ludwig set consisted of a 5.5x14 Supraphonic 400 chrome snare drum, a 9x13 mounted tom, a 16x16 floor tom, and a 14x22 bass drum. His Avedis Zildjian cymbals included 14" hi-hats, a 20" ride cymbal with rivets, and an 18" crash with rivets. His choice of stick was Regal Tip 5A.

Today Shrieve uses DW drums and hardware, Istanbul Agop cymbals, and Remo heads.

groove; I followed the bass later in the song. I started playing the song with the snares on *after* Woodstock, and I think that actually sounded better."

The Santana band, including Shrieve, saw the *Woodstock* movie one year later in New York City. Stardom was right around the corner. "I remember standing outside the theater when the people coming out who'd just seen it started pointing at us. That was the first time we were recognized as a whole band. The movie was unbelievable. We had no idea that it looked or sounded like that and/or how the drum solo was going to be edited [by, among others, Martin Scorsese], so I was filled with emotions. I was caught between wanting

of the era withstand Santana's hectic touring schedule? "They were fine," Shrieve replies, "including the Ludwig Speed King pedal. I want to get back to that kind of simplicity as opposed to everything being over engineered as it is nowadays. And there's something to like about a four-piece drumset, which is very comfortable. Although I'm playing a five-piece now, those were my first drums. When I was younger, I was very intimate with them. And I'm going back to those old stands. In fact, companies are making those lighter stands again.

"Concerts weren't as loud then," Shrieve continues. "Now the volume level is unhealthy. Also, it doesn't work for my style

Areas and Mike Carabello, the musicians reanimated the soaring spiritual music at which the original band excelled.

Shrieve continued in that vein with his 2006 album, *Drums of Compassion*, on which he was joined by drummer/percussionists Jack DeJohnette, Zakir Hussain, Pete Lockett, Babatunde Olatunji, and Airtio Moriera, Chapman Stick/Warr Guitar player Trey Gunn, electronic artist Amon Tobin, and saxophonist Skerik. "I wanted to make music that you could listen to at two in the morning, following the concept of ambient synthesis," Shrieve explains. "For one song I had sixteen drums in a semi-circle, played standing up, more like a pulse than a groove."

He continued that pursuit in projects as diverse as 1981's *Novo Combo*, 1989's *Stiletto* (with Mark Isham, David Torn, Andy Summers, and Terje Gewelt), 1995's *Two Doors* (with Jonas Hellborg, Shawn Lane, Bill Frisell, and Wayne Horvitz), and 2005's *Oracle* (with Amon Tobin). "As a musician I want to assist in that creative space where people can come in and feel completely washed and cleansed, like a spiritual shower," he says. "Let go of all the illusions that are around us in terms of what to believe, who to believe in, where to go. It's very difficult now to know what's real—you have to go inside yourself to find that. I'd like to be a part of music that helps people to do that."



Led Zeppelin II

In the fifty years since Led Zeppelin roared onto the scene, much has been made of their being ground zero for “heavy rock.” But since day 1, Zeppelin’s bold amalgamation of blues, folk, and world styles, coupled with their fearless invention, has astounded and influenced musicians from every genre imaginable. Case in point, the three pro drummers we speak to this month about

Zeppelin’s classic second album—Mastodon’s **Brann Dailor**, former Train member **Drew Shoals**, and Zep singer Robert Plant’s current sticksman, **John Blease**. While each of these players was intimately aware of the contributions of the band’s drummer, John Bonham, none imagined the circumstances under which he’d one day have to contend with it. Here’s what they learned.

by David Ciauro

Led Zeppelin II was released on October 22, 1969. Although initially panned by some critics, the album became the band’s first number-one album, dethroning the Beatles’ *Abbey Road*. Over 12 million copies have since been sold, and the album is acclaimed as one of the most foundational and influential hard rock albums ever released.

Imagine slapping on the headphones that fall afternoon, dropping the needle, and hearing the opening notes of “Whole Lotta Love” for the first time. Thirty-three seconds later, the listener meets the majesty of John Bonham’s famous drum sound and deep pocket, fueled by a lead foot, playing on the very last sliver of a quarter-note’s value, and with such graceful momentum in his hands pushing the songs forward. Bonzo’s touch on the

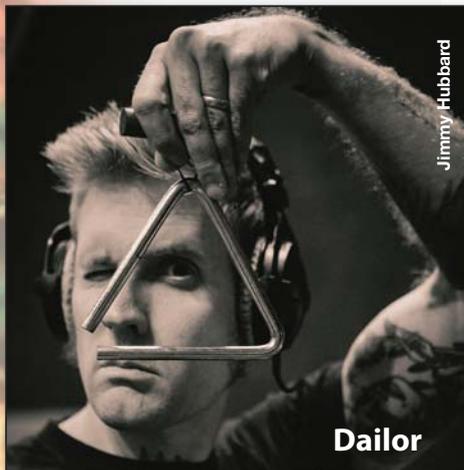
drums was such that he simultaneously caressed and thwacked, creating grooves that told a story.

John Bonham was a rhythmic narrator, and boy did his words carry weight. Led Zeppelin’s name was apropos, as their songs carried seriously paradoxical weight. They were big personalities that emitted an energy as a collective that was intangible—thus the band became untouchable. That’s how Zeppelin was “heavy.”

Led Zeppelin II had no shortage of songs that cascaded the sonic spectrum, be it bluesy, folky, tender, or rockin’, and their stamp left a permanent imprint on music. Solo vehicle “Moby Dick” may have tattooed the drummer’s fate by showcasing his insane ability, but interestingly enough, when you ask

drummers about their favorite Zeppelin song, “Moby Dick” often isn’t a top choice. This probably says less about that particular song’s shortcomings than the peerless song chops of the band’s drummer. That’s how John Bonham was “heavy.”

Indeed, although Bonham could solo with the best of them, what truly made him great was how well he played with the band. The interplay between John Paul Jones and Jimmy Page, and how Bonzo expertly crafted drum parts, enhanced the songs and cradled Robert Plant’s voice. Each band member was certainly a master of his craft, but Zeppelin didn’t ascend to godlike status because of their individual virtuosity; they claimed the throne because they wrote great music together and because of how they played together,



Dailor



Shoals



Blease

a magical essence that simply cannot be replicated.

To pay tribute to John Bonham on the fiftieth anniversary of *Led Zeppelin II*, we sought three drummers who are admittedly not Bonham-esque in their playing style, but who can share three unique insights and experiences on how this particular album made a profound impact on their lives.

Drew Shoals was Train's drummer between 2014 and 2018. Growing up in Portland, Oregon, in the 1990s, Shoals was raised mostly on hip-hop and alternative rock. While he was obviously familiar with Led Zeppelin and respected others' reverence for Bonham, he hadn't exactly spent his formative years obsessed with Bonzo or Led Zeppelin. But during Shoals' time with Train, singer Pat Monahan, who began his singing career doing Zeppelin covers in bar bands in Erie, Pennsylvania, wanted to pay homage to his favorite band. So in 2016, Train entered the studio to record a front-to-back cover of *Led Zeppelin II*.

Shoals was excited and honored to be part of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, but he was also acutely aware of the potential criticism he faced, especially in the age of social media and YouTube commentary. "These are songs that inspired a couple of generations' worth of musicians to get behind a kit, front bands, and pick up guitars and basses," Shoals tells *MD*. "So I was excited but super intimidated. For Pat, this was his way to pay homage to his favorite band. For me, I definitely had that moment of thinking, *Oh crap, now everyone's going to say, 'This guy thinks he's better than Bonham!'* which was not at all what I was thinking! I was excited to grow from the experience and just do the best that I could to honor his legacy."

The idea to cover the album came together quickly, and Shoals had only two weeks or so to prepare for the recording session. Although he had the ability to transcribe every tune, he chose to connect more with the intention of each song, and did so by playing and listening to the record over and over. "I sat with the music as much as I could and tried to internalize the spirit of what the beats were about," explains Shoals. "And I tried to stay as true as I could to the parts. Doing a deep dive into this album and analyzing everything, it became very clear that Bonham was influenced by jazz, R&B, and early rock 'n' roll and developed his own sound as a result. That subtle triplet-y swagger he



had in his grooves, the slight chatter on the snare, and the steady hi-hats—all that nuance is what stands out. It's almost like slowed-down James Brown grooves, but in a rock setting."

Mastodon's Brann Dailor recently spoke to us about his band's cover of "Stairway to Heaven," which appeared on *Led Zeppelin IV*, recorded as a tribute to their manager, Nick John, who passed away from pancreatic cancer earlier this year. Mastodon is known primarily for their intense genre-bending brand of metal and classic prog, with Dailor leading the charge with fierce intensity, blazing single-stroke tom fills, and ghost notes galore. The band's late manager was a Led Zeppelin fanatic and always affectionately referred to Mastodon as "his Led Zeppelin." We asked Brann why their manager drew such comparisons, when the bands don't have much in common on the surface. "He had it worked out in his mind as to why we were his Led Zeppelin, but I think that he thought that we were four very individual characters, and that for some reason the sum of all our parts is what made Mastodon special," says Dailor. "Something about our musicianship, and he felt that we were a sincere group of guys who, when we got in a room together, there was something magical that happened. That's what he felt was so special about Zeppelin."

As for Dailor himself, he was introduced to *Led Zeppelin II* as a toddler, but he was

more enthralled at that time by Jimmy Page's guitar alchemy. "My mom was in a cover band when I was a kid, and they did some Zeppelin covers, including 'Whole Lotta Love' and 'Ramble On,'" reminisces Dailor. "Most of my musical memories as a child are my mom's band rehearsing in our basement. In particular, I remember 'Whole Lotta Love' because of the mid-section guitar swells and wails—*eeerrrrnnnn!* That was something my young ears latched onto. Oddly enough, even though I was drawn to the drums from a young age, I don't even remember 'Moby Dick' being something that caught my attention until I was a teenager, when I saw the live solo of Bonham. Then my jaw dropped."

John Blease has been playing drums with Robert Plant and the Sensational Space Shifters since May 2018. Getting the gig with Plant wasn't sealed by any attempt to be a Bonham clone. In fact, it was his roots in jazz and his deep connection to the history of Zeppelin's songs that made him Plant's first choice. Blease always had an affinity for *Led Zeppelin II* and considers it an honor to be part of the Zeppelin lineage in a small way. Robert and the band always incorporate Zeppelin songs into their live shows, and in true Robert Plant fashion, the songs and arrangements are continually evolving. "We play quite a lot of the songs off of *Led Zeppelin II*," says Blease, "so it's probably easier to say what we currently *don't* do, which would be

'Heartbreaker,' 'Moby Dick,' and 'Living Loving Maid.' Although we do play a lot of the songs from the album, we don't play them like they were then. They've evolved. Robert's not interested in recreating the past. He's all about being inspired in the now, and he wants to be surrounded by musicians he feels will inspire him and offer up new ideas."

The desire to seek inspiration is a large part of what made the songs on *Led Zeppelin II* so meaningful. The band was not only influenced by music but by landscapes. When you listen to "Ramble On," you can envision the lush scenery of

Tolkien's shire. Zeppelin didn't just blow your mind musically, they took you on an earthly journey. They were individually elemental and collectively otherworldly. "I

Super Deluxe II



Courtesy Atlantic Records

In 2014, Rhino Records issued remastered and expanded versions of the first three Led Zeppelin albums, including this Super Deluxe Edition of *II*, which includes the two-CD edition, the double 180-gram vinyl LP pressing, access to downloadable high-def digital audio, a hard-bound eighty-page book, and a high-quality print of the original album cover. While the improved sound quality is notable and the extra tracks are quite interesting to hear, the book is perhaps just as illuminating, containing as it does a wealth of previously unseen photos, including fascinating shots of Bonham and his bandmates in the studio. One in particular shows bassist/keyboardist John Paul Jones on bongos, singer Robert Plant on tambourine, and Bonham on congas, putting down a live percussion take at A&M Studios, perhaps for overdubs on "Whole Lotta Love." Another is a wide-angle view of Olympic Studios, showing John's unmanned four-piece drumkit, adorned merely with hi-hats, a crash, and a ride cymbal. One message, at least, is clear: with the right musicians, it doesn't require a ton of gear to create a massive, historic rumble.

think perhaps that's what's important about bands like Zeppelin and albums like *Led Zeppelin II*," says Blease. "They were absolutely fearless in their choices. Music is a living,

breathing thing. Listening to albums like *Led Zeppelin II* makes me remember all the good things about life."



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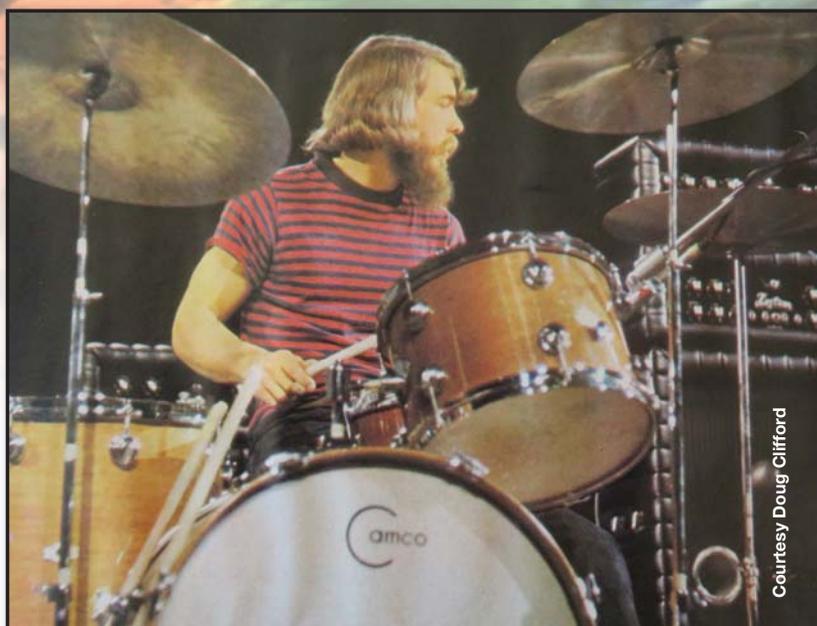
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Creedence Clearwater Revival's Doug Clifford



CCR played so many concerts and scored so many hits in the late '60s, you could easily have missed the fact that they somehow weren't included in the classic audio and visual documents of the Woodstock generation. Patrick Berkery gets the story.

The workload is much lighter these days than it was fifty years ago for former Creedence Clearwater Revival drummer Doug Clifford. And it's about to get lighter. Once Clifford and former CCR bassist Stu Cook wrap their scheduled 2019 dates with Creedence Clearwater Revisited—the band they started twenty-five years ago, not long after John Fogerty refused to perform with his former bandmates at their Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony—the group is retiring from touring.

Given the breakneck pace at which CCR operated in 1969, it's a wonder Clifford and Cook are still out on the road fifty years later. Just contemplating how much work the band put in over the course of those 365 days is exhausting. They released three classic Top-10 albums—*Bayou Country*, *Green River*, and *Willy and the Poor Boys*—and toured behind each; they cut the hugely successful double A-side single “Travelin’ Band”/“Who’ll Stop the Rain” (released in January of 1970); and they performed a late-night headline set at the generation-defining Woodstock festival.

“I asked John, ‘Why are we doing so much?’” Clifford says when questioned about the band’s Herculean 1969 workload. “His answer was, ‘If we’re ever off the charts, we’ll be forgotten.’ I didn’t necessarily agree with what he was saying. Other bands took some time off and when they’d come back, they’d be in the charts, but if that’s what he wanted done, we could do it. We had a work ethic that was second to none. We were lunch pail guys.”

That work ethic served CCR well as the band was faced with one obstacle after another as they tried to make it to the stage at Woodstock on August 16, 1969. After taking a redeye flight from Los Angeles to New York, plans to take a connecting flight upstate were scuttled due to road closures caused by overflow traffic. Instead the band members crammed into helicopters for white-knuckle rides to Yasgur’s Farm. Upon arriving at the concert site, they were greeted by a muddy, chaotic scene, and a crowd of nearly a half million people that Clifford says had been basically lulled to sleep by the Grateful Dead, who performed just before CCR.

“They were acid’d out and pretty boring,” Clifford says, recalling

the Dead’s Woodstock set. “They finished with a forty-five-minute ‘Turn on Your Love Light,’ and there was never a pocket in it. It was just awful. It was pretty difficult to come into that situation. Everybody was pretty beat from two days of what they were going through—the weather, and all the things that happen when you have six times more people than you had allotted for.

“And there were so many distractions. We barely had a line check; half the stuff wasn’t working. But I had adrenaline in me. That’s how it was back then. I was always the guy who drove the band. That was my style. That’s what my job was. I was charged. In the DVD you’ll see me with my Mickey Mouse t-shirt on, pounding the shit out of my Paiste cymbals and Camco drums.”

The DVD Clifford is referring to is *Woodstock: 40th Anniversary Edition, the Director’s Cut*—not the blockbuster, Academy Award-winning film released in 1970 and seen by millions in theaters and on television in the years since. While the 2009 DVD release featured howling versions of three classic CCR tunes—“Born on the Bayou,” “I Put a Spell on You,” and “Keep on Chooglin’”—the bulk of the band’s hour-long set has been kept in the vaults all these years because John Fogerty felt the band didn’t play well at Woodstock. Consequently they also didn’t appear on the original documentary’s famous soundtrack LP. (At press time, the August 2 release of the CD/LP *Live at Woodstock*, featuring the band’s complete set, was announced.)

“I always wanted to be in the movie, but John said no because we didn’t play well,” Clifford says. “[John’s] answer was that it was us—Stu, Tom [Fogarty, CCR rhythm guitarist], and me. It was always us with John; it was never him. But I know we played well, especially given the conditions. There’s a million excuses—we were tired or whatever, the stage sound wasn’t great. But it was the same playing field for everyone. It was something all the bands had to deal with. At the end of the day, it was really one of the most amazing things that I’ve ever participated in. I was just glad to be a part of it.”

Doug Clifford plays DW drums and Paiste cymbals and uses Evans heads and Vic Firth sticks.



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Tony Williams

at a Jazz Crossroads

by Jeff Potter

Nineteen sixty-nine America was a turbulent time, rumbling underfoot with the quakes of change. In that year, Tony Williams' drumming graced two significant and dramatically different albums. On his final recording with Miles Davis, *In a Silent Way*, he would lay down the most minimal performance he ever

committed to tape. On the other LP, *Emergency!*, which debuted his trio the Tony Williams Lifetime, Tony delivered some of the most muscular, unbridled cyclone-drumming of his career. Yet as polar as those recordings are, both became watersheds with long-term influences that opened the doors for jazz fusion.

During his years with Miles Davis, beginning in 1963 at age seventeen, Tony Williams radically changed jazz drumming. His astonishing six-and-a-half-year stint with the iconic trumpet player shook up previous concepts of straight-ahead jazz drumming with his blistering, independent conversational slipstream. In 1969, he would trailblaze once again with his merging of rock and soul elements into jazz.

As Miles' youngest sideman, Tony had been reared in the rock generation, persistently turning Miles on to current sounds, including Jimi Hendrix and Cream, and had dropped a copy of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* into his hands. Also coaxing Miles was sideman Herbie Hancock, as well as his girlfriend-later-wife of the time, R&B vocalist Betty Mabry, who hipped the trumpeter to funk-rockers like Sly Stone. As *In a Silent Way* and subsequent LPs would prove, Miles was absorbing these new inspirations and filtering them through his own vision.

In the mid '60s, Miles released a string of increasingly progressive classic LPs for

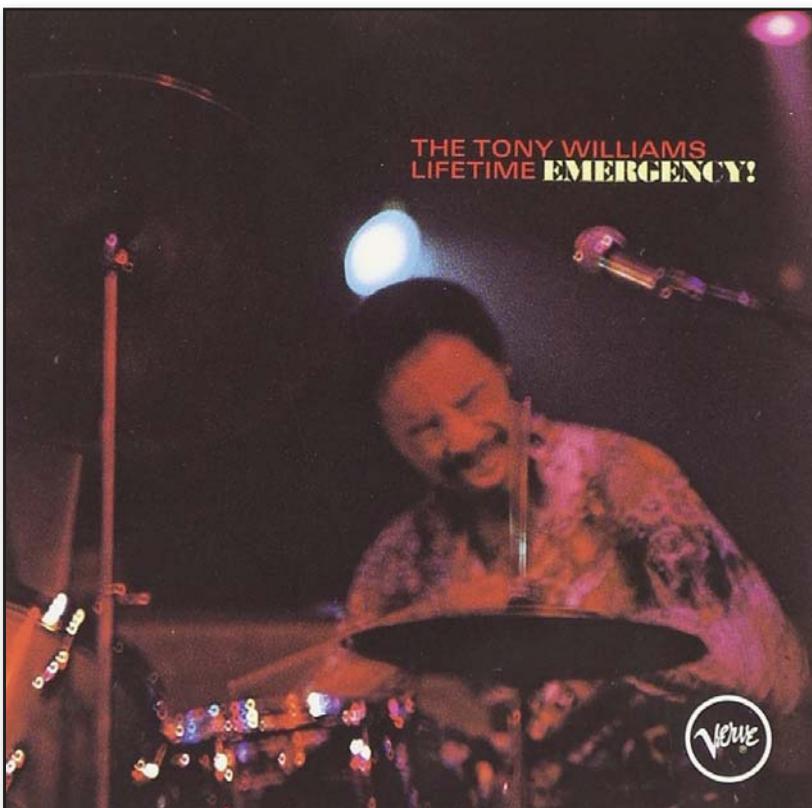
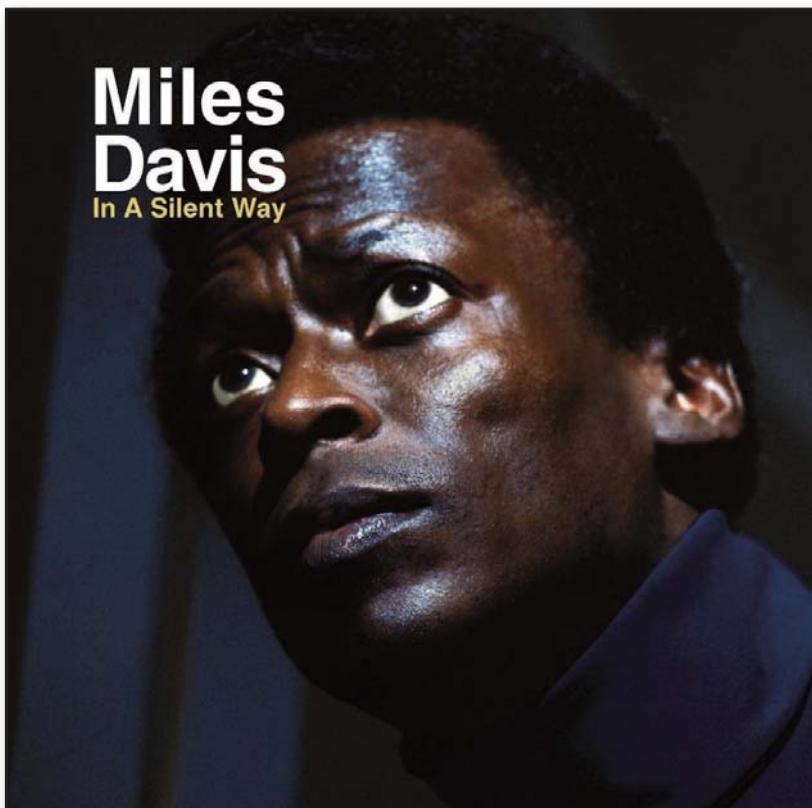
Columbia Records with his young virtuoso band, who were informally dubbed the Second Great Quintet: tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, bassist Ron Carter, pianist Herbie Hancock, and Williams. But with the arrival of the *In a Silent Way* sessions, Miles' unorthodox choice of format made it clear that he was searching beyond the pioneering quintet for an even greater departure. The new octet featured Williams, Shorter, bassist Dave Holland, and electric guitarist John McLaughlin, along with three electric pianists: Chick Corea, Joe Zawinul (who also played organ), and Hancock. The result is a confirmed classic and one of the major turning points of Miles' catalog.

Yet its release sparked divisiveness in Miles fandom. Ironically, what naysayers favoring the pre-*In a Silent Way* Miles didn't realize was that this shift was merely a ripple in a koi pond compared to the tsunami soon to come: the thoroughly radical and divisive electric excursion, *Bitches Brew*, being recorded (August 19–21, 1969) even as they sulked.

The *In a Silent Way* tracks were cut in a

single day (February 18, 1969). Each side of the LP featured one extended track, both exuding a mystical, meditative aura. No longer is there a lead "head" melody and a chord cycle that is improvised upon. In fact, on the A side, "Shhh/Peaceful," there is no defined melody (only a respiced-in segment taken from a trumpet solo). With exposition cast aside, the musical focus turns to sitting in various minimal grooves in open-ended forms. The rhythm section development unfurls very gradually and ever so subtly while the keyboards and guitar build layers of color, harmonies, and skittering percussive runs. Holland leans long on a simple rhythmic bass pedal while Tony introduces a subtle locomotion, playing hi-hat 16ths for a full six minutes before a brief dropout and then resumes. Eight minutes in, Holland gets funkier and Tony responds, increasing the open/closed variations of the hi-hat. The band sculpts a mesmerizing arc over a nearly eighteen-minute span without Tony straying far from his hi-hat commitment.

Side B, "In a Silent Way/It's About That Time," once again emerges with a pedal



point, with McLaughlin stating the title tune's melody, composed by Zawinul, in a wandering, almost folkloric drone. In the 2001 box set *The Complete in a Silent Way Sessions*, a rehearsal reel reveals the band playing this segment in time with numerous chord changes while Tony plays a simple cross-stick pattern suggesting a bossa-ish groove. But in the final version the chord changes are minimized, Tony lays out, and the theme is played rubato. Tony instead transfers the use of cross-stick to the following "It's About That Time" segment, this time stripping down to a simple but urgent all-quarters pattern.

As the collective improvisation unfolds, Tony subtly fills the quarters in with 8ths, varying between hi-hat, snare taps, and a stick-on-cross-stick flam effect, building tension over a long trajectory. Finally, a repetitive bluesy soul organ/bass riff is introduced. Not until passing the thirteen-minute mark does Tony finally uncork the pressure, exploding into the full kit with a big wide cymbal ride and rollicking syncopated rock-soul groove. The track winds back down until the opening rubato section is spliced back in as a finale. The album shared the methods of rock records in itself: the keep-the-tape-rolling session was edited, spliced, and also resequenced by producer Teo Macero to create a new tableau—a highly unorthodox practice in jazz at the time.

It's unclear whether Miles had given a minimalist directive to Tony or if he was just feeling it. Certainly Miles' own soloing was also unusually reserved and the bass lines both simplified and repetitive—a soul/rock influence that would escalate on future albums. Either way, the drumming choices are ideal for complementing a canvas that's ethereal yet grooving in its own organic, idiosyncratic way. Some devotees consider the disc to be the beginning of Miles' "electric period," though in fact electric instruments had been introduced into previous Miles discs. Others consider it to be the first fusion album. But the demarcation cannot be so specific; the disc did not appear from a void. One thing is clear: the classic is certainly a bridge, a decisive statement that Miles was moving on. In truth, the alluring unexpected beauty of the disc is

Tony Williams

that it exists on its own plane, an anomaly in the extensive Miles catalog.

Transitions

The sessions would eventually reveal themselves to be the nexus of what would become the more clearly defined fusion genre, marked by a thoroughly electric sound infused with rhythmic complexity and unfettered ultra-chops. In addition to Tony, other sidemen from the sessions would also become spearheads of the fusion genre: McLaughlin with the Mahavishnu Orchestra, Corea with Return to Forever, Zawinul with Weather Report, and Hancock with his Headhunters.

Attentive Miles fans would have noticed that well before *In a Silent Way*, Tony had been planting rock/soul-influenced seeds on previous Second Great Quintet releases (and on the 1964 title track of Hancock's *Cantaloupe Island*). On *E.S.P.* (1965), Tony dabbled with these elements on "Eighty-One," suggesting a jazzy variation of a boogaloo beat—the mix of soul with a Latin influence—playing a straight-8ths groove leaning towards 2 and the "and" of 3. Still, it lies well within the jazz drumming vocabulary of the day; notable examples include the similarly influenced grooves Billy Higgins played on Hancock's "Watermelon Man" and Lee Morgan's "The Sidewinder." But things become more forward-looking on "Stuff," from *Miles in the Sky* (July 1968).

Laying it down in tandem with the rare instance of Carter using electric bass, Tony

"It's unclear whether Miles had given a minimalist directive to Tony on *In a Silent Way* or if he was just feeling it. Either way, the drumming choices are ideal for complementing a canvas that's ethereal yet grooving in its own organic, idiosyncratic way."

plays an even firmer soul-derived groove bridged with hellacious over-the-bar fills and adventurous variations. But a truly decisive leap is heard on "Frelon Brun" from *Filles de Kilimanjaro* (1968). Tony is still playing on his beloved pre-Lifetime small Gretsch kit with an 18" bass drum, but a more aggressive sound, energy, and concept have emerged. Taking a cue from Clyde Stubblefield's groove on James Brown's "Cold Sweat," Tony turbo-charges it via adventurous variations, furiously filling around his patterns as Carter grounds it with his broken 8th-note bass pattern. The stage was set for Tony's next moves.

Even before the *Silent Way* sessions, Tony was itching to fly the Miles nest. In sum, he felt that jazz itself was in a bubble. Reflecting on that transitional previous year, Tony told *DownBeat* in a 1970 interview, "I had to find something completely different to throw myself into... It would be disastrous for me to try to get a group, a quintet, saxophone, and make nice pleasant records..." And recalling first hearing the Jimi Hendrix Experience's *Are You Experienced*, he added, "The sound of it, you know, with all that electricity... not presence electricity but amplified electricity, the sound of the guitars, and that started to excite me..."

Emergency!

Departing from Miles, the restless drummer formed the Tony Williams Lifetime, featuring McLaughlin and organist phenom Larry Young (credited as Khalid Yasin), and



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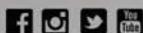


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Tony Williams

promptly recorded *Emergency!* Completed in two days (May 26 and 28, 1969) and released later that year, the Polydor Records double LP was a daring blast-furnace session destined to be a seminal fusion/jazz-rock landmark. Although Miles' *Bitches Brew* has received greater acknowledgment as a fusion genesis, *Emergency!* was recorded three months prior.

The album opens with Tony playing a pressed roll swelling into an aggressive solo flurry, followed by bracing distorted/saturated guitar and organ chords. They dive into a brawny, edgy swing, but the *sound* is not swing, especially as the guitar explodes into crunching aggression and Tony lowers the hammer, hitting all fours on the snare under an ensemble riff.

As *Emergency!* unfolds, Tony unleashes fiery rock/soul-based grooves interconnected with continuous cascades of fills and flourishes, somewhere between prog-rock and free jazz. "Sangria for Three" gets into funk-rock territory, while "Via the Spectrum Road" explores a cosmic blues in 11/8. And on "Vashkar," Tony takes his explosive multilevel barrage to its apex with an almost continuous drum-solo-groove flow. In a bracing finale, the avant-garde-ish head of "Something Special" gives way to a repetitive riff in six for Tony to feverishly solo over.

Whereas its harmonies are pulled from jazz, the rock element of *Emergency!* is primarily in its defiant energy, loud electric sound, power soloing from all members, and rock/soul-derived grooves. The twenty-

three-year-old drummer's stunning, ecstatic performance screams, "Liberation!"

Several cuts include Tony's oddly lacking vocals and awkward lyrics. But those passages are brief, and their quiriness can be forgiven in context of the unapologetic go-for-it spirit of *Emergency!*

In a 2008 *Modern Drummer* interview, John McLaughlin reminisced about his experiences playing with Tony: "I learned to stay on my toes. The way he felt time was wonderful. His groove was just amazing, but he had a sense of dynamics that was revolutionary. And he taught me a lot about phrasing. He was a very honest musician, just like Miles."

The liner notes from the album's later reissue on CD cite an oft-repeated tale that the frequently distorted audio quality of *Emergency!* was due to careless engineers unused to such high volumes on a jazz recording. But that seems highly unlikely since there would be numerous playbacks over the course of a double-LP session. More likely, upon hearing playback results—whether initially a mistake or not—Tony went with his rock-inspired instincts and let the meters ride hard into the red.

Impressions

Despite the initial controversies, *In a Silent Way* was a commercial success that reaped steadily increasing crossover appeal with new, younger audiences, bolstered by the emergence of FM/college radio formats. And while *Emergency!* largely earned

critical praise, it faltered commercially. The following two Lifetime releases struggled even further.

Oddly, some jazz purists accused Tony of "selling out" because he dared to consort with rock. "Everything I've done," Tony told *MD* in 1984, "I've done because I enjoyed doing it. Also, I didn't want to repeat what I had already done." Tony further recalled that when he was with Miles, he had a Beatles poster on his wall. "When I was with Miles," he explained, "I was seventeen... so why would people find it odd that I like that music? When I was growing up I would watch *American Bandstand* when I came home from school. I was leading two lives." Trumpeter Wallace Roney, who was a member of Tony's mid-'80s quintet, said in a 2008 *DownBeat* tribute issue, "He felt the critics never credited him for being the innovative jazz drummer he was, the one who started fusion."

Regardless of Tony's dispiritedness on this account, drummer Lenny White offered a wider perspective on potential music-genre debates. As a drummer who professed to be highly influenced by Tony—and who along with Jack DeJohnette and Don Alias succeeded Tony to perform on *Bitches Brew*—White gave the ultimate accolade to the groundbreaking drummer. Following Tony's death in 1997, he told *MD* in a tribute issue, "Tony transcended any kind of music he played, and the music became 'Tony Williams Music,' whether it was rock 'n' roll, fusion, or jazz."



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WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT...?

Bruce Rowland



Michael Shrieve's career-defining solo in Santana's "Soul Sacrifice" wasn't the only incident of musical and drumming alchemy at the Woodstock music and arts festival in August 1969.

by Will Romano

Drummer Bruce Rowland, of Joe Cocker's Grease Band, rode a magic carpet of beats and grooves, contributing to one of the most transcendent moments of the entire mud-splattered weekend at Yasgur's farm, in Bethel, New York. While Cocker's soulful vibrato, exaggerated air-guitar pantomimes, and otherwise awkward body twitching nearly stole the show, an understated Rowland displayed finesse, passion, and effortless stick control, helping to ignite plucky, rousing renditions of Dylan's "Dear Landlord," Dave Mason's "Feelin' Alright?," and the timeless classic "Hitchcock Railway."

Noted *Rolling Stone* magazine scribe David Fricke, all of seventeen years of age when he witnessed Cocker's Sunday afternoon set, wrote in the liner notes to Atlantic Records' 1994

four-CD Woodstock box set, "The impatient, circular rush of the drums, guitar, and organ at the end [of 'With a Little Help from My Friends'], accelerating into an orgasmic blur, remains one of the original triple-LP set's underrated highlights."

As one of the greatest vocal interpreters of his generation, Cocker, post-Woodstock, scaled the upper echelon of pop stardom, while facing the challenges of maintaining sobriety. Conversely, Rowland diversified, racking up numerous recording and touring credits through his extensive work in the pop, folk, blues-rock, and rock worlds. In fact, in the ten-year period beginning in 1969, Rowland went from experiencing the highs of captivating hundreds of thousands of attendees at the Counterculture's defining

event to accepting a lump-sum payment to abandon recording, due to dwindling sales figures.

Through it all Rowland's supportive spirit remained intact. He encouraged musicians in and around his native London and became a mentor to a young Phil Collins, years prior to the drumming frontman's stellar career in Genesis and as an international pop idol.

Story goes that after hearing a demo tape of Collins singing, Rowland suggested to him that he should be a vocalist, not a drummer. In his 2016 memoir, *Not Dead Yet*, Collins confirms that he regularly received Rowland's wisdom, and even went so far as to purchase the sage's Gretsch drums, as if to absorb their energy. "[It's a] kit I have to this day," Collins writes.

"Phil Collins took lessons off him," confirms bassist Dave Pegg,

Rowland's one-time bandmate in Fairport Convention. "He would do anything to help young drummers."

Longtime Fairport Convention member Dave Mattacks recalls double drumming with Rowland at Fairport's annual Cropredy festival. "Watching and listening to him helped me open up more," says Mattacks.

It's important to note that Rowland, born in London, in May, 1941, possessed several signature drum approaches, including an ability to command a chorus of choreographed percussive voices via multitracked overdubs.

Rowland was also sensitive to the material he was recording and performing. "Bruce could get inside the songs and really understand what they were about," says folk singer/guitarist

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT...?

Steve Ashley (solo, the Albion Country Band), on whose *Family Album* Rowland appears. "What surprised me at first, during the live show, was his decision to use brushes throughout. With a flick of the wrist on the snare he could add power without an overkill of volume. He was a very perceptive and kind man, as well as a great drummer."

"There's a track called 'Egypt' on my record *The Gap*," says folk and blues guitarist/vocalist Bryn Haworth (Joan Armatrading, John Cale, Jackie Lomax). "The song is about slavery and the children of Israel leaving Egypt. We needed construction

noises for it. There was a building site in the area, so we gathered pieces of wood, a hammer, and a nail punch, and Bruce used these for the track."

Timekeeping and precision, sharpened as a result of Rowland's military service and participation in the Royal Edinburgh Tattoo, were hallmarks of the drummer's style. "When you're in a marching band, you're a long way away from the guy in the middle holding it together," says Pegg. "There's the problem of hearing one another and syncing. Drummers would have to play milliseconds above the beat in order to be in sync when they passed each other. It was quite an art. Bruce had all of this experience, and his snare technique was incredible."

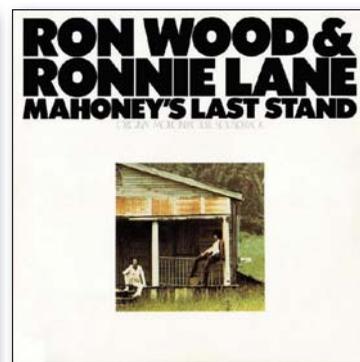
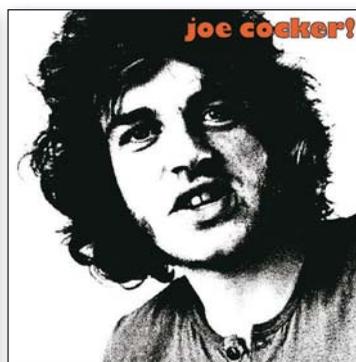
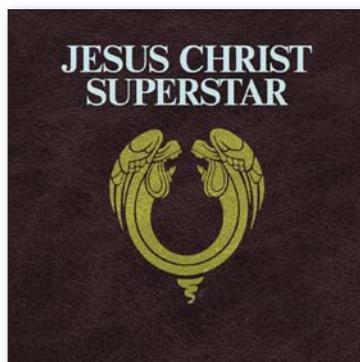
Prior to his stint with the celebrated British folk-rock band Fairport Convention, Rowland's most high-profile gig was with Joe Cocker's Grease Band, recording some of the most moving material of the singer's storied career and appearing on the Top-10 U.K. hit "Delta Lady." The Grease Band, backing Cocker, had

for the "rock opera" *Jesus Christ Superstar*. (Drummer John Marshall, of Nucleus and Soft Machine, also appears on the record. "Everything's Alright," the jazzy pop ballad in 5/4 sung by Yvonne Elliman, likely features Marshall, though the drummer tells *MD* that he has no recollection of recording it.)

Composed and arranged

certainly also represented one of his major regrets. "He could have received royalties [on the record] but took his session fees instead," relates Dave Pegg. "That always bugged him, because he would have made thousands instead of a couple hundred [quid]."

Rowland's film work continued into the 1970s. He appeared on the soundtrack



undeniable grit and musical chemistry. However, by 1970, Cocker began collaborating (and butting heads) with top hat-wearing songwriter/piano man Leon Russell and his new supersized band, Mad Dogs and Englishmen. The Grease Band, save keyboardist Chris Stainton, was out.

The Grease Band carried on, though. Rowland and bassist Alan Spenner operated as a tight rhythmic unit, mixing electric blues-rock, gospel, and a bit of funk on their self-titled debut album from 1971. Still, without Cocker's penetrating voice, the band's appeal was limited. Rowland needed to avail himself of session work.

Arguably, the most unusual gig Rowland landed around this time was as a drummer

by Andrew Lloyd Webber, the double-album package, complete with libretto and lyrics penned by co-producer Tim Rice, cast Deep Purple's brassy vocalist, Ian Gillan, as the Nazarene carpenter. Members of the Grease Band, among others, helped reimagine the First-Century Holy Land as a very dangerous if not unusually musical place. There's scarcely a greasier example of rock 'n' roll boogie in the Age of Aquarius than "What's the Buzz?" Rowland's fervent cymbal patterns create swirls of sonic fog, much as they did during Cocker's climatic performance at Woodstock. Elsewhere, Rowland grooves handily in 7/8 for "The Temple."

If *Superstar* was a career milestone for Rowland, it most

for the obscure Canadian flick *Mahoney's Last Stand*, credited to future Rolling Stones guitarist Ron Wood and bassist/guitarist Ronnie Lane, then both members of the Faces. Rowland airs it out in the rootsy and bluesy "Tonight's Number" and "Car Radio," the latter featuring the Who's Pete Townshend on percussion. Cut in 1972 during the disjointed and dysfunctional recording sessions for the Faces' *Ooh La La* album, *Mahoney's* wouldn't surface until 1976. It's recently been reissued on CD by Real Gone Music with explanatory liner notes.

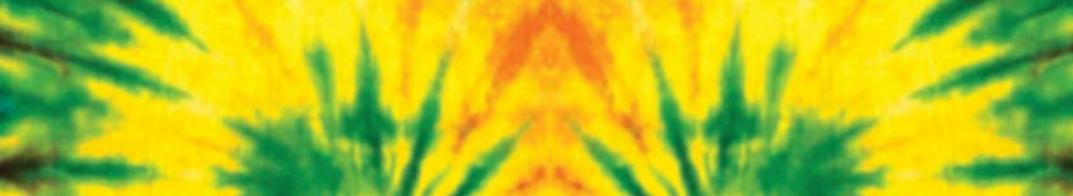
After surprisingly signing on for another Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice rock opera, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, Rowland reconnected with Bryn Haworth,

RECORDINGS

Wynder K. Frog Out of the Frying Pan /// **Joe Cocker** Joe Cocker!, Live at Woodstock /// **Andrew Lloyd Webber/ Tim Rice** Jesus Christ Superstar, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat /// **Shawn Phillips** Second Contribution, Spaced /// **The Grease Band** The Grease Band /// **Gerry Lockran** Wun /// **Jackie Lomax** Three /// **Kazimierz Lux** I'm the Worst Partner I Know /// **Donovan** Essence to Essence /// **Bryn Haworth** Let the Days Go By, Sunny Side of the Street /// **Fairport Convention** Rising for the Moon; The Bonny Bunch

of Roses; Tiplers Tales; Farewell, Farewell; 25th Anniversary Concert; Who Knows? 1975 (The Woodworm Archives, Volume One); 4 Play—76/79 /// **Ron Wood and Ronnie Lane** Mahoney's Last Stand /// **Steve Ashley** Steve Ashley's Family Album

Rowland can also be seen performing in the films *Woodstock* and *Groupies* and being interviewed in the 2006 documentary *The Passing Show: The Life and Music of Ronnie Lane*.



someone he met in the late 1960s when he was a member of Wynder K. Frog (keyboardist Mick Weaver's alter ego). "Grappenhall Rag," the opening track of Haworth's solo debut, *Let the Days Go By*, had been rehearsed years earlier, when Jackie Lomax drummer Bugs Pemberton accompanied the guitarist on a set of pots and

and legendary producer Glyn Johns (Rolling Stones, Beatles, the Who) was tapped to produce the band's 1975 studio effort, *Rising for the Moon*. During the recording sessions for *Moon*, longtime Fairport drummer Dave Mattacks exited to pursue a more lucrative career as a session musician. "Bruce kind of saved the day," says Pegg, although

when Swarbrick's second wife, Birgitte, and Bruce were an item. It was a bit like Fleetwood Mac in terms of what was going on in the band at the time."

Taut rhythms and military-style snare figures inject a tinge of funerary grimness into both the twelve-plus-minute Napoleonic title track and "The Poor Ditching Boy," the latter written by Fairport co-founding member Richard Thompson. In "Jams O'Donnell's Jig," "Adieu Adieu," and "Royal Seleccion No. 13," the interplay between Rowland, Pegg, Swarbrick, and guitarist Simon Nicol is lively, knotty, and playful.

On *Tiplers Tales*, Rowland seamlessly slips through

different tempos for the eleven-minute "Jack O'Rion," dusts off the brushes for "Bankrupted," and constructs time-bending tom fills in "Ye Mariners All." The multitracked percussion showcase, "As Bitme," falls somewhere between avant-garde, Japanese taiko, and African tribal music.

These were solid efforts, but Vertigo execs were unconvinced. "They paid us to not make any more albums," says Pegg with a laugh. "We had signed on for six albums, but they told us, 'We don't want any more. We can't sell them.' They gave us half of what should have been [our] advances. We made 7,000 pounds each, the most money we had ever seen in our lives."

Soon after, the extended Fairport family would change irreversibly: Denny died of a cerebral hemorrhage, sinking any hope some observers had of the band reclaiming the more mystical elements of its music. The band forged ahead anyway, and in 1979 Fairport opened for Led Zeppelin at the Knebworth festival. (Zep fans will recognize Denny singing alongside Robert

Plant on the classic cut "The Battle of Evermore.")

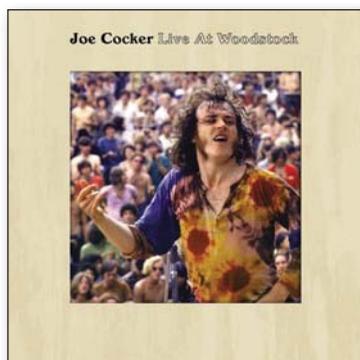
The dawning of a new decade brought new challenges. Tastes had changed, and Fairport recorded independently. Rowland would crop up on a live album or compilation, but little more. By the mid 1980s, he left music altogether and moved to Denmark with now-wife Birgitte. Years later he returned to the U.K. and took up with new partner Barbara. The two officially tied the knot just prior to Rowland succumbing to cancer in July of 2015.

"[We] saw each other fairly regularly," says Steve Ashley, "because my wife's mum lived in Paignton, just down the road from Bruce's place in Brixham. He had retired from playing, but we had a lot in common."

Ashley wrote the song "For Bruce" to commemorate Rowland's funeral. "There were many friends and neighbors [there], and yet none of them were in the slightest bit aware of Bruce's illustrious musical career," the singer tells *MD*. "He'd never told anyone in twenty years. That's how genuine and self-effacing he was."

"I called him up a couple of weeks before he passed away," Pegg says. "He said, 'Don't be upset. I've had a great life. I made some great music and great friends. Whatever you do, don't cry.'"

As Bryn attests, Rowland was encouraging of his fellow musicians right to the end. "I hadn't seen in him in years," says Haworth. "He called me up out of the blue and said some really nice things about me and about my playing. What I remember most about him was the little twinkle in his eye when he got an idea about creating a sound for a track. You couldn't stop him. He was like a little boy. He would fly around the room and play all of these instruments. Every take would be great."



pans. "Bruce captured that same clicking sound by using the rim of a drum," says Haworth. "He then overdubbed the snare, cymbals, toms, and tambourine. There's also a tom, snare, and cymbal fill, at about 2:38, that Bruce nails."

Rowland employed a marimba for "Miss Swiss," years before Jimmy Buffett's on-the-nose usage of the instrument for the Caribbean-flavored pop phenom "Margaritaville." "We were amazed he could even play the marimba," says Haworth. "It fit so [well] with the sound of the 1920s Gibson mandocello I was using."

After the release of Haworth's second album, 1975's *Sunny Side of the Street*, Rowland toured with the guitarist/vocalist through the U.K. and continental Europe. "His playing was like a whoosh," says Haworth. "You would feel it as much as hear it. I have not met another drummer like that."

Fairport Convention concurred and asked Rowland to join during one of its many transitory periods. Vocalist Sandy Denny had returned to the fold

Paul Warren gigged with Fairport in early 1975, before Rowland claimed the drum throne in the spring of that year.

The record failed in its bid for crossover success, but the overall production is intimate, layered, and dreamy, evoking dark woods and dusky autumnal skies. The drums, benefiting from Johns' "three-mic" recording approach, are effective and unobtrusive, often providing an eerily appropriate backdrop for Denny's entrancing voice.

Gottle O'Geer, from 1976, originally intended to be a solo effort by Fairport fiddler Dave Swarbrick, was not, to put it mildly, a commercial smash either. As a result, Island Records dropped the band. The Philips imprint Vertigo rescued Fairport, now a four-piece, and signed them to a multirecord deal that spawned two fan favorites, *The Bonny Bunch of Roses* (1977) and *Tiplers Tales* (1978). Each was completed in less than two weeks.

"Those two records were done at the Chipping Norton Studios in Oxfordshire," says Pegg. "Bruce lived in Oxfordshire

Theme for an “Imaginary” Drummer

Mountain’s Corky Laing picked up two gold records for his Woodstock performances—without stepping foot anywhere near Yasgur’s Farm.

by Bob Girouard

To most, Corky Laing’s drumming is synonymous with the great heavy-rock band Mountain, and vice versa. Less known is the fact that Laing wasn’t the band’s only drummer. In fact, N. D. Smart was in the hot seat for the band’s early performances—including their gig at the original Woodstock Festival in August of 1969.

“I remember that Norman Smart was a very good player,” recalls Corky Laing today, “but he wasn’t right stylistically. He was more of a country drummer, and not loud enough for what the music called for. So when producer/bassist Felix Pappalardi asked me if I was available and could I cut the gig...well, I guess the rest is history.

“The fact that I got two gold records from two songs at the festival still blows my mind,” Laing laughs. “The story of the first one, for the Mountain song ‘For Yasgur’s Farm,’ goes like this: When they were mixing the Woodstock soundtrack, I had just joined up with Mountain and was laying down initial tracks for the album *Mountain Climbing!* with Felix and guitarist Leslie West. Felix was also producing my band Energy at the time, and he loved our song



Corky (left) with Felix Pappalardi

Letters to Sarah

Our Mountain man releases a heartfelt autobiography

It’s not unusual for celebrated musicians to write their story, especially at pivotal points in their career. Corky Laing, whose storytelling abilities are legendary, has joined the ranks with his own autobiography, *Letters to Sarah*.

The book is not your typical tell-all filled with sex, drugs, rock ‘n’ roll, and celebrity name-dropping. Sure, there’s a bit of that, but more engaging is Laing’s keen perspective on his profession, defined by his honest, often humorous take on things. The mechanism here is Corky’s personal

correspondences with his mother, Sarah, who passed in 1998 and who was both his muse and his Rock of Gibraltar. Despite the ups and downs of the drummer’s show-biz existence, Sarah never wavered in support of his endeavors, regardless of risk. Corky’s letters to her mark several key life occurrences and are featured throughout the text.

Laing begins by documenting his story from humble beginnings as a shy kid from Montreal, Canada, to reaching the pinnacle of his drumming career with bassist/

producer Felix Pappalardi and guitarist Leslie West in America’s favorite heavy-rock trio, Mountain, and the subsequent supergroup West, Bruce, and Laing. That level of super-stardom was short-lived, however, and ascents were followed by major descents, both emotionally and physically. The ‘80s came fast and were a time for seasoned rockers like Laing to redefine (or more accurately, repackage) themselves. While Corky was not spared, his positivity and diverse approach to music played a major factor in his surviving



'Who Am I But You and the Sun.' Felix changed the title to 'For Yasgur's Farm,' and offered it to the album's producers. That's how I received my first Woodstock gold record. [While not included on either of the two original Woodstock LPs, *Music from the Original Soundtrack and More* and *Woodstock Two*, Mountain's performance of the song at the festival would eventually come out on the 2009 box set *Woodstock 40 Years On: Back to Yasgur's Farm*.]

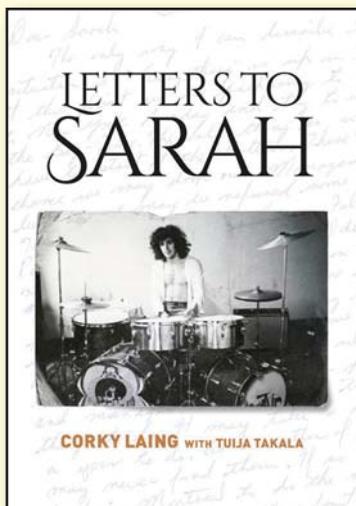
"Here's where lightning strikes twice," Corky continues. "In September of '69, while recording *Mountain Climbing!* at the Record Plant, I got a knock on my door from some folks who asked Felix and Leslie if they could borrow me for about an hour to record with Ten Years After, on their famed song, 'I'm Going Home.' Apparently while recording onstage at the Woodstock concert, drummer Ric Lee's drum microphones conked out, so the entire song, which highlights Alvin Lee's guitar virtuosity, needed to be rerecorded. Ric was now back home in England, so I got the nod.



Corky and Leslie West

Bob Solberg

"So there I was, trying to keep up with Alvin, who I'm sure had consumed some serious medication. The song went from 100 bpm to 200 bpm, constantly speeding up and speeding up. Little did I know it would clock in at something like twenty-two minutes long! It was a basic 'oom-pah' beat, but the timing was all over the place. The point being, I was exhausted! Wouldn't you know, about a month later comes another knock on my door, and they hand me a package with yet another gold record, for 'I'm Going Home.' Looking back, I just happened to be there in the studio. It's all about luck—don't let anyone tell you otherwise!"



format changes and drum machines. Segueing to the '90s, he once again found himself "diversifying" with two stints as a label executive—until the record industry crashed in 2000.

Since then, though, Laing has survived and remained busy. He's given guest lectures at universities in Canada, the U.K., and Finland, and he's presented in international academic conferences, covering topics ranging from the history of rock music and changes in the music industry to developing drumming, marketing, and producing skills. More recently, in 2012 and 2013, he was a

featured performer in the off-Broadway production of *Playing God*; two years later he hit the road again billed as Corky Laing Plays Mountain. And this year finds him featured on a new album, *The Toledo Sessions*, with bassist Mark Mikel and guitarist Chris Shutters.

In short, *Letters to Sarah* offers a heartfelt study of a man in search of a nesting place in a business devoid of permanency. Laing's passion, determination, and—above all—resiliency make this a very special read indeed.



Ringo Starr's Maple Ludwig Hollywood Drumkit

The two albums the Beatles recorded in 1969, *Let It Be* and *Abbey Road*, would become notorious for the strained feelings among the band members, for their out-of-order release dates, and for closing the door on the Fab Four's working relationship. Despite all of this, the LPs are revered by fans for containing some of the band's most inventive and enduring performances—and uniquely notable among drummers for featuring Ringo Starr's first five-piece kit. Noted Ringo historian **Gary Astridge** provides the background information and details the gear.



Over the decades, Ringo Starr has had a profound impact on millions of drummers. During his career with the Beatles, he left many of us mesmerized by his creativity, feel, distinctive fills, and percussive sounds. This complete package makes Ringo's playing unique and elusive for drummers to replicate.

As it turns out, some of Ringo's quintessential drum gear is as elusive as his drumming, notably his 1963 5.5x14 Ludwig oyster black pearl Jazz Festival snare drum. Just as rare is Ringo's maple 1967 Ludwig Hollywood drumkit, which featured Ludwig's keystone badge and Thermogloss finish. Finding a Keystone badge Thermogloss maple kit from the '60s is close to impossible, and if by chance you own one, consider yourself extremely lucky (and feel free to contact me).

It was May of 1970 when the Beatles released their *Let It Be* album and movie of the same name, and it was the first time that Ringo's new kit was seen by the public. Drummers and some Beatles fans were surprised not to see Ringo behind his traditional Beatles drumset, but rather playing a new set, which came to be alternately referred to as the "Hollywood" kit, the "Let It Be" kit, the "Maple" kit, or the "Get Back"

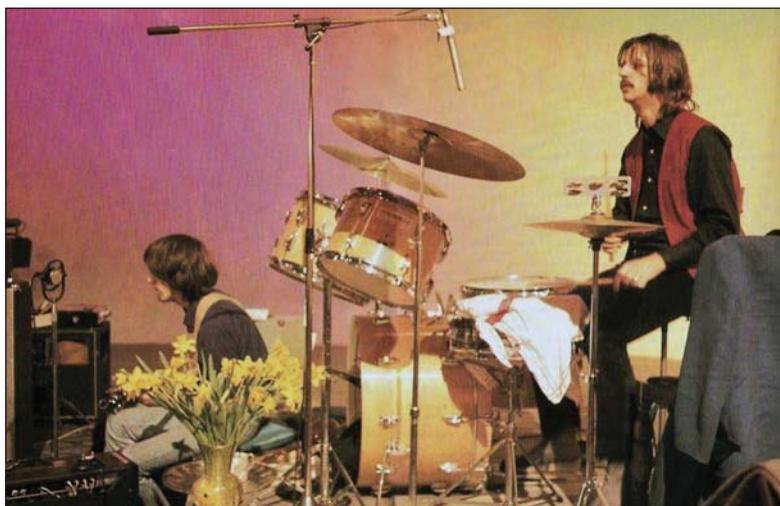


kit. Little did anyone know that Ringo took ownership of this kit during the tail end of the *White Album* recording sessions, in September of 1968. After performing and recording with a succession of four Ludwig oyster black pearl drumkits (two Downbeat and two Super Classic models), why the switch to a wood finish?

In early 1968, the members of the Beatles traveled to Rishikesh, India, to study transcendental meditation. Among those along for the trip was singer, songwriter, and performer Donovan Leitch, well known for such classic songs as “Sunshine Superman,” “Mellow Yellow,” and “Hurdy Gurdy Man.” In talks that he has given over the years, Donovan tells the story of his time in India with the Beatles, specifically John, Paul, and George. He describes how he showed them the claw-hammer guitar picking technique and how he told them to sand the finish off their wooden instruments, saying that a guitar sounds better without a heavy finish.

Upon returning from Rishikesh to London, John removed the finish from his Gibson J-160E acoustic guitar, and both he and George did the same to their Epiphone Casinos. George is reported to have said that once they’d removed the finish, they became much better guitars. “I think that works on a lot of guitars, if you take the paint and varnish off and get the bare wood,” said George. “It seems to sort of breathe.”

During the summer of 1968, Ringo ordered his new Ludwig drumkit, abandoning his trademark oyster black pearl wrap for a natural maple finish. The Ludwig point man for this order was Dick Schory. Dick, who’s now in his eighties, is a wealth of unearthed information, and he and I have become friends. Dick told me that in February of 1964 he was Ludwig’s director of marketing, and he was assigned the task of working directly with the Beatles’ manager, Brian Epstein, and Ludwig’s U.K. distributor, Drum City, to take care of Ringo’s needs.



The remaining songs recorded for the *White Album* after “Glass Onion” were “Happiness Is a Warm Gun,” “Savoy Truffle,” “Long Long Long,” “I’m So Tired,” and “The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill.”

Though the maple kit came with calfskin heads, forensic photo analysis shows that some heads were temporarily replaced with Mylar heads during the *Let It Be* recording sessions.

The most notable question that people ask about this drumkit is why Ringo opted to use a dual tom mount stand instead of the center post mount on the bass drum. The simple answer, according to Ringo, is that the tom stand came with the kit.

During the *Let It Be* recording sessions and on the Beatles’ famous rooftop performance seen in the movie, Ringo used the tom stand and positioned his snare drum forward, encroaching over the side of the bass drum to reduce the gap between the snare and 8x12 tom. Some questioned the position of his 9x13 tom, but believe it or not, it’s not a difficult reach. During the recording of *Abbey Road* (which began less than a month after the *Let It Be* sessions), Ringo used the bass drum’s center post mount. He retired his Premier drum stool (model 245) and began using a Sonor (model Z-5801), which had a motorcycle-type seat and a back support.

Ringo actively utilized his now-expanded set of toms on *Abbey Road*, resulting in some of his best recorded work. Isolated drum tracks from this album can be found online, and they allow us to closely dial in on what he’s playing. It’s a bonus to so clearly hear the sounds of his snare and toms, which were partially draped with tea towels to muffle their tone.

In June of 1971, a year after the breakup of the Beatles, Ringo used his maple kit when he played on B.B. King’s *In London* album. He also used this set in August of the same year when he performed with George Harrison at the Concert for Bangladesh. In 2004 into the early part of 2005, Ringo used this kit in his L.A. home studio when he recorded his *Choose Love* album.

From June 2013 through April 2014, the kit was on display at the Grammy Museum in Los Angeles for the *Ringo: Peace & Love* exhibit. Over the years, the kit has been cataloged, which is the reason for the small numbered labels near the Keystone badges. The Drum City labels were removed from the toms and floor tom, though one was found inside the bass drum. As an iconic piece of rock ‘n’ roll history, this kit has since been archived, documented, and refurbished, and it currently resides in custom road cases in a well-secured, climate-controlled environment.

Gary Astridge, hailing from Buffalo, New York, is well known as the preeminent expert on Ringo Starr and his drumkits.



Ludwig provided Ringo with a Hollywood model maple kit (8x12, 9x13, 16x16, 14x22) with a light Thermogloss finish. It was constructed of 3-ply shells with white interiors, all having March 1967 stamp dates. (It’s interesting that the stamp dates are such a mismatch from the time the drums were ordered—but that’s a topic for another time.) In addition to having calfskin heads, both toms and the floor tom came with chrome-over-brass hoops. A 5x14 Supraphonic snare drum was supplied along with new hardware that included a dual tom mount stand.

“Glass Onion,” from *The White Album*, was the first song to be recorded using the maple kit, on September 11, 1968, and for this one time there was an unusual twist. Trusted Beatles roadie Mal Evans described in a column from the November 1968 issue of *The Beatles Book Monthly* that Ringo experimented using “two kits instead of one” for this song. Since June of ‘64, Ringo’s go-to kit was his first Ludwig oyster black pearl Super Classic, and on this day, it was set up in combination with his maple kit.

Remembering Hal Blaine

The drummer, who passed away on March 11 at the age of ninety, helped pave the way for every great studio musician who came out of Los Angeles during the 1960s and '70s, the undisputed



golden era of pop music recording. By some measures, his overwhelming influence extends to this very day, as every new generation of musician has to contend with the age-old reality of having to prioritize “playing for the song,” a concept that he simultaneously embraced and busted open by playing not only with supreme tastefulness, but ceaseless creativity.

In 2000, Hal Blaine and his early mentor, Earl Palmer, were both inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. “At the beginning of my career,” Blaine recalled, “Earl was getting so busy that he started passing sessions my way. He was responsible for opening the doors of rock ‘n’ roll for me.”

It wasn’t long before Blaine himself would become one of the top studio drummers in the world, eventually playing on 150 top-10 singles. Forty of those became number ones, and eight of those won Grammys for Record of the Year. The list of artists he played with is a who’s who of the music scene of the ‘60s and ‘70s: Frank Sinatra, Tommy Sands, Elvis Presley, Jan and Dean, Nancy Sinatra, Simon and Garfunkel, Connie Francis, Sam Cooke, Dean Martin, Roy Orbison, Johnny Rivers, John Lennon, Sonny and Cher, Neil Diamond, Glen Campbell, John Denver, Tommy Roe, Andy Williams,

Captain and Tennille, the 5th Dimension, the Everly Brothers, Gary Puckett, Barbra Streisand, and on, and on, and on.

All the top producers would call on Blaine to track or overdub on records for popular groups, many of whom already had drummers, such as Gary Lewis and the Playboys, the Byrds, the Monkees, the Beach Boys, the Carpenters, the Grass Roots, the Partridge Family, Herb Albert and the Tijuana Brass, the Mamas and the Papas, and America. Much of Blaine’s work as a session player was with legendary producer Phil Spector as the powerful percussive backbone of the Wrecking Crew, the group most associated with helping Spector create his famous “wall of sound.” “I coined the name the Wrecking Crew,” Blaine said. “All the guys in the suits would say, ‘Oh, no, these kids in their blue jeans and T-shirts are going to wreck the business.’”

Photos courtesy of the Hal Blaine Collection

Hal Blaine was born Harold Simon Belsky on February 5, 1929, in Holyoke, Massachusetts. His family moved to Hartford, Connecticut, when he was seven, and when he was fourteen they moved again, this time to California, where Hal would have the kind of experiences most aspiring musicians could only dream of. In fact, beyond the enormous number of records he was involved in, Blaine even crossed over into Hollywood itself, appearing in films while working for Disney at Paramount studios.

Ultimately, though, for Hal it was all about the music. By his own estimation, he recorded more than 35,000 tracks. "At any moment we could listen

to the radio and know within a few minutes that we would hear a Hal Blaine fill," says Denny Tedesco, director of the film *The Wrecking Crew*, and the son of Crew guitarist Tommy Tedesco. "He treated every session as if he was trying to make a hit. It didn't matter if it was Frank Sinatra or John Doe." "If you were a songwriter," adds Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts, "you'd want Hal Blaine on your track. Love you, Hal."

Watts' heartfelt sign-off reminds us just how much *everyone* who knew Hal Blaine loved and respected him. For this special tribute, we asked some of his closest friends and colleagues to say a few words about the legend.



Jim Keltner

"Hal was a generous soul. His kindness and his encouraging words to me when I was starting out made a huge difference in my confidence. I tried to copy Hal during my early years, but it never sounded or felt like him. I finally realized I had my own thing to try and work on. Now, all these years later, when I listen to any of the many records he's on, I realize I've never really stopped trying to emulate his playing. He was so versatile. And he had the greatest instincts. The other thing I loved about him was how he interacted with his fellow musicians, and with people in general. That was a very valuable lesson I learned from Hal, and every bit as important as the music."

Kenny Aronoff

"We all know that Hal Blaine did things that no other drummer had ever done before him or ever will do again. When Hal was recording seven days a week, and sometimes all night long, there

were no drum machines, Pro Tools, drum sequencers, or any other technology to edit or fix unwanted drum fills or parts. You had to be able to play in time, groove, be creative, get along with everyone, be a team player, read music, and take direction from all the different kinds of producers and artists. Hal served the song, the producer, the artist, the bands, and most important the music, and he could play so many different styles of music. He was making records at the perfect time, when records sold, and when rock 'n' roll and pop records exploded all over the world. The bottom line is, he got the job done. Hal was a role model for me, and I am so grateful I had the opportunity to hang out with him and talk to him numerous times."

John "JR" Robinson

"The world has lost a true legend. As a little boy I was being influenced by him and didn't even know it. His groove became

instilled in my inner soul as I grew into playing drums. I cannot thank him enough for the impression he injected into me. Hal also posed the question to us up-and-comers: "Why isn't the drummer in the band playing drums on the record?" Finally it sunk in that there were certain situations where you need a hit man. Hal was that hit man. Thank you, Hal, for all you have done and all the people you have touched. Your musicality and groove will live on forever. Love you."

Vinnie Colaiuta

"Hal Blaine has been woven into my musical consciousness since I was a child. That's the profound thing; he's been an integral part of the soundtracks of our lives without most of us even realizing it. He was a hero without even trying to be one. Many of us have heroes who stand out in some way—a featured sideman, soloist, or bandleader—yet Hal was a hero just by





being in the music. Shaping it 'behind the scenes,' so to speak. The Earl Palmers, Al Jacksons, and Hal Blaines deserve all of the recognition they get, and much more, for the contributions they've made that I feel are probably the most important. Telling the story. As long as we hear a song from the American popular songbook—the Beach Boys, Simon and Garfunkel, the 5th Dimension, the Carpenters, countless others—there will be Hal. Thank you."

Steve Gadd

"When I was in college in the '60s and in the army in the '70s, Hal Blaine was recording with all the top artists in America. Thank you, Hal, for all you've given to music and for influencing me long before I even knew it was you. RIP."

Ringo Starr

"God bless Hal Blaine. He was the man, an incredible drummer. My story of Hal began with George Harrison, who'd come to L.A. and met him. Hal had invented a kit for Ludwig called the Octa-Plus, and George bought it for me and brought it back to England. We set it up at Abbey Road Studios, and I began to play. When it came time to do a fill, I just stopped. I didn't hit *anything*—there was too much there! So after we finished the track I said to George, 'Well, this is great, but let's put it back in the box!' Peace and love."

Gregg Bissonette

"Hal was a real drumming hero of mine and a great friend. In 2012, I was playing in my hometown of Detroit on the Ringo Starr and his All-Starr Band tour, and I was on



A teenaged Hal, and on stage with singer Vicky Young

the phone with Hal before the gig, and he asked where our gig was that night. When I told him Pine Knob, just north of Detroit, he burst out, 'Pine Knob! Gregg, give me your home address in L.A.: I got home a month later, and there was a package from Hal. It was a super cool '70s vintage orange

windbreaker jacket that had the Pine Knob amphitheater logo on the back in white, and on the front in white, the name Hal. He had this jacket since he played there in the '70s with Nancy Sinatra! That was the kind of guy and friend that Hal Blaine was. God bless you, Hal!"

Alvin Taylor

"There may not be a musician alive that hasn't been influenced by the work of Hal. He set the standard for what good music should sound like. Hal left an indelible mark on me, and one that my heart will always cherish. Having had the privilege of

Hal Blaine 1969

by Patrick Berkery

It's hard to single out one year from Hal Blaine's heyday as superior to others, though 1969 stands out as a time when Hal seemed to find another gear. His work that year on songs like the 5th Dimension's "Wedding Bell Blues" and Glen Campbell's "Galveston" featured the familiar taste and economy he lent to so many hit records of the day. But peruse his output from 1969—which featured sessions with Nancy Sinatra, Apple Records signee Jackie Lomax, the Monkees, and Christian folkie Larry Norman—and you'll hear dirtier grooves, more adventurous fills that found him putting that Octa-Plus kit to good use, and an overall sense that as popular music was evolving at a rapid clip, Hal wasn't just keeping pace; he was staying ahead of the curve.

We talked about Hal's game-changing year with Smitherens drummer Dennis Diken, a friend of the legendary drummer since the early '80s and an ardent student of his playing since first taking up the drums in the late '60s.

MD: Do you think Hal's playing was under the influence of all that was going on in popular music leading up to 1969—psychedelia, the emergence of funk, heavier rock, the continuing sophistication of pop?

Dennis: He had to have been influenced to some degree by the sounds he was hearing. But I don't think his playing was necessarily reflecting a strong influence of anything in particular. I think he just naturally evolved as a player. He would adapt to things. I'm sure

when producers said, "Play like this Motown record," he would cop [that feel] as best he could. And I could be wrong about this, but I think a big part of his evolution was when he teamed up in earnest with [Wrecking Crew bassist] Joe Osborn. Joe was an extroverted kind of player, yet he was so in the pocket and had such an imaginative approach. I think they fed off each other in a real nice way.

MD: That's an interesting observation. They had been playing together a few years by 1969, right?

Dennis: I think [1964's] "Mountain of Love" by Johnny Rivers was the first record they played on together. Come '67, '68, '69, it just seemed like Hal was *playing* more, rather

knowing and working with him has made it even more special. He carved and paved a road for many of us to travel. Thank you, Hal, for being my mentor and compass. And even though you're gone in the flesh, it's impossible for your spirit to not be with us. Thank you for your love, friendship, amazing stories, and inspiration."

Chad Smith

"There was only one Hal Blaine, and those of us who were lucky enough to know the guy understood exactly why he was such a successful and in-demand studio cat. He was always the funniest—and nicest—guy in the room, and he had a way of making you feel like a million bucks, whether he was loosening you up with a raunchy joke or telling you a story about a classic recording session. He had a humble swagger that came from having all the chops but not always needing to use them. And he could swing like the balls on a bull elephant.

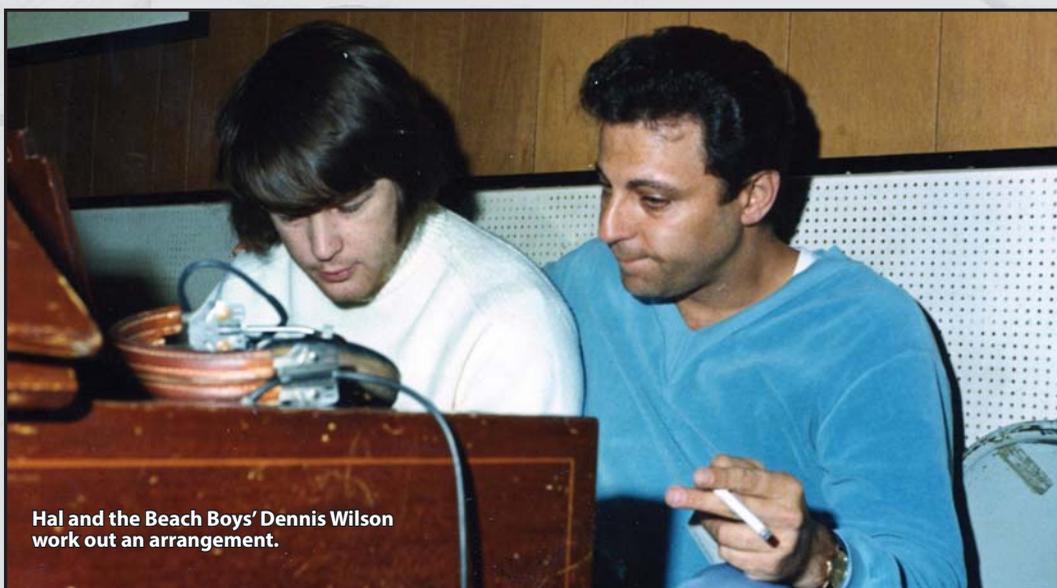
"Hal had a superhuman way of finding the musical center of a song and adding that something special that took it over

the top. Would 'A Taste of Honey' have been such a huge hit for Herb Alpert without Hal's bass drum kick starting the horns? I doubt it. Try to imagine 'Be My Baby' without thinking of Hal's iconic boom-ba-boom-pop. You can't do it. And the other musicians always loved him because he made everyone else on the session look good and sound their best. He was money in the bank.

"Hal, along with Earl Palmer and other drumming pioneers, made it possible for guys like me to do what I do. Every time I go on a session, I think about how I can best contribute something to the music. I learned that from listening to Hal. Rest in peace, my friend."

Joe Vitale

"When I was in high school, I watched the Beatles on *Ed Sullivan*, and, needless to say, it set my life's plan in motion. As I and so many of my drummer friends have stated, 'It changed our lives,' but long before that historic moment, drummers all around the world were listening to this guy from the West Coast named Hal Blaine. He was on every record we loved, every TV soundtrack—you name it, there was Hal! He played with such feel, dynamics, and a pure sense of 'song,' knowing when and what to play and just how to make his patterns and fills be an intricate part of the song. I spent many hours playing along to records that he



than just being a session guy. He was really growing as a musician. I think you can hear it.

MD: Is there a particular record you would point to as an example of Hal's style starting to evolve?

Dennis: The Association's *Insight Out* [1967] and *Birthday* [1968] albums are good examples of when he was coming into that new phase of playing. I was just crazy about his playing on those. There's a track on *Insight Out* called "Wantin' Ain't Gettin'." He plays a really soulful, almost hip-hop-y groove. It's real funky, and different from any track he had played on prior to that—maybe different from anybody, for that matter. And by '69, that's probably the apex of his evolution, with [the 5th Dimension's] "Aquarius/Let the Sunshine In."

MD: His drumming on those tracks is so colorful and imaginative. Very reflective of the times culturally.

Dennis: I think the 5th Dimension stuff typifies his style and really shows what he was doing at that point; what he was really becoming. Again, he's playing with Joe Osborn, and he's just stepping out and coloring the music in a different way. He's displaying his chops in a way that he never had before. That outro on "Aquarius" is just stunning, the interplay between him and Joe. And what he's doing is so musical. It was meaningful, musical ear candy. That's what makes a great musician, and a lasting musician, and a musician who can play on so many different records and so many different styles, and make it all work in such a musical

and magical way.

MD: Tommy Roe's "Dizzy" is another one from 1969 that was a massive hit and had such brilliant playing from Hal. Little nuances like how he opens up the hi-hat to accent the backbeats, those sweet tom rolls...and that groove is so laid-back and in the pocket.

Dennis: "Dizzy" is a great example of Hal's genius, too. It's a study in simplicity and utter perfection. It's such a perfect performance, and it's so well recorded. It's so perfect, but it still feels human. Feel is another big part of why we love him so much.

MD: And why we're still dissecting his work all these decades later.

Dennis: Absolutely.



On March 6, 2000, Hal Blaine was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame alongside fellow drumming great Earl Palmer—the first year “sidemen” were given the honor.

played on and trying my best to match his performance.

"Years went by, and Hal continued to be an unforgettable icon. It wasn't until the Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp in 2013 that I finally got to meet and hang with one of my all-time heroes. He was everything I imagined: so personable, funny, and willing to talk drums and give his thoughts and advice. May God bless you, Hal Blaine. You will always be in our hearts and on our speakers forever!"

Paul Leim

"Let's see, where do I start with a career, credits, and legend like Hal Blaine? America, the Carpenters, the Beach Boys, Elvis, John Denver, Jan and Dean, Johnny Rivers, Mason Williams, Simon and Garfunkel, Sonny and Cher, the 5th Dimension, Glen Campbell, the Monkees, TV and movies.... Like Elvis, Hal is the quintessential measure by which all his peers are viewed. He was instrumental in teaching an entire generation of us how to play drums on records. I learned early on from Hal that you could play in not just a band, but in every band, at the same time. You could play all kinds of music on everyone's records in the studio, if you were prepared in performance and styles, and if you were great enough.

"I believe that among my early mentors, Hal was the first that molded my studio career. He played to make a great record for someone, not for himself. To make the artist of the day sound like a star. For fifty years, whenever I'm exhausted or playing on a bad song that needs help, and I just can't think of anything fresh for that track, I think, 'What would Hal do?' Every time, something pops into my head, be it a groove from a Ronettes hit, or a Beach Boys beat, or a Carpenters fill, and I'm inspired to refocus and think of something. Hal, you will be in my thoughts, and have my deepest respect and thanks, forever."

Steve Lukather

"How does one write merely a few words about a true legend whose work graced more hit records than I can count? A hero to anyone who ever had a session career, and even more of a hero to the artists he worked with. His sound *made* hit records. He made hit records, in all styles. He made everyone sound great. When I was nineteen he called me for a session, and when I heard, 'Hi Steve, this is Hal Blaine,' I dropped the phone and had to recover fast! He was so kind to me. I will cherish that memory



with Jimmy Webb



with Glen Campbell

and cherish the countless hit records that changed all of our lives. God bless you, Hal. You are a legend and will always be the king of all session players. I guess God needed to get a track fast!"

Micky Dolenz

"Needless to say, Hal Blaine was a percussive force to be reckoned with. There are so many of us who owe so much to him and his rhythmic sensibilities. In the early days of the Monkees experience, I clearly remember sitting cross-legged next to his kit trying to soak up as much as I could from the master. RIP, Hal!"

Denny Seiwell

"Hal was an inspiration to many who didn't even know it. His creativity for the records he made influenced generations

of drummers. The only thing bigger than his iconic parts was his sense of humor. Hal always left you with a belly full of laughs and a huge smile on your face."

Dom Famularo

"As a young, excited drummer in the 1960s, I had ten top songs that inspired me, and I loved the drummers on these recordings. There were creative musical grooves and ideas on each recording. I did the research and learned that nine of the ten drummers were Hal Blaine! I got the chance to tell him that story in a YouTube interview for the Sessions Panel. He laughed so hard. Hal was truly one of a kind. He inspired, taught, and played the soundtrack of my formative musical years. I'm a better person and musician for hearing his playing and knowing him personally. Long live Hal!"



On February 9, 2019, at the premiere of the *Wrecking Crew* documentary at the Saban Theatre in Beverly Hills, legendary music producers Herb Alpert, Lou Adler, and Jerry Moss presented Hal Blaine with a commemorative set of his Grammy-winning Records of the Year. Back row, from left: Adler, Moss, Blaine, and Alpert. Front: *Wrecking Crew* director Denny Tedesco.

James Gadson

"It was so wonderful knowing Hal Blaine. Before I even got to meet him, he was a lifesaver to me. I remember being in session with the Watts 103rd St. Rhythm Band, and my drums were not cutting it. Hal heard about it and left his drums for me to play that night in the studio. The track was 'Gigging Down 103rd.' You can hear his famous tom-tom sound in that song! I really admired Hal. RIP, my dear brother."

Rick Marotta

"If you ever listened to music, you heard him play. If you ever spent time in a recording studio, he influenced you. If you ever got to meet him, you liked and respected him. Hal Blaine was a pioneer in the studio scene. He was playing on hit records when the music was changing and rock 'n' roll was in diapers. He nurtured it and raised it to what it grew up to be. All of us who work in the business have a lot to thank him for. I didn't get to spend that much time with him, but the times that we hung out were filled with stories and humor. We all miss you, Hal. Thanks for opening the door."

Russ Kunkel

"When you wake to find that a profound inspiration in your life has passed, your mind scatters in a thousand different directions. Like searching through an old photo book to find one particular picture that you know

is there somewhere, you try to remember all the times you spoke or saw or thought of the person that you will never see again. We all will come and go. What we hope to leave behind is the gift. Hal Blaine left so many gifts behind that for all of us, it's like Christmas every day. Hal, you touched us all so deeply. Your talent, your humor, your friendship, and your inspiration will forever live on. Thank you. Sent with love and respect."

Leland Sklar

"I met Hal in 1967, when the *Wrecking Crew* played on a record by the band I was in, Group Therapy. We were produced by Mike Post and not allowed to play on our own record. That was up to 'the professionals.' Three years later I found myself working with Hal almost daily. He was a gift to a bassist. None quite like him."

Narada Michael Walden

"Hal Blaine = explosive! His wild, precious energy was the backbone not only for the wall of sound, but *everything* he touched had his magic. I unfortunately never met him, but those who share with me say his brilliant sense of humor was always evident. I just want to say blessings to Hal Blaine and his family for his love offering on the drums of life, which has changed us all for the better. So much heart and soul in this man. Power to Hal, and back to us!"

Peter Criss

"Unfortunately I never met Hal Blaine. But I'm still finding out, to this day, what an influence he was on my whole life and playing style. Growing up and listening to AM radio and playing in bands, copying all those hits he played on, is mind-blowing. I've realized that besides Gene Krupa, Hal Blaine is one of my all-time favorite drummers. I respect him tremendously. Every session he recorded, and every part he created, he played perfectly. His talent inspires me, and I don't think we'll ever see the likes of someone like him in our lifetime again. Rest in peace, and thank you for the soundtrack of my life. God bless."

Liberty DeVitto

"What can you say about a musician who had taught so many and was so humble as to never take the credit for doing so? I was honored beyond words while playing at the 2017 NAMM show with Ronnie Spector, when Hal came up on a second drumset and we both played his classic groove to 'Be My Baby.' I will forever be humbled knowing it was the last time he played in a live concert situation. RIP, Hal."

Doane Perry

"There are a lot of drummers...and then there's Hal Blaine. He had *all* the right stuff. The right feel, groove, fills, touch, and what a sound! It didn't matter what or with whom

he was playing; he brought that same energy to everything with style, swagger, musicality, and empathy. Of course, his witty and colorful personality was uniquely reflected in his identifiable playing... dynamic, economical, powerful, and subtle, accompanied by an extrasensory, telepathic musical sensitivity and maturity. I can't say I knew him well, but I'm honored that I knew him at all, and grateful that I could tell him what his playing meant to me. But in the most important, enduring sense, we *all* knew him pretty well through the countless iconic recordings he helped create. The exceptionally rich legacy that he left in music is what he deserves to be remembered for...*and* probably his frightening repository of jokes, too! Thank you, Hal, for paying it forward and being such an excellent teacher, to every one of us."

Slim Jim Phantom

"Hal Blaine was a one of a kind, and the last of a kind. He always delivered the right lick with the same perfect timing as when he delivered the punchlines to his never-ending supply of vaudeville jokes. I'm honored to have counted him as a true drummer buddy. RIP, Hal."

Mark Schulman

"Whether we knew it or not, so many of the records that inspired us, that made us groove, dance, analyze, release, laugh, and cry, from the '50s, '60s, and '70s, had Hal Blaine playing drums. Therefore, so much of the pop and rock that we drummers play to this day is derivative of what Hal created. He was one of the founding fathers who laid down the palette of drumming for the rest of us to learn and expand upon."

Ernie Durawa

"I first met Hal Blaine at his close friends Pam and Jake Jacobs' house in L.A. many years back, and we became great friends. Right before he passed, we spoke about the book I'm writing, and he very graciously volunteered to write the forward to it. Needless to say, I was honored. He was to me, as to many others, a great inspiration, and I will miss him very much."

Carlos Guzman

"There are rare moments in time that you get to meet your heroes. When they become your friend, it's a true blessing. I came to know Hal on a personal level thanks in large part to my association with Jules Follett and my work with the Sessions Panel presentations and interviews. When we



Goofing around with Brian Wilson



with Tommy Tedesco

were together I was always captivated by his stories of his incredible career and touched by his true sincerity of appreciation towards the music business, which had honored him in so many ways. We all have come to know his incredible track record of recordings that will live on forever in our hearts. I will just choose to remember my friend Hal, who was one of a kind."

John DeChristopher

"Hal was my friend for thirty years, and for more than fifty years my hero. As a kid I had no idea eight of my ten favorite drummers were Hal Blaine. It's an old drummer's joke, but it's true. I was fortunate to grow up in the golden age of popular music, when Hal's backbeat dominated the AM radio airwaves.

It was literally the soundtrack of my youth. I'm glad I got to tell him that many times. His list of recording credits is unparalleled.

"Hal had the uncanny ability of always playing what was right for the song. I attended his ninetieth birthday on February 5, and he played 'Be My Baby' and 'These Boots Are Made for Walkin' and even at ninety, he sounded great! The party was a wonderful outpouring of love and respect for Hal. He was confident and self-assured without having any ego whatsoever. Hal had been there and done that and had nothing to prove, because he'd already proven it. I'll miss his voice, his jokes, his funny emails, and his genuine and kind demeanor. Hal, thanks for your friendship, the laughs, the stories, and for making this fan feel so

special. And most of all, thanks for giving all of us the gift of your backbeat. Always, your number-one fan!"

John Good

"In my forty-six years at Drum Workshop I can't really believe I spent forty-plus years never having met Hal Blaine. One day in the hallway at DW, there he was, talking with my partner, Don Lombardi. As I approached them, Hal said, 'You must be John Good. I've heard all about you!' 'Good or bad?' I said. He laughed, 'All good, John!' We started a conversation and immediately became friends, talking drums like two old pals. I went to my office later that day, and it dawned on me: We *have* to make a Hal Blaine Icon limited snare drum—after all, he's obviously one of the biggest icons in our industry! I had a good friend, Jake Jacobs, take the drum to him a couple months later, and Jake said Hal was genuinely touched, which meant the world to me, knowing that he had a chance to understand how much all of us at DW loved him. I miss him. I only wish I had met the man much earlier. I do feel grateful to have spent time with him, and grateful that his recordings and greatness will live on forever."

Don Lombardi

"I only knew Hal casually back in the day, mostly through our mutual friend Jim Keltner. We did get to become close friends in recent years, partly because of his DW association and me wanting to document his legendary career. Here are some things that stick out in my mind: Once, when Hal was asked during one of our roundtable discussions with Charlie Watts and Jim Keltner on Drum Channel about what he would tell young kids going into the studio, he said, 'They have to understand that a song is a story, and the first thing I would want to know are the lyrics.'

"I think one of the biggest compliments ever given to a drummer was when we were standing in my office after a taping with Hal and Charlie. Charlie turned to me and asked if he could get a coated white drumhead and a sharpie. Not knowing what he was going to do with it, I of course got it for him and handed it to him, and he immediately turned to Hal and said, 'Hal, can I have your autograph?' I kidded Hal about that all the time."

Denny Tedesco

"Words cannot describe what Hal meant to me and to all his family and friends. When musical legends pass on, we're reminded of



the careers they leave behind. But with Hal he leaves so much more.

"Hal, there are no words to express how much joy you brought to all of us in our lifetime. For those of us that knew you personally, you filled our lives with love, encouragement, and laughter. You had such respect for the art and the artist, and you always spoke about how you were not a soloist but an accompanist. You were there to make the artist and the song shine. My father Tommy would talk about you in the seminars with such praise and love: 'There is no one like Hal Blaine.'

"Over the last twenty-three years, my father's friend became my friend as well. You were always there, helping and encouraging me to tell the story of the Wrecking Crew. I will cherish the times we travelled to various cities around the country, seeing the standing ovations as you walked down the theater aisle when the credits finished. I was honored to be in that shadow walking behind you.

"In 2004, you and I went to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland. They asked me to share thirty minutes of the film in the making. I was very nervous about sharing it. I wasn't worried about the audience, but about what you might think. At that point,

you'd only seen ten minutes of footage.

After the thirty-minute screening was finished, they announced your name and gave you that standing ovation. Then the moderator started asking you a question. You started to answer, but then you started crying. At first I thought you were putting us on, but I realized you were emotionally touched by what you saw. Behind those oversized sunglasses, there were tears.

"There was nothing better than hearing you speak in adoring terms about other drummers and musicians. I know you're in heaven, looking down and seeing the tears and love that your fellow musicians shed for you. For the rest of the world, you gave us a beat that will live beyond all of our lives. RIP. Love you."

The quotes for this story were compiled by *Modern Drummer* editor at large Billy Amendola. "Hal was not only an influence on me as a drummer," says Billy, "but a close friend, an inspiration, and a mentor. I'll miss all his jokes and the wonderful conversations we'd have. I love you, Hal, and none of us will ever forget all you've done for musicians all over the world. You will live forever in our hearts and in our ears."





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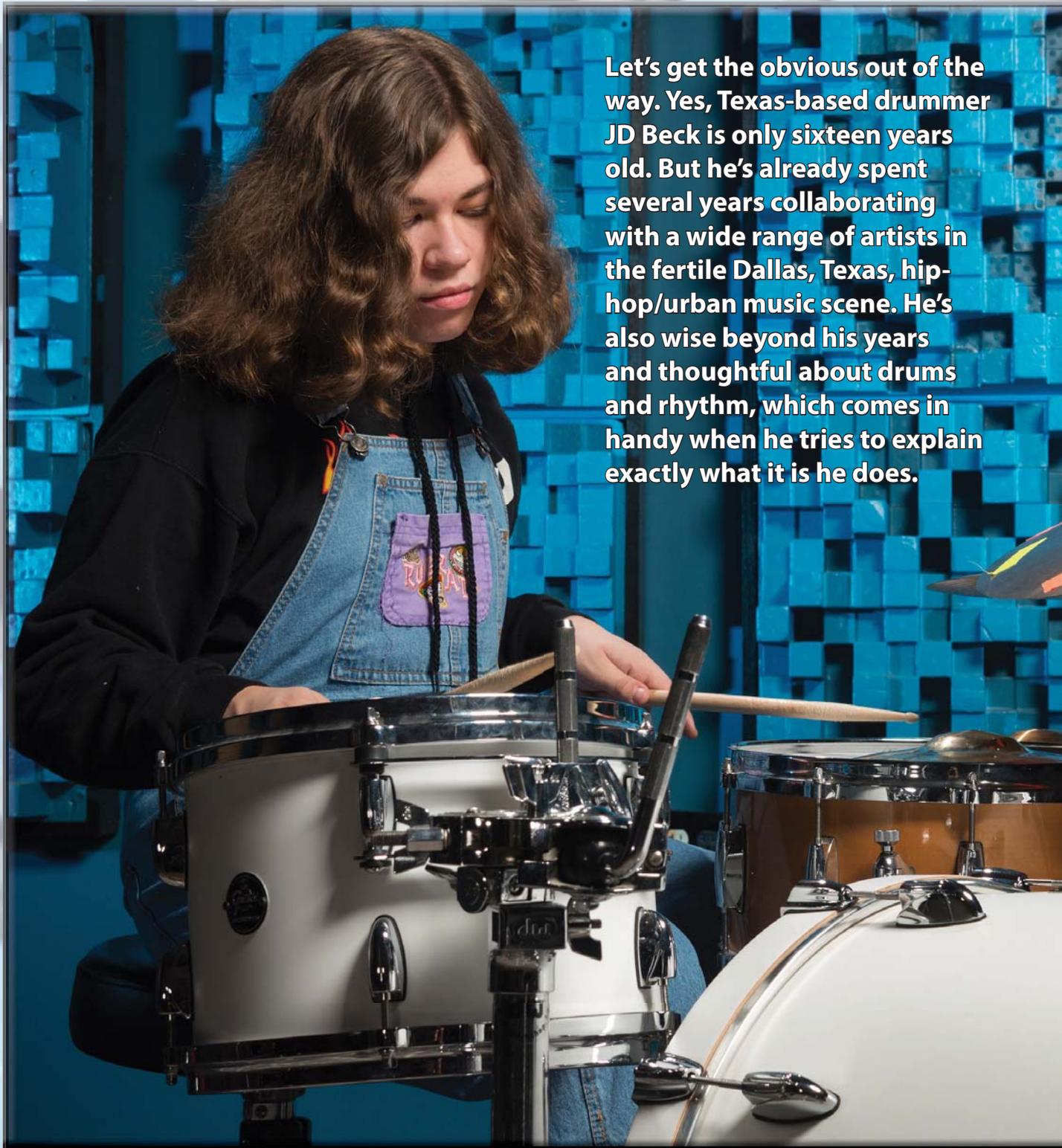
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JD Beck

Let's get the obvious out of the way. Yes, Texas-based drummer JD Beck is only sixteen years old. But he's already spent several years collaborating with a wide range of artists in the fertile Dallas, Texas, hip-hop/urban music scene. He's also wise beyond his years and thoughtful about drums and rhythm, which comes in handy when he tries to explain exactly what it is he does.





Story by Ilya Stemkovsky
Photos by Alex Solca

Mentored by Dallas-area drummers like Robert “Sput” Searight (Snarky Puppy), Mike Mitchell (Stanley Clarke), and Cleon Edwards (Erykah Badu), JD Beck has crafted a style of crooked beats and patterns mixed with over-the-barline fluidity that grooves in its own unique way. Singles and ghost notes fly by, and there’s definitely a pulse. But, especially for listeners whose sense of groove was baked in prior to the envelope-pushing approaches of modern kit players like Karriem Riggins and Eric Harland, everything feels somehow...different. “It’s this thing in the air,” says Beck about the unique drummers coming out of Dallas. “People play beats with this live, jazz feel. And everyone sounds like a computer, a program, which is really cool.”

Beck may have started young and with conventional lessons, but he quickly became inspired by a contemporary musical vocabulary that led him down a new path. There was a precedent set by the electronic offerings of producers like J Dilla and the kit work of players like Chris “Daddy” Dave, and Beck began to get his chops together and develop the internal meter that’s so important to sounding authentic when playing these unconventional beats. Jam sessions were attended and drumming friends made, and calls started coming in from local musicians like Jon Bap.

Others then took notice, and soon Beck started leading gigs in the Dallas area under the name JD Beck and Friends. Through Searight, he hooked up with Berklee keyboard student Domi Degalle, resulting in a funky, jazzy keys-and-drums collaboration that’s currently his main focus, with high-profile gigs including the Newport Jazz Festival. But Beck is also getting opportunities to play with big-time names like will.i.am, Skrillex, and Anderson .Paak, and laying beats down with hot bassists including MonoNeon and Thundercat. And you get the feeling he’s only *just* begun.

“On YouTube I was watching old-school jazz videos and new hip-hop drummers. I think the YouTube algorithm made me play the way I do.”

MD: Did you go through formal lessons like most kids?

JD: I started on piano at age five, in this little music school in Allen, Texas, which is twenty minutes from Dallas. I was doing classical and jazz for a few years and then switched to drums at age eight at the School of Rock. I was there until about age eleven. They put me in the advanced band at age nine, though you're supposed to be fifteen. But by eleven, I got worn out on the whole School of Rock band thing, so I just began practicing by myself.

MD: What made you switch from piano to drums in the first place?

JD: I used to play drum patches on the keyboard as a joke, because it was funny. But drums also spoke to me, in a weird way.

MD: What were you listening to?

JD: I was listening to fusion-y kind of rock. And my dad was a huge Led Zeppelin fan, so I'd hear that stuff with him. But I've always been all over the place. I would listen to all the pop music my brothers

would listen to. And I'd hear hip-hop, too.

MD: So you were digging on Bonham and all that stuff?

JD: Yeah, Bonham, but also his big influence, Joe Morello. And I liked how much Keith Moon didn't care. His playing wasn't the craziest to me, but his attitude was really cool. And everything I've been influenced by is still with me. But as I got older, I started branching out and meeting more people. When I was ten, I met Cleon Edwards, this drummer from Dallas who plays with Erykah Badu, and he introduced me to Robert "Sput" Searight. And they put me on to a lot of people.

Cleon is one of my biggest influences as a drummer, and he needs more recognition. All these drummers were playing with chops and intricate patterns, and he found a way to put space in. The way he approached it was really crazy. It's hard to explain. He doesn't sound like anyone on the planet.

I really liked Chris Dave for a long time when I was younger. He set off my whole "the meter isn't as big a deal as people make it" thing. That was really helpful. And Mike Mitchell showed me a lot of stuff.

MD: So there's been a unique music scene in the Dallas area?

JD: Dallas has a crazy hip-hop sound. It's not brand-new, but it's these subtle details of how they play. Nobody plays standards out here. That's kind of rare. People will play beats, and live bands will have rappers instead of singers. People come from a similar background, and the sound speaks for itself.

MD: Talk about what you did for chops and exercises.

JD: I worked out of *Syncopation* and *Advanced Techniques*, but I really didn't care. I'd do the paradiddle groove in triplets instead of doing the Purdie Shuffle. They'd ask me to do the iconic stuff like that, and I'd switch it up. I think they got mad, but it was a good learning experience. [laughs] But mainly, for hand stuff, I wouldn't do anything too complicated. I would work on flam taps, paradiddles, and singles and doubles.

MD: What does a younger-generation drummer like you use YouTube for?

JD: On YouTube I was watching a lot of drummers—old-school jazz videos and new hip-hop drummers, like Elvin Jones and then a Questlove video. And I'd play along to records, like Tony Williams' fusion stuff. And J Dilla. And Madlib. YouTube is so random. I think the YouTube algorithm made me play the way I do. And I'm more influenced now by programmed beats. And producers influenced me, like Knxwledge. He has an album with Anderson .Paak. And I just did a few tracks for Knxwledge. It was something about this gritty, offbeat, but quantized kind of feel that made my sound. Knxwledge, Dilla, Madlib.

MD: And breaking up the meter is something you really practiced?

JD: Yes, and it's funny, people will message me asking when I'm going to do a video in 4/4. I have to DM them and send them all my videos on Instagram, which are all 2 and 4. I think it's a compliment, though. [laughs] Practicing was me playing to computerized beats. It was quantized to a point where if I would go out from whatever the metronome was doing, I'd always know when to come back. And I practiced to unquantized stuff, and my brain internalized the weird



feel. And I practiced to a metronome a lot.

MD: What are other things about meter that you've learned and internalized?

JD: No matter what tempo you're in, any BPM will fit over it. It will always line up at some point. You can play a hip-hop beat at 92 and you can play a shuffle at 130 [on top of it], and it's going to line up. It has to. There's going to be one beat that makes sense, so when you find it, you can go anywhere. The whole off-meter thing is complicated. It's not a concept; it's an internal thing. If you have it, I guess you have it.

MD: When you're called by the artists who like what you bring, do you generally have a green light to play whatever you feel?

JD: You can call anybody to play a gig note-for-note, but not everybody is going to play what I think of at a show. It's individual. Someone like Jon Bap is going to call someone for what that person

does, what's different from anybody else. Jon lets me play pretty much whatever I want.

MD: How'd your collaboration with Domi Degalle happen?



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JD Beck

JD: Sput Searight was playing at NAMM, and he called me to come, and Domi was there playing with him. After that, we hung out and became friends and played each other a bunch of music. Then we played at a jam session, and it kind of just took off.

MD: Did you discuss what you'd play? Did you put charts in front of each other?

JD: We didn't realize we wanted to be a duo at first. I was doing these JD Beck and Friends shows in Dallas, and I invited her to come play. [After] we played with other people, we realized that we were the ones communicating the most. We had this

connection.

I'll sing her notes, and she'll write chords around that. Or she'll have a melody, and I'll add drums to that. I'm producing all of it on my laptop, but we definitely write all the songs together. It's cool, because all the decisions are collaborative.

MD: Is the plan to just play live shows, or do you eventually want people to hear you and hire you as a duo to add to their projects?

JD: We've been asked to play for a bunch of pop artists lately, but we've declined. The plan is to put out this album whenever we finish it. We also have a trio with [bassist]

MonoNeon, who will record some parts on our album. We also play with [bassist] Thundercat.

MD: What about session work? Do you hope to just get called for your unique thing?

JD: There are so many drummers way better than I am at a lot of stuff, but maybe I have this weird little niche that some people can't replicate. I don't know.

MD: But it needs to be for someone whose music you totally respect?

JD: For sure. If a pop gig is right and the people are cool and it's an easy enough situation for me to fly out and dedicate

time to, I will definitely do it. But for session work, Domi and I are set to do something for will.i.am that will be different, and Skrillex asked me to record a bunch of breakbeats that he will use for some tracks he has coming out soon. It's definitely all over the place.

MD: When you produce beats for yourself or other artists, is it an involved process?

JD: When I record my live drums, I try to make them sound as electronic as possible. But when I work with other artists, I always ask what they want. I don't get offended when they don't want live drums on a record. It's not that big of a deal to me, because I do more than just play drums.

MD: And you record at home?

JD: We turned our garage into a rehearsal spot and studio. But in my room, I have a kit set up, some speakers and a TV, and my laptop. I have an interface and mics, so I pretty much have a home studio in my room. I was using mainly Logic for the longest time, but I recently switched to Ableton. A bunch of friends showed me some crazy stuff you can do with it. Domi and I were at Flying Lotus's house, recording some live stuff, and he put some crazy plugins on my drums. I spent two days searching the internet, trying to figure out how to do that, and it was only in Ableton.

MD: What's in your immediate and long-term future?

JD: Evolution is inevitable. In a few years, I'll probably sound different. That change is going to happen. But I want to continue to play with Jon Bap and Domi, and keep recording studio stuff for everybody. Domi and I want to do a big gig together for some other artist, too. It just has to work out. I'm glad whatever I do can translate to a lot of people. That's really cool. I'm trying to do my own thing and trying to be as "me" as possible, not trying to fit into any category.

Tools of the Trade

Beck endorses Zildjian cymbals and Vic Firth sticks.



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Timing and
Technique Exercises
for the Modern
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by Bill
Bachman

Rhythm and Chops Builders, by renowned technique master Bill Bachman, contains a ton of practical and efficient exercises for developing and expanding your rhythmic vocabulary and accuracy, and for increasing your overall comfort level with the sticks. This book is best used in conjunction with Bachman's *Stick Technique*, which focuses on the physical motions required for building loose, flowing, powerful, and fast hands.

Technique

INTRODUCTION

Bill Bachman has been a drum teacher for over 30 years. He has taught thousands of students and has been a member of the Modern Drummer staff for over 20 years. He has written several books on drumming, including *Stick Technique*, *Rhythm and Chops Builders*, and *Drumming for Dummies*. He is a highly respected and sought-after instructor and has been a member of the Modern Drummer staff for over 20 years.

Fast Strokes

Fast strokes are a key component of a drummer's technique. They are essential for playing fast music and for creating a sense of urgency and excitement. There are several ways to achieve fast strokes, and each has its own advantages and disadvantages.

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Inverted Paradiddle-Diddles

Variations for Grooves, Fills, and Solos

by Kristen Gleeson-Prata

Rudiments are generally some of the first things we all learn when we start our drumming journey. I found them tedious and boring at first, and honestly sometimes I still do. It wasn't until I became comfortable with a few of them and started experimenting with their figures in my everyday playing that I finally started to believe that my teachers were actually on to something!

Rudiments can essentially be described as groupings of single and double strokes in different configurations and rhythms. So it's no mystery that with enough practice, they can become second-nature vocabulary of the language we learn to speak so fluently with our hands and feet.

One of my favorite rudiments is the inverted paradiddle-diddle, which is often commonly referred to as the six-stroke roll. Let's take a paradiddle-diddle, which has a sticking of RLRLRL or RLRLRL, and shift the first stroke to the end of the figure to get RLRLRL and RLLRRL, as notated in Exercises 1 and 2. Now you have a fun new piece of vocabulary to add to your grooves, fills, and solos.

1

RLRLRLRLRLRL LRLRLRLRLRL

2

LRLRLRLRLRL RLLRRLRLRL

This rudiment naturally lends itself to a 16th-note-triplet subdivision with all six strokes living in the space of a quarter note. Therefore, in the context of grooves, the six-stroke roll can be quite useful in shuffles. Check out these variations.

3

RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL

4

RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL

5

RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL

Grooves in a duple subdivision aren't off limits, though. Since duple time is typically based on two-, four-, eight-, and sixteen-note groupings, a rudiment containing six notes can fit into that

space unevenly. This creates lots of space for creativity. Only two six-stroke rolls can fit into a measure of 4/4, leaving a quarter note of space at the end of a measure. This can create a feel with groupings of three, three, and two notes, or even groupings of three, two, and three notes, as demonstrated in Exercises 6 and 7, respectively.

6

RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL

7

RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL

To incorporate six-stroke rolls in the context of fills, play one (or two, or three) at the end of a phrase. Try starting the six-stroke roll in different places in the bar, filling in any extra space as needed in between the end of the rudiment and the downbeat.

Here's an example of a six-stroke roll starting on beat 4.

8

And here's an example where we start the fill on beat 2.

9

My favorite use of the six-stroke roll is in a 16th-note-triplet subdivision in a soloing context. As mentioned previously, the six-stroke roll naturally lends itself to 16th-note-triplet use.

Adding accents to the two single strokes (the first and last strokes of the rudiment) nicely rounds out the six-stroke roll and helps to anchor the rudiment to the pocket. Try moving those first and last accented strokes to different drums and/or cymbals to mix it up and add color.

10

RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL

11

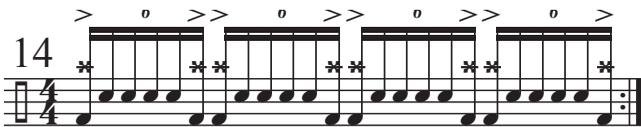
RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRL



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



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



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

If the six-stroke roll isn't a rudiment you've spent a lot of time with yet, do that first. Start slowly on your snare, allowing your hands to get comfortable playing it. Play each stroke deliberately at first, even the doubles. Then start to speed up, allowing those doubles

to begin to bounce. Being comfortable with the rudiment will make learning the previous examples very natural. From here, the possibilities are endless!

Pick any other rudiment, spend some time getting really comfortable with it, and see how you can incorporate it into your grooves, fills, and solos. After a while you won't realize you're playing rudiments at all.



Kristen Gleeson-Prata plays with the alternative pop group BØRNS and is an educator and freelance writer. Gleeson-Prata plays Tama, Paiste, Remo, and Vic Firth products.



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Advanced Techniques for Jazz Soloing

Creative Solo Applications Inspired by a Master

by Stephane Chamberland

I had the chance to study with the great Jim Chapin during the last four years of his life. (Jim passed away at ninety years of age on July 4, 2009—coincidentally, as he's been referred to as the “Father of Independence” in the drumming world.) For four years I'd been studying intensely with Dom Famularo, who suddenly said during one of my lessons, “Steph, you're now ready for Jim.” He picked up the phone and called Jim right away. He came, and we started our first lesson.

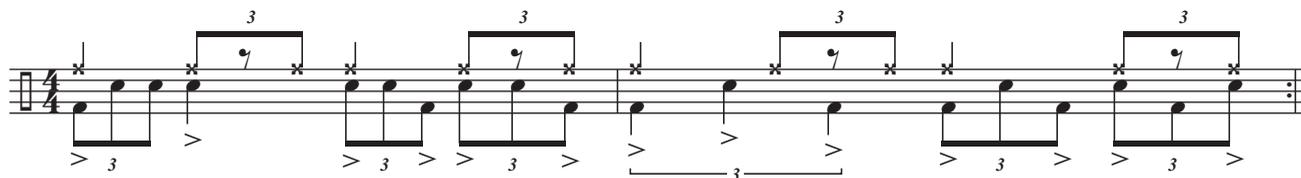
It was moving to watch Jim having a hard time getting out of his car, yet impressive to see him sit at the practice pad and play like he was still twenty years old. From that day on, almost every month that I was on Long Island, I took lessons with him. We worked on techniques on the pad for a long time and eventually moved to the drumset to focus on jazz concepts and independence.

Jim wrote the highly regarded books *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer, Volume One* and *Volume Two*, and was the author of the video *Speed, Power, Control, and Endurance*. Jim had been one of Sanford Moeller's best students, and after his studies with the influential player/instructor, Jim traveled the globe teaching Moeller's concepts to many of the best drummers in the world.

In this article, I'll show you my personal application of Jim's first book. I came up with this idea while I was looking for a method to improve my vocabulary in jazz solos and trading phrases of four or eight bars. (At the time I felt that my comping was at a much higher level than my soloing.) One day while I was at Steve Maxwell's Vintage Drum Shop in New York City, I found the amazing *Philly Joe Jones Solo Book*, which was transcribed by Joerg Eckel, and it inspired me to work on solos and find ways to incorporate any comping vocabulary from Chapin into my phrases.

Removing the Ride Cymbal

Let's begin with Exercises 5 and 6 from Page 41 of *Advanced Techniques*. That's one of my favorite pages to start with when demonstrating this concept.



Start by playing the patterns as written without the ride cymbal. Make sure to use a sticking that feels comfortable. Because both hands are playing the phrase now, the sticking possibilities are numerous. Try to alternate hands as much as possible. You should notice the conversation that's created between the snare and the bass drum—already we've got fodder for tremendous jazz drum solos.

Note that it's harder to play when you're leaving more space. But it's important to practice soloing without always filling in the spaces between our ideas. In other words, be as confident with the rests as you are with the notes you play. Sing your phrases to help you to connect more with the musical side of your composition.



One-Handed Orchestrations

Another famed jazz drummer and teacher, John Riley, gave me great advice to improve my technique and get more ideas out of one single pattern. “Play it with just one hand,” he said, and that's exactly what we are going to do next. This will help you work on endurance, precision, and movement around the drums. Go slowly and start on the snare, and then move between two drums. Finally, orchestrate this phrase everywhere you want—for instance, from the rack tom to the floor tom or from the floor tom to the rack tom—and create random combinations. In this second step, you can hear the melodies created by your drums. I'll also use some stick-on-stick strokes that are very common in jazz. Here's one possibility.



Incorporating Double Strokes

Now it's time to fill in the spaces. Double-stroke rolls are so important when it comes to feel and getting a fuller sound. In this next step, we'll change all the singles that are not accented into doubles. The accented singles are going to stay accented. Make sure to play the doubles soft and the accents loud to create dynamics. You may also want to displace the accents on cymbals or on toms, though staying on the snare also sounds good.



Combining Phrases

Now you can have fun doing the same thing with all the pages of the book. Some patterns will feel and sound better, so write down your favorite ones in a journal. Then take those figures and put them together in a jazz context. Use some play-along tracks, and find musicians to play with as well.

I recommend practicing these ideas by trading phrases. Start by trading one, two, four, eight, and even twelve bars. If you're by yourself without music, you can play time in between your phrases. When you play time, stay light with the comping, and focus more on the sound of the ride cymbal. Make music, and have fun!



Stephane Chamberland is an internationally recognized drummer, clinician, educator, and author who currently leads the Stephane Chamberland Jazz Quartet. He is the co-author of the books *The Weaker Side*, *Pedal Control*, and *Drumset Duets* (Wizdom Media). Chamberland endorses Yamaha, Sabian, Promark, and Evans products. For more info, visit stephanechamberland.com.



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The 5/4 Half-Time Shuffle

A Perennial Groove with an Enlightened Perception

by Daniel Bédard



For those of you who've never heard the coveted half-time shuffle, which is also commonly referred to as the Purdie shuffle, I'd encourage you to check out the timeless tracks "Babylon Sisters" and "Home at Last" by Steely Dan (with Bernard Purdie on drums), "Fool in the Rain" by Led Zeppelin (with John Bonham), and "Rosanna" by Toto (with Jeff Porcaro) to hear the incredible groove played by some of the best drummers who've tackled it.

Dennis Chambers played a very slick variation of that groove on the song "Mother Tongues" on John McLaughlin's album *The Heart of Things: Live in Paris*, which documents two 1998 performances. Chambers plays the groove in 5/4, which makes it sound quite different and fresh. Essentially, he adds one beat to the common 4/4 pattern. Exercise 1 demonstrates Chambers' main groove.

Filling in the Triplets

I decided to add a few notes to the original groove to vary it a bit. In Exercises 2–4, we'll fill in some of the 8th-note-triplet rests with the snare. These variations create a fatter groove.

Incorporating the Hi-Hat Foot

Next we'll explore variations using the hi-hat foot. I orchestrated some of the kick notes from the original groove and moved them to the hi-hat pedal. This makes the groove sound lighter, as there are fewer bass drum notes.

Riding over the Barline

We can also employ a cymbal pattern that resolves over two measures. Gavin Harrison has called this idea "overriding" in his book *Rhythmic Horizons*. In Exercise 8, every other cymbal note is accented. In Exercise 9, we'll incorporate a jazz ride pattern in 4/4 over the original 5/4 groove.

Adding Polyrhythms

To close, let's explore a pattern Dennis sometimes plays throughout the song's choruses. He plays many variations, but what mainly comes out of them is a three-against-four polyrhythm over the 5/4 groove. The three cymbal accents over beats 2, 3, 4, and 5 create the polyrhythm. This one can be tricky, so be patient.

I strongly suggest that you check out the whole song to hear what Chambers plays on the track, as he employs a lot of variations that we didn't dig into here. And for the second part of the song, he plays a very cool double-time funk beat in 5/4. Check it out—it's worth a listen.

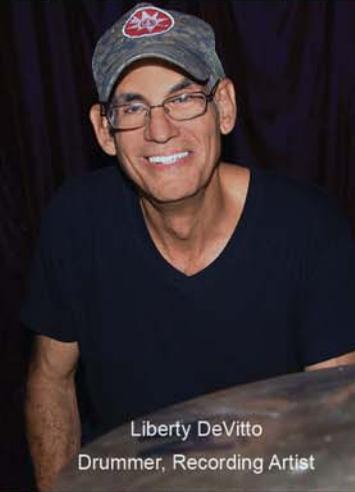
Daniel Bédard is a Montreal-based drummer, educator, and clinician. For more information, visit danielbedarddrums.com.



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10

RL RL RL RL RL RLR RLRL

Exercises 11 and 12 get a little more adventurous with our phrasing by incorporating space, open hi-hats, dynamics, flams, buzzes, and toms in 3/4. Don't let the time signature psych you out. If you're having trouble feeling these comfortably, slow down, count out loud, and focus on a consistent note placement until you can comfortably align with the pulse.

11

12

R RL IR RL

To close out our linear septuplet adventure, let's revisit 4/4 and explore different accents and phrasings. Exercise 13 embellishes the first two beats of the previous example in a new 4/4 groove.

13

RLRLR IR R R RLRLR IR RL B

Exercise 14 creates variation with a ride bell rhythm that has two contrasting themes. The middle of the bar accents every fourth septuplet partial, while the beginning and end of the beat utilize a five-note motif.

14

The last example incorporates doubles across different stacks or hi-hats, toms, and rests to create a funky, dynamic, and challenging pattern. Pay special attention to the dynamics—if most of the notes are loud, beats such as these can sound like a mess.

15

RRLRLRL RLLRRL RLLRLRL RLRL

Spend time with every pattern that connects with you, as there's an unlimited number of ways to mold and shape it into whatever you want. The more you explore, the more you can unlock what makes you truly tick on the instrument!

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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Zimbabwean “Tuku” Music

Analyzing Iconic Guitarist Oliver Mtukudzi’s Drummer, James Austin Manyungwa

by Mark Powers

Combining the traditional Jit, Tsotsa, and other rhythms of Zimbabwe, the late Oliver “Tuku” Mtukudzi’s style could only be defined as distinctly his own. And beyond being an ideal showcase for his unique music, his legendary early-’90s release *Shoko* features James Austin Manyungwa on drumset laying down tight and fascinating African/soul grooves throughout.

The three-against-two hemiolas felt in many of the 12/8 rhythms of *Shoko* help to push the music along, keeping it danceable yet elusive. And the 4/4 examples apply subtle beat displacement ideas that every funk drummer should stow away in their bag of tricks. Let’s dive in.

“Bvongodza Muto”

On this track, which is listed in the liner notes as having a sped-up Jiti-Tsotsa rhythm, Manyungwa anticipates the snare drum and mixes in a nice hi-hat syncopation over a solid four-on-the-floor bass drum pattern. (0:06)

Two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff shows a bass drum pattern (x) and a snare drum pattern (o) with a plus sign above the second measure. The second staff shows a more complex snare pattern with accents (>) and a plus sign above the second measure.

This great fill breaks away from the 16th-note flow and opens things up a bit. (3:30)

Two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff shows a bass drum pattern (x) and a snare drum pattern (o) with a plus sign above the second measure. The second staff shows a snare pattern with a triplet (3) and a plus sign above the second measure.

“Mwana Asingacheme”

The minimal bass drum pattern and wide-open third beat on this “bump” groove create a soft bed for the guitar and Hammond organ. (0:11)

Two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff shows a bass drum pattern (x) and a snare drum pattern (o) with a plus sign above the second measure. The second staff shows a snare pattern with a plus sign above the second measure.

“Ndiri Bofu”

Every third measure of the song is a break from the regular rhythm. As the song develops, Manyungwa experiments with different ways to fill the space. Our example begins with the one-bar break, followed by the primary groove of the piece. (1:20)

Two staves of musical notation in 12/8 time. The first staff shows a bass drum pattern (x) and a snare drum pattern (o) with plus signs above the second and fourth measures. The second staff shows a snare pattern with plus signs above the second and fourth measures.

Two staves of musical notation in 12/8 time. The first staff shows a bass drum pattern (x) and a snare drum pattern (o) with plus signs above the second and fourth measures. The second staff shows a snare pattern with plus signs above the second and fourth measures.

Two staves of musical notation in 12/8 time. The first staff shows a bass drum pattern (x) and a snare drum pattern (o) with plus signs above the second and fourth measures. The second staff shows a snare pattern with plus signs above the second and fourth measures.

Here are two more interesting ways that the previous break is played. Exercise 5 demonstrates a figure at the 2:17 mark, while Exercise 6 begins at 3:01.

Two staves of musical notation in 12/8 time. The first staff shows a bass drum pattern (x) and a snare drum pattern (o) with plus signs above the second and fourth measures. The second staff shows a snare pattern with plus signs above the second and fourth measures.

Two staves of musical notation in 12/8 time. The first staff shows a bass drum pattern (x) and a snare drum pattern (o) with plus signs above the second and fourth measures. The second staff shows a snare pattern with plus signs above the second and fourth measures.

“Baba”

Hi-hat placement and dynamics vary throughout this groove, which is a fusion of two Jiti beats. Note the driving three-over-two feel created by the bass drum. (0:06)

Two staves of musical notation in 12/8 time. The first staff shows a bass drum pattern (x) and a snare drum pattern (o) with plus signs above the second and fourth measures. The second staff shows a snare pattern with plus signs above the second and fourth measures.

Manyungwa places toms between the unchanging bass drum pattern to play fills without interrupting the flow of the song. (0:30)

Two staves of musical notation in 12/8 time. The first staff shows a bass drum pattern (x) and a snare drum pattern (o) with plus signs above the second and fourth measures. The second staff shows a snare pattern with plus signs above the second and fourth measures.

“Tumirai Shoko”

The laid-back feel and single displaced snare drum of this rhythm leave lots of room for the organ, guitars, and vocals. (0:30)

9

After being delayed throughout the basic groove, the anticipated snare notes here add a sense of urgency to this fill. (1:23)

10

“Timbumbamireyi”

The bass drum again adds a hemiola flavor to this African soul groove. (0:07)

11

On the recording, this fill lays way behind the beat and creates a huge hole in the rhythm, leaving the listener begging for that next downbeat. (2:08)

12

“Kumhunga”

A perfect example of a rhythm that can be perceived in more than one way, the “Kumhunga” rhythms have been notated here in two different time signatures. First we’ll look at the rhythm in a 9/8 perspective. Here’s the basic groove. (0:06)

13

Here is a two-measure phrase that applies a hi-hat variation and a short fill. (1:45)

14

Here’s the same basic groove, although thought about in a 3/4 perspective. This should sound identical to Exercise 13. (0:06)

15

And here is Example 14 notated in 3/4. Keep in mind that although we’re writing and thinking of these two rhythms in two slightly different ways, they should both sound the same to a listener.

16

“Madzongonyedze”

The last track on *Shoko* features a laid-back 12/8 feel. The bass drum is varied subtly, sometimes playing two back-to-back 16th notes (as notated below), and occasionally doubling some of the 8th notes being played by the bass guitar. (0:11)

17

Manyungwa’s fill going into the first verse of the song again beautifully mirrors the bass guitar line and then leaves some breathing room before nicely setting up the entrance of the vocals. (0:33)

18



Katarzyna Ceppek

Mark Powers plays drums for the Portland, Oregon, based band Floater. He’s facilitated drumset, world music, and alternative percussion programs in over 200 schools and organizations in the United States and abroad, and has authored or coauthored multiple percussion instructional methods. Find more information at powerspercussion.com.



The Starr Festival Snare

by Bob Campbell

On May 12, 1963, Ringo Starr received a 5.5x14 oyster black pearl Ludwig Jazz Festival snare. This drum was seen and heard by millions of Beatles fans, and it became an object of obsession for many generations of drummers that followed. One of those drummers is historian Gary Astridge.

Astridge—who wrote the piece on Ringo's late-'60s maple five-piece kit on page 44 of this issue—idolized him in every way, from his playing style to the gear he used. Over the years, Gary has meticulously researched Ringo's drumkits and assembled exact replicas of the ones used with the Beatles. He became a de facto expert. Gary said, "I realized that I had accumulated a lot of information that people didn't know about, and I wanted to share it, so I created a website, RingosBeatleKits.com, in 2006. It became a blueprint for each of Ringo's kits."

In 2012, Gary got a surprise phone call from the Grammy Museum. They were doing an exhibit on Ringo's life called "Ringo: Peace and Love" with some of Ringo's gear, but no one knew how to assemble the Beatles-era kits. It was all in disarray, and some parts appeared to be missing. They had seen Gary's website and asked him to help. Gary was flattered and agreed to set up the exhibit. He quickly identified what was missing and replaced them with parts from his personal collection.

Astridge used that time to chronicle Ringo's gear up close, as some of these kits had not seen the light of day for decades. In particular, he knew that Ringo's 1963 oyster black pearl Jazz Festival was a rare configuration. The snare was 5.5" in depth instead of the typical 5". Each drum had a Ludwig pre-serial number keystone badge, bowtie lugs, baseball bat muffler, and P-83 throw-off. However, Ringo's Jazz Festival snare had an unusual hardware arrangement. The keystone badge was located one panel to the left of the throw-off, and the baseball bat muffler was placed one panel further to the left. On all other Jazz Festival snares, there was a blank panel to the left of the throw-off.

According to Astridge, "In 1964, the Jazz Festival went from 5.5" to 5", the red muffler pad was changed to white, the chrome-over-brass hoops were replaced with chrome-over-steel, the snare gate size on the bottom hoop was reduced, and serial numbers were added to the badge. To my knowledge, there are only about five snare drums



Gary Astridge

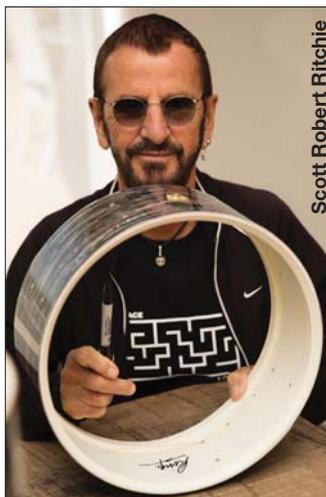
like this surviving, including two that I own but not counting Ringo's. Ringo's is stamped April 18, 1963."

Gary decided to commission a custom snare to the exact specs as Ringo's original 1963 drum. He went to Bernie Stone, of Stone Custom Drum Company, to make a prototype 3-ply mahogany-poplar-mahogany shell with a scarf joint and reinforcing rings. He then harvested the necessary hardware from other 1960s-era Ludwig drums and had them replated in chrome. He also designed a keystone-inspired logo for the badge. When Gary showed the badge logo to Ringo, he suggested adding crossed drumsticks and his name. The decision was to make that the outer badge and have a numbered keystone

badge on the inner side of the grommet. Two prototypes were built, and Astridge took them to the 2017 Chicago Drum Show. The response was overwhelmingly favorable.

Astridge kept Ringo's drum tech, Jeff Chonis, and personal assistant, Scott "Scotty" Ritchie, informed on his Starr Festival snare. Upon Ringo's approval, Gary presented the idea to reissue the snare to Ludwig. He recalls, "We had a meeting in their conference room, and the Ludwig team was sold on the idea. Ludwig made the shell, the oyster black pearl wrap, the eighteen-strand snare wires with the script logo, and the heads. I did the final assembly. I originally thought maybe we could do sixty-three drums, like the year, but we realized that wasn't going to be possible. Ringo thought we should do fifteen, so that's where we wound up."

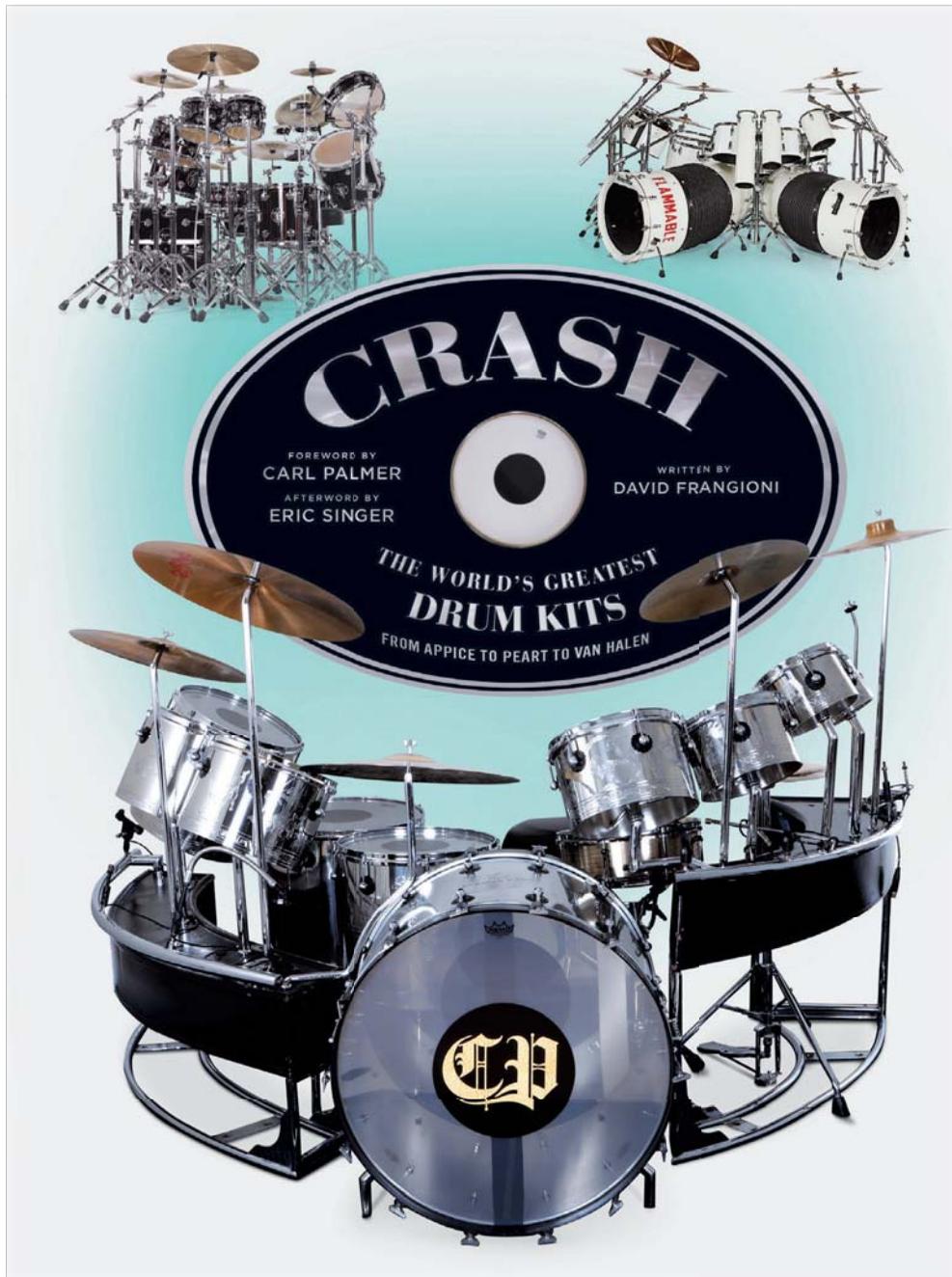
Fifty-five years after Ringo obtained his 1963 Jazz Festival, Gary presented him with the first production Starr Festival snare drum (#9, at Ringo's request). Each of these drums is hand-signed by Ringo and comes in a custom 1960s-style case with a special Starr Festival drum key, tea towel, drumsticks, a personalized book on Ringo's drums, and a signed certificate of authenticity. Each drum costs an impressive \$30,000, with part of the proceeds going to the Lotus Foundation, a charity founded by Ringo and his wife, Barbara.



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LP Sugar Skull Karl Perazzo Congas and Bongos

These signature congas and matching bongos feature Dia de los Muertos skull artwork designed by longtime Santana percussionist Karl Perazzo. The quinto, conga, and tumba shells are manufactured from 30" Kevlar-reinforced seamless fiberglass and are finished with lacquer and chrome hardware. The drums are topped with rawhide heads and feature heavy-duty .3125" tension rods, patented LP Top-Tuning Comfort Curve II rims, and ProCare shell protectors. Matching 7.25" and 8.625" bongos and an 11" mini conga are also available.

List prices are \$1,076.99 for the quinto, \$1,092.99 for the conga, \$1,123.99 for the tumba, \$615.99 for the bongos, and \$107.99 for the mini conga.

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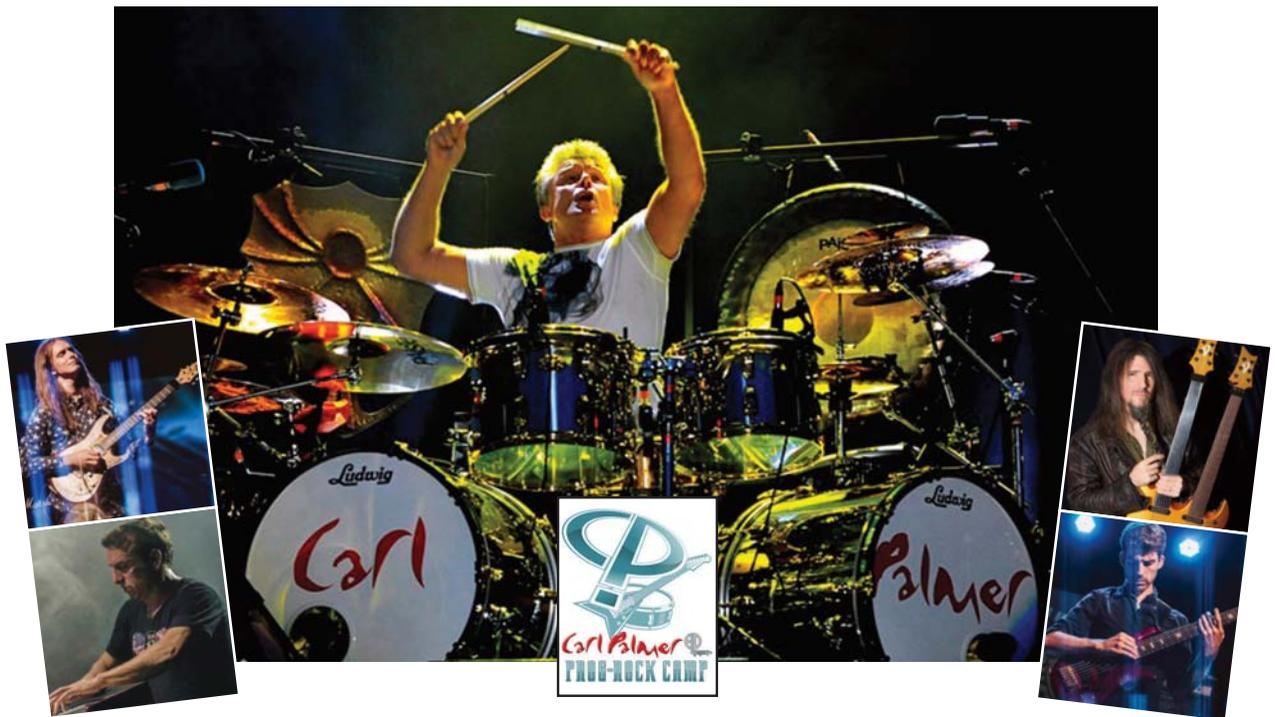
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MISCELLANEOUS

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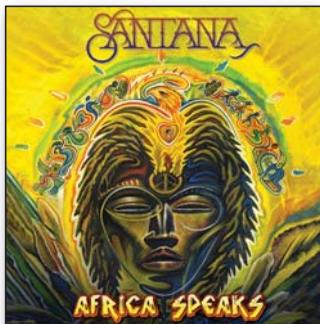
CRITIQUE

RECORDINGS

Santana *Africa Speaks*

CINDY BLACKMAN SANTANA and KARL PERAZZO shine on an exhilarating new release from one of music's truly timeless bands.

Drummer Cindy Blackman Santana's call and response with conguero Karl Perazzo sets the tone for the heightened rhythmic interplay to follow on *Africa Speaks*. The versatile drummer gives her toms a workout on "Batonga," leaning into the snare to craft a hybrid second-line groove as well, and, as "Oye Este Mi Canto" shifts from 6/8 to 4/4 funk-rock, she aggressively accents along with the leader's searing guitar. With Perazzo keeping time on bongo, she fills the gaps with creativity and intent, capping the tune with crisp single strokes. The straight-up-and-swinging rock groove on "Yo Me Lo Merezo" bends into dancehall turf on an epic out-vamp, while the slamming pocket on "Los Invisibles" and jam on "Blue Skies" are as raw as Santana tracks recorded half a century earlier. The dynamic ensemble work of Blackman Santana and Perazzo fuels the band's still-unique musical fire throughout. (Concord) **Robin Tolleson**



Oz Noy *Booga Looga Loo*

The New York-based guitar maverick brings together some big drumming names to have some fun.



Guitarist Oz Noy assembles his usual high-level assortment of sidemen for an album of pleasing, throwback jazz alongside grooving originals with modern flourishes.

Steve Ferrone and bassist Will Lee keep things squarely in the pocket on "Boogaloo Fever" with their best finger-snapping "Sidewinder"-style feel, while **Vinnie Colaiuta**

teams up with bassist John Patitucci for a laid-back shuffle on "Chocolat Souffle." Elsewhere, **Dave Weckl** and bassist James Genus convene for a mellow, funkified take on Monk's "Bemsha Swing," allowing the drummer to throw in understated syncopations and accents underneath Noy's sinewy guitar lines. Colaiuta returns with a 7/8 take on the boogaloo rhythm for the title track's head, before he and the band veer off into open fusion territory. Check out the conversational way the drummer caresses his snare during Kevin Hays' piano solo. A record of familiar covers and ready-to-eat originals might not be a novel offering, but in the hands of these players, the proverbial phonebook would sound good. (Abstract Logix) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

Grupo Fantasma *American Music: Volume VII*

Austin's Grupo Fantasma continues to expand the very notion of Latin music on their latest long player.

Coming up on their twentieth year, the Grammy-winning nonet known for collaborating with Prince and spawning many side projects (Brownout, Brown Sabbath, Money Chicha) teamed up with producer Carlos "El Loco" Bedoya (Missy Elliott, Weezer) and did most tracking at Sonic Ranch studios in the border town of Tornillo, Texas. Drummer **John**



Speice IV anchors the affair on drums, with **Matthew "Sweet Lou" Holmes** on congas, **Jose Galeano** on timbales, and vocalist **Kino Esparza** on percussion. The LP goes heavy on the cumbia, as on the boozy "La Cruda" and the more folkloric album closer, "Sombra Roja," but the record travels enough stylistically that it's impossible to pin it to a particular locale. "Nosotros" builds an arena-sized shuffle around a West African 6/8 core, "L.T." explores a psychedelic Turkish sound with a guest spot from Sunny Jain of Red Baraat on dhol drum, and "The Wall" delves into political hip-hop with guest verses from members of Ozomatli. Grooves like "Ausencia," which almost sounds like a song played by Tony Allen, bear repeated listens. The guitar and horns take the bulk of the solos, so if you want more than Speice's lone Jabo Starks-style break on "Cuidado" (his funk expertise is all over the last Brownout LP) and a few choice timbale breaks from Galeano, you'll need to check out a live show. (Blue Corn) **Stephen Bidwell**

Otmaro Ruiz/Jimmy Branly/Jimmy Haslip *Elemental*

Drummer JIMMY BRANLY slays on an album of high-level progressive groove music.

This trio's debut is a drummer's delight. Bassist Jimmy Haslip is, as always, melodic and foundational. Otmaro Ruiz shines in compositions and keystrokes. Drummer Jimmy Branly, however, nearly steals the show. JB's playing is bold and dynamic, whether it's big things like fluid 32nds around the toms, or little ones like his switch to cross-stick under Ruiz's solo on "A Good Start." Branly peppers the rhythm behind his bandmates on "Greed"—inventive groovemaking, rarely satisfied with the norm. Off-beat syncopations on the intro to "Boomtown," and the move to a cowbell-based flow, are a sweet prelude to his beautifully broken sixteen-bar solo. Drums steer the action on "Low Row," from the intro's joyous, barely contained barrage to a busy but not over-reaching swing, to a blistering fast finale. Meanwhile, "Part Time Smart" relives funk-fusion's heyday, and the drummer's backbeat is as strong as his solo is breathtaking. (Blue Canoe) **Robin Tolleson**



Betty Carter *The Music Never Stops*

Three drum masters elevate an ambitious concert from the vault.

The late, great Betty Carter is captured here in a terrific 1992 Jazz at Lincoln Center performance. The idiosyncratic jazz vocalist is backed alternately—and sometimes in tandem—by a fifteen-piece jazz orchestra, a string sextet, and a trio. The collective of A-list New York cats propel Carter in up-tempo swingers and ruminative ballads. On board are three—count 'em, *three*—of the city's finest straight-ahead jazz drummers: **Kenny Washington** helms the large ensemble while **Clarence Penn** and **Gregory Hutchinson** alternate on the trio seat. The three share something in common: in their emerging years, they all worked with Carter, who was known for polishing young talents. The set is an education on supporting vocalists. Washington drives hard without overwhelming, while Penn and Hutchinson give smooth swinging support with keen attention to dynamics and space—an essential skill for accompanying the unpredictable Carter, who boldly explores between the rhythmic and melodic cracks. (Blue Engine) **Jeff Potter**



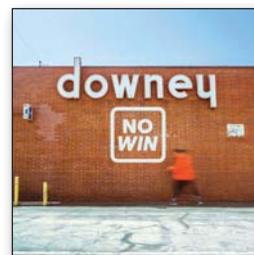
Indie-Rock Roundup

The Littlest Viking *Feelings & Stuff* /// No Win *downey* /// Brutus *Nest* /// Royal Tusk *Tusk II*



Self-described math/emo/punk duo the Littlest Viking have released their third album, *Feelings & Stuff*, replete with drummer **Christopher Patrick Gregory's** frenetic yet precise and structured playing. Featuring a surprisingly full texture for only two members, the L.A.-based duo have already completed a month-long domestic tour this year and are in the planning stages for their first tour abroad later in 2019. (farewellmylittlevikingrecords.com)

No Win, a more-than-a-side-project helmed by ex-Fidlar drummer **Danny Nogueiras**, recently released its debut full-length, *downey*. Drumming duties on the album were handled by ex-Joyce Manor member **Jeff Enzor**, allowing Nogueiras to explore his musings as a bandleader and lead vocalist. The result is ten songs of emotionally charged power-pop reminiscent of the best of the '90s and early 2000s slacker-rock with a modern edge. Enzor's playing and meaty drum sounds throughout deliver exactly what the material needs. (Dangerbird)



The members of post-hardcore trio Brutus came together in 2013 in Leuven, Belgium, as members of a tribute band to seminal Swedish punk group Refused. After years of work on the road throughout Europe, Brutus has released its second album, *Nest*. Fueled by drummer and vocalist **Stefanie Mannaerts'** dynamic and emotive contributions, Brutus has toured with Thrice and labelmates Russian Circles, as well as appeared at most of the major European rock festivals over the past few years. (Sargent House)

Canadian rockers Royal Tusk's second full-length, *Tusk II*, features drummer **Calen Stuckel's** muscular approach, which pays homage to his early-2000s influences while smashing the band's material right into the sweet spot between reckless and contrived. *Tusk II* feels huge and anthemic without being too slick. (eOne Music) **Ben Meyer**

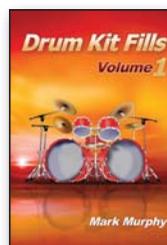


MULTIMEDIA

Drum Kit Fills (Vols 1, 2, and 3) by Mark Murphy

An Australian drummer and educator's three-volume set features hundreds of fills to enhance your playing, regardless of style.

There's a wealth of information contained in the three volumes of *Drum Kit Fills*, and the books escalate in difficulty gradually, so begin wherever you feel comfortable. *Volume 1* contains fills on the simpler side, with 8th notes, flams, and triplets. By *Volume 3*, Murphy presents linear fills and odd times, and playing a few examples in succession almost feels like soloing musically. The author transcribes several actual solos across the books as well, summarizing what's been taught throughout. Whether used for sight-reading training or for ideas to throw in at the end of a verse-to-chorus transition, if you're short on inspiration, *Drum Kit Fills* will prove useful, regardless of what level you're at. (markmurphymusic.com.au) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



The Bailey Method

A no-nonsense approach to getting great drum sounds, from top touring/session musician Dan Bailey.

Filmed with minimal edits at the drummer's Southern California studio, Trackland, *The Bailey Method* is longtime touring and session drummer Dan Bailey's first opus in the world of online education. When he's not on the road with singer/songwriter Father John Misty, Bailey spends most days engineering and tracking drums for other artists, and this video course gives you an inside look on how it all goes down, from tuning and other preparations to setting up mics for different sounds and tracking songs.

Bailey takes a friendly and casual approach throughout the course, letting the camera roll as he changes and seats drumheads, tensions and tunes the drums to perfection, and makes final tweaks. Eloquent and insightful, Dan packs each chapter with real-life info he's collected from years of personal experience working as his own drum tech and audio engineer. "Teaching hadn't been in my wheelhouse before," he says. "But my buddy Dave Elitch was in my ear telling me to do this. I've never really studied privately or taught, so it was all from scratch. But the response has been surprisingly great. There must have been a knowledge vacuum that no one thought to address in this specific way."

The Bailey Method consists of eleven chapters, including segments on the author's recording philosophies, his personal approach for tuning each piece of the kit, minimal and multiple-mic configurations, and drum tracking on three songs with very different approaches and tones. While it took several months of planning, the actual filming for the various chapters went quickly. "I started doing an outline last year," says Bailey. "But we shot everything in chunks over the course of a week in total. There aren't a ton of edits, and some sections are eighteen minutes of just one shot. Luckily we didn't have to redo anything, so the filming went fast."

In the chapter on snare drum tuning, Bailey discusses his approach for quickly detuning a standard-sounding drum to achieve a classic fat, dead tone. But he didn't get the results he wanted on the first attempt. Rather than cutting filming and restarting, Dan kept the camera rolling. "I've been tuning drums for years, and I still don't know why sometimes that happens," he says. "But I was really happy that it did while we were recording that chapter because I want people to know that at no point will your tuning skills be so perfect that you'll never have to redo something. There's no magic. It's about feel and repetition. The more you do it, the better you get."

When asked about whether he thinks drum tuning is more ritual than science, Bailey says, "As with most things in audio engineering, you'll stumble across something that works and then make a mental note to come back to it again. So a lot of it's ritual. What I show is the way I've gotten my sound for years. It works and is really mic friendly. I know what the tension should feel like, and I know how I want the heads to resonate together. But I don't think you can tune drums via straight science, or else something like a Drum Dial would work every time. But it just doesn't."

Selecting snare drums for sessions is a similarly experience-based decision. "I'm lucky enough to have a lot of drums, and each of my snares has a particular personality," Dan says. "So when I hear a song, I know which drum to start with."

Contrary to the conventions of many studio drummers, Bailey prefers to start with an open, resonant tone and dampen to taste, even with the bass drum. "People often think that every unported bass drum is going to sound like a 28" concert drum," he says. "That's not at all the case. The Camco I used in the video just sounds like a bass drum. A lot of that comes down to mic placement. The closer you place the mic to the center of the head, the more beater sound you're going to get. So you can control how wet or dry a bass drum sounds with mic placement."



"If you're playing a slow tune," Dan continues, "then the bass drum can be more open and take up more space. I use deadening mostly to keep the notes from running into each other. I also like an open, cracking snare. But if you're playing a tune at 150 bpm, that sound doesn't work because there's no clarity. I think it's best to find out what a drum wants to do in its most open state and then manicure it from there. I always start with the snare open to see if the personality of the drum is fitting the song, and then curate the sound toward a more specific thing. If the drum is sounding good open, then it's easy to throw on a little tape if it's ringing too long."

In the chapter on a two-mic setup, Bailey emphasizes the importance of dynamics and balance in order to achieve great drum sounds. "The overhead doesn't lie," he says. "If you're bashing the ride, or if the toms are completely lost, it'll let you know. One thing I like to do is put on one of my favorite songs and record myself playing along to it, using just the bass drum mic and overhead, and try to get something that sounds like a full mix. The floor tom is usually the one drum that you need to play harder in order to get it to translate to the overhead."

Along the same lines, Dan cautions against focusing too much attention to the nuances captured by the close mics. "I think people make too many decisions based on the sound of the close mics," he says. "The majority of the drum sound comes from the overheads and rooms. The close mics are there to fill in underneath and add some attack. But most of the time if the toms sound weird, it's a problem with the position of the mic. A lot of people mike the toms too closely. Little moves make a huge difference, and usually they sound better if you back off the mics a bit."

Despite his initial reluctance, Bailey is eager to start production on some follow-up courses. "We could have gone way more in-depth," he says. "So I'm already storyboarding potential second and third courses that will go deeper into getting specific sounds and other things."

Check out *The Bailey Method* at [Vimeo.com/ondemand/thebaileymethod](https://vimeo.com/ondemand/thebaileymethod).

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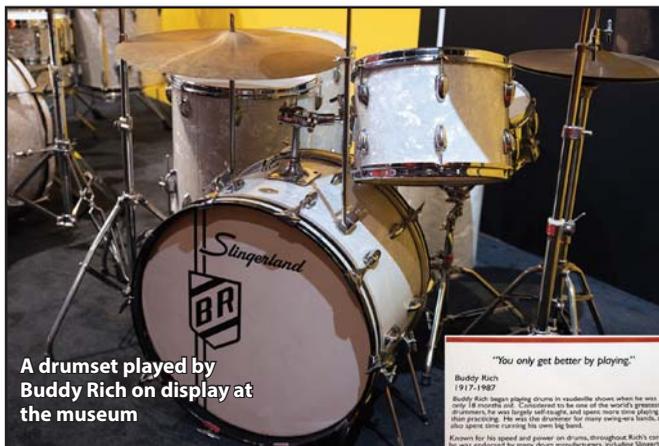
Rhythm! Discovery Center Ten-Year Anniversary

The interactive museum celebrates a decade of percussion education.

Nestled in the heart of downtown Indianapolis is the Rhythm! Discovery Center, a gem of the drum and percussion world. Founded by the Percussive Arts Society in 2009 and now celebrating its tenth year, the RDC is said to be the world's only interactive drum and percussion museum. The organization says its mission is to "offer an incomparable experience in exploring the universality of rhythm and percussion, and its role in shaping communication, music, art, performance, and society."

The museum's exhibits and programs change periodically, so there's always something exciting and new. Some of the RDC's more intriguing 2019 exhibits include *Time Tunnel*, which demonstrates how cultures have made rhythm an integral part of their lives throughout history. *Evolving Sounds* explains how various percussion instruments are designed and built and how orchestral percussion has evolved over time, and allows visitors to be hands-on with those instruments at interactive stations. One-of-a-kind percussion instruments are also on display, including the Celestaphone, a vibraphone made from meteorite ore. *It's Rudimentary*, an exploration of PAS drum rudiments, teaches about the basics of drumming and the creation of the PAS International Drum Rudiments. Practice pads are provided to try out each rudiment.

The exhibit *Drums and Drummers* highlights famous players and their kits. On display in 2019 were kits from Ginger Baker, Neil Peart, Kenny Aronoff, Chris Johnson, and Daru Jones. New kits will rotate in each year. A companion display showcases kits from PAS's permanent collection that were played by Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, and Louie Bellson.



A drumset played by Buddy Rich on display at the museum

Buddy Rich
1917-1987
Buddy Rich began playing drums in middle school when he was only 18 months old. Considered to be one of the world's greatest drummers, he was largely self-taught and spent more time playing than practicing. He was the drummer for many swing-era bands, to also great care during his career.

The Rhythm Center maintains a schedule of special events for visitors, such as performances from local and national musical groups and community drum circles, so it's recommended to periodically check their schedule. In addition, there are guided tours that can be arranged, including a "behind the glass" tour of the PAS collection storage space, where hundreds of rare and unique percussion instruments are housed, many of which are not available for public viewing.

The conception of the Rhythm! Discovery Center has been a forty-plus-year journey, first introduced as an idea by the PAS Museum Committee in 1971. Ten years later, PAS received its first significant donation, a drumkit once owned by the renowned theater, television,



PAS executive director Joshua Simonds

and Minneapolis Symphony drummer Roy C. Knapp. Collecting continued, and in 1992 the PAS Museum was created as part of the organization's newly established headquarters in Lawton, Oklahoma. As PAS grew, its headquarters were expanded twice to increase exhibit and storage space for the growing historical instrument collection.

In 2007, PAS moved its international headquarters to Indianapolis, Indiana. The relocation allowed their headquarters, museum, and annual convention, PASIC, to all be in close proximity. The museum collection was placed in storage while a new museum was constructed. The goal was to have construction completed and exhibits ready for the first PASIC show in Indianapolis in 2009.

In November of 2009, the enhanced PAS museum opened under the Rhythm! Discovery Center moniker. Michael Kenyon, PAS's executive director between 2001 and 2012, recalls that first day. "It was very hectic," he tells *MD*. "We were literally putting up signs, preparing exhibit labels, and putting together the displays until about 3 A.M. We had a grand opening reception, and instead of a ribbon cutting, we had six sets of cymbals crashed by VIPs. Our first exhibits were *Journey of a Rhythm: Clave*; a display from Clair Omar Musser, who was a marimba virtuoso, conductor, teacher, and designer of keyboard percussion instruments; and *Percussion in Film*."

In 2016, Joshua Simonds was appointed as the executive director of PAS. Simonds says that the location in Indianapolis was ideal, as "it not only allowed us space for our collection and to offer other educational activities, but also become a part of the community. This has worked out well, as we now have nearly 24,000 visitors a year coming through the museum."

The RDC now holds over 2,000 percussion instruments, in addition to thousands of documents, scores, recordings, and photos. These artifacts and archives are used in exhibits at RDC and by PAS members for research. In recognition of this achievement, PAS has recently renewed their lease in Indianapolis for ten more years.

Simonds sums up the organization's success. "RDC is an interactive drum and percussion museum for all ages," he says. "There's the opportunity to learn and to play. Some people say, 'I don't have any rhythm.' I believe that rhythm is inherent in all of us. We all have a heartbeat. This museum is all about self expression and having the opportunity to connect with that rhythm. It's an open, friendly environment where no one is judging. You're just enjoying the experience."

For more information, visit rhythmdiscoverycenter.org.

Story by Bob Campbell

Photos by Bob Campbell and George Burrows





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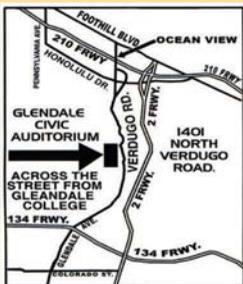
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A Restored Gretsch Steal



Drummer Tony Carbone of Syracuse, New York, tells *MD* that his goal with this beautifully restored vintage project was to buy some older Gretsch shells in his favorite sizes on the cheap and create a road-worn-looking vintage kit that has that oft-referred-to “Great Gretsch Sound.”

The set consists of an 8x12 tom, a 14x14 floor tom, and a 14x20 bass drum. “I purchased the shells on an auction website,” Carbone says. “As with most vintage Gretsch drums, it’s difficult to pinpoint the year that they were manufactured. Tags and serial numbers were faded and/or partially torn off, except for the bass drum’s, which has a serial number of 122011. After some research, I believe it was made in 1969.”

Carbone says that the condition of the shells varied greatly. Each had its own issues, and none of them came with any hardware or hoops. “The project took more than three months to complete,” he says. “This was due to finding a 14x14 shell, waiting for parts, and the long curing time for 100-percent pure tung oil, which was used for the finish.” Carbone says that he chose tung oil for its all-natural, non-toxic formula. “I also wanted a flat finish to give it more of a vintage look.

“All of the hardware was made by Gretsch from various eras,” he continues. “Parts were purchased from different websites; I also rummaged through bins at a local independently owned music store. I used Gretsch’s new reproduction 302 double-flanged hoops on the tom and floor tom.”

Carbone shares that he paid \$25 for the bass drum, \$64 for the rack tom, and \$129 for the floor tom. “I used paint stripper to remove the bass drum’s flat black oil-based paint and completed several sanding stages to get the drum ready for the finish,” he adds. “The rack tom seemed to have sustained some exposure to moisture and was stained, which was okay with me because the shell was still solid. And the floor tom shell had a black sparkle wrap on it and a two-inch chip on the outer ply at the bearing edge. I removed the wrap and glue residue, filled the chip, sanded, and applied the tung oil finish.”

Not too bad of a deal for such a gorgeous finished product. “I forgot to mention the most important thing!” Carbone concludes. “The drums sound amazing!”

Photo Submission: Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to kitoftthemonth@modern drummer.com. Show “Kit of the Month” in the subject line.



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