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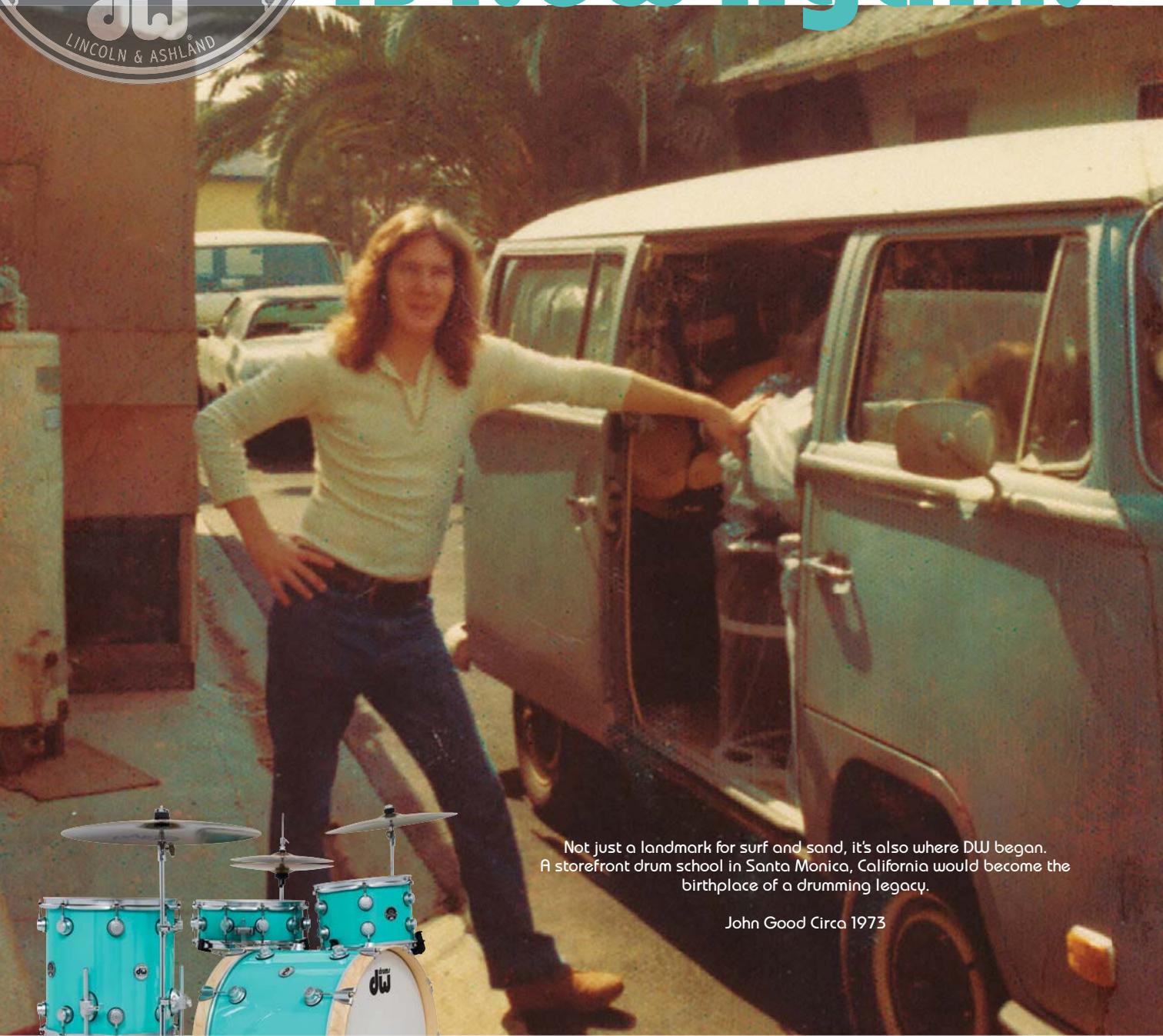


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Jerod Boyd *Miss May I*

PERCUSSIVE GUT PUNCH

The Metalcore band, *Miss May I* counts on the powerful rhythms and heavy hitting fury of TAMA Artist **Jerod Boyd**. His infectious, raw energy and excellent timing are the perfect formula for drum tones that kick you right in the gut; there’s absolutely no losing his sound in the mix! Jerod’s a full-fledged power hitter and his kit of choice is his **Starclassic Walnut/Birch**. Its balanced dynamics and projection are ideal complements to Jerod’s intensity and drive.



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EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

The 2020 *Modern Drummer* Readers Poll: Something New

This year we've made some adjustments to our annual Readers Poll at moderndrummer.com, so if you've voted in the past, you'll notice that things look a little different.

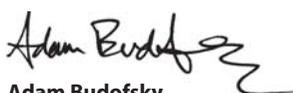
First off, whereas for the past several years we've supplied nominees in each category, for our 2020 Poll we're putting the process back in your hands. Besides the Hall of Fame category (we can't let you have *all* of the fun, you know), you now choose all the nominees. We think this gives all of us drummers a more accurate idea of who is truly exciting and inspiring us at this particular point in history. This is actually the way we did things during our first few decades of publication, and it provided a direct line to readers' feelings that we've missed during the past few Polls. We hope you appreciate our new/old approach, and we're extremely excited to see who you choose—and, of course, who tops each category!

Speaking of "this particular point in history," we've also made a few changes to our categories, to fully reflect the multitude of ways that we all rate the players and teachers who entertain and educate us today. As popular music and drumming of all types reflect wider global and stylistic influences, it becomes harder—and less accurate—to describe musicians solely in terms of one playing style. The way we see it, that's a healthy thing both for the art of drumming and for music in general.

To help better represent the always-changing realities of drumming and music, we're evolving from a genre-oriented approach to a broader one, simultaneously dropping certain stylistic categories and adding new ones, such as Soloist, Live Drummer, and App/Online Instruction. In a sense, it's our way of getting closer to the types of conversations we're all having when we get together in the real world, and less about being beholden to academic traditions.

For sure, some of you will have strong opinions about these changes, and we'd expect nothing less. And there will no doubt be further adjustments in future Polls. But like Roger Daltrey sang more than forty years ago on *Who Are You*—a year before the *Modern Drummer* Readers Poll was launched—"the music must change." Likewise, it's our duty to continuously consider the way we discuss and judge it, as reflected by the way you, our readers, do.

If you're so moved, let us know how you feel about all of this on social media. More importantly, go to moderndrummer.com, and vote!



Adam Budofsky
Editorial Director



Jim Esposito

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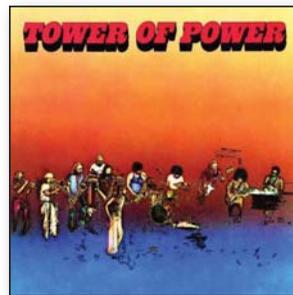
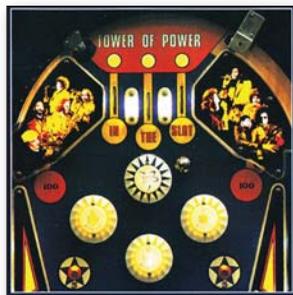
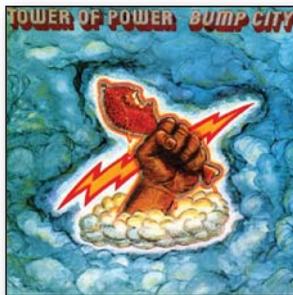
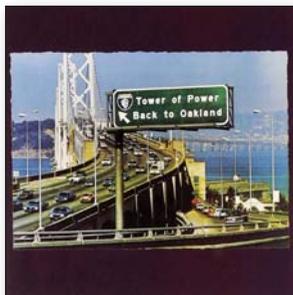


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What's Your Favorite David Garibaldi Track?



"Oakland Stroke." The groove is completely original, innovative, and funky AF. It fits the song perfectly, and it sounds 100 percent like Garibaldi. He has so many amazing grooves,

"Oakland Stroke." Pure genius.
Ash Soan

"Ebony Jam." The groove is so simple, yet so genius.
Zach Wilt

"Oakland Stroke" and "Soul Vaccination." If it wasn't for Dave Garibaldi, my left hand wouldn't exist—all of the ghost notes!
Mike Davis

"Oakland Stroke," because no matter how many times I drill that groove, I could never in a millennia play it like Dave.
Joseph Wesley Arrington

"Oakland Stroke." Learning to play that helped me identify exactly what elements in my playing I wanted to improve and has provided hours and hours of meaningful, musical practice that's immediately applicable.

A Michael Collins

but to me, "Oakland Stroke" is his crowning achievement. It's to Garibaldi what "Funky Drummer" was to Clyde Stubblefield. Whenever I meet someone who's never heard TOP, I play them "Oakland Stroke" first.
Steven Wolf

"Soul Vaccination." There's a lack of a backbeat throughout the whole song, yet it still has a pocket feel.
Matthew Lofton

The beat he programmed on an early Linn drum machine that eventually became [the Time's] "777-9311."
Joey Campanella

"What Is Hip?" Classic, feel off the charts, the pocket ridiculously deep, and the band is so tight you'd think they were glued together.
ddogn

"Soul Vaccination." There is so much going on in that track that most drummers have no idea of the genius of the construction and how ahead of its time it was.
Tommy Igoe

"Can't You See." I love all the punches with the snare and horn section.
Eddie Gonzales

"Vuela por Noche."
Juanma Cayota

"Squib Cakes."
Slim Jim Phantom

"Squib Cakes." It represents Garibaldi's way of bridging jazz and funk.
Landon Blackburn

"Clever Girl." Not his most technical, but that groovy half-time is unbeatable.
Carter Skillicorn

"So Very Hard to Go." It shows that David could play a simple torch song but still make a groove like crazy, and it was TOP's biggest hit. And for all the drum nerds, the fill at 3:26 will soothe your over-the-barline beating hearts.
Echdrums

"Soul Vaccination," because the groove is so creative and hard as hell to play as smooth as he does.
macton325

"On the Serious Side" has always been one of my faves—broken up and funky, and there's no real 2 and 4 in the pattern. So cool how it all works together with the band.
Keith Carlock

"Down to the Nightclub" because it seems to be the easiest, which it surely is not.
Cengiz Tural

"Squib Cakes." When it breaks down to just the organ and drums it's such an emotional rush of energy.
Russ Lawton

Dropped Beat

The photo on page 51 of our October issue shows Hal Blaine with Brian Wilson, not Dennis Wilson.

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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Terri Lyne Carrington and Social Science's *Waiting Game*

The world class drummer and founder of Berklee College of Music's Institute for Jazz and Gender Justice addresses myriad social ills in her ninth album.



Credited to Terri Lyne Carrington and Social Science, *Waiting Game* is a broad palette marked by the drummer/leader's always remarkable, graceful, and dancing deep-pocket grooves over which are layered the talents of pianist/keyboardist Aaron Parks, guitarist Matthew Stevens, multi-instrumentalist Morgan Guerin, vocalist Debo Ray, and MC/DJ Kassa Overall. It's a significant album, divided into two discs: the first, a thoughtful, powerful, but relaxed and groove-heavy take on myriad social injustices; the second, an elastic four-part improvisation. Disc one addresses society's ills in word; disc two ruminates on injustice instrumentally, from a nearly avant-garde angle.

MD: Why approach social justice issues in your music now?

Terri: We're at a critical time in our country's history, and you have to decide where you stand. You either stand for something or you'll fall for anything. My priority was always working and making music. I've put the two together in my teaching with opening the Institute at Berklee and in my music. My past albums *The Mosaic Project* and *Money Jungle* were my way of doing that in a subtle way. But *Waiting Game* is in your face. If you're not affected by what's happening in this country something's wrong.

MD: How did you write your contributions?

Terri: In the beginning Aaron developed some ideas; I created grooves and ideas. I worked on melodies and lyrics based on Aaron's ideas. Everyone brought songs. I brought "No Justice (for Political Prisoners)," Meshell Ndegeocello contributed the spoken-word part. I brought "Pray the Gay Away," and Raydar Ellis and Kassa Overall added parts. "Bells (Ring Loudly)" was Aaron's piece and I wrote lyrics, and Malcolm-Jamal Warner added spoken word. "Waiting Game" is by a former student of mine who played the piece on the piano. I wrote a lyric to it. On "If Not Now," Matt Stevens wrote the guitar part. It was a collaboration. I lived with the music more than everyone else and produced the tracks and had the responsibility of making the project happen.

MD: How did you track drums?

Terri: I like to replay the drum parts if I need to. Some things I couldn't replay because it was recorded with the band and it didn't feel right to replay. I'll often retrack drums, though, because when you make a record, often you haven't played the music before. After living with the music for a couple of months, I know it much better. So I'll replay and rerecord the drum parts. But some of the songs on *Waiting Game* didn't work like that; "Over and Sons" and "Trapped in the American Dream," those songs are my original drum tracks.

MD: Are we hearing the same drumset on both discs?

Terri: I had two different drumsets in two different parts of the studio, so that at any moment I could go between them. One was a jazz kit with an 18" bass drum, for the improvisations disc, and I used a larger kit with a 22" bass drum for the other disc.

MD: Did you treat the drum sound?

Terri: I always play around with the drum sound. That's the beauty of producing. I edit in Pro Tools, putting effects on drums and sampling. I may sample one of the toms, and then trigger that tom every time it's hit. It's a

consistent sound, but the velocity changes with the hit. "Bells" is the most treated song on the album. There's a ride cymbal pattern throughout the song that's a looped sample. I played the kick and the snare but removed the hi-hat. I want separation, but sometimes when you play certain groove ideas, there's too much bleed from the hi-hat and snare microphones, so I turn off the hi-hat microphone. And I still have too much hi-hat. So I replayed the groove with a kick and snare only, without the hi-hat, and then I added the hi-hat later. I also programmed ear-candy types of things.

MD: How did you program ideas?

Terri: I work out of GarageBand, which is crazy. I transfer the track to Pro Tools and work with an engineer to edit what I programmed in GarageBand. Inside of GarageBand I have samples from previous sessions I can use. I can grab drum or cymbal or drum machine sounds from that library.

MD: Is there any drum treatment in "Pray the Gay Away"?

Terri: There's very little drumset in that tune. In the studio I played a lot of percussion, knowing that I wouldn't use most of it. I pulled parts I liked and made grooves. I was going for a Brazilian maracatu groove there, but with my own take on it. Then a former student of mine who is Brazilian, Negah Santos, played live percussion on top of what I played. I made grooves out of my tracks, and then she added live percussion.

MD: The record is a meditation in a way. You can ride along with the grooves.

Terri: "Bells" was the first track that I wrote; it's one of the album's defining tracks. It shaped the musical approach, the sound of the band. "Bells" was written as a spoken-word piece for Philando Castile.

MD: What's your goal for the Institute for Jazz and Gender Justice at Berklee?

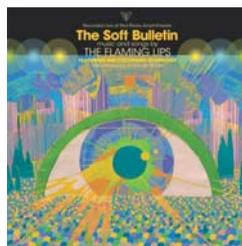
Terri: It's the Institute for Jazz and Gender Justice, so I won't populate the classes more than 50-percent male. Women have been marginalized for so long in jazz; this is corrective work. All the classes have men, but often they're more female-heavy. Gender equity is everybody's work. It makes sense to have men in a more female-prominent situation, class, or band so that dominance from all these years of patriarchy can be challenged. If you're in a band playing and struggling with something and you look around and it's all women playing, you'll look at things differently. We all have a collective consciousness, and as music evolves and grows, we grow with it.

Ken Micallef

More New Releases



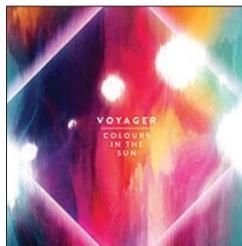
Dave Douglas
Engage (Kate Gentile)



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Lost and Found (Jim Keltner)

ON TOUR

BJ Miller with Health

Since answering a drummer-wanted Craigslist ad that listed influences from Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath to Public Image Ltd. and Can, BJ Miller has proven the ideal rhythm generator for his band.



The L.A.-based group Health's sound could be neatly represented by a Venn diagram of riff-, dance-, indie-, and noise-rock, and BJ Miller's detailed slugging easily betrays the influences of his older siblings' Public Enemy and Faith No More records—but also, in its open-mindedness, the jazz piano that his father would play at home.

"My earliest understanding of drums came from Steven Adler, Mike Bordin, and the Beastie Boys, peppered with Art Blakey and Buddy Rich," Miller tells *Modern Drummer*. "But it was John Bonham, Dave Grohl, and Danny Carey who most influenced my style of drumming. Ginger Baker, too—we have the same birthday, after all."

Perhaps even more influential on the young drummer, however, was his mother. "She taught me to persevere and unwittingly led me towards drums in the first place," Miller says, recalling how she insisted he make use of his older brother's abandoned Remo drum pad and sticks. Following a blazing paradiddle demo by his band director, the kid was hooked. "I knew right then I had to be able to play one just as fast; every time I use parapadiddles in 'Men Today,'" he says, "I still think of that lesson."

We caught up with Miller as Health was in the midst of its North American tour.

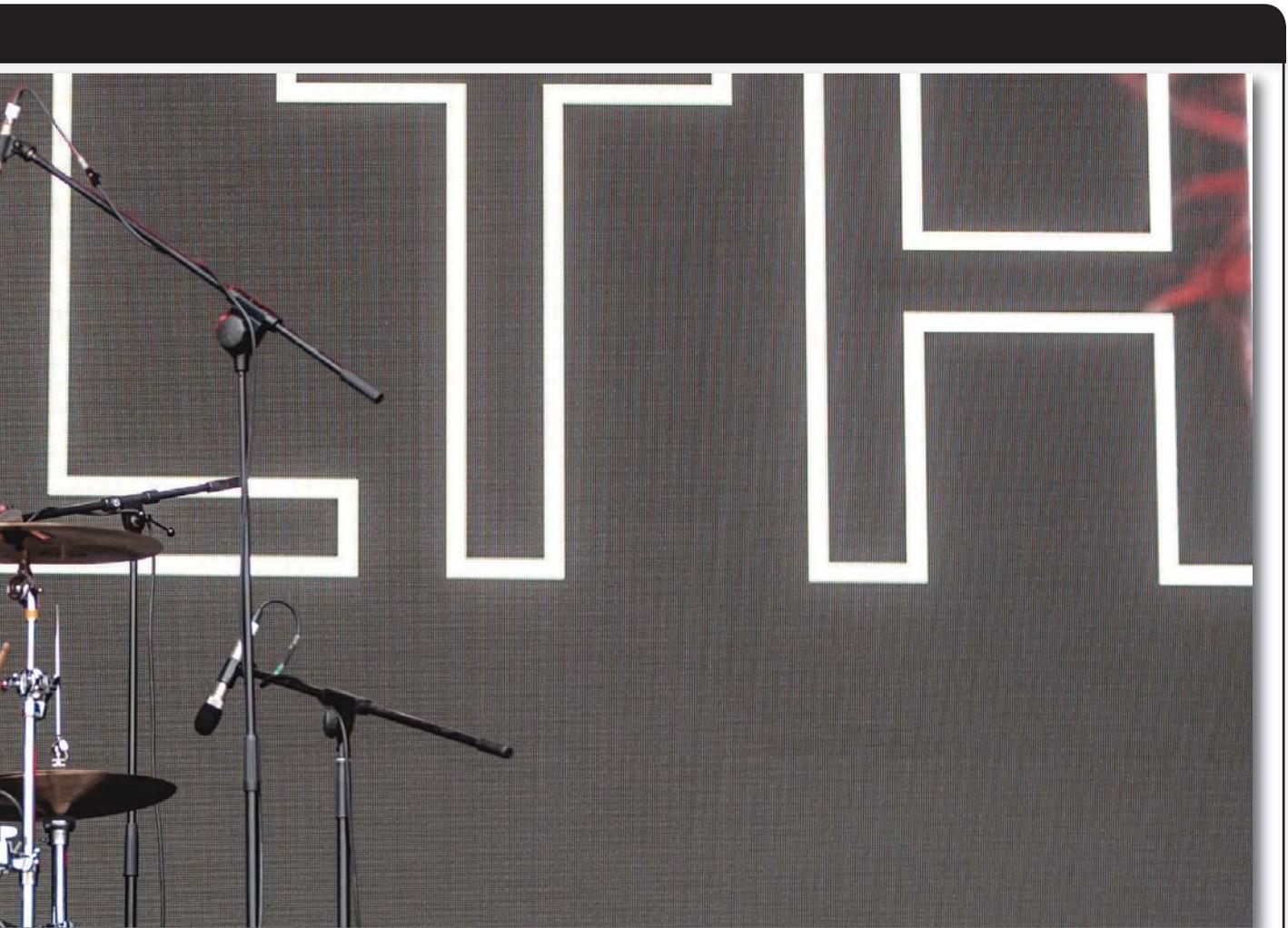
MD: What's the band's rehearsal process like leading up to a tour?

BJ: When we started, Health would almost over-practice. We were so obsessed with getting our crazy math-balls, start-stoppy, esoteric noise-rock tighter and tighter that we had ourselves in the practice space at least four days a week the whole year. These days, once we have a set dialed in we can just add new stuff to the mix.

MD: How do you maintain the stamina to play some of Health's more intense parts live?

BJ: I come from an athletic family, and since the days of waking up at 5 A.M. to lift weights for high school baseball, I've been used to exercising regularly. At the beginning my lifestyle followed the typical [hard-partying] mode of touring musicians. These days I've given up drinking—for a year and a half now—which has made an undeniable difference in my endurance behind the drums. I also try to ride a bike, jog, and swim a couple times a week, which laying off the booze has encouraged even more.

As far as techniques go, I'm by no means an expert on the Moeller method, but I do more or less whip the drumsticks, and try to imagine pulling the sound out of the drums. I bury the bass drum beater, which can be a little tiring, so



lately I've tried to focus on just the right amount of pressure there, especially when it's a blast beat or something fast.

Before playing I have a variety of go-to stretches, like hands out in front of you, palms down, and then rotating your palms away from each other. I take a bungee cord with me on the road and tie it to a door handle or a rail and do baseball warm-ups. I wasn't always so prepared over the years, and I paid the price with tendinitis, a sprained hand, and tennis elbow. On that note, I never leave home without compression gloves and sleeves. And the obvious, ice after the show. If I'm ever trying to recover from an injury, I'll downsize sticks to a 7A to lessen the strain. You have to listen to those injuries and be humble to the healing process.

Just before the show I try to sit quietly somewhere and slow down my breath. Tightness in the forearms or cramps are

about the worst thing that can happen during a set, so I do everything I can to just stay calm before the storm. I'm an avid coffee drinker, which doesn't help.

The fact that I'm singing backup vocals on half the songs now and have to catch my breath makes the anaerobics that much more challenging. But keeping a healthy lifestyle has made a world of difference. That being said, there's no shape like show shape. Somehow no matter how good I feel before a tour, it takes a good five shows or so before I really feel up to speed.

MD: What's the process like adapting Health's music to a live setting?

BJ: It's changed considerably over the years. Around *Get Color* [2009] we started to use tracks from pedals, like the rhythmic synth sound of "Die Slow" or "Death+." These were the first incarnations of us being track based, and I had to be able

to hear the monitor well or everything would be off. So I got professional molded earplugs to make sure I could keep those songs tight. I began to use triggers run through a Roland SPD-S. At the same time, Ableton was getting more crucial to the production and writing process, so we replaced the triggers with plug-ins and I switched to in-ear monitors with count-ins and all. It's a bit of a leash, but the trick to adapting live drums to Ableton tracks starts with simply playing along until they are memorized like video games you can always win, and each night you're trying to beat the game again. And when you're off that leash, go nuts.

BJ Miller plays Mapex drums and Istanbul Agop cymbals, and uses a Pearl Eliminator Demon Drive double bass pedal, Vic Firth 3A sticks, and Evans G2 Coated heads.

Also on the Road

Barry Kerch with Shinedown /// **John Tempesta** with the Cult /// **Martin Axenrot** with Opeth ///
Matt Abts with Gov't Mule /// **Rhys Hastings** with Angel Olsen /// **George Kollias** with Nile



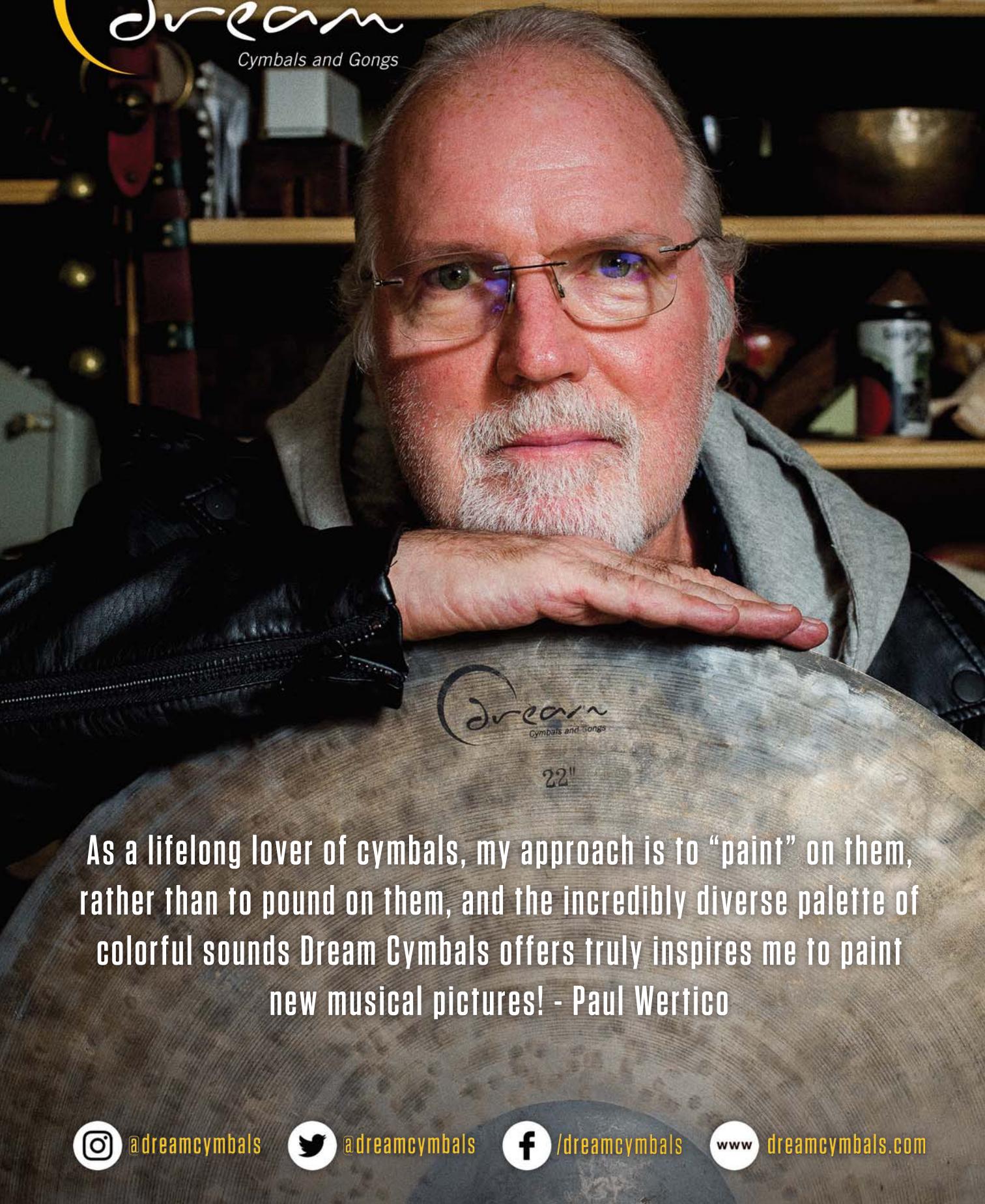
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As a lifelong lover of cymbals, my approach is to “paint” on them, rather than to pound on them, and the incredibly diverse palette of colorful sounds Dream Cymbals offers truly inspires me to paint new musical pictures! - Paul Wertico



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FX Stacks

Compact, specially crafted pairings for bright and cutting textures.

Many modern drummers still favor trashy-sounding cymbals and stacks in their setups. Zildjian initially fulfilled that need a few years ago by revamping and reintroducing its legendary K Special Dry series. This past year, the company created a unique offering in its special-effects series, the FX Stack, which provides pre-packed stackers in 8", 10", 12", 14", and 16" sizes designed to produce bright, fast, and cutting tones. We were sent samples of each size to review, so let's check them out.

What Are They?

Each FX Stack comprises a rolled-steel bottom cymbal that's lathed, hammered, and then finished to a sandblasted-like texture. The outer lip has been flattened slightly to create a perfect fit when paired with the proprietary Zildjian alloy top, either in a stack or hi-hat setup. The top cymbal has a bronze finish and has been punched with holes throughout the entire bow. The bells and bow curvature are identical, allowing for a perfectly flush and tight stack.

Every FX Stack also includes an exclusive mount made for Zildjian by Cymbolt. This mount replaces the wing nuts, felts, and washers on any existing stand so that you can quickly add, remove, or adjust the tension of the FX Stack. The Cymbolt comprises a 3.5" threaded rod affixed to an upper wing nut, four black felts, and a second, removable wing nut that screws onto the bottom of the bolt to hold the cymbals at your desired tension. The bottom wing nut fits very tightly, so it will never loosen up during play. But it's also easy enough to adjust when you want to tighten or loosen the cymbals. The bolt is long enough to accommodate a hi-hat setup, but you'll have to remove most of the felts to use the FX Stack with the Cymbolt in that manner. When used in a standard stack position, all four felts can be left in place.

You don't have to use the Cymbolt in order to play the FX Stack; they'll fit onto any standard or auxiliary hi-hat stand just fine, and they can be used in a stack configuration with regular cymbal stand hardware. But the convenience of having the Cymbolt preset to your preferred tightness before sliding the FX Stack onto a stand is really slick, especially if you'd like to swap out one of your regular cymbals for an FX Stack quickly during a gig or session.

How Do They Sound?

The FX Stacks are designed to produce bright, fast, cutting tones that are ideal for staccato accents, quick articulate licks, and noisy electronic-inspired smacks. With all five sizes, there's a sweet spot for the tension of the Cymbolt where the cymbals are loose enough to give you a touch of trashiness without sacrificing articulation. If the tension is too tight, the cymbals choke and you start to get a bit of overtone that might not be ideal. If the tension is too loose, you start to lose definition. I found the sweet spot by tightening the FX Stack as tightly as possible and then backing off the thumbscrew about one full rotation.

The 8" and 10" FX Stacks are excellent for quick timekeeping patterns and phrases that jump between the hi-hat, snare, and stack, à la electronica/jazz drummers Nate Wood, Mark Guiliana, and Zach Danziger. The larger pairs (12", 14", and 16") have slightly broader tones that match well with the chunkier timbre of medium-weight 13" and 14" hi-hats. And when loosened a bit, they provide a nice, wide electronic handclap-type attack. The larger models also have wider sonic palettes, where you can get drier, sharper tones by playing on the bell or bow and wider, trashier tones by focusing your strokes on the edge. While it's not a sound for every drummer or every situation, having a couple of these FX Stacks in your gig bag will no doubt inspire you to go for some unexpected ideas when the time is right. And the best part is that they won't cost you a fortune. The starting price is just \$99.95 for the 8" pair, while the 16" version is \$169.95.

Check out our extensive video demo of the Zildjian FX Stacks at moderndrummer.com/gear.

Michael Dawson





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REMO

External Sub Muff'l Bass Drum System

An adjustable dampening product that can retrofit onto any drumhead.

When it comes to bass drum muffling, every drummer has his or her preference. For some, a basic bedroom pillow placed inside the shell is perfect. For others, a more open old-school sound using felt strips is the secret. And every drumhead manufacturer offers versions of a muffled head that produces a dry, punchy, mix-ready thud. But what about those of us who want to be able to easily switch between a fully resonant tone to a more controlled punch without having to add or subtract deadening materials inside the shell? Remo seeks to serve that desire with its new External Sub Muff'l system. Let's take a closer look.

What Is It?

The External Sub Muff'l system comprises a black plastic tray and a foam circle insert that's cut into quarters. The tray is designed to fit between the hoop and the drumhead. It has a form-fitting collar that sits flush with the flesh hoop of the drumhead once installed, but it extends a fraction of an inch above the outer 2" of the drumhead. That way, without any of the foam inserts installed under the plastic tray, the drumhead will resonate fully.

The four segments of foam can be added to taste to enhance low-end frequencies, shorten the decay, and increase attack. Installing the first three foam pieces takes minimal effort. Just slide them under the tray and make sure the cutouts in the pieces

are interlocking correctly. To get the fourth ring segment into place, you'll need to arch the center up a bit so that the ends can be tucked under the tray. Once they're aligned, you then push the center down to get the foam to fit flat and flush under the tray.

I don't think I would want to be adding and removing that fourth piece on the fly during gigs, since it took a bit of finagling to get into place. But going from a wide-open tone to a subtly dampened sound with one, two, or three inserts took mere seconds to execute.

My only other word of caution is to make sure the tray is flush with the collar of the drumhead before tightening down the drum hoop. If it's not perfectly aligned, the tray could buckle slightly, causing a bit of a gap

between the foam inserts and the tray, thus leading to less effective tone control and potential buzzing. On several perfectly round modern bass drums, the tray sat flat and had no issues. On an older vintage drum with imperfect hoops, I had to be more careful during the initial installation.

How Does It Sound?

While I appreciate the convenience of pre-muffled bass drum heads, I'm often frustrated by their one-dimensional sound. What if I want my bass drum to ring a little bit? If you're using a model with the dampening placed underneath the drumhead, then you're stuck with what you've got. If you're using one that has an external foam or fabric dampener, then you can customize





the amount of muffling by cutting or removing some of the material. But all of those designs involve a drumhead with some type of dampening system glued to the head itself. So you have to buy a new head each time you want to try a different approach. Remo's External Sub Muff'1 allows you to start with any drumhead of your choosing (except those with prefabricated external dampening) for a more customized experience.

I tried the system with single-ply Ambassador Coated, Powerstroke P3 Clear, and double-ply Powerstroke P4 Clear models. On all three, the experience was the same. With no inserts installed under the tray, the drum sounded exactly as it would without

the tray attached. One insert had a minimal impact on volume, resonance, or attack. The main difference was that the high-end overtones were attenuated slightly, giving the drum a more focused fundamental. Two inserts shortened the decay a bit; this made the drum punchier while still sounding big and open. Three inserts had a similar sonic impact as when I tossed a bath towel inside the shell but didn't have it touch either head. When all four inserts were in place, the drum had an ideal balance of openness and focused punch. The drumhead was dampened enough to rein in the overtones for maximum low-end oomph, and the resonance was truncated so that the drum didn't ring for too long between notes.

For live, unmiked situations, the External Sub Muff'1 system allowed for maximum volume and depth with no other muffling required. If you're going to use close mics, either on live gigs or studio sessions, you might need to further add some dampening inside the shell or against the resonant head to tighten up the sustain a little more.

I welcome the flexibility of this new muffling system from Remo. I appreciated that I could start dialing in my bass drum tone by simply adjusting the amount of dampening foam placed on the outside of the batter head. In many cases, that's all the muffling I needed.

Michael Dawson

British Drum Company

Merlin and Big Softy Snares

Distinctive yet versatile offerings from the UK's strongest newcomer.

British Drum Company has been a quick-moving newcomer since establishing itself in 2015. With unique cold-pressed shells and classic hardware styling, the entire line is worth a serious look. Of particular note are some of its snare offerings. In British fashion, the company sent us two with cheeky names—the sturdy and versatile Merlin and the light and woody Big Softy.

The Merlin

The Merlin we were sent for review was a 6.5x14 model with a 20-ply, 10.5 mm shell comprising alternating vertical and horizontal veneers of maple and birch. The drum features 45-degree bearing edges. Per BDC's website, "The shell is then expertly finished with a black tulip outer veneer inlaid with a tasty double pinstripe of maple." The art deco-inspired Palladium lugs and strainer hold in place 2.3 mm triple-flange hoops and twenty-strand BDC-branded brass wires. Given that these shells are formed in a mold from the outer plies in, at room temperature with no heat

or moisture, it can be assumed that there was a fair amount of labor involved. The final result is a drum that looks super sharp. Everything from the interior decal to the badge looks as if they could be accessories on a classic British car.

The Merlin is far more practical than one might think, given its 20-ply shell. When presented with that thick of a drum, I usually assume it's meant to compete with loud guitars. But I first took the Merlin on a jazz gig on which I played brushes most of the time, and it fit in like a dream. The Palladium snare strainer reminded me of the Gladstone-style throw used on Pearl

Masters series drums from twenty years ago; the latter is still one of my favorites because it can be engaged and disengaged with a quick flick of the thumb.

The maple plies in the Merlin shell offer the warmth you want at lower tunings, and the birch gives the cut you need at higher tunings. In louder contexts the Merlin had the cut of a brass or aluminum shell, but I felt like I was hitting something more substantial. Snare sensitivity was crisp when I played on any area of the head. And when it's tuned up high, you get the authoritative backbeat you need when playing in a funk or rock context.





The Big Softy

The 6.5x14 Big Softy is described at the BDC website as the warmest snare in its collection. The inner and outer veneers are cherry and have an oil finish. The core plies are kiln-dried ochroma, which comes from the balsa tree. Apparently ochroma is the softest of hardwoods.

The interior plies of most classic drum shells are poplar, which is similar in density and hardness to ochroma, so this is a new take on an old concept. As BDC describes, ochroma has “a micro-pore grain structure that filters out higher frequencies, so bigger, warmer, and funky sounds are achieved without detuning.”

The drum came with the same hardware as the Merlin; additionally there were

wooden washers placed under the interior lug screws. There’s also a wood tag under the badge that has the words “Big Softy” laser-etched into it.

The Big Softy presented a new sonic palette for me, but it was a delight in many situations. Even at higher tunings, it maintained fullness of tone while being dry but not brittle. It produced full backbeats, even with the heads cranked. Ghost notes at any tuning had a lot of grit and substance, and rim clicks sounded dry and woody. Rim shots had distinct flavors that ranged from a full, throaty smack to a brighter “ping” when hit just inside the rim. I took this drum on a blues-rock gig, and it provided some satisfying woody sweetness when I explored

buzzes and different types of rim shots in second-line and mambo grooves, while also supplying big and funky backbeats.

The street price for the Big Softy is \$689, and the Merlin comes in at \$699. While not a no-brainer bargain, these drums are significantly cheaper than many boutique snares. Whether you favor the all-around contemporary vibe of the Merlin or the fatness and warmth of the Big Softy, you would be getting a distinct drum with a wide range of applications. The top-shelf hardware and artful design choices are the icing on the cake. These snares—as well as British Drum Company’s other creations—are well worth checking out.

Stephen Bidwell



GEARING UP ON STAGE
AND UP CLOSE

Galactic's Stanton Moore

It seemed fitting to meet up with Galactic's Stanton Moore in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, the home of the original Gretsch factory, so we could talk about his Brooklyn series drumkit. Stanton uses this set when the band tours North America via bus and trailer. We showed up during load-in to snag a shot of "Big Sexy," Stanton's custom trap case that holds all of his gear. "The crew loves this case," he says. "It makes setup faster and more efficient." When it comes to these drums, Stanton says, "All of Gretsch's drums are focused, but the Brooklyns have an aggressive punchiness to them."

When asked about the extensive percussion incorporated into the setup, Moore explains, "Everything on the kit is there for a reason. When Galactic rehearses, I put up all kinds of percussion and just improvise. As the songs come together, I then have to decide what needs to be there for the live gigs. I'm always trying to incorporate New Orleans sounds, rhythms, and textures into our songs. Being that floor toms, tambourines, cowbells, and bass drums are all part of the Mardi Gras Indian rhythmic ensemble, the percussion on my kit is there for me to recreate that sound."

Regarding his need for multiple bass drums, Stanton explains, "The 26" comes from having guitar envy. Guitar players have pedals that allow them to overdive their sound, and essentially that is what the 26" does for my sound. It allows me to get bigger when I need to. There is a beater on the slave side of the pedal I use to hit the 26" that also hits the 20". The reason for that is that sometimes when I go to the 26", I lose the punch and attack. This helps keep some continuity in the sound."

Interview by Dave Previ Photos by Heather Courtney

Drums: Gretsch USA Brooklyn in Creme Oyster Nitron finish
A. 6.5x14 Stanton Moore Drum Company "Spirit of New Orleans" titanium snare in Galactic Black Sparkle powder coating (Not shown: 4.5x14 for backup)
B. 8x12 tom
C. 14x14 floor tom
D. 16x16 floor tom
E. 14x20 bass drum
F. 14x26 bass drum

Cymbals: Sabian Stanton Moore Crescent series
1. 15" Fat Hats
2. 20" Trash crash
3. 22" Wide ride
4. 20" Pang Thang
5. 18" Smash crash
Percussion: LP and Pete Engelhart
aa. Stanton Moore signature pandeiro (tuned high)
bb. Stanton Moore signature pandeiro

(tuned low)
cc. 6" and 8" Mini timbales
dd. Steve Gadd signature cowbell
ee. Black Beauty cowbell strapped to a Cyclops tambourine
ff. E57 cowbell
gg. Salsa cowbell
hh. Pete Engelhart Satellite
ii. Pete Engelhart Shield Bell
jj. Handbournine (fastened to a trap case)
kk. 8" tambourine

Electronics: Roland SPD-SX multipad and RT-30 snare trigger; Boss DB-90 metronome

Heads: Remo Ambassador Coated on snare and timbale batters, Emperor Coated tom and pandeiro batters, Ambassador Clear tom resonants, Powerstroke P3 Coated bass drum batters, and Gretsch-logo Fiberskyn bass drum resonants

Hardware: Drum Workshop 9000 series, including a double pedal on the 26" that has a beater on the left pedal that strikes the 20" drum

Sticks: Vic Firth Stanton Moore signature model and Heritage brushes

In-Ear Monitors: Westone



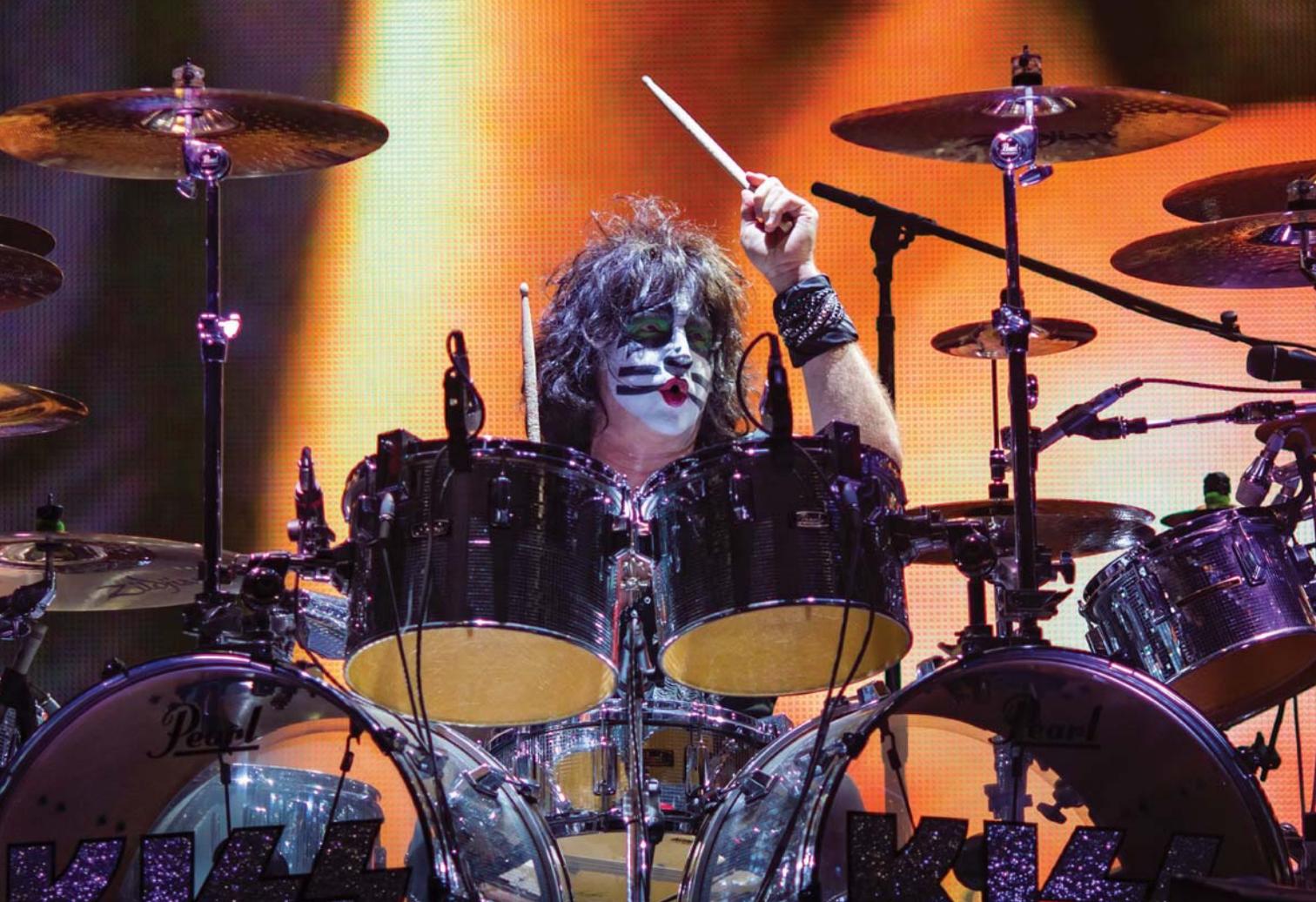
Eric Singer of KISS





It's the end of an era, as the world's most notorious rock act takes its final bow. We look back, and forward, with their long-serving timekeeper.

Story by Ilya Stemkovsky • Photos by Nicola Coccarone



Eric Singer knows this: serve the artist.

With Kiss, his primary function is, and has always been, to support the band and to put on the best show possible. "It says Alice Cooper on the marquee and the ticket," Singer says, referring to his previous employer. "They might like you on guitar or bass or drums and be a fan of you on a personal level, but the people are coming there to see Alice Cooper. So you owe it to Alice Cooper to make his show as good as it can be. Some guys like to promote their side bands and solo projects, but I always look at it like I'm there for that band and nothing more."

The Cleveland, Ohio-born Singer grew up on a steady diet of Led Zeppelin and big band before starting his professional career. Prior to Kiss, Singer provided rock-solid timekeeping, fiery drum solos, and excellent backing and lead vocal skills for Cooper, Lita Ford, Badlands, Brian May, Gary Moore, Black Sabbath, and his own group, the Eric Singer Project (ESP). Now sixty-one, Singer has been involved with Kiss and related projects for nearly three decades, first in 1989 as the drummer in singer Paul Stanley's group, and then in 1991, taking over drum duties in the main band when Eric Carr fell ill. Original Kiss drummer Peter Criss did come back to the fold for stints in 1996 and 2002, but since 2004, it's been Singer up there rocking and rolling all night and partying every day.

Though nowadays, "partying every day" entails sitting for hours of makeup and costuming on show day, and taking hundreds of photos with fans who are more than eager to part with their hard-earned cash for a chance to rub shoulders with members of the legendary band. And regarding that makeup, yes, Singer wears the classic "Catman" face that Criss made famous, and no, not everyone is happy about it. But Stanley and bassist Gene Simmons are brilliant marketers, so if you're going to the show, you'll have to accept the fact that Singer has definitively replaced Criss (as guitarist Tommy Thayer has replaced original axeman Ace Frehley) in the late incarnation of Kiss, down to the fact that it's even Singer playing piano and singing "Beth" in the encore slot. And he does it all beautifully, playing certain drum beats and fills you're familiar with, while injecting his own well-honed flavors into the music everyone has known since Kiss emerged in 1973.

But the show can only go on for so long, so the band's End of the Road world tour, which started in early 2019 and is expected to end some time in 2021, will indeed be the band's last (*we think*). But Singer is taking it all in stride, and his attitude about the finality of it all remains consistently refreshing and inspiring.

MD: Now that you've been associated with Kiss and its members for so long, how do you feel about the end?

Eric: I try to take life one day at a time. There's a John Lennon quote, "Life is what happens while you're making plans." I've always tried to live by that, because it's so true. Many times I thought I was going in one direction, and life throws you a curveball and you're headed in a different direction. Sometimes it's by choice and sometimes it's out of necessity. But I allow myself the flexibility because things are constantly changing. So you recognize that many times you don't have control over a situation.

They say it's a good idea to be adaptable or versatile as a drummer or a musician, but I think you need to do that in life as well. Nothing's forever. Every day, I play the show, try to take care of myself, and live in the moment. I try to play each beat, each song, each show for what it

version of the band that they identify with or grew up with. And that's okay, because we all have our favorite lineups.

It starts with you at home and your attitude. I never went into any band or situation thinking I was trying to change the world or change somebody's mind about how they feel about somebody else. To me, you're there to do a job. You're there to make music with other people and have a cohesive working environment for yourself and to bring some stability. But ultimately you're making music, so you want to be the best musician you can be, because that's why somebody hired you.

In a band like Kiss, I sing a lot, so that's a requirement to be the drummer in Kiss. Although when I got the gig, they didn't even know I could sing. If you're versatile and have better tools, you could get the gig over the other guy. Let's say you play other instruments or sing.



is and make the best of it, knowing that if I didn't have the best show, I get to do it again the next time we play.

MD: What's the best mindset for players who face the situation of having to replace another drummer?

Eric: Everything is a choice. You can choose to take a gig or not take a gig and how you want to approach the gig. You can choose the attitude you're going to have when you [come up against] people who are fixated on one particular era or lineup of a band. So unless you're an original member, there will be people who are married to the

Whatever you bring, those tools make you more valuable. And you should find a situation where people will want to nurture that and have you contribute that.

MD: What about having to play certain iconic beats or fills that fans are used to?

Eric: [Original Black Sabbath drummer] Bill Ward was more of a jamming drummer, more free-form style. A lot of the older drummers from the '60s and early '70s didn't play such formulated drumming. They didn't play a strict, identifiable part in the verse, chorus, and

SINGER'S SETUP

Drums: Pearl vintage fiberglass shells custom-assembled by Billy Baker

- 6x14 snare
- 5.5x6 single-headed tom
- 5.5x8 single-headed tom
- 6.5x10 single-headed tom
- 8x12 single-headed tom
- 9x13 single-headed tom
- 10x14 single-headed tom
- 12x15 single-headed tom
- 16x16 floor tom
- 16x18 floor tom
- 14x24 bass drums

Cymbals: Zildjian

- 15" A New Beat hi-hats
- 19" A heavy crash (8)
- 20" K Custom Hybrid ride
- 16" China (2)
- 9.5" Zil-Bel
- 6" splash
- 8" splash (2)

Hardware: Pearl, including Icon rack system customized by John Aldridge and Lorne Wheaton, Eliminator double chain-drive bass drum pedal, Eliminator hi-hat

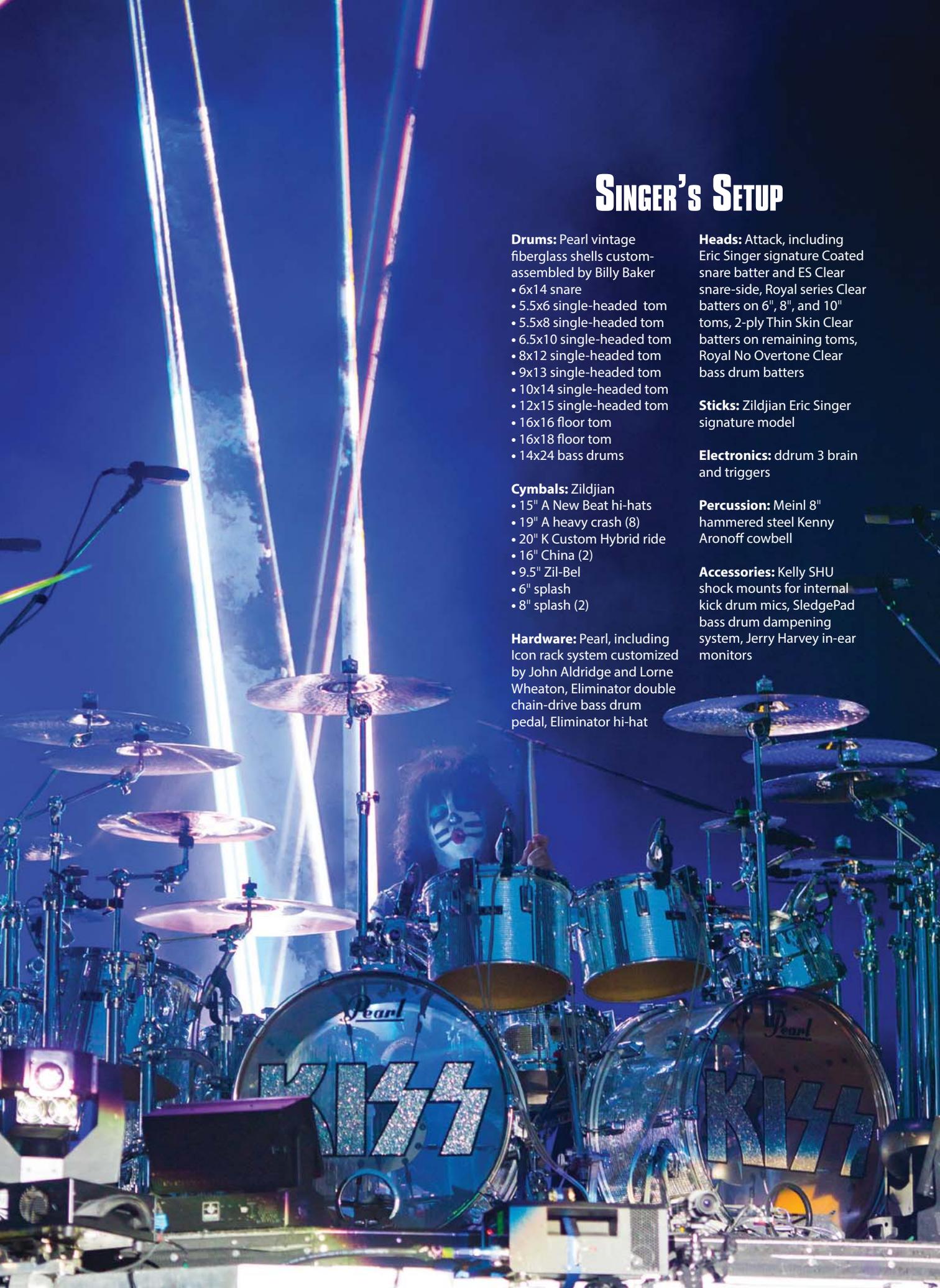
Heads: Attack, including Eric Singer signature Coated snare batter and ES Clear snare-side, Royal series Clear batters on 6", 8", and 10" toms, 2-ply Thin Skin Clear batters on remaining toms, Royal No Overtone Clear bass drum batters

Sticks: Zildjian Eric Singer signature model

Electronics: ddrum 3 brain and triggers

Percussion: Meinl 8" hammered steel Kenny Aronoff cowbell

Accessories: Kelly SHU shock mounts for internal kick drum mics, SledgePad bass drum dampening system, Jerry Harvey in-ear monitors



bridge at every show. It was loose and scrappy, and you got something different at every show. And some guys don't remember their own parts, what they wrote or played. They play how they feel on a given night, and it could be very inconsistent or a wild ride. It could be an improvisational approach to drumming. Ward and [Cream's] Ginger Baker were like that. And to a certain degree Peter Criss was like that in the early Kiss. It was a less disciplined approach.

Some people play like the record every night. It gives them continuity and makes it easy to time the show with the lights and pyro. Those become musical cues for each other. That makes for a better show from a production point of view. In any band I play in, I take into consideration how the band is playing [the music]. I listen to recent live tapes, because many bands end up evolving their live arrangements. For Black Sabbath, I listened to live stuff with both Bill Ward and Vinny Appice so the band could see that I did my homework and could play the songs in a way that was familiar to them. That way they're not thinking you're just playing it the way you want. Because that can throw people off. Then if they want to give you some liberties, you can incorporate your own personality and style into the songs. And as you get older, you realize that making people happy by giving them what they want, audience and artist, is what's most important.

MD: Please talk about singing while playing.

Eric: I've had to adjust my playing to accommodate my singing. [With Kiss] I sing the high harmonies on all the songs, which is physically very taxing. The first thing that goes when you're tired or run down is your voice. I'm very disciplined about how I take care of myself. After the shows, I go back to my room and shut up for the rest of the night, because I know that if I don't, I'm going to wear my voice out even more. And I sing lead on a couple of songs.

MD: What specific adjustments have you made? Do you hit lighter and play fewer fills?

Eric: Yes. I've had to back off

Mirror Stars

Billy Baker on how he made Eric Singer's latest Kiss kit



"In February of 2018, a friend of mine, Mark Good, traded me a full set of 1970s Pearl fiberglass shells. I realized I had all the sizes to do a replica of the 1975 *Kiss Alive!* kit, but I needed to source the 5 mm mirror mosaic to make it happen. After many late nights, I finally found the exact mirror I needed.

"I decided to try the process on the 6" tom. When I finished it, I was all smiles, because I knew I was onto something special. My plan was to have the kit ready for the 2018 Chicago Drum Show. I finished the kit and decided to post a teaser photo, and after thirty minutes, I received a message through Facebook from Eric Singer with a straight and simple 'Call me.'

"Eric wanted the original kit I'd built, and we began collaborating and making changes to make it a bit more gig ready. Eventually I suggested we just start from scratch and build what he really wanted. Mark Good had been stockpiling old Pearl fiberglass shells for about five years, so I had access to anything we wanted. I realized I was doing the kits for Kiss's final tour, and Eric trusted me without having received an actual drum. Just two guys that shared a passion for customizing drumkits. He's an incredible drummer, and now I consider him an incredible friend. Thanks for everything, E!"



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physically. Rock 'n' roll drumming is how you hit the drums. It's an attitude thing. Some guys will look at jazz drummers and say that they don't play rock the right way, and what they're referring to is an attitude behind those hits. We know there are a lot of accomplished drummers who can technically play the notes. It's like a singer who can hit the notes. Yes, he can hit the notes accurately and have the right range. But does he have the right style and vibe? A lot of drummers don't get it when you explain about driving the band and that power thing that rock drumming requires. And jazz is a higher art form. It's definitely more difficult to be a serious true jazz player, especially bebop players from that era.

MD: But Buddy Rich likely wouldn't sound totally great in Kiss.

Eric: That's my point. Buddy Rich, to me, is the greatest drummer ever, my favorite of all time. But Buddy wouldn't play Kiss music. He wouldn't understand it or relate to it. Of course he could technically play it, and a lot of guys can. But that doesn't mean he'd be right for the band.

MD: Is sitting behind a piano in an arena singing and playing "Beth" nerve-wracking?

Eric: I'm not really a nervous person. I'd probably be more intimidated if I had to sit at a drumkit and you asked me to just play something. That's more intimidating than playing in front of twenty thousand people. When the lights go down and we come onstage, I know what I'm there to do. I'm prepared and I've put the work in and the rehearsal in. You're playing by muscle memory. You've trained your muscles how to play each beat, each song, and each part. Now it's about trying to perform and entertain people and put on a show. And that to me is what the adrenaline and energy are focused on. I don't have time to be nervous. I'm always focused on breathing. It gets you oxygen, and it calms you down and makes you more relaxed. Then you can get the best of both worlds. You learn how to play with more fluidity, less effort, and more physically but in a relaxed way.

MD: But you do get to do "Beth" in the encore slot, so all eyes are on you.

Eric: Well, I end the show on "Black Diamond" and then I have to go downstairs and put on my boots and all that crap and get ready to come up and do "Beth." Once I get to that point, the last two songs are like gravy. Lately it's been "Crazy Crazy Nights" and "Rock and Roll All Nite."

I look at the show as a marathon, so it's about pacing myself. And that's why I go back to making the comment about breathing. I can't stress it enough. If you can focus on

learning to do deep breathing, on and off stage, that will help your playing immensely. Especially when you're onstage and you can't hear properly, or you're having a bad show, you tend to get uptight, almost a panicked feeling. The solution for me is to back off a little bit, don't get so strained in your playing, and just focus on breathing. Before you know it, within a couple of minutes, you feel like you're in a different place.

MD: How often is stuff not ideal onstage?

Eric: Sometimes the room just sounds bad, or you're in a bass trap or you're getting a lot of feedback. Or you're getting a lot of weird frequencies and it's hard to hear things accurately. The drums are in a fixed position. I tell everyone else in the band that when a room doesn't sound good, they can move. They can go to different parts of the stage and find a sweet spot. The drummer is stuck.

MD: What about other challenges of wearing costumes and makeup? And dealing with stage craziness like pyro?

Eric: It's adapting to an environment. The pyro is already loud, and then I have twenty microphones on my kit amplifying that, into my in-ears. And sometimes pyro misfires and goes shooting into the wrong direction. I've had it happen and have a few burn marks and scars on myself to show for it. And the fiberglass Pearl kit is already loud.

MD: What's it like grooving with Gene? Do you guys ever discuss kick patterns and linking up with his lines? Eccentricities aside, he's a good bass player.

Eric: No, Gene's a great bass player. He doesn't rush or drag, and he doesn't get swayed or pulled off time. And he comes up with really cool bass lines. He's obviously influenced by Paul McCartney, Felix Pappalardi from Mountain, Jack Bruce, John Paul Jones. He has a great feel and sound, and he's solid as a rock. And it has nothing to do with a click. It's just his inherent ability. He's effortless to play with. He's very underappreciated. And Gene likes to play it down like he's not really a musician. But he's a very good musician. He knows music theory and chord voicings. He knows his stuff.

MD: Do you have a pre-gig warm-up routine?

Eric: I like those stretch bands. I try to stretch as much as I can throughout the day. Stretch in the morning, during the day, before you go to bed. That's very important. We have a lot of demands on our time at our shows. With Kiss I don't have the ability to warm up the way I'd like to. With Alice Cooper or other bands, I did have more time. I didn't have to put on all the costuming and spend two hours getting ready. And we sometimes take from fifty to two hundred photos before the show. I'm not complaining, but it's a long day and a lot of



work and responsibility for us.

MD: Kiss songs are often 2-and-4, meat-and-potatoes rock drum parts. But what's an example of a difficult or interesting tune to play in the setlist?

Eric: Well, it's not as simple 2-and-4 as you'd think. No, you're not playing odd time signature music, but when you listen to the parts that you have to learn, you have to know all the material and the changes. There are tunes that have more stuff going on than you realize. Like "Detroit Rock City" or "Love Gun" are based on a 6/8 shuffle feel in a way. It's an implied shuffle feel; it's not played with a doubled-up right hand like a traditional blues

shuffle. So there are some grace notes and subtlety to that. Same thing with "100,000 Years," which is also based on a 6/8 shuffle, like a swing pattern. You could almost play "Detroit Rock City" as a big band swing arrangement with horns.

MD: Speaking of "100,000 Years," let's discuss your drum solo in that tune. Do you improvise any of it?

Eric: I approach it in that 6/8, triplet feel, and I go into some other stuff as the solo evolves. I have a basic foundation or skeletal form that I developed, and Gene was instrumental in helping. He would sit there and watch me from the side of the stage every night, and

he'd turn around and watch me on the screen. And then he'd tell me he liked this or that, or when I stood up or pointed at the camera, whatever.

Kiss is a visual-entertainment type of band, so I feel my job is to try to be a visual drummer. And I've always liked twirling sticks and that kind of stuff, because I always liked visual drummers as a kid. Seeing Dino Danelli, or Carmine Appice with Vanilla Fudge on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, those guys were stick twirlers. A lot of the old jazz drummers...like Lionel Hampton, really fantastic with his stick tricks. Buddy Rich would do stuff as well, but he was more of what I'd call a temperamental

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Eric Singer

type of drummer. Look at his solos on YouTube, they're always great, they're just either great or *greater*. If he felt like clowning around or being more visual, then he would do cool tricks with the cymbals and stuff. I got the idea of hitting the cymbals underneath from Buddy. I do that a lot, though not in the exact same way.

MD: What about double bass?

Eric: I used to play a lot more double bass in the 1980s, with Alice Cooper, Kiss, and Black Sabbath. It wasn't uncommon to see drummers with double bass kits back then. And a lot of my influences were double bass drummers, like Carmine Appice, Tommy Aldridge, Simon Phillips, Cozy Powell, Steve Smith when he got in Journey, Aynsley Dunbar. I loved Aldridge because of his double bass stuff, and he was a great visual performer, but when it came to feel or style or how they approached the drum parts, I probably leaned more towards Cozy Powell.

MD: Anything different or interesting about your live kit?

Eric: I'm using a Pearl Icon rack. I have a fixed footprint, an 8x8 riser, so out of necessity I had to go to a rack, to be able to fit my kit on there. It made me change the position of some of the drums. It's not ideal. I would be more comfortable if I had a wider footprint, but I had to make it work. It was because of the way they built the platform that goes up in the air and the lights that are around it and how they were choosing to build the production from that point of view.

Everything I use is Pearl, every pedal and every screw. And I use Zildjian cymbals and

my own model Zildjian sticks. And Attack heads. Sometimes I'll use my most recent signature snare, which is a chrome over brass 6.5x14. It was patterned after the old Jupiter snares from the '70s, which were chrome over brass [and often came with] a parallel throw-off system. But they made the same snare with a basic Gladstone-style throw-off as well, which is what my snare has. But this year I've been using a custom-made snare, a Pearl 14" floor tom that was cut down. It's a 6x14 fiberglass shell with 1970s-style lugs. And the drums are all 1970s Pearl fiberglass shells: 6", 8", 10", 12", 13", 14", 15", 16", 18", and two 24s. The hoops and the hardware are all modern, making it road worthy and user friendly.

MD: The kit looks beautiful.

Eric: It was made by a company called Baker Drums in Nashville. I found Billy Baker on Facebook [see sidebar] last year when I saw he'd made a glass mirror-ball kit just like the *Kiss Alive!* kit from 1975 that Peter Criss used. Billy is a passionate drum guy. I had a mirror-ball kit before that was custom made, where every mirror tile was glued on by hand. They were bigger, half-inch square tiles, and it looked amazing. It was totally hand-made and took like eighty hours to make, a labor of love. But I always wanted to find the really small mirrors. When I saw Billy's set on Facebook I was like, "Where'd this guy find this material?" We started talking, and I had him make me a whole new custom kit. That kit had a 22" single bass drum, like Peter Criss's. I had him make [a second kit] with bigger, double bass drums and add more drums. I turned it into the sizes that I'm using now. So he took old

1970s Pearl fiberglass drums, stripped the finish, cleaned up the lugs, and refinished them all. I'm using newer hoops and tom mounts, though some of the mounts are even the original old style. It's like a modern kit with real vintage drum shells.

MD: You still collect timepieces? Is that too obvious for a drummer?

Eric: It probably is, but it doesn't go back because of drumming; it goes back to me just liking watches. My father gave me a watch when I was five or six years old. I was really attracted to these cool watches—one was a chronograph, and another had the man in the moon phases. As I got older and started playing drums, I thought there was a direct correlation. A watch is a functional tool that serves as a timing device, and at his core, a drummer is a timekeeper. That's not a drummer's only function, but it's the main thing a drummer does in most scenarios.

MD: So how long is this farewell going to be farewelling?

Eric: It can take anywhere from two to three years, depending on what parts of the world we go to and when we get there. But I'm trying to live one day at a time, in the here and now. Once yesterday's gone, you can't change it. And you can try to prepare for the future, but in the big picture, I don't really know what the future is going to hold for me. So I like to keep myself open-minded for the possibility that I might end up doing something completely out of left field. Life might lead me down a certain path, whether it happens intentionally or by circumstance. But I'm willing to be flexible to that idea.

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A KISS DRUMMER

To the casual observer, Kiss has featured three drummers in its lineup: Peter Criss, who in 1973 cofounded the band with bassist Gene Simmons and guitarists Ace Frehley and Paul Stanley; Eric Carr, who came on board upon Criss's departure in 1980 and remained until his death in 1991; and Eric Singer, who's been the band's drummer since.

But like many threads of the band's story, the Kiss drummer timeline is messy. Anton Fig, of *Late Show with David Letterman* fame, played on two albums in the transitional period between Criss and Carr (*Dynasty*—which was originally credited to Criss—and *Unmasked*), and New York studio heavy Allan Schwartzberg tracked a couple songs and did some overdubs

Peter Criss

Kiss (1974)
Hotter than Hell (1974)
Dressed to Kill (1975)
Alive! (1975)
Destroyer (1976)
Rock and Roll Over (1976)
Love Gun (1977)

Alive II (1977)

Dynasty ("Dirty Livin'") (1979)
Kiss Unplugged ("2,000 Man," "Beth" [vocals only], double drums [with Eric Singer] on "Nothin' to Lose" and "Rock and Roll All Nite") (1996)
You Wanted the Best, You Got the Best!! (all songs except "New York Groove")

[Eric Carr] (1996)

Psycho Circus ("Into the Void") (1998)
Kiss Symphony: Alive IV (2003)

Anton Fig

Dynasty (1979)
Unmasked (1980)

Allan Schwartzberg

Music from the Elder ("Odyssey" and "I") (1981)

Eric Carr

Music from the Elder (all songs except "Odyssey" and "I") (1981)
Creatures of the Night (1982)



9 CATMAN CLASSICS

Kiss's original drummer reflects on his favorite performances

Coming from the tough streets of Brooklyn, New York, to hanging out at the Playboy Mansion, to selling millions of records and playing multiple sold-out shows at Madison Square Garden and tours all over the world, drummer, singer, songwriter, and Kiss co-founder Peter Criss, who is now in his seventies, is in a very happy place at this stage of his life. He's a cancer survivor, he's a loyal and loving husband to his beautiful wife, Gigi, he's still a fan of the music he grew up with, and he's especially proud of the music he helped create

with one of the biggest bands in history.

As a drummer Criss has influenced thousands to pick up the sticks, and when he came out from behind the kit to co-write and sing on the ballad "Beth," one of Kiss's biggest hits, he influenced drummers to pick up a microphone and become bandleaders. Despite the infamous disagreements the original Kiss members had, Criss tells *MD*, "I still hold a special place in my heart for my bandmates." We spoke to the original Catman about a few of his favorite Kiss songs.

"Deuce" At the time—and unbeknownst to Gene and Paul—the beat and feel on "Deuce" is really a cha-cha-cha. [laughs] If you listen to the song carefully, you'll hear me playing a cha-cha-cha on the snare with the bass drum ending on a 4 beat. This came from years of me being influenced by Latin music.

"Strutter" With "Strutter" I thought of Charlie Watts on the Stones' "Paint It Black." It was a beat that was in a song, and I made an intro out of it. It's an intro fill with an added flam beat instead of a single beat. Over the years so many drummers have



told me how much they love that intro. This song became another signature sound for me.

"Firehouse" On "Firehouse" I really got the chance to incorporate the cowbell, and we came up with a great stop-and-go beat. I'm also clutching the cymbal instead of letting it ring out, to tighten it up. I put my stick in the hole of the cowbell

TIMELINE



on Carr's early recordings with the band.

Later, Kevin Valentine made modest contributions to Carr's last two albums, and returned to ghost-drum on the original lineup's reunion album, *Psycho Circus*, during Criss's return to the band between '96 and 2004 (which itself was an in-again-out-again situation).

Keeping the band's convoluted history in mind, the following breakdown of their main studio and live albums should get you pretty close to understanding the comings and goings of Kiss's major sticksmen, as well as the important contributions made by several veteran players to their recorded legacy.



Lick It Up (1983)
Animalize (1984)
Asylum (1985)
Crazy Nights (1987)
Hot in the Shade (1989)
Revenge ("Carr Jam 1981") (1992)
You Wanted the Best, You Got the Best!! ("New York Groove") (1996)

Kevin Valentine
Hot in the Shade ("You Love Me to Hate You," "King of Hearts") (1989)
Revenge ("Take It Off") (1992)
Psycho Circus (all songs except "Into the Void" [Peter Criss]) (1998)

Eric Singer
Revenge (all songs except "Take It Off" [Eric Valentine] and "Carr Jam 1981" [Eric Carr]) (1992)
Alive III (1993)
Kiss Unplugged (all songs except "2,000 Man" and "Beth" [Peter

Criss]) (1996)
Carnival of Souls: The Final Sessions (1997)
Sonic Boom (2009)
Monster (2012)
Kiss Rocks Vegas (2016)

and played really fast in a circular motion to make it sound like an old-time fire engine bell.

"Shout It Out Loud" That's my British Merseybeat feel. I thought "Ringo" on the verses and then straight fours on the chorus, with a straight hi-hat. I was very into Motown, so that beat always influenced me. For "Shout It Out Loud" I was looking for the feel of [the Four Tops'] "Sugar Pie Honey Bunch" and also Roy Orbison's "Pretty Woman."

"Detroit Rock City" I remember being out with Jerry Nolan from the New York Dolls at the Headliner club in New York, and we heard a band that night with the drummer playing a

funky snare beat with a fast foot. I loved the beat so much, I learned it and I used it for "Detroit Rock City."

I incorporated my own double bass feel (with one bass drum) on the kick with a single on the floor tom and snare (I flipped it around) and then a shuffle side beat on the snare and the hi-hat. I don't play straight eights because I wanted to swing it.

"God of Thunder" That's my big Gene Krupa influence with four on the floor and four on the toms. I did a marching band type feel on the snare, which I learned when I studied with the great Jim Chapin for about a year, and that gave "God of Thunder" its structure.

"Rock and Roll All Nite" Again, it's my Motown influences. And remember the [Wilson Pickett] song "Land of a Thousand Dances?" I always liked that Dick Dale sound, the Beach Boys, James Brown, Wilson Pickett—I loved R&B. "Rock and Roll All Nite" is a great anthem, so I thought that beat felt and fit perfectly.

"Love Gun" When Paul came up with "Love Gun," I immediately thought the intro should sound like a machine gun. At first I did it too fast, so we slowed it down a bit. It became one of my signature drum sounds. After the intro it goes into a shuffle beat, which gets you up on your feet. I always wanted to make people move, dance, and

tap their feet. In the beginning, no one ever suggested what I played. I'm mostly a self-taught drummer who plays what's needed for the song. When you listen to all these Kiss songs, it was all my Motown and big band swing added to rock 'n' roll music. I always played my best when I was free to be me. If I felt restrained, I'd lose the feel.

"100,000 Years" I'm very proud of "100,000 Years" because I've been told by so many drummers over the years, many who I admire, that *that* song influenced a generation of drummers to play drums. It makes me very happy that I could have an effect like that in my life. I'm very grateful.

GIVING THE DRUMMERS SOME

Guitarist Bruce Kulick on the Kiss drummers he's worked with

Eric Carr was the first Kiss drummer I worked with. He wasn't a tall man, but he was super powerful, and his drumkit was very large. He knew to stand up on his stool at the end of a drum



solo to be seen! He was very creative, and anyone hearing the *Creatures of the Night* LP would think, *Holy cow, what a beast of a drummer!* On his last few Kiss tours, Eric introduced [electronics] into his drum solo. In the studio Eric played very hard, and his fills were always a driving force—a tough thing to do in a power ballad. For huger drumming, listen to “Love It Loud,” “Creatures of the Night,” “King of the Mountain,” and the head-spinning double kick intro to “No No No.” It was a tragic loss to Kiss and the drum world when he passed from cancer on November 24, 1991.

Eric Singer is a valuable addition to Kiss. He has a great feel and fit into Kiss smoothly. His playing on *Kiss Unplugged* was very tight and tasty, and he could follow direction from a producer such as Bob Ezrin, who is a strict man in the recording process. Eric's effortless ability to be creative in the complex arrangements of *Revenge* brought the music to another level. “Heart of Chrome,” “Tough Love,” and “Domino” are dynamic songs, and he has the timing *down*. His performances on *Carnival of Souls* were also very creative. “Hate” and “I Walk Alone” show his ability to flex his muscle with taste and style.

Kiss brought in Kevin Valentine for a few songs when Eric Singer's schedule with Alice Cooper prevented him from being able to record a few tracks. He's a talented musician, and his drumming was solid. Happily his performances didn't distract; they were correct for the songs, and that's important.

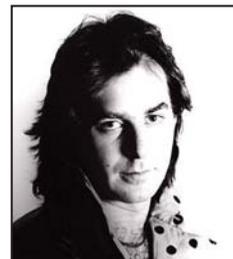
I only played two songs with Peter Criss, at the MTV Unplugged gig. He's another drummer who loves big band music. He was so much a part of the feel and sound of the original Kiss. My personal highlights of Peter are “Black Diamond” and “100,000 Years.” “Black Diamond” was a classic Kiss tune, and Peter's drumming on it has lots of fills and attitude. “100,000 Years” has lots of drumming that's tribal and big band-like. I always respond favorably to that.



THE NEW YORK GROOVER

Late Show legend Anton Fig on his *Dynasty* and *Unmasked* performances

My Kiss experience started when I played on Ace Frehley's solo album. [In 1978 each Kiss member released his own album.] It came out really well and had the hit “New York



Groove” on it. When it was time for them to go back into the studio as a group, they called me to record *Dynasty*. Peter had broken his arm, and they needed to keep on schedule. At the time I was told that this would be a private arrangement and that I was not to talk about it. I didn't until they started to mention it in books and remastered versions of the album twenty years later.

We rehearsed at Brit Row in Queens, and then we went into Electric Lady Studios for recording. They never told me how to play or to sound like Peter, they just let me do the drums as I heard them. And I was there to drum for them; I never got involved in whatever internal stuff was going on between them as a band.

I don't really remember all that much about recording individual songs, but I do remember hitting bunches of sticks together and pitching down the harmonizer for the whip crack sound on 4 in the breakdown of “I Was Made for Lovin'You.” It sounded quite exotic in those days. I was also struck by Paul's vocals in the bridge of the song. I had no idea he had that range. That song was a departure for them, in a similar mold to the Stones' “Miss You” or Rod Stewart's “Do Ya Think I'm Sexy?” So it made perfect sense for the time.

I honestly don't know where Peter was when it came time to record *Unmasked*, but they asked me to play on that album as well. Among the songs I really liked playing are “I Was Made for Lovin'You” because it was so unusual at the time. Also “Hard Times” because that was typical Ace. I remember cutting a different version with him up at North Lake Studios when he was preparing his songs for the album. And I really like “Is That You” from *Unmasked*. I think it's a good rocker. It was an exciting time in New York and music back then.

FROM THE BEGINNING

Session master Allan Schwartzberg had a hand in the proceedings before Kiss was Kiss

I first met the band more than thirty-five years ago, at Electric Lady Studios in New York. They were still called Wicked Lester at the time. They were working in Studio A with Eddie Kramer and I was recording in B with BJ Thomas and a guest artist, Stevie Wonder. I was also producing Sean Delaney at the time, an amazing character who wrote songs for Kiss and helped conceive their live shows. He invited me to play on his productions of Gene and Peter's solo albums. I believe I'm on all the tracks on Gene's and a few on Peter's.

Peter was recording at Electric Lady Studio A, and he'd often be sitting next me as we recorded, with not one moment of negativity coming from him. He had a bad accident and couldn't finish the record, and the band was up against a deadline. Peter handled the potentially egoistic situation of being a well-known drummer having to have another drummer play on something so personal as your own record. That's a testament to his strength of character.

For Gene's solo album, Sean had a studio band, which I helped put together. Gene called me later to add some tom fills on a few *Animalize* tracks. Soon after that, Bob Ezrin, one of the very few genius music producers, called me to play on the album *The Elder*. We did it at Ace's cool home studio in Connecticut. It was killer because Bob wanted me to double my tracks note for note. Try doing *that* at home without flaming.



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The Aristocrats'

Marco Minnemann

Like a drumming magician, he's made the impossible seem effortless.
But increasingly he also enchants with songcraft and the alchemy of instrumental interaction.

By Mike Haid

A carefree smile has always been the hallmark of Marco Minnemann's demeanor at the kit. With a commanding confidence, he shrugs off the most masterful performances of complex odd meters and dazzling stick tricks with a casual attitude that seems to say, "Well, that was fun!" while the rest of us watch in amazement.

Concurrent with his heavy touring and recording schedules with countless artists, Minnemann has also released twenty-odd solo albums, the latest of which, *My Sister*, features such high-profile artists as Alex Lifeson of Rush and dUg Pinnick of King's X, as well as a number of international collaborators from projects he's recently participated in. Among the emotionally and rhythmically individualistic compositions on the double album, the beautiful Minnemann composition "Lovers Calling" is nearly worth the price of admission alone. Sung by Maiah Wynne and starting off like a shoe-gaze ballad in the mold of My Bloody Valentine, the tune smoothly moves into a section punctuated by a selection of blistering full-set drum fills, then shifts into an angular workout featuring an exciting Lifeson guitar solo. Bold in every sense, it reflects a musician who has brilliantly figured out how to put the song and the production first while still delivering advanced chops that shredders can appreciate.

Marco hardly stays in one place long enough for us

to catch up with his evolving and copious output. As of this interview, his main focus has returned to the Aristocrats, the instrumental power trio that began as a fluke collaboration during a 2011 Winter NAMM Show with bassist Bryan Beller and guitarist Guthrie Govan. As you're reading this, the Aristocrats are likely between European legs of their 2019/20 world tour, supporting their fourth studio album, *You Know What...?* The release reveals a well-oiled, laser-focused, and increasingly popular instrumental-rock trio—in fact, one that's more commercially successful than the players had ever imagined. The fuel behind their growing popularity? "Chemistry!" insists Minnemann.

Indeed, the chemistry among these three masters of their craft is musical and personal. Using late-'60s experimental blues-rock pioneers Jimi Hendrix, Cream, and Led Zeppelin as a jumping-off point, Beller, Govan, and Minnemann infuse jazz, metal, prog, funk, rock, and even country elements into their well-structured soundscapes, which are filled with thoughtful and mind-blowing improvisations. Between songs, the players interact with the audience and provide humorous "Storytellers"-style intros, which serve to draw us into the creative process, and let us in on the origins of the material and the facets of each artist's personality.

MD: It's interesting that your career in the States was launched through your work with Mike Keneally and Bryan Beller, and years later the three of you would reunite as Joe Satriani's rhythm section.

Marco: That's true. I haven't spoken with Mike lately, but that seems to be the way of the music business: you meet great players, you do great work together, and then you move on and enter another phase of your career. And then, unexpectedly, you're working together again. That's what makes this crazy business so interesting. You never know what will happen next.

MD: How did the gig with Satriani come about?

Marco: It came out of nowhere, really. I believe Mike Keneally recommended me. They said it would be either me or Vinnie Colaiuta, which was very humbling.

I met Joe for the first time when I was playing with Adrian Belew. So when Joe needed a drummer for the tour supporting his album *Unstoppable Momentum*, which featured Vinnie, he called me. Vinnie and I then recorded Joe's following record, *Shockwave Supernova*, and then I toured with Joe for four years and shot a DVD. Joe also played on my last solo recording, *Borrego*, and we keep in touch. It was a fun gig, and Joe is a great guy. Who knows what the future will bring.

MD: With numerous requests for your talent in such varied musical styles, how do you decide which gigs to accept?

Marco: At some point you have to remind yourself why you're playing music in the first place. Then you have to establish priorities. The Aristocrats are selling out venues around the world, and selling records. So you have to step back and realize that this needs to become a priority before other gigs.

After our third album, *Tres Caballeros*, we took a year off, because we all had several projects going on. Then in 2018 we got back together for a European run, without any new music, just to see what the response



would be. We were blown away by the positive response, and we sold out almost every venue. We were playing the same venues that I played with Satriani and with Steven Wilson, and the Aristocrats out-sold them. This was a real awakening for us. It made us realize that we do have something very special, and now it's time to set priorities for this band.

MD: Do you feel your career shifting from “drum god” to “composer” with your recent solo work, and to “band member” with the Aristocrats?

Marco: Yes! It took such a long time to get people out of the mindset of me just being the “drum dude” to finally discovering my songwriting and really listening to my music. Now when people listen to the Aristocrats or my solo albums, it's more about the songwriting. We now get more compliments about our music than we do about a particular solo or a drum fill in a song. This is what we've always wanted.

It didn't start out that way. When we first started playing together, we could see people in the front row watching our hands and feet, and so on. Once we really focused more on our writing, our songs weren't just platforms to shred over, but thoughtful compositions based on the talents of each band member. Now we have a loyal fan base that

“The attention was on the drum pyrotechnics instead of the music I was writing. I'm glad those days are over.”

knows the melodies of our music; they sing along and get excited when we play their favorite tunes. It's gone way beyond the chops and is now about our catalog of music that the fans look forward to hearing. This is what we've been trying to achieve for so long, and we've finally reached that special place as a band. And it feels really good!

MD: What's obvious during an Aristocrats show is the playful, relaxed attitude of the band, and the joy that you each bring to the audience by involving them in the show.

Marco: First of all, we never take ourselves too seriously. The biggest mistake that you can make in a band is to distance yourself from the audience by thinking you're better than them. We love to bond with our audience and share the

stories of how we created our music, and celebrate each gig that we do with our fans. We want them to encounter a very personal experience with us.

MD: With the Aristocrats, each style that you perform sounds authentic, not contrived or forced.

Marco: We're all about the same age and grew up playing all these styles of jazz, metal, rock, funk, blues, and pop music. So we know how to play it properly. That's what makes it fun for us, to compose material that flows from one style to the next and incorporates the sounds and structure that really make each style work.

MD: The maturity of your playing is obvious when you're playing with the Aristocrats. You're relaxed and flowing, whether it's an intense metal passage, a sensitive jazz section, or an uptempo funk groove. You've mastered the art of stick control and economy of motion around the drumkit. And your feet can play virtually any pattern under all of this.

Marco: After so many years of learning hundreds of complex songs, the rhythmic ideas just start flowing, and all the technique involved in executing certain drum parts just happens naturally. I really don't practice anymore. I just learn songs and develop new ideas from the music that I write and record. And touring with so many different bands helps to build your rhythmic vocabulary.

MD: What kit are you using on the new Aristocrats album?

Marco: The same kit that I have on tour now with the Aristocrats, which is my old whitewash DW Maple Collector's series kit with a 23" bass drum that I've had for years, just sitting in my garage. It's always worked, no matter what the musical situation.

I had a recording session and needed some drums, but I didn't want to break down my two other kits at home, a Jazz



Minnemann's Setup

Drums: DW Collector's Series with maple shells

- 7x14 wood snare
- 22" gong drum
- 5x14 steel or brass snare
- 8x10 tom
- 9x12 tom
- 7x8 tom
- 14x16 floor tom
- 16x18 floor tom
- 18x23 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian

- 14" Avedis hi-hats
- 14" K hi-hats
- 12" Avedis splash
- 8" K Custom bells (2)
- 20" Constantinople Medium Thin ride
- 18" Avedis Medium crash
- 17" K Dark Medium crash
- 19" K China
- 20" Platinum Custom ride
- 21" Armand Beautiful Baby ride (optional)

Hardware: DW 5000 single- or double-chain double bass drum pedal and hi-hat stand, cable hat

Heads: Evans G1 Clear on gong drum batter, ST snare batters, G2 Clear tom batters and G1 Clear resonants, EMAD or G1 Clear bass drum batter

series and a Custom Cherry Wood, because they're all miked up and sounding good for my home recording projects. So I pulled out this old kit.

I wasn't sure how it would sound after sitting for so long. But I remember talking with Chester Thompson about how his old DW kit sounded sweeter with age because the wood changes over time. I wasn't really convinced of this because of all the plies of wood in the shells. I mean, I was certain that it worked that way with guitars, but drums with glued layers? I was skeptical at first.

But after I set up my old kit and began to play it, I decided Chester was totally right. It sounded amazing. So I started using it more and more for sessions, recorded the new album with it, and then brought it on the road for this tour. I'm also using an old Gretsch Brooklyn snare that I found in Japan that sounds and feels unbelievable.

MD: Speaking of drumkits, it seems you've found a comfortable setup that hasn't changed much over the past few years, which is quite scaled down from what you used during your early years on the clinic trail, with the vast array of pedals and triggers and such.

Marco: Yes, I'm very happy with my current setup. Those early years were really more driven by the drum industry, which from the mid '90s until about 2005 was pushing this shred drumming movement that was all about who could play faster, how many pedals you can play, and all of this crazy independence stuff. Which I could do, but that was not my purpose of playing those things. It was always about the music, and it was very frustrating for me, because the attention was on the drum pyrotechnics instead of the music I was writing.

I'm glad those days are over and people are now taking me seriously as a songwriter, with the drumming being a part of the music that I write and not the focus. I still do some drum clinics and festivals, but that's not my priority these days. It's way more fun touring with my band and playing creative music for people that truly enjoy what we do.

MD: Talk about your recent Drumeo performance where you

Marco Minnemann



Ekaterina Gorbacheva

debuted your new song, “Drum for Your Life.”

Marco: I flew to Vancouver straight from the Cruise to the Edge experience, where I played with three artists—the Sea Within, In Continuum, and Steve Hackett. So on my flight home, I stopped off in Canada and spent two days recording videos for Drumeo. I composed “Drum for Your Life” in the hotel room when I arrived. It took me two hours to write the whole thing.

It’s a pretty complicated piece that moves through various permutations and modulations in 15/16. It started as a technical exercise but ended up being a pretty cool song that demystifies this so-called complex time signature and shows that it can become a truly beautiful rhythmic piece of music. I took from the Iron Maiden lyrics “Run to the hills, run for your lives” and came up with “Drum for Your Life.” [laughs] Playing in 15/16 is such fun, because you can divide it so many ways, like three times five or five times three, or modulate it and play it as a shuffle in 4/4.

MD: You’ve played with many progressive artists over the past few years. Talk about

some of the more recent experiences.

Marco: These last couple of years have been extremely busy with different bands. The Sea Within is a very cool project. We each wrote songs and brought them to the studio together in London, and recorded for two weeks as a live band. The songs are very well written, and it was a fantastic experience. But this type of band is impossible to tour with, because everyone is in other bands.

Another great progressive recording was with In Continuum. The Cruise to the Edge experience was also amazing because I got to perform the classic Genesis catalog with guitarist Steve Hackett, who was an integral part of their best music. Another progressive project I’d like to mention is the Mute Gods. We recently released our third album, *Atheists and Believers*. I also get to play guitar and keyboards with this band.

MD: How were you able to memorize so much complex material with three bands for the Cruise to the Edge experience, in such a short period of time?

Marco: I booked a hotel room in Florida before the cruise and scheduled each day

to learn two songs, maybe three or four on a good day. I spend half the day learning songs, then take a break, and then spend the second half of the day writing for the Aristocrats. It worked out well, and I was able to learn about sixty songs for the cruise, plus write my songs for the new Aristocrats album.

MD: You’ve written some very diverse, emotional, and complex music on *My Sister*. Talk about the various influences on this release, especially the Indian ones that are prevalent on several tracks.

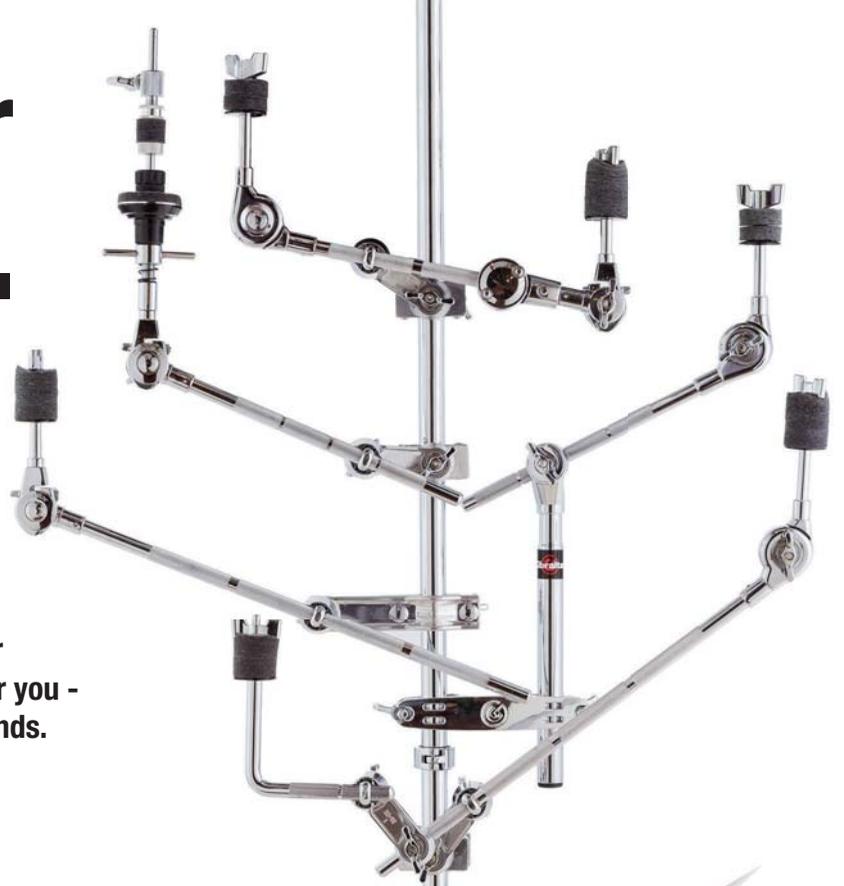
Marco: From my musical collaborations on several projects and tours in India in recent years with bassist Mohini Dey and others, I was able to invite several incredible artists to record my music, which really brought a unique sound to the new album. When I started working on the tune “Lovers Calling” with Alex Lifeson from Rush, we each brought artists into the recording. I brought Mohini on bass, and Alex brought Maiah Wynne to sing the lyrics. Longtime Rush engineer Richard Chycki mixed that track, which sounds incredible.

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Marco Minnemann

I was invited to Bangladesh recently to perform on *Wind of Change*, a popular TV show with many amazing musicians. So I invited some of those artists to perform on my new music as well, such as violinist Anna Rakita on "White Sheets" and vocalist Aditi Singh Sharma, who is huge Bollywood star.

MD: How did you develop a musical relationship with Alex Lifeson?

Marco: When I started to record my last solo album, *Borrego*, the label contacted Alex to play on it. He replied that he would be delighted to. He's a fan of the Aristocrats and knew of my playing, which was very flattering to hear. Alex played on three songs on *Borrego*, and we developed a friendship from there.

When I wrote "Lovers Calling" for the new album, it had his sound all over it. So I reached out and he was excited to record again. Ironically, we've yet to meet in person. I'm hoping to work with Alex again. We've developed a great musical chemistry.

MD: How did you recruit bassist/vocalist dUg Pinnick from King's X for the track "Arrogance"?

Marco: He and I played together in a trio in Hollywood at the Whisky and became friends. He came to my house to record the track and



nailed it. He's such a cool guy to hang with. I wrote this song specifically with him in mind. It's aggressive and bluesy, just like dUg!

MD: The insanely fast instrumental track that really allows your fluent, syncopated odd-meter playing to shine is "Shuttle," with bass player Mohini Dey.

Marco: "Shuttle" was originally written as the coda for "Lovers Calling" with Alex Lifeson. But Alex said, "No, I've

already played too many notes!" [laughs] So I arranged it to feature Mohini on bass. There are actually three pieces that I wrote for the album as "transport" pieces, "Shuttle," "Ferry," and "Car," which all transport you into the next song.

MD: At this point in your career, do you have any goals that you would still like to accomplish?

Marco: I'm very happy that the Aristocrats are doing so well. I already have a few tunes in mind for the next album. I just want to continue to grow musically. I feel that if you ever think that you've done it all, then that's when it's time to move on to another career. I'm still learning, creating, and growing. That's what I love to do.



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Skillet's Jen Ledger

Story by Ilya Stemkovsky Photos by Paul La Raia

Her drumming journey has taken her from Coventry, England, to Kenosha, Wisconsin, to touring the world with Christian-rock group Skillet. That wasn't exactly her life plan, though.

Jen Ledger's *original* plan was to be a hairdresser, and today she admits that, at various points in her life, she wasn't even that committed to the drums. Nonetheless, she entered a U.K. contest for young drummers—and was surprised when she placed high as a finalist. "It was a little bit of a shock to me," said Ledger, "because I didn't understand what I was capable of."

Such humility is a prime personality trait for Ledger, whose talent behind a kit is matched by her equally impressive singing voice. With Skillet she handles double duty: rocking out hard on the drums over anthemic, arena-chorus Christian-heavy-metal fare, and then confidently stepping down from the riser to sing lead at the front of the stage.

Along with husband-and-wife team John (vocals, bass) and Korey (keys, guitar, vocals) Cooper and guitarist Seth Morrison, Ledger travels the world and brings an empowering message to fans searching for meaning and a guiding light. The drummer's Christian faith has even helped her overcome recent episodes of anxiety.

But you wouldn't have any clue about those struggles while watching Ledger pummel a kit, sing backing vocals, and then come out into the spotlight in full rock-star mode. She's such a magnetic presence, in fact, that she's indulged her creative juices and formed her own group, Ledger, with whom she sings and writes the music, with a little help from her Skillet friends on the production end.

Jen Ledger's tale is all about believing in yourself and proving the naysayers wrong. It also doesn't hurt to be able to play a perfect rendition of "Tom Sawyer." But before we get to that, let's find out how the drummer's journey began.

MD: What brought you to the States?

Jen: I thought my two older brothers, Martin and David, were super cool, and I copied anything they did. And they both played drums. There was a Young Drummer of the Year competition in the U.K., for sixteen-year-olds and under, and before that I hadn't taken drums that seriously. I spent a year and a half really digging in and made it into the top twelve in the country for that competition.

I was as surprised as anyone else. But a few months later I was offered a scholarship to the Living Light School of Worship in Kenosha, Wisconsin, which is a Bible study discipleship worship course. It teaches you Bible stuff but also music theory and ear training, and it gives you experience playing with other musicians. I didn't love the idea of moving to the States; it seemed a bit daunting at sixteen years old. But I prayed about it and came to Kenosha, which is in the middle of nowhere. The course only had about eighteen or twenty students.

MD: Before that, were you able to listen to all kinds of music, or did it have to be faith-based?

Jen: Honestly, we didn't grow up Christian. In America you have the Bible Belt, and a lot of people raised in church, but England is a different culture. But some of my best memories were singing Beatles songs in the car with my dad. And I was raised on a lot of Queen. I actually didn't know any Christian music, which is funny because it ended up being my entire career.

MD: What was your audition for Skillet like?

Jen: I've never been the flashiest of drummers, and it wasn't about how many notes I could fit in every measure. And at seventeen years old, I was just too young to know that we could all approach the instrument in different ways. Everyone around me was inspired by Travis Barker. It kind of shot my confidence down. So at that point I was actually playing bass in a worship band. When Skillet approached me to audition, I was so insecure, and I originally thought, *no way*. But then I thought I'd regret it for the rest of my life if I didn't go and try out.

They had me prepare a solo, so I was

working on that, and they asked me to learn double kick, which I'd never really played before. I worked out of *Stick Control* and just did that with my feet instead of hands, trying to get my left foot working. Then I'd put a click on and do those exercises under a groove. And I'd switch stuff in my mind. If a rudiment was RLRR, the R would be a RL with my hands and then the L would be a RL with my feet. That would make for hand/foot [combinations] that would sound like really cool fills. So I was trying to incorporate double kick, which I'd only been learning for a few weeks, into a solo. I really enjoyed learning the double bass stuff. It was challenging and new.

MD: Besides the solo, you had to play Skillet music, naturally.

Jen: They had me learn some songs—P.O.D.'s "Alive," Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit," Skillet's "Better Than Drugs," and Rush's "Tom Sawyer." And later I found out that John asked nobody else to do "Tom Sawyer," just me. [laughs] And he had no idea I was seventeen at the time. Korey loved the idea of having a female drummer, by the way. But John wanted to prove a point that they needed a professional and not just some local from church who doesn't know what she's doing. So "Tom Sawyer" would show where we were at, but instead I ended up kind of nailing it. [laughs] But I had a good five weeks before the audition.

MD: What was the process of recording Skillet's latest album, *Victorious*? Were you free to come up with your parts?

Jen: The nice thing is John and Korey are writers, but they're also producers, so that made this experience one of the best for me. On previous albums, we'd fly into L.A., work with the big-dog producer, I'd have to know all twelve songs, do them all in two takes, and then be out. It left zero room for experimentation, and it was just high pressure. You're paying by the thousands per hour in some studio in Hollywood, and there's no room for error.

The beautiful thing about Skillet producing their own album this time around is it's taken all that pressure off. From the demos, it's pretty clear what John and Korey want from the drums, but they give me room



to put my own flair in it. And depending on who is producing the song more, I'll see influences. Like John's would be Tommy Lee and Lars Ulrich for his songs. For Korey's songs, she leans alternative, so it'll be more Stewart Copeland or Larry Mullen Jr. And that's exciting as a drummer, because it pulls you out of your go-to fills or feels. It pulls me

Ledger's Setup

Drums: Pearl Reference Pure in Custom Sparkle Fade lacquer with black hardware

- 6.5x14 Reference brass snare
- 9x12 tom
- 14x14 floor tom
- 16x16 floor tom
- 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Sabian

- 14" AAX X-Celerator hi-hats
- 18" AAX X-Plosion crash
- 19" AAX X-Plosion crash
- 20" AAX X-Plosion crash
- 21" AAX Medium ride BR
- 20" AAX Chinese

Hardware: Pearl, including P3002C Demon chain-drive double bass drum pedal, 2050 hi-hat stand, and B1030 boom cymbal stands

Sticks: Vic Firth Jen Ledger signature model

Heads: Evans, including ST snare batter and Hazy 300 snare side, EC2S Clear tom batters and EC resonants, EMAD 2 bass drum batter and EQ3 front

Mics: Shure



into new avenues of drumming and keeps me out of my comfort zone.

But Skillet isn't afraid to embrace technology or the "new," so you'll hear some live drums but also programmed and electronic drums. We want to make the song a powerhouse. This is what you sing in a stadium, or what will make you run the extra mile when you're too tired.

MD: What about your own band?

Jen: The EP came out last year. It's surreal and super exciting. I never believed I'd have the privilege and honor of playing in a group like Skillet. I'm incredibly grateful. Touring the world with them has opened my eyes to how powerful music is. It's a way to influence people for good or for bad. And I've met so many girls that were learning to play drums

because of me and changing their hair to copy me. I felt really humbled with the platform that I'd been given, to reach young people and shine a light.

We're living in a social-media and reality-TV culture, and it makes people feel like their lives aren't perfect but everyone else's are. I wanted to be a voice for something else. You don't have to be perfect and look like the Instagram models. Music is the best tool for that. So I started writing my own music and told John and Korey all the things in my heart, that I'm blessed to be in this band but that I could be more vocal and more of an influence for these young people. The Coopers trained me and took me under their wing and made room for this. And for some of our shows, I'm opening up with Ledger,

where I sing, and closing out drumming and singing with Skillet. So it's a bit of a whirlwind. It takes its toll on you. At the end of the night I'm wrecked.

MD: You're hitting pretty hard live. What's your warm-up like? And how do you prepare for that kind of live assault?

Jen: If I go up there cold, I might not be able to move my head the next day. [laughs] I've made those mistakes before. [Backstage] I have an electronic drum pad set up. And thirty minutes before the stage, I'll warm up and get loose going through the parts. And I need to stretch out my neck and shoulders. For the performance, I'm all about connecting with the audience. I'm all about the passion and my heart shining through in my playing, more than the finesse at that

Jen Ledger



point. So yes, I'm completely going mental up there.

MD: There have been many drummers who sing while they play, but what's the key to singing while you're really smacking the kit?

Jen: What's hard with vocals is they're so unforgiving. If you're nervous or your adrenaline is pumping too fast, you'll lose

your breath. When I'm drumming, you won't notice if I'm nervous, but when I'm singing I can't hide it. If I'm hitting way too hard or playing fills when I'm singing, you'll hear my voice shake. So I have to learn as I go, and each song is different. But at the end of the day I'm playing the drums so freaking hard and singing at the same time. People are

excited by the experience and the energy, and the fans connect with me giving my all. It's a rock 'n' roll show.

MD: There are more and more female drummers in all kinds of bands. What advice would you give hungry female drummers trying to break through the boys' club wall?

Jen: To all female drummers, I say, yeah, maybe you can still feel it a little. There are going to be those extra eyes on you when you walk up onstage. I've walked onstage and felt disappointment from a crowd when they see a girl on the drums. I've been there. But there's nothing more rewarding than showing them up and winning them over within a couple of songs. You can feel the crowd turn.

But it's changing. I'm playing with so many female drummers now that are on fire, and they hold their own. My advice is, don't just be good for a girl. Don't settle for that. Just be good. Work hard and do it your way. Don't stress if you play differently. Come at the drums in a way that you enjoy playing them. The more you play with passion and heart, the more you'll connect with an audience. And passion and emotion and performance seem to go a lot further with a crowd than being so stressed that it's all perfect.



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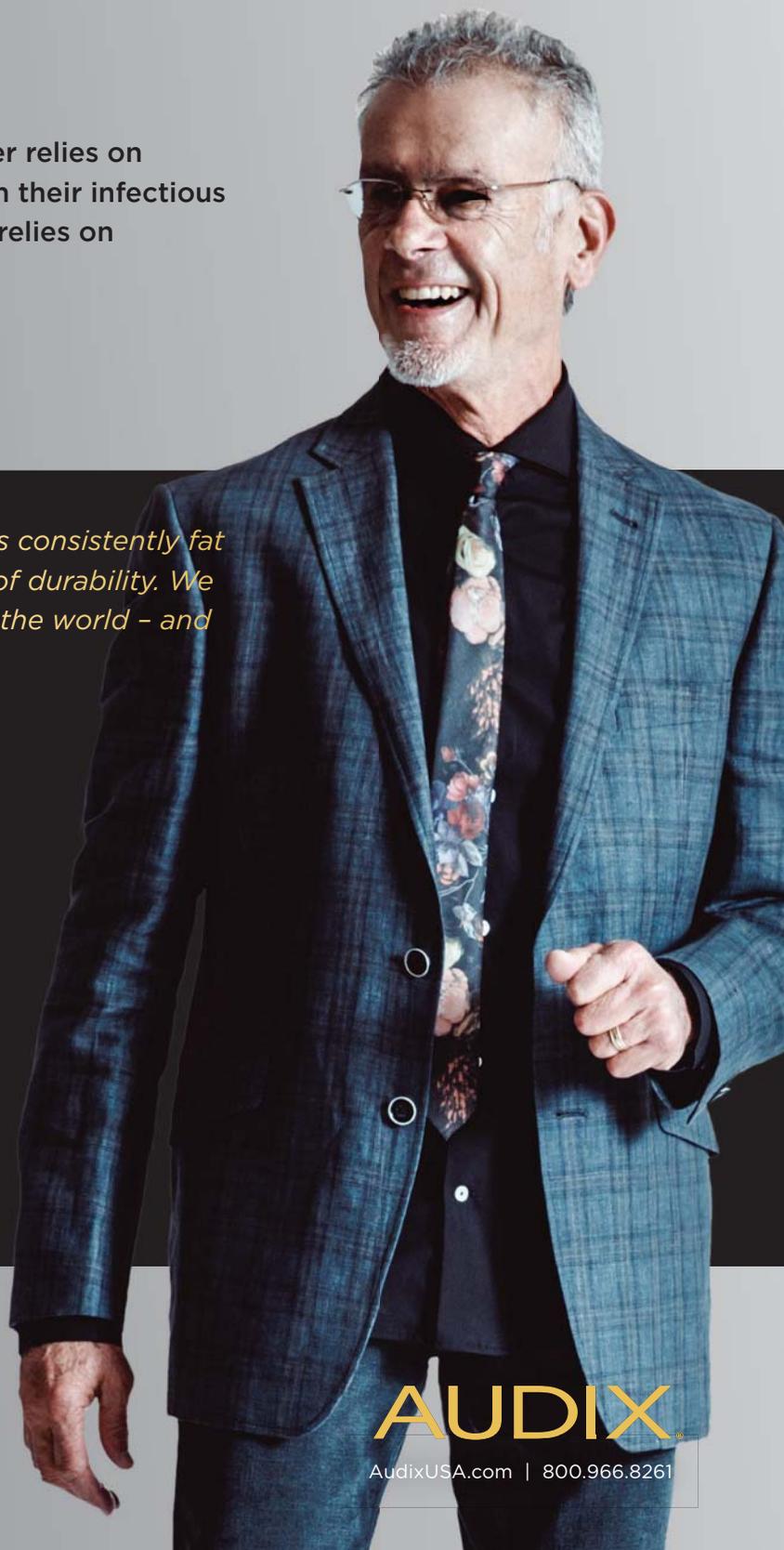
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Gunnar Olsen

Bringing art and craft to YouTube, Bruce, and all points between.

Story by Patrick Berkery Photos by Savannah Lauren

If you've watched funny animal videos on YouTube, been notified of a "friendiversary" by Facebook, or heard something from Bruce Springsteen's latest album, *Western Stars*, there's a good chance you've heard Gunnar Olsen.

Those are three completely random places to hear the forty-year-old Brooklyn-based drummer keeping the beat. They also happen to be three of the most recognizable brands on the planet. Meaning tens of millions of people have heard Olsen's drumming. Not many freelance drummers in this day and age have those kind of stats.

When Olsen first began recording and touring with the alternative rock band the Exit in the early 2000s, he envisioned that kind of exposure, but strictly as the drummer in the Exit. He planned to be what Dave Grohl was to Nirvana, what Taylor Hawkins is to the Foo Fighters—"a guy in a band," as he puts it.

"I was convinced that the Exit was going to rule the world," Olsen says while seated just a few feet from his brand-new C&C kit at Russell Street Recording, a co-op studio that serves as his home base in the Greenpoint neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York.

"On our very first tour, we were paying ourselves \$10 a day, and I remember thinking, 'Oh, I could just do this for the rest of my life.' We were sleeping on couches. We were playing shows. I didn't owe anybody any money. Then the Exit had a pretty good record deal with Wind-up. One of the last major-label deals. I lived off that for two years. It was never about sessions. That world never entered my mind."

The Exit never did end up ruling the world, but Olsen's slashing, groove-oriented playing made an impression on Wind-up A&R executive/producer Gregg Wattenberg, who eventually started using him on records he produced for the Goo Goo Dolls, O.A.R., Gavin DeGraw, and others. Touring gigs followed, with electronic-leaning artists like Big Data, Fischerspooner, and Miike Snow.

Olsen was busy, but as many freelance drummers can attest to, "busy" isn't always synonymous with creative fulfillment or financial sustainability. And some drummers would rather not spend weeks and months at a time on the road if they can help it. So what's a freelancer to do? In Olsen's case, he took advantage of the new opportunities technology and social media presented for musicians and managed to turn them into creative outlets and revenue streams.

With an audience of thousands of Instagram followers, Olsen began posting clips of himself playing. Though he didn't necessarily intend for the clips to serve as a commercial for his services, the DMs and emails began coming in with inquiries about remote session work, which, in most cases, he's able to engineer on his own. On the day *MD* visited with Olsen, he was working on tracks for RX Bandits singer Matt Embree and electronic artist Baauer of "Harlem Shake" fame.

And when YouTube began assembling a library of royalty-free music as a means for video creators to soundtrack their clips legally (as opposed to, say, using "Baby Shark" without permission), Olsen and other musicians were hired to record hundreds of tracks in rapid-fire fashion to populate the library. Olsen landed similar work when Facebook began assembling its own library of royalty-free music.

Now Olsen and some of those musicians are taking the idea of royalty-free music a step further with a new endeavor called TrackTribe. The group is making royalty-free music for video creators to use on YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. Users can download the songs for free and keep 100 percent of the money generated through the videos (via ads, etc.). Drummers can also download drum-less versions of select songs to play along with. All TrackTribe asks for is a charitable donation, though it's not required.

The path Olsen's career has taken—which also includes wedding and corporate gigs with the New York City-based Dexter Lake Club—isn't what he envisioned during his days with the Exit. But these are radically different times for musicians. And Olsen, a different drummer with a different outlook from when he started out, is definitely content with where he is professionally.

"Being a freelance drummer in 2019," says Olsen, "it's, 'What can I do to pay the bills? What can I do to be creatively stimulated?' Playing corporate gigs and weddings, and making music for Facebook—on paper, those could be very uncool things. The twenty-year-old me would be like, 'Oh, man, are you selling out?' If I'm selling out doing all that, I'm cool with it, because I'm making good money. I'm not touring all the time and only seeing my wife six months out of the year.

"All I ever wanted to do as a musician was to make people happy and be heard doing what I'm doing. I feel like I'm doing that."



MD: Your career typifies what a new age it is for freelance drummers. Like using Instagram as a showcase for your skills.

Gunnar: I like Instagram as a platform because I can be in [my studio] on a day when I'm working for nobody, having fun. And the goal can be, "I have a minute on Instagram... make a piece of art that's a minute long." It's a fun goal to set for yourself. It's like setting limits for yourself. I'm in a position now where more people can see me on Instagram with a video than if I'm playing on tour.

MD: How do you navigate getting hit up for session work via social media? I would imagine it's mostly D.I.Y. artists without much of a budget.

Gunnar: I try to answer everything. Then it always comes down to rate. That's going to change for everybody. I always try to say, "Send me the song, what you have in mind," and I can usually get a gauge of what level it's on. I can do a little research and see if they're on a label. If it's something I like and they can't afford my rate, I might say, "Let's work out a deal."

It's not always unknown artists. Baauer, the guy who did "Harlem Shake," found me on Instagram. He saw a video of me running a Yamaha EAD10 and some pedals, getting weird sounds, and getting live loops. And he said, "I have some electronic music that would be great to add live drums to," so we met up.

MD: With remote sessions, do you have a standard process for giving an artist or a producer options, carving out time for fixes, etc.?

Gunnar: I did a session for this Mexican band called Porter about a year and a half ago. It was the first time someone said, "Can you



do it again?" My ego was like, "Oh, did I not play it right?" And the producer, Hector Castillo, said, "You sound great. But you sound like a session drummer. Ditch the ghost notes. Imagine you're the drummer in this band." His notes were great. It was an eye-opening moment. It made me step back and think about what I'm doing when I'm doing a remote thing.

It's really important to have a few emails or phone calls to figure out what we're looking for. I'm pretty good at giving people four options of something. Nowadays almost everyone is sending me a drum idea. The first thing I do is my version of their beat. Then by the end, it's what I would do. I try to do everything in between, with fill options and cymbal hits.

But that thought of "Play like you're in this band...you're not doing a remote session"—those are the kind of things that you only



learn by doing them.

MD: How did you become adept at engineering and recording yourself?

Gunnar: As the Exit was morphing into other things, a buddy put Abelton Live on my computer. I'd go into my iTunes, throw an mp3 into it, and cut it up, just experimenting. So I was just kind of creating stuff. Recording stuff into the mics on my laptop. I remember being able to go home with a rough mix, add some percussion ideas, then show up at the studio the next day with some stuff we could add to the track. And very slowly over time, I was observing other engineers, asking questions, taking pictures. I started with two mics, then I got an Apogee Duet, and it grew from there.

It's only in the last couple of years that I was able to come into a place like this and actually know how to route everything and record my drumset, then add some other music in. I couldn't get these mics up and running by myself before. I had to have someone come in here. I can do a two- to five-mic setup here and feel comfortable that if I send you something, it'll sound cool and you'll probably be into it. And if you need me to do it again, it's probably not hard.

There's another studio in Brooklyn called Mozart Street, and I have a friend there who engineers. I go there when I do stuff for producers who want all the toms miked, the hi-hat miked—when they want more than ten mics [on the kit]. So I'm not worrying about phasing with fifteen microphones. That's out of my comfort zone. But I'm really trying to be able to do it totally on my own.

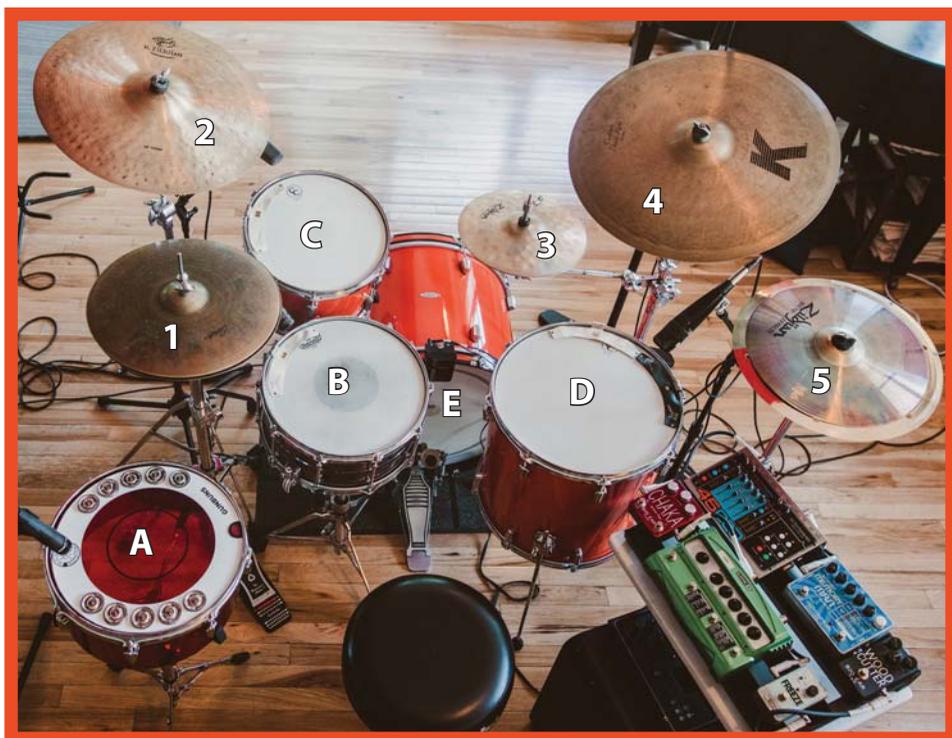
MD: Engineering and recording drums to the degree that you do, has that prompted you to think differently about the way you play on a session?

Gunnar: It definitely opens up your ears. When I do sessions now, I can hear a little bit more of the big picture in my head. Like, okay, if I'm giving this guy five takes, don't do all this bullshit that he's going to have to go through and need to get rid of.

When we first started doing [royalty-free music] for YouTube, I was doing a lot of stuff at home with programmed drums, a lot of electronic drums. Building a beat at home and coming in here using two or three mics and adding live drums and a live energy to it. But then you still have the electronic kick and snare to punch through. So it's, How do I play to that? What drums do I use? How do I mike a drum and get it to a point that I know how to mix it?

MD: The world of royalty-free music is a relatively new phenomenon. People might assume it's one person doing all the tracks on a laptop or something, that there'd be no need for a drummer. How did you wind up in that world?

Gunnar: YouTube wanted to build a royalty-free



Drums: C&C Gladstone Maple in Fiesta Red finish

- A.** 5x14 Acrylic red concert tom
- B.** 6.5x14 Black Chrome Over Brass snare
- C.** 9x13 tom
- D.** 16x16 floor tom
- E.** 16x 22 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1.** 15" Avedis hi-hats
- 2.** 18" K Constantinople crash
- 3.** 12" Remix prototype hi-hats
- 4.** 22" K Custom Dark ride
- 5.** 14" Trashformer/16" A Custom EFX stack

Accessories: Big Fat Snare Drum HALO ring, Index Drums shakers

Sticks: Vater Power 5B acorn-tip

Hardware: Yamaha bass drum pedal, DW stands

Heads: Remo, including Powerstroke P77 Colortone red concert tom batter, Controlled Sound Reverse Dot Coated snare batter, Emperor Coated tom batters and Ambassador Clear resonants, and Powerstroke P3 bass drum batter

Electronics: Yamaha EAD10 stereo mic on kick hoop that feeds into pedal board; Big Ear Chaka and Woodcutter effects pedals; Electro-Harmonix 45000 Looper pedal, Freeze Sound Retainer pedal, and Memory Man digital delay with Hazaarai; Line 6 DL4 Delay Modeler pedal



Gunnar Olsen

audio library of music, so they reached out to some musician friends. I accidentally stumbled into playing live drums on about 250 songs in six months for YouTube. And those songs have been downloaded 20 million times and are in 50 million videos. If I played with Beyoncé, I'd have similar numbers. This is in the last five years. Seven years ago, the literal thing that we're talking about didn't even exist.

There's a whole web of people I've worked with doing this stuff. Credit to the

people working the music systems for YouTube and Facebook; they want it to be real music. A lot of the royalty-free music has a certain sound. Our goal was, Just because it's free and it's background music, it doesn't mean it has to sound lame.

MD: You have to work pretty quickly to cut drums for 250 original songs in six months. What's your process?

Gunnar: Our goal was to do as few takes as possible so we could move on to the next song. That was good for me because

I was always like, Oh, we'll do two or three takes and then comp the best stuff. There's no time for that. We were trying to bang out ten songs in a day. So I got good at not doing stuff I didn't 100 percent believe in. Keep it simple. When the chorus comes, go to the ride cymbal. That sort of thing.

MD: It seems like an assembly-line approach. Did you find you were still growing as a player, learning new things?

Gunnar: It's good for your chops. Facebook asks for ten songs in the vein of the Strokes, or you're trying to make ten songs that sound like Vampire Weekend, though not necessarily sound-alikes. But it's really fun to get into the headspace of, What are the drum sounds on this? What are the guitar, bass, and drums doing that if you hear it, you're reminded of a band? Or learning how to make a dubstep song. I've really enjoyed it because I've learned a lot as a music maker.

Backing Up the Boss

Early one morning in 2014, Gunnar Olsen received a vague text asking if he was available for a session that day. Several hours later, he found himself in Bruce Springsteen's home studio in New Jersey, working on songs that would eventually see the light of day five years later on the *Western Stars* album. Olsen ultimately wound up on six songs, and appeared in the videos for the title track and "Tucson Train," and in the *Western Stars* concert film, all shot at Springsteen's home. (The film debuted in theaters this past October 25, and the live music from the concert film came out the same day.) He told us about the experience of working on the record.

"My friend Ross Peterson had been engineering. It's a very secretive world. I knew he was working on something with Bruce, but I had no idea he was working on a record. Bruce was on tour at the time. He was recording a lot of ideas with guitar and vocals, and he would go back on tour. I think [producer] Ron Aniello was taking those songs and building up stuff, with drum loops Ross had made out of snare and hi-hats. And I think Ross said, 'Why don't we get my buddy Gunnar in here to play some real drum ideas? Best case scenario, we keep them. If not, it sounds better than us hacking away at a snare drum.'

"I get to Bruce's place, and they play me a song once or twice—I'm not quite sure what song it was. It's very surreal. I'm hearing Bruce's voice [in the headphones]. Now I'm

continued on page 58

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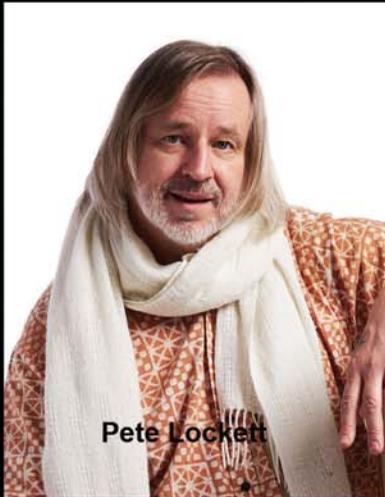
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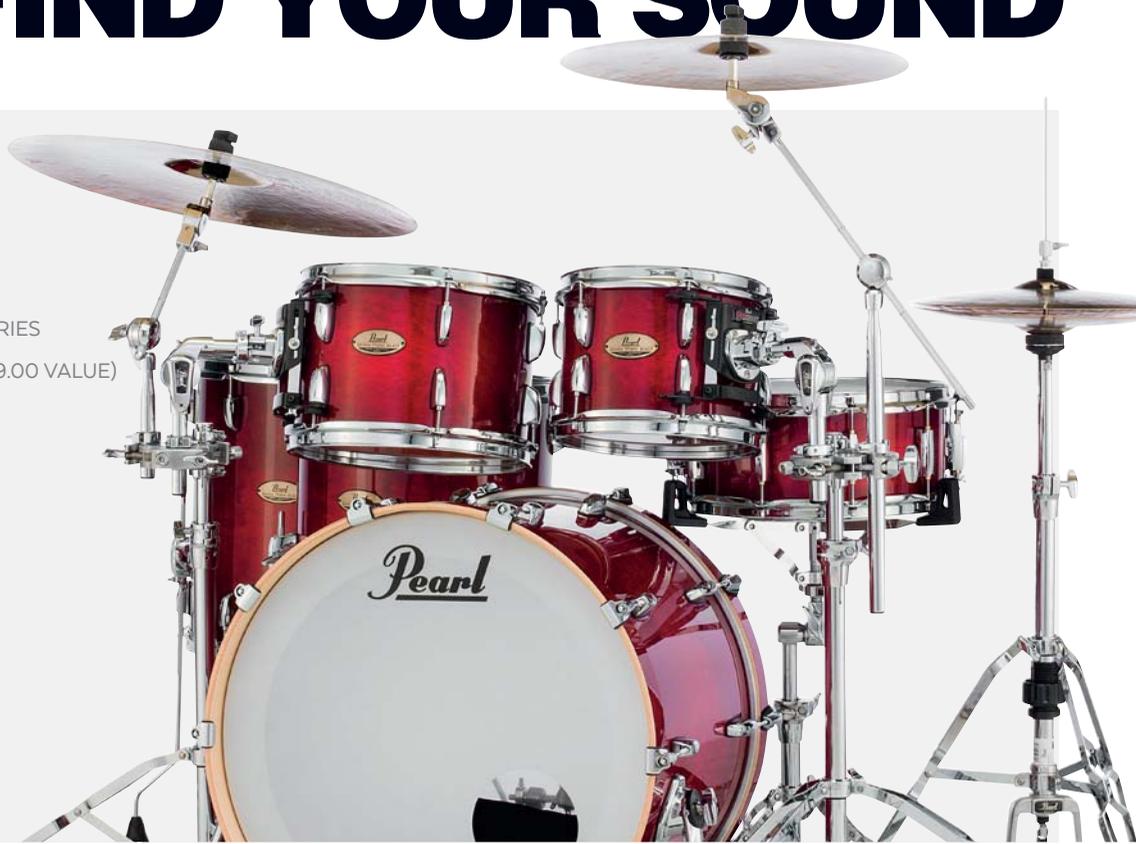
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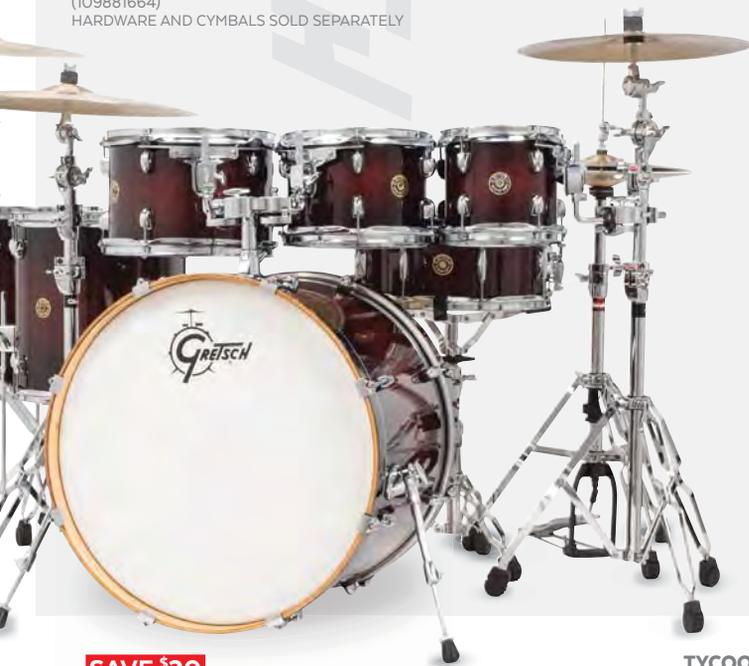
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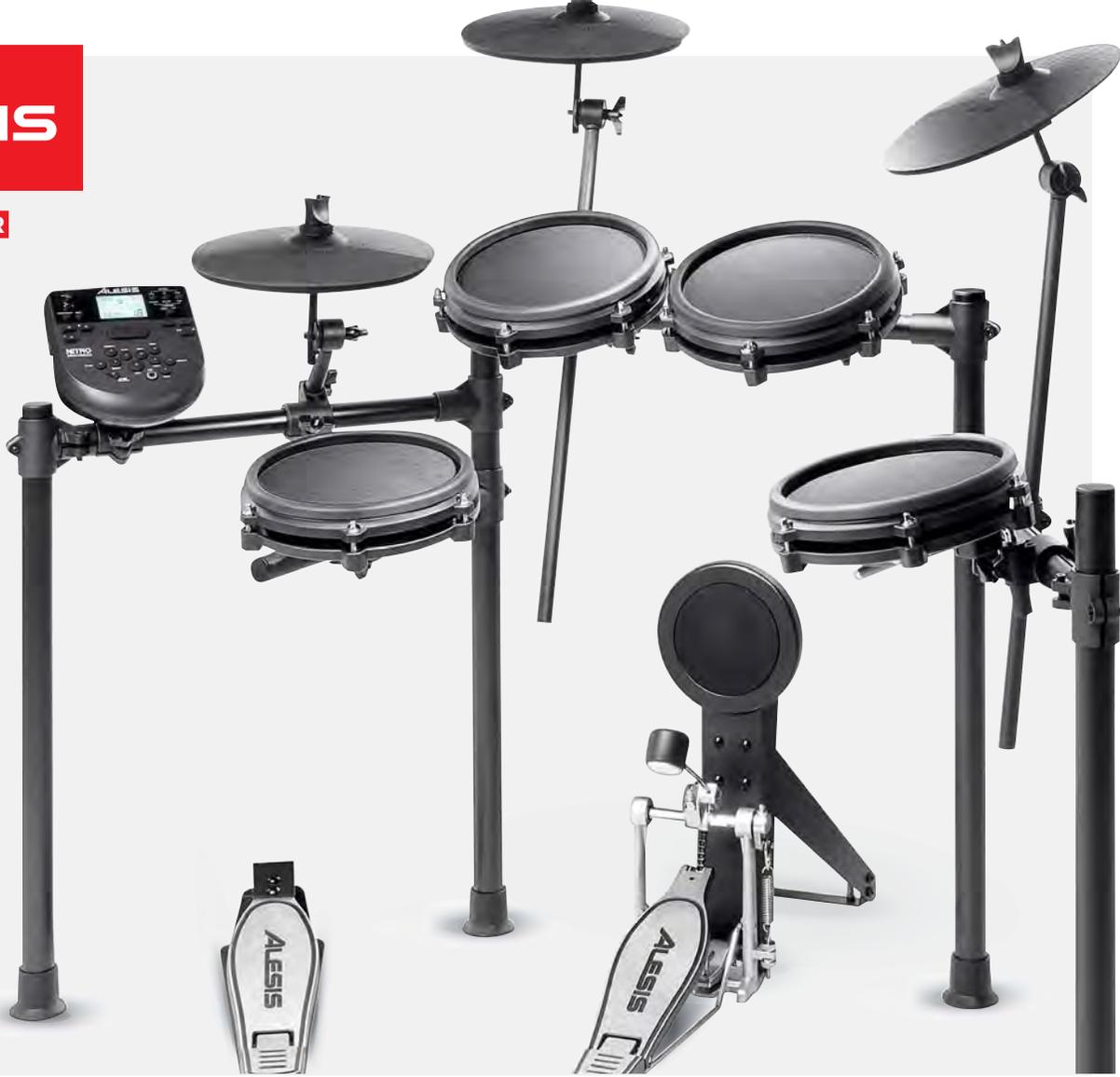


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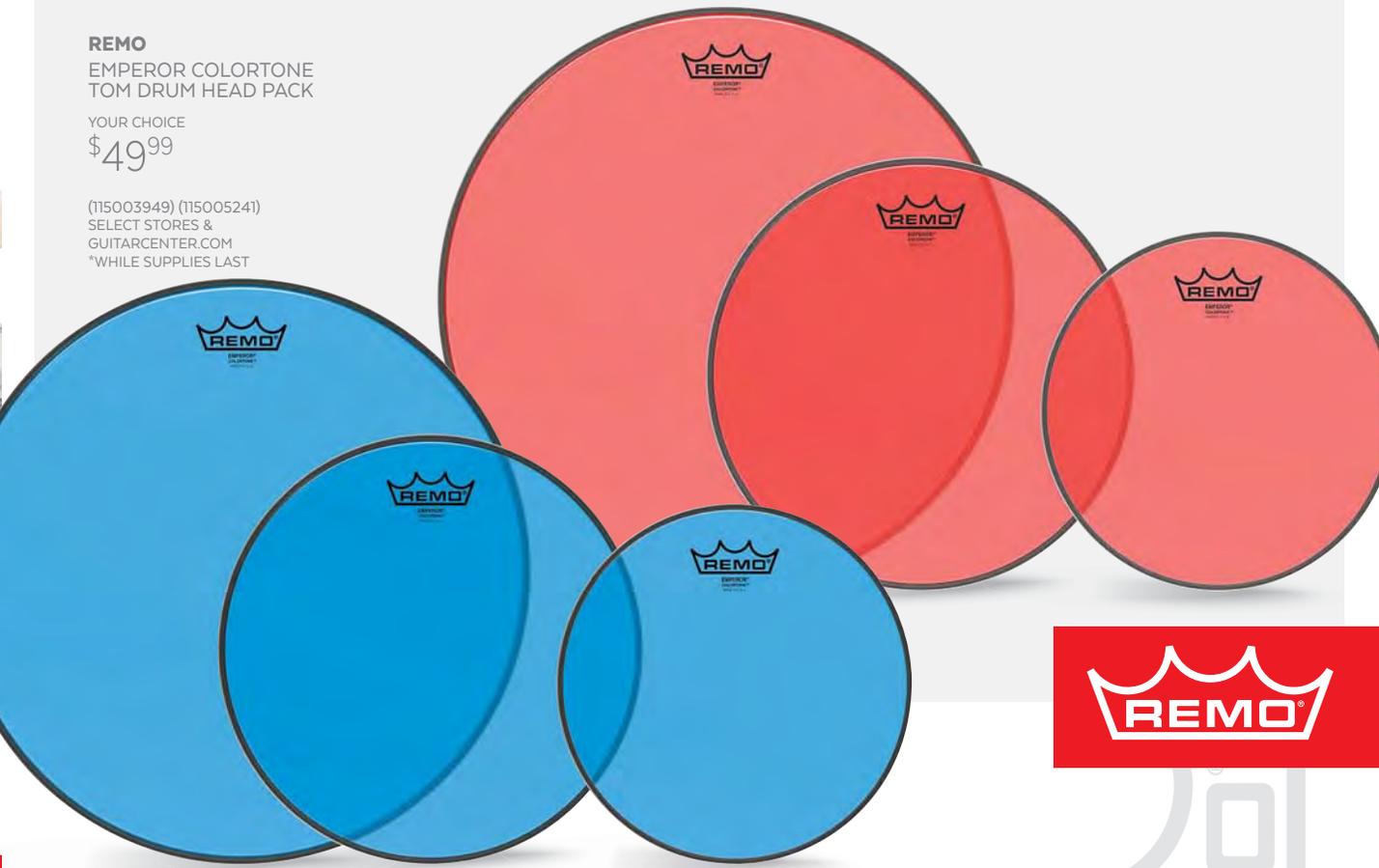
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Gunnar Olsen

tracking to his voice. I do a take, and I go in. I'm going to listen. And then I hear this murmuring: 'He's here.' Bruce walks in the room, and now I'm in this weird position of sitting in the back of the control room and he's going to listen to some songs.

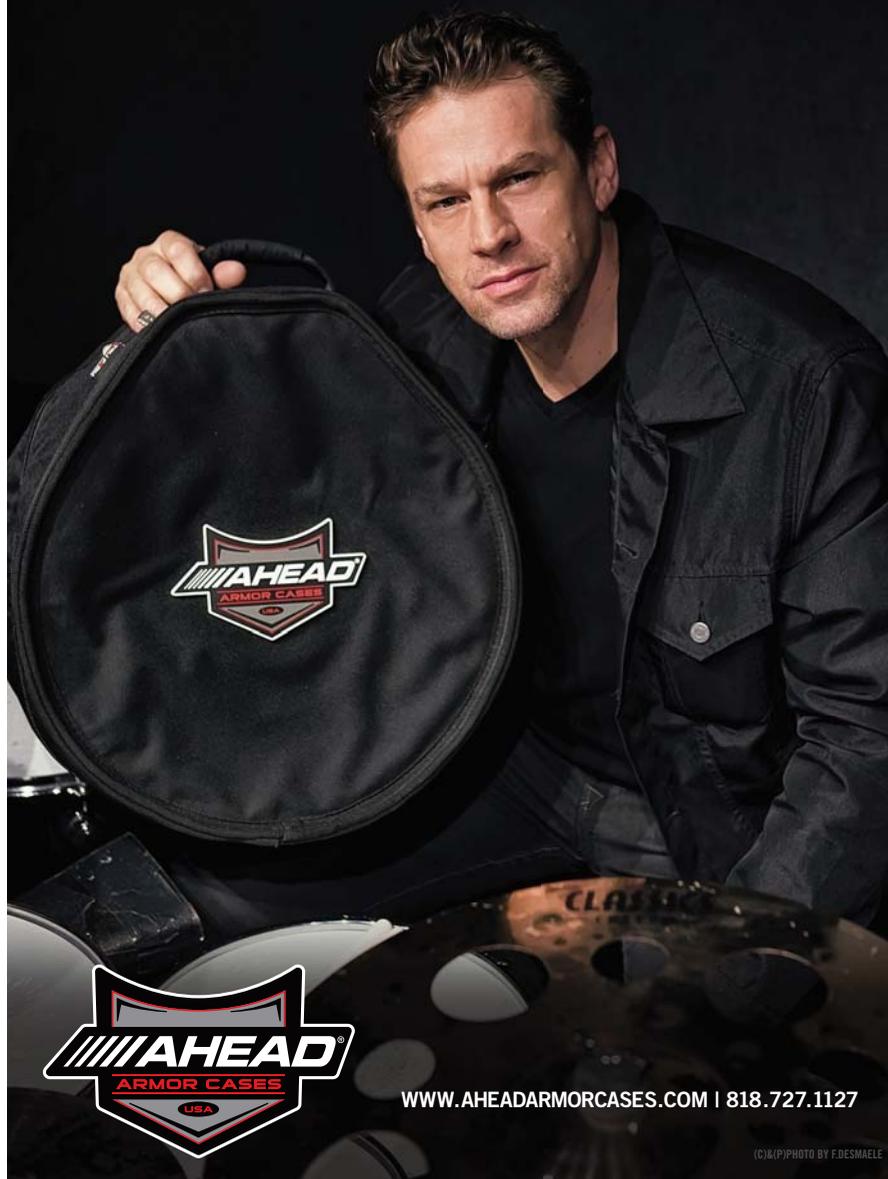
"First was a song on the record called 'Sleepy Joe's Café.' They bring up a version with Matt Chamberlain. We listen to this song, and I'm feeling so weird. It sounds great; it sounds like Matt. But I don't feel like I should be here. So they finish, and they

pull up a version with Steve Jordan. Apparently Bruce had never heard these songs past very early demos. And now he's hearing a full, mixed version with two completely different drum options. Obviously they're two different players. Steve was doing kind of a Latin groove. They finish and, I'll never forget it, Bruce looks over at me and says, 'You wanna give it a shot?' And it had nothing to do with what those guys were doing. He wanted



Gunnar's kit onstage during the *Western Stars* live performances.

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another option.

"I think in the back of my mind I was like, 'You should probably be learning this song.' I never make charts or notes, I have to make a mental road map. So in my mind, I was just going to give them the Max [Weinberg] version. Really just up the middle. As we're listening back I'm watching him. His eyes were closed. I remember it got to the chorus and he kind of did like an air fill. It was telling me he wants a setup there, without him saying, 'Hey, can you set up the chorus?' So I probably did a couple more takes with that in mind. I think we did three songs that day. He hung the whole time.

"There's another song on the album called 'Drive Fast (The Stuntman)'. That song is one take. That day it was me, Bruce, and some other players. I feel like Bruce showed up out of nowhere that day. He had a new song and taught us the song. It's like anything: you sit around, he's got an acoustic guitar, and he wants to play twenty seconds of it in four or five different keys to see what sounds good with his voice. We decide on a key, and now we're going to do the take. And because he was going so quickly, the other musicians were making charts really quickly and trying to do mental transposing. So we go to do the take, and it just wasn't super tight. No discredit to the amazing musicians. So he just says, 'Gunnar, let's do it, you and me. We'll lay down the foundation, then we can build stuff on top of it.' We do the take. He's playing acoustic and singing. Next thing I know, David Sancious is adding some organ.

"He's a very loyal person. Pretty much everyone who did the videos had played on the record. All the extras in the videos are just these locals that know him. He's not interested in session people. He's interested in players. I'd like to think that's what he saw in me."

To catch a behind-the-scenes look at Gunnar Olsen's creative process in the studio, go to moderndrummer.com.



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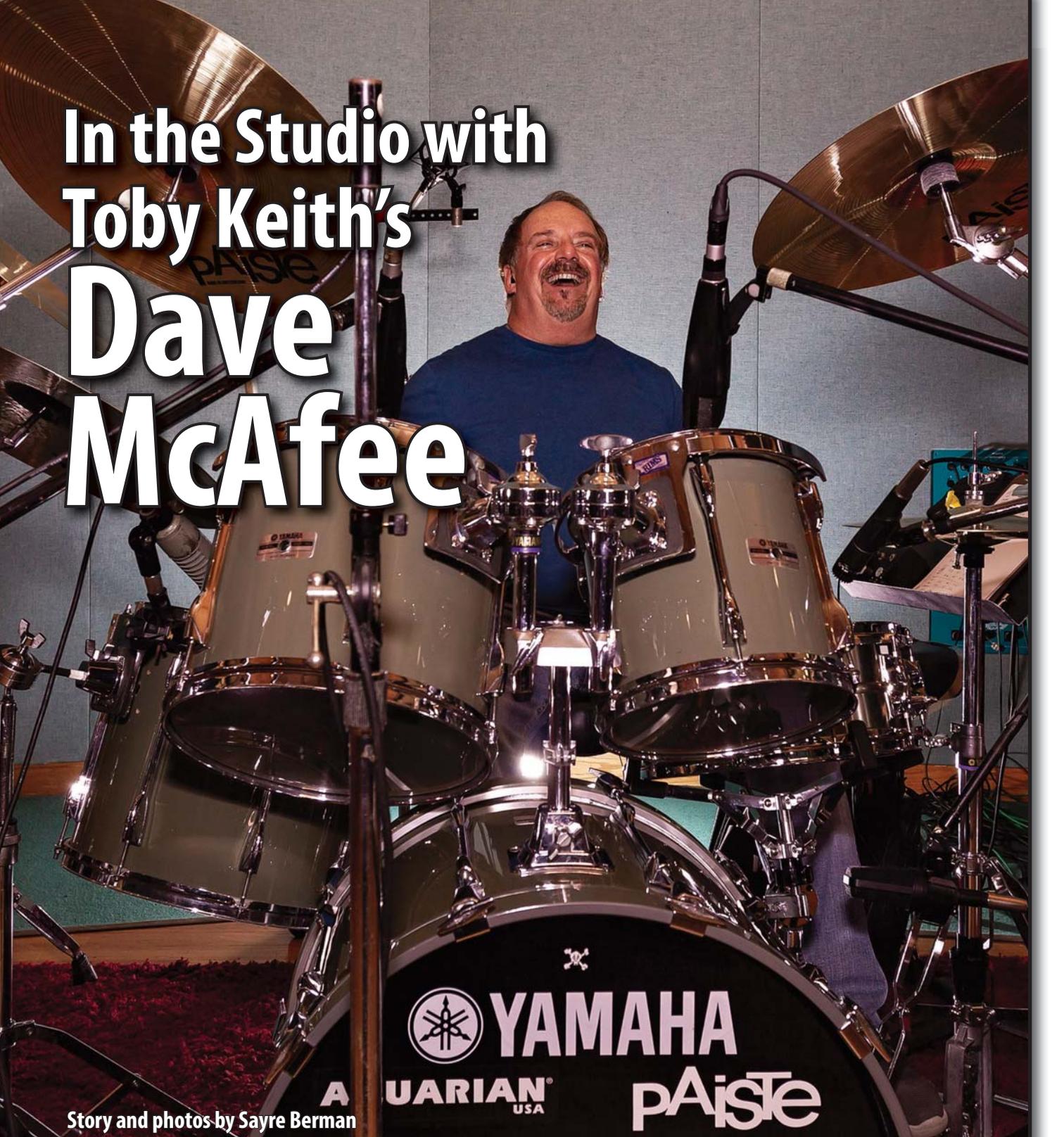


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In the Studio with Toby Keith's Dave McAfee

Story and photos by Sayre Berman

Dave McAfee has been on the road with country superstar Toby Keith for almost twenty years. Between arena tour stops, visiting the troops overseas, and one-off gigs at festivals and award shows, Dave and the band have been just about everywhere in the world. So what does such a perennial road warrior do when he's home? Well, he starts his own production company, of course.

Dave McAfee Productions was founded in early 2000. "I had enough work to call it a business by 2006," McAfee says. "In 2007, my accountant advised me to incorporate, and it's been a viable business ever since then."

Thanks to technological advances, almost every drummer in Nashville has a home studio where they can overdub tracks remotely for clients around the globe. But McAfee takes a different approach. "I never had a working home studio," he says. "It's not that I have anything against them, but I love the collaborative, in-person process more. I'm hooked on the flow of ideas that you get when everyone is in the room together."

McAfee raises another important issue when it comes to deciding whether to tackle setting up a home recording setup versus working in established professional studios. "I'm not interested in being the

super-tech guy," he explains. "If I get my stuff set up and it works, that's great. But when it doesn't work, it's an interruption that can become costly to the client and to my reputation. A pro engineer will generally fix whatever problem arises in the time it takes me to walk to the break room and pour a cup of coffee. We're up and running again in no time, and everyone is creating again." With all this in mind, McAfee opted to run his business out of Sound Kitchen in Franklin, Tennessee, just south of Nashville. "I've been working with [the engineers here] since 2006."

When he's on the road with Toby Keith, McAfee has the dual responsibilities of being the drummer and bandleader. This translates well when he's back in Nashville producing records. "Sometimes your job is to put a band together and do a showcase for somebody that's trying to get a record deal," he says. "That might not involve any studio time at all. The bottom line is money. I like to find out what the client's budget is so we can get the most bang for their bucks. Being a producer is also about figuring out the best musicians to hire for the genre and vibe. I don't want to turn a client's idea into my idea, and then tell them they have to like it. I want to be able to make them smile."

As McAfee's client list expanded, managing budgets was a skill that needed to be honed. "I didn't know how to speak to the client's money managers when I first started doing this," he says. "I'd be working with a client, they'd ask for something, I'd agree, and they'd tell me that their company would send a check. But when I'd send an invoice, they'd often respond back with, 'Wait a minute; this isn't how we do things. Who are you?' So I've learned how to speak to accountants. And my wife taught me how to use Excel. She built a spreadsheet template, so now I just plug in the numbers and send it over to the accountants. If you put together a good session budget and manage the time effectively, you can pay everyone immediately. The check comes in advance, everybody gets paid immediately after the session, and we move on."

"The wonderful thing about Nashville," McAfee continues, "is that I can pick up the phone and get a hold of the musicians that I love making music with. You get them in a room and simply say, 'Here's the song.' These guys will bring all their instincts and experience with them, and most of that will come out during the first take. If



you get too involved, you'll kill the magic."

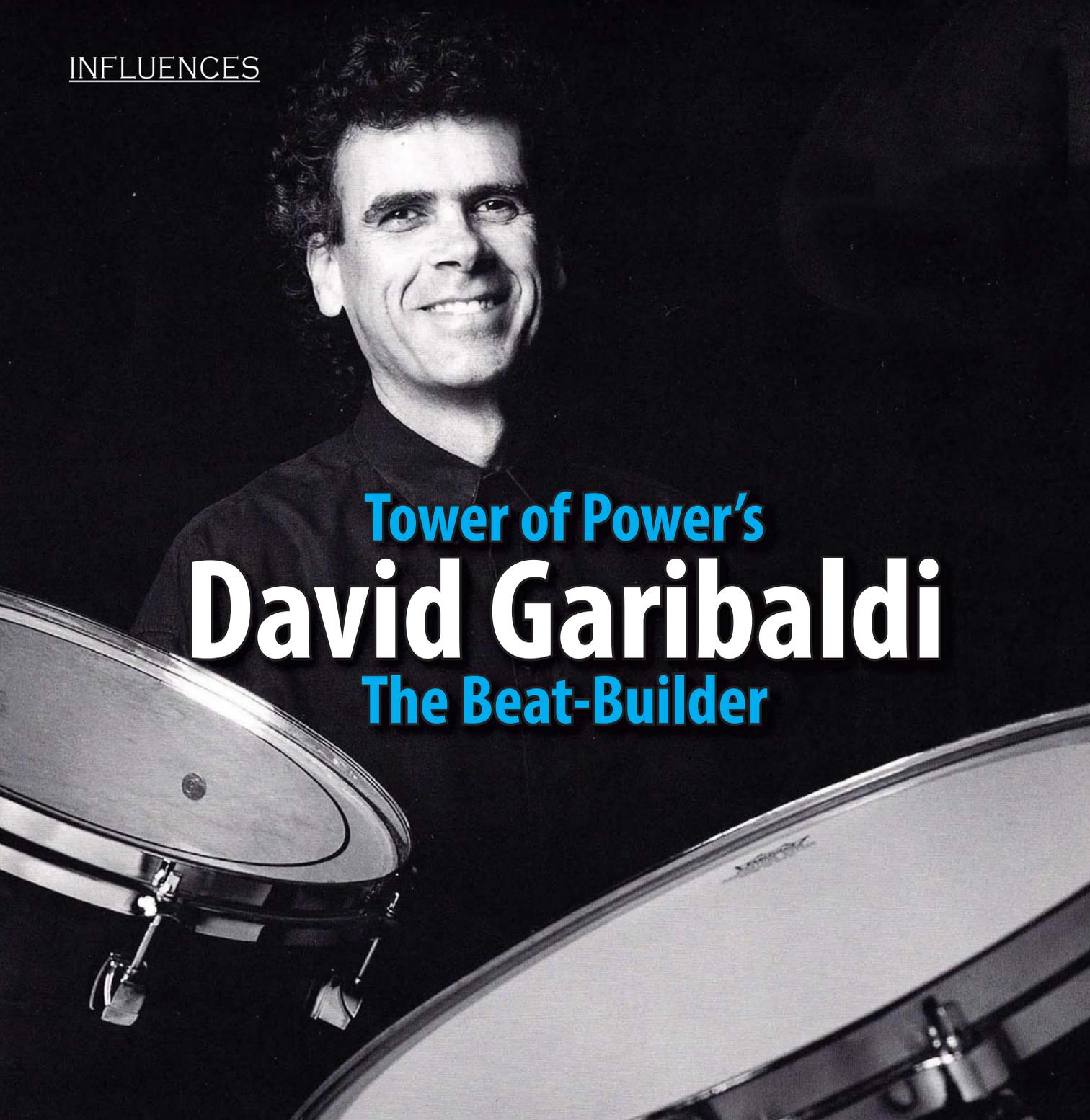
Knowing which musicians to choose for a particular album or track is a talent unto itself. "I love the process," says McAfee. "You always take something home from a session when these guys are left to be imaginative. It's a free exchange of ideas. When you bring a song into a band, you're blessed if you have a trusting group of people, where a musician might encourage a different set of chords during a section. Typically session guys are happy to improve on a song, and they're happy to be an integral part in the process. That's one of the aspects that makes Nashville so special."

McAfee's recent production credits include the last two Wade Hayes records and a new band called the Skallywags. "Jesse Poe and I worked on these projects, and we're super proud of them," says Dave. "The Skallywags is a young group in Nashville. They're a killer band with killer vocals, and they're gaining momentum. We did some demos with them, and then they came back to talk about doing a record. They wanted to play on it, but they knew they weren't session musicians. I suggested using a couple of session players. I also suggested that we build in some extra hours, because if you're not a session player, it might take you longer to get your parts right. I explained that if they did their homework and came to the studio prepared, we wouldn't need those extra hours. That's exactly what they did, and it was one of the most organized sessions I've ever been on. It was fun to give them some money back at the end of that project."

Dave's Preferred Studio Gear

- Drumset: 1980s Yamaha Recording Custom
- Snares: Yamaha Recording Custom 6.5x13 brass and 5x14 steel, 5x14 Absolute Hybrid Maple, 5x14 Birch Custom Absolute Nouveau, 6.5x14 Paul Leim signature chrome-over-brass, and 3.5x14 brass piccolo





Tower of Power's David Garibaldi The Beat-Builder

by Jeff Potter

A security officer wasn't doing their job. As it turns out, that was lucky for drumming history. "Nobody stopped us," David Garibaldi recalls. "There was nobody there. We walked right up to the front of the stage and watched the band rehearsing."

It was 1965 at the San Jose Civic Auditorium. The eighteen-year-old drummer and some friends had come to see a James Brown concert and chanced upon an unexpected treat: basking in the presence of the band heard on the classic *Live at the Apollo* album. "It was unbelievable," Garibaldi says, "a big moment. I realized, *Wow—I want to do this!* I was really connected to the vibe, the *beats*."

Within five years, the teen would be making his own indelible

impact as a member of the famed brass-fueled funk-rock unit Tower of Power, where he would become one of the most influential drummers of the past five decades.

Born in Oakland on November 4, 1946, John David Garibaldi gigged with a local big band as well as R&B and rock acts since his mid teens. After serving in the 724th Air Force Band, he returned home in 1969 to a wildly exploding Bay Area music scene.

"It was a very fertile, creative scene," Garibaldi recalls, "and you couldn't help but do your own thing. The wide variety of music and bands fostered a more individualized approach to playing. It was common to have big band influences but also to be influenced by

rock, funk, and Latin players. That was me: I enjoyed anything that was rhythmic. My quest throughout my playing life has been to make one drummer out of all the music I liked."

Garibaldi hung out and shared ideas with fellow Bay Area funk innovators such as Mike Clark, Greg Errico, and Gaylord Birch. When Emilio Castillo, the saxophonist/leader of Tower of Power, sat in at a club where Garibaldi was subbing, he promptly recruited the groover to be TOP's new drummer, kicking off with their debut disc, 1970's *East Bay Grease*. "Emilio encouraged me to experiment, and I was never told what to play," Garibaldi insists. TOP became the drummer's ideal laboratory for creating his catalog of progressive grooves. Indeed, Mike Clark once called him a beat-making "mad scientist."

Garibaldi's funk concepts and symbiotic beat-building with bassist Francis Rocco Prestia became central to TOP's sound, feel, compositions, and arrangements. His detailed patterns were thoroughly part-oriented and song-specific. Even fills were often precomposed to fit a composition's character.

The innovator plumbed influences from previous funk pioneers including Zigaboo Modeliste, Bernard Purdie, and, most notably, the great James Brown drummers, especially Jabo Starks and Clyde Stubblefield. "Clyde's playing on 'I Got the Feelin' was like some drumming from the future," says David. "And it *still* is!"

Building upon the JB legacy, the Tower helmsman expanded the vocabulary of beat-displacement groove patterns, serving up ultra-syncopated 16th-note beats peppered with shifting accented

notes placed far beyond the typical 2 and 4, all threaded seamlessly with ghost notes. He applied the patterns in a "linear" concept, emphasizing contiguous snare, hi-hat, and bass drum notes distributed largely within their own spaces as opposed to being "stacked." The effect was a less thick yet powerful percolation of exceptional clarity, executed with a laser-sharp staccato accuracy.

And while many previous soul drummers favored a "behind the beat" snare, Garibaldi urged the groove with an "on top" yet swinging placement, lending the continuum an irresistible forward momentum in tandem with Prestia's crisp, pumping bass lines.

Another crucial keystone of the Garibaldi groove was his stunning dynamic control, which navigated the hills and valleys between accents and ghost notes—as well as drumset voices—that made his sound and groove so personal and electrifying.

Garibaldi also cites as an inspiration the driving energy of Sonny Payne's work with Count Basie. As a large, horn-fronted band, TOP provided an ideal forum for Garibaldi to synthesize his influences. While other linear drumming stylists were primarily locking their patterns to a rhythm section, Garibaldi did this and more. Channeling big band drummers, he also outlined ensemble parts in his patterns, mirroring everything from guitar comps to the stabbing brass lines and funky baritone pickups.

The funkster's explorative pattern permutations exuded a dizzying sense of endless possibilities. Most importantly, the complex grooves ultimately served to make a body move. Some fans came to marvel at the musicianship while others came to

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Classic Tower Beats

by David Garibaldi

Here are some of my favorite grooves from the Tower of Power recordings that I played on. I enjoyed making those records very much, and the selection of what to write here was easy. Over the course of many performances, my patterns evolved to the point where the live versions were somewhat different from the recorded ones. These are, to my best recollection, the original parts I played. (By the

way, my personal favorite is the vamp out on "Man From the Past.")

During the early years with Tower I used a layered coordination concept that is more dense sonically than the linear style. As my playing has grown over the years I have become quite a bit more linear in my coordination concept. I have found that combining the two coordination styles is very useful in building grooves.

"Drop It in the Slot" (bridge section), *Drop It in the Slot*.

Musical notation for the bridge section of "Drop It in the Slot". It features a 4/4 time signature with a complex, syncopated pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The notation includes dynamic markings (>) and articulation marks (x).

"Soul Vaccination" (intro), *Tower of Power*.

Musical notation for the intro of "Soul Vaccination". It shows a 4/4 time signature with a syncopated eighth-note pattern. The notation includes dynamic markings (>) and articulation marks (x).

"Soul Vaccination" (instrumental bridge before second intro)

Musical notation for the instrumental bridge of "Soul Vaccination". It features a 4/4 time signature with a syncopated eighth-note pattern. The notation includes dynamic markings (>) and articulation marks (x).

"Soul Vaccination" (main groove)

Musical notation for the main groove of "Soul Vaccination". It shows a 4/4 time signature with a syncopated eighth-note pattern. The notation includes dynamic markings (>) and articulation marks (x).

"Man From the Past" (vamp out), *Back to Oakland*.

Musical notation for the vamp out of "Man From the Past". It features a 4/4 time signature with a syncopated eighth-note pattern. The notation includes dynamic markings (>) and articulation marks (x).

Musical notation for the vamp out of "Man From the Past". It features a 4/4 time signature with a syncopated eighth-note pattern. The notation includes dynamic markings (>) and articulation marks (x).

Musical notation for the vamp out of "Man From the Past". It features a 4/4 time signature with a syncopated eighth-note pattern. The notation includes dynamic markings (>) and articulation marks (x).

Musical notation for the bridge section of "Drop It in the Slot". It features a 4/4 time signature with a complex, syncopated pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The notation includes dynamic markings (>) and articulation marks (x).

Musical notation for the intro of "Soul Vaccination". It shows a 4/4 time signature with a syncopated eighth-note pattern. The notation includes dynamic markings (>) and articulation marks (x).

"The Oakland Stroke," *Back to Oakland*. (The first bass drum note within parentheses indicates that this note is played the first time only and omitted when the pattern is repeated.)

Musical notation for "The Oakland Stroke". It features a 4/4 time signature with a syncopated eighth-note pattern. The notation includes dynamic markings (>) and articulation marks (x).

Musical notation for "The Oakland Stroke". It features a 4/4 time signature with a syncopated eighth-note pattern. The notation includes dynamic markings (>) and articulation marks (x).

"On the Serious Side" (main groove), *Drop It in the Slot*.

Musical notation for the main groove of "On the Serious Side". It shows a 4/4 time signature with a syncopated eighth-note pattern. The notation includes dynamic markings (>) and articulation marks (x).

Musical notation for the main groove of "On the Serious Side". It shows a 4/4 time signature with a syncopated eighth-note pattern. The notation includes dynamic markings (>) and articulation marks (x).

"Vuela Per Noche" (main groove), *Drop It in the Slot*.

Musical notation for the main groove of "Vuela Per Noche". It features a 4/4 time signature with a syncopated eighth-note pattern. The notation includes dynamic markings (>) and articulation marks (x).

Musical notation for the main groove of "Vuela Per Noche". It features a 4/4 time signature with a syncopated eighth-note pattern. The notation includes dynamic markings (>) and articulation marks (x).

dance. TOP remained one of the rare bands that managed to crack the charts while simultaneously creating buzz with rock, soul, and jazz musicians alike.

Praising the innovator in his February 2016 *MD* cover story, Adam Deitch noted, "His ghost-note concept, the three levels of snare drum height [volume]—tiny accents, mid-accents, and rimshots—his incorporation of paradiddles and paradiddle combinations with grooves and moving the snare drum accents around...Garibaldi is a genius with that stuff"

In TOP's first defining decade, Garibaldi's distinct groove identity began crystalizing with their sophomore release, *Bump City* (1972), then solidified with *Tower of Power* (1973), and found a pinnacle in the essential-for-drummers classic, *Back to Oakland* (1974), followed by the equally ambitious *In the Slot* (1975).

Among the many enlightening columns Garibaldi contributed to *MD* was "Classic Tower Beats" (February, 1991), featuring transcriptions of iconic grooves he cites as favorites from his early canon, including "The Oakland Stroke," "Soul Vaccination," "Vuelo per Noche," "On the Serious Side," and "Man from the Past." Certainly other titles belong in this list, including "Down to the Nightclub," the jazz-tinged instrumental "Squib Cakes," which included his ultra-classic killer intro, and TOP's hit signature song, the Garibaldi co-write "What Is Hip?" And a testament to his ability to drive soloists, improvise, and kick a band to ecstatic heights can be heard on the sweat-drenched 23-minute live version of "Knock Yourself Out" from *Live and in Living Color* (1976).

Although the 16th-note funk groove was Garibaldi's signature ticket to fame, he was equally commanding on a wide variety of grooves. He also played in a more minimal style when appropriate, as heard on charting singles such as the R&B ballad "You're Still a Young Man" and the solid backbeat-driven "So Very Hard to Go."

In 1977, Garibaldi took a brief leave from TOP to pursue studio work in Los Angeles, and in 1980 he took what he thought would be his final departure. In the hiatus years, he performed and/or recorded with notables such as Patti Austin, Natalie Cole, Boz Scaggs, Gino Vannelli, and Roy Buchanan, and was a member of the fusion group Wishful Thinking.

The restless artist eventually became disenchanted with the L.A. scene, however, feeling it favored stylistic trend-acclimation over individualism. A year or so after returning to Oakland in 1989, he formed the percussion super-trio Talking Drums with Michael Spiro and Jesús Diaz. The intermittently ongoing unit allowed the kit master to experiment with melding funk and Afro-Caribbean rhythms. And in 1996 and 1997, he collaborated with other percussion masters as a member of Mickey Hart's Planet Drum.

As if fated, the drummer casually dropped by to reconnect with TOP at a 1998 Fillmore West show. The band's current drummer would soon be leaving, and Garibaldi was quickly enlisted to cover what he thought would be a brief Japan tour. He never left, though, and TOP's tireless touring continues today. As he told *MD*, "After a few shows, we all realized that I belonged here—I feel like I'm at home."

Returning in top form, Garibaldi created more dazzling TOP grooves with *Oakland Zone* (2003) and *Soul Side of Town* (2018), a release celebrating the band's fiftieth anniversary. This year is Garibaldi's own fiftieth celebration since joining his famed band. And for these past five decades, drummers have continued to reverently study this master's legacy and credit his influence on their own musical lives.

David Garibaldi plays Yamaha drums and Sabian cymbals. He uses Remo heads and Vic Firth sticks.



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The Ancient European Rudimental Codex

Part 2: The Coup de Charge

by Claus Hessler

Welcome to my second column on the Rudimental Codex, which is an alternative collection of rudiments that focuses on the ancient European legacy of rudimental drumming. In this lesson we'll continue with some flam variations that aren't necessarily part of our standard drumming vocabulary.

The word "flam" itself could be considered an onomatopoeia, in that its pronunciation imitates the sound of two notes almost played in unison. In French rudimental drumming, you find the expression "fla" serving the same purpose. There's also reason to believe that the early history of drumming includes an interpretation of flams in which both hands have struck the drum at the very same time—however, that's subject to speculation. Joe Morello used to sometimes refer to "flat flams" when discussing two notes played in unison.

Here are some flammed figures from the Rudimental Codex that might make your head turn. Let's start with the Coup de Charge phrase.

The Coup de Charge appears in the Rudimental Codex in both Swiss and French variations. In the Swiss interpretation, the grace note and the main note are both accented. It's been said that this figure's name originates from the pattern that had been used on the battlefield as Swiss mercenaries attacked an enemy. In the Codex, we wrote out the two notes of the flam instead of utilizing its typical notation, as demonstrated in Exercise 1.



There's also a flammed version of the Swiss Coup de Charge with an additional grace note before the accented grace note. This may sound strange, although it's widely used in Basel drumming.



In the French interpretation of this rudiment, the grace note is accented before the beat while the main note is played softly on the beat. This phrase, although short in structure, appears to be difficult in two ways. First, the accented grace note can tend to fall on the beat as opposed to on its proper spot before the beat. Second, the distance between the grace note and main note is often too wide. When practicing, watch out for those two potential challenges.



In order to help you form a foundation to practice flams, the following exercises employ different ways to incorporate the rudiment into your playing.

Exercise 4 demonstrates the basic sticking that serves as a platform for all the following examples. You may want to use Exercise 4 as a base by alternating between it and the rest of the patterns. Simply play this phrase with soft, low strokes, and spend some time with the structure to get the sticking right.



Exercise 5 demonstrates the sticking with standard, unaccented flams. The articulation used to notate each flam here is taken from the Swiss method of indicating the rudiment, and it utilizes a little line inside the notehead to represent an extra grace note.



Exercise 6 follows the same basic sticking. However, now the flams are accented. Make sure there's a significant difference between Exercises 5 and 6.

6

Exercise 7 can be challenging. Here we'll practice the French interpretation of executing the Coup de Charge by accenting the grace note but not the main note on the beat. When switching back and forth between Exercises 4 and 7, be sure that the basic pattern of soft, low strokes remains consistent.

7

Exercise 8 features the Swiss Coup de Charge with accents on both the grace note and main note. Make sure this figure sounds different from Exercise 6, and focus on the dynamic difference of the execution of the grace note.

8

Exercise 9 again features the flammed Swiss Coup de Charge. Many French or Swiss rudimental sources employ the notation demonstrated here.

9

When practicing these exercises—and especially when you get to Exercise 9—make sure you take it slow enough to maintain control. Tap your foot on quarter notes, use a mirror to check your technique, record yourself, and use a metronome starting at a tempo around 40 bpm.

To give you an idea of how these unusual flam figures are embedded in real-world Swiss or French rudimental drumming, I included some short, standard two-bar phrases. You may notice that they also feature the Final of Seven rudiment that we explored in part 1 of this series. Exercise 10 features the French Coup de Charge in a typical "Rigodon" (or five-stroke-roll) context.

10

Exercise 11 demonstrates a possible use of the Swiss Coup de Charge with accents on both the grace note and main note.

11

Exercise 12 includes both the Swiss Coup de Charge and the flammed Swiss Coup de Charge.

12

A free download of the complete Rudimental Codex poster is available at percussion-creativ.de and at moderndrummer.com. Enjoy!



Claus Hessler is an author, educator, and international clinician. He endorses Mapex, Sabian, Promark, Evans, Ahead, Gon Bops, and Drummer Shoe products. For more information, visit claushessler.com.



Metric Modulation Magic

Creative Variations to Warp the Pulse

by Mike Alfieri

This month we'll take a look at playing triplets in groupings of four. This is a clever way to employ a metric modulation and imply a different pulse in any groove you play. In a measure of 4/4, when twelve 8th-note-triplet partials are played in groups of four instead of three, a half-note triplet is naturally emphasized. This creates the feeling that the tempo suddenly slows down. Thinking about polyrhythms and metric modulation can seem like an intimidating algebraic problem, but these techniques are naturally present in many common grooves and are fun to play.

We can think about this concept simply by applying a paradiddle sticking to triplets. Practice this first on the snare while the hi-hat foot maintains the original quarter-note beat. The paradiddles and bass drum outline the new half-note-triplet pulse.

1

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

Next shift the rhythmic placement of the half-note triplet. The goal is to develop this skill so it becomes intuitive, allowing these ideas to manifest fluidly and naturally as you improvise. Move the bass drum to line up with the second, third, and then fourth stroke of each paradiddle. Shift the accents in the hands to coincide with the bass drum as well. Practicing the next three permutations opens new possibilities of time-warping devices, because the weight of the bass drum's sound anchors the new implied time. Notice how drastic each change feels, and be aware that the ear naturally hears the bass drum as a strong downbeat. Controlling this tendency works as a deceptive tool to create drama and tension in your music.

2

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

3

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

4

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

By moving the right hand to either the hi-hat or the ride cymbal, we get a groove that metrically modulates. After you're comfortable with the facility developed in Exercises 2–4, omit and/or add the bass drum as you like to color the groove.

5

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

Infinite groove possibilities are available by omitting, adding, or shifting the different ornaments, just as we've done with accents and the bass drum. Try inverting the paradiddle sticking or thinking of different paradiddle rudiments, such as flammed mills or drag paradiddles, to keep busy with even more variations. Exercise 6 demonstrates an example that utilizes flam paradiddles.

6

1 R L R R r L R L L I R L R R r L R L L I R L R R r L R L L



Mike Alfieri has a bachelor's degree in music education from the Crane School of Music and a master's degree in jazz studies from SUNY Purchase. For more information, visit mikealfieri.net.



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Rhythmic Problem Solving

A Systematic Approach to Odd Subdivisions

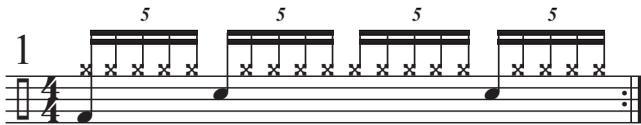
by Aaron Edgar



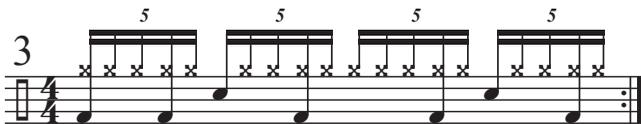
Gary Chester's classic book, *The New Breed*, contains thirty-nine "systems," which are essentially grooves that you play with two or three limbs while the remaining voices work through a series of reading material. This approach forces you to apply everything you work on in a musical context while solidifying your time, independence, reading, counting, ambidexterity, and more.

This idea is scalable to work with any type of material. We can use a similar approach to isolate any type of rhythm or concept by creating our own systems specific to whatever we're working on. Then, instead of using full pages of reading material, we can isolate any problematic rhythms piece by piece.

A good system needs to outline the subdivision you're working with while accenting the pulse—in this case, quarter notes—in a way that's recognizably musical. Exercises 1 and 2 present systems designed for working with quintuplets. They each have solid quintuplets within what is essentially a rock beat in quarter notes underneath. Exercise 1 utilizes the bass drum for rhythmic work, and Exercise 2 employs the right hand on a cymbal stack.



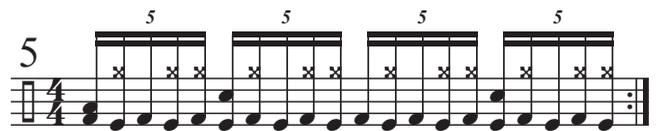
Once the systems feel groovy, get comfortable with each partial of the quintuplet. Exercises 3 and 4 explore the fourth quintuplet partial, or "ah," within each system. Notice how the space left on beat 3 in each of the systems poses a unique challenge. In the first half of the phrase, there's a bass drum (or gong drum) on beat 1. Without that accent on the pulse on beat 3, we really feel the space.



Once you've worked on each individual quintuplet partial, you can practice all the combinations of those notes as well. There are thirty-two combinations in total, and if you have my newest book, *Progressive Drumming Essentials*, you can find them on pages 19

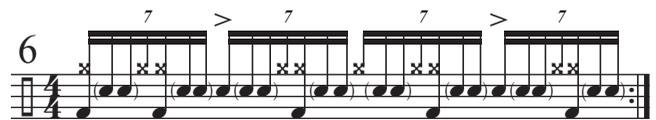
and 20. Exercise 5 demonstrates one such rhythm over the double bass system.

Using this idea of outlining the subdivision and accenting the pulse with a backbeat, you can design systems in any style to work on rhythms with any of your limbs. So also try making your own quintuplet system before moving on.



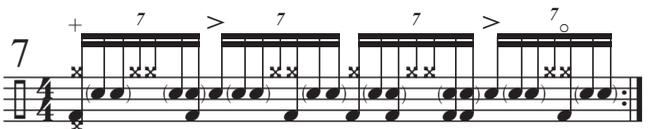
Sticking patterns are a powerful tool when you're designing systems. On one hand, they bring a little personality to whatever subdivision you're dressing up; for example, they can make a subdivision sound especially funky between tight hi-hats and ghost notes. They also give you a way to know where every piece of the rhythm sits by how it lines up and interacts with the pattern.

Exercise 6 demonstrates this idea using a RLLRRLL sticking as a system in septuplets. Just like before, there's a backbeat on beats 2 and 4 and a kick on beat 1. The note we're isolating on the kick is the fifth septuplet partial ("ge"), which lines up with the second note of the double stroke in the right hand. Using this method, you can easily gain comfort with each septuplet partial, which allows you to experiment freely.



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

Exercise 7 embellishes our system with a funky kick pattern. Think about the whole phrase musically, and focus on how the bass drum's notes interplay with the hand pattern. You'll be surprised at how easily you can make something like this feel good with a little practice. Again, if you want to really dig into this concept, you can find all 128 septuplet rhythms in *Progressive Drumming Essentials* on pages 45 and 46.



We can even use this idea to work on polyrhythms. First, though, we need to set up a system that's the length of the rhythm and leaves two limbs free. To visualize this easily, let's first look at a basic four-over-three polyrhythm. We have a bar of 3/4 time with the bass drum in quarter notes to represent the three side, and we'll



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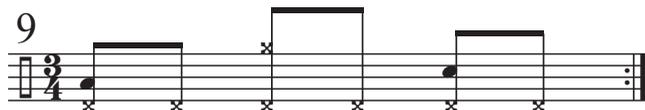
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play four equally spaced notes across that phrase on the rack tom to represent the four side.



This leaves our left foot and one hand to put together something that sounds like a beat and gives us a clear framework for the bass drum (the three side) and the tom (the four side) to voice the polyrhythm.

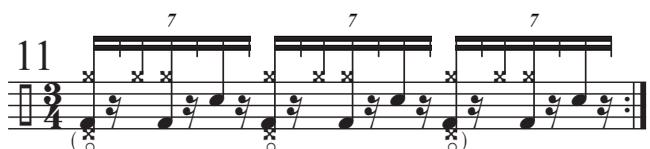


Exercise 10 puts this idea together with our layer of four pushed forward by two 16th notes and the layer of three pushed forward by one 16th note. In this way we can feel this oddly phrased version of four-over-three in a context that has a recognizable groove. In 16th notes, there are twelve different permutations of four-over-three. Striving to make each one of them groovy in this way will result in a clearer understanding of the rhythm overall, and you can start seeing the concept organically manifest in your playing.

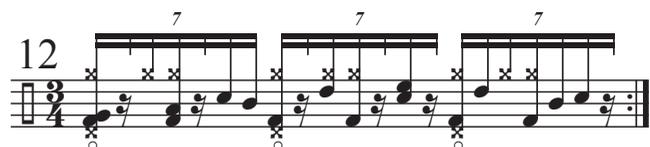


In the spirit of the new Tool album, *Fear Inoculum*, let's see how this idea works with a much nastier polyrhythm. In the song "Invincible," the band is playing a seven-over-three polyrhythm in the context of 7/16. Since we've already warmed up with septuplets, we can instead fit this idea into 3/4 time perfectly.

Exercise 11 sets up a scary-looking system with a left-hand stack/snare pattern over the bass drum, the latter of which lands on the first and fourth septuplet partials. It's not as hard as it might look, so take it slow and focus on feeling the quarter-note pulse. You can add the splashed hi-hat (in parentheses) to emphasize the quarter note.



If you added the splashed hi-hats in Exercise 11, you already have a layer of three within this context. Exercise 12 adds our layer of seven going up and down the toms over that idea. You might want to try this on just one tom at first. If you focus on where the toms line up—either on or between the notes of the system—it's surprisingly easy to coordinate. And that's the true power of this method!



When you get the hang of using systems in this way, they end up feeling like you're physically playing a grid that you can self-quantize to. Since real life isn't a studio—and we can't snap our notes to the grid in real time—we can use this to simulate that with our bodies. Have fun!



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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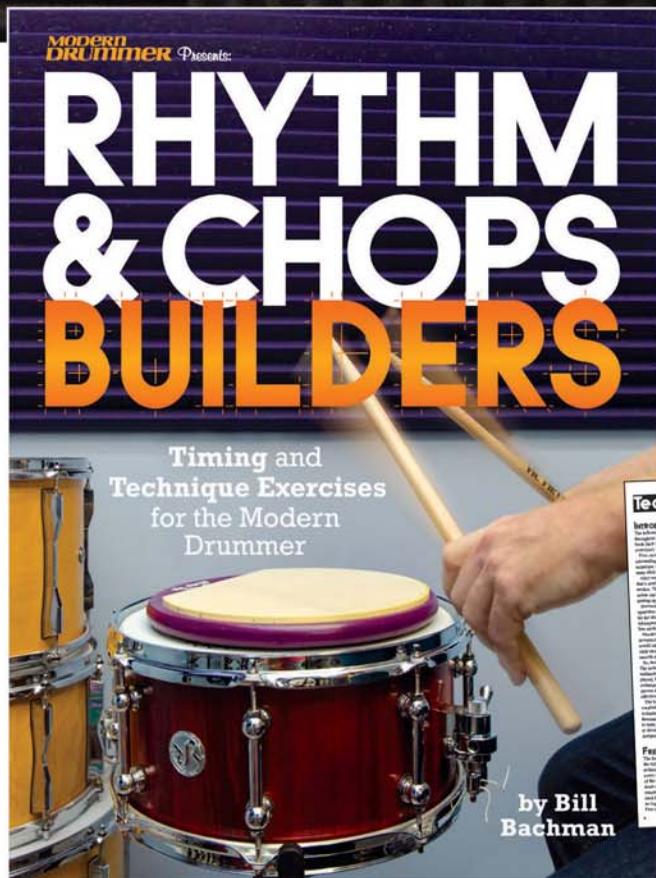
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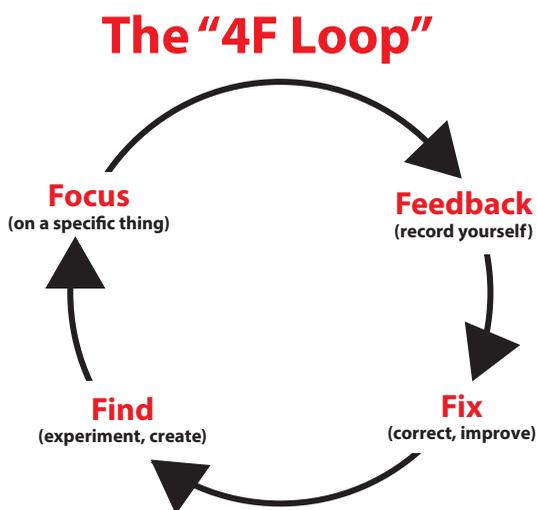
An Effective Approach to Modern Challenges

by Marc Dicciani

Learning is a skill, just like, say, playing the drums, or flying a plane. At the core of teaching and learning to play is the ability to diagnose specific issues and goals, create a balanced game plan for improvement and change, and find a distinctive musical voice through creativity and experimentation.

As a drummer for forty-plus years, a drumset professor for more than two decades, and a researcher in areas of neuroscience, neurophysiology, and cognitive psychology for twelve years, I believe I can't teach anyone how to play drums. Rather, I can only teach them how to *learn* to play drums and find their own style and concept of playing.

The goal of practice is to improve our technical facility, musicality, and originality, so we want to practice in a way that balances those areas. The idea of balance is a strategy and a way of thinking that broadens our self-expression on the instrument. I use a practice formula with my students that I call the "Four Fs"—focus, feedback, fix, and find.



Focus your practice on the specific concept you're trying to learn or improve. Then, create a process for objective **feedback** to inform you of whether you're learning it correctly or playing it the way you want to. If you're not, then **fix** it. **Find** is a critical step on the road to discovering who we want to be as drummers—how we want to play and sound. This may be the most challenging step, since it requires experimentation, exploration, and risk.

Let's look at each of the four Fs in some detail.

Focus

Over the past fifteen years, there's been an abundance of new research in the area of motor skill and cognitive development for musicians. There are some differing theories on the best way to develop these skills, including that of "Deliberate Practice" from the Swedish psychologist Dr. Anders Ericsson. The training for someone wanting to play traditional Western European (classical) music differs greatly from what's required of those who want to play contemporary, jazz, popular, and most music that includes drumset. However, there is general agreement that learning and developing

motor skills and physical ability require purposeful, focused, methodical, systematic, and regular practice. This type of practice is very specific and goal oriented. It's not naïve practice, in which you just continue doing something repeatedly while gaining experience but little improvement.

In order to progress, we need to pinpoint things we want to learn or identify weaknesses we're trying to address. It requires that we spend about 75 percent of our time working on things that are outside of our comfort zone and that are very specific. Here are a few examples of general versus specific items for practice. Keep in mind that the more specific, the better.

General: Play jazz time with the right hand on the ride while the left hand plays rhythmic independence on the snare. **Specific:** Practice jazz time with the right hand while the left hand develops rhythmic and volume independence between various drums at 90–140 bpm.

General: Play Groove Study 14 from the Dave Garibaldi book *Future Sounds*. **Specific:** Play the first four exercises of Groove Study 14 as written, varying the accents and sounds. Then create four of your own variations.

General: Work on your brush technique. **Specific:** Practice brushes in a 4/4 jazz ballad at 60 bpm at low volume.

General: Work on soloing. **Specific:** Practice soloing over an ostinato. For example, the hi-hat foot plays quarter notes while improvising using the snare, toms, and bass drum in straight 8th- and 16th-note subdivisions at 120 bpm at a moderate volume.

The more specific your practice is, the quicker your playing will improve in those areas and the better your retention will be. In almost everything you practice, I recommend contextualizing what you're working on. That is, practice with music—recordings, play-alongs, MP3s, loops—and then record yourself. We make the best use of our practice time by working on a specific concept for a maximum of thirty minutes before moving on to something different. This process, known as "interleaving," boosts learning and promotes rapid development.

One more critical point I'd like to make here is about concentration. Deep learning and efficient skill development require focused attention without distraction. Attempting to do other things while practicing decreases the effectiveness of learning.

The ability to multitask may be a myth. Cognitive neuroscientist Dr. Indre Viskontas discounts our ability to multitask, especially when we're trying to learn something new and/or challenging. According to Viskontas, "When you think you're multitasking, you're actually switching quickly between tasks, or mixing tasks, and each one comes at a cost." If while practicing you're also watching television or routinely checking your smartphone, "You likely aren't doing the hard work of learning by engaging deeply with the content," says Viskontas. "But even perhaps more nefarious is the illusion that you're learning when in fact you're not. Some tasks aren't always enjoyable, and making them enjoyable via distraction doesn't mean you're accomplishing what you set out to do."

This is true even if, by the end of the TV show or after repeatedly checking social media, you've made your way to the next chapter

in the method book. "Social media and email can be especially troublesome," Viskontas says, "as you might find yourself inadvertently thinking about a response or something you read or saw while you should be focusing on the task at hand."

It's better to train at 100 percent effort for less time than 70 percent effort for a longer period. So work on the exact skill you want to develop, and avoid distractions while practicing.

Feedback

In this case, feedback is referred to as information obtained about some aspect of our playing that we should work on. This can come from a teacher, another musician, and ultimately and ideally from ourselves. As our drumming and creative skills increase, we become more aware of what we need and want to work on simply by paying close attention to what we're doing and how we're doing it.

Of course, a teacher can give immediate feedback during a lesson, but we can also do this for ourselves by recording our playing and analyzing what we did. For an advanced player, this feedback should be enough to self-correct and also to help identify some new and different ways to play something. For the student who is home practicing on their own and unsure of their accuracy, waiting a week or more for the teacher's feedback at the next lesson is too long to wait for correction. In addition to having wasted a lot of time, the

student may have gotten pretty good at playing it inaccurately. Our brains and nervous systems become used to doing something incorrectly and develop a bad habit that can be difficult to unlearn.

As I mentioned earlier, I always recommend that my students practice with music, record themselves, and listen back to create their own feedback system. For beginning students, it will take some time to understand what to listen for. But they'll learn quickly, and this method of self-feedback will become extremely valuable.

Also, when practicing a pattern, try switching up the music you're playing with. This develops something called "far transfer," which is a classic research finding that states that breadth of training predicts breadth of transfer. In other words, changing the music you're practicing with helps your ability to transfer learning into different playing situations that you may have never been in before. This ability is a trademark of the originality and authenticity that all great drummers possess.

For beginning players, teachers can make a short recording on a smartphone demonstrating the correct way to play something and send it to the student. They can listen to and/or watch our version and compare that to what they're working on. The student can also send a quick email, text, or private posting of an audio or video to the instructor for feedback. Whichever method is used, constant, quick, and accurate feedback is crucial for precise learning and

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quick development.

The most difficult part of feedback is to decide—ultimately for ourselves—what we want to fix or keep, what is incorrect, or what may actually be the discovery of something new or different. Too much feedback, even if accurate, can stifle creativity. Sometimes what we or others may think of as a mistake can really be something that broadens our individuality and enables us to uncover a new and unique way of playing something.

Fix

As mentioned, a good teacher will give feedback on what you're doing correctly or incorrectly and, if necessary, instructions on how to fix it. Don't practice mistakes—correct them. For this reason, I rarely assign pages, exercises, patterns, styles, and more from a book without first demonstrating those ideas, sending a link to a recording, or making a recording for the student so that they'll have something to model.

If a correction is made, the teacher should explain in detail what was incorrect, why, and what to listen for in the future so that the student can self-correct (teaching someone how to learn to play). Introducing these self-teaching skills from the very first lesson, regardless of age, is a good idea.

As I mentioned earlier, when we receive feedback and devise methods to improve, we want to make sure that we always balance our goal of skill development with that of maintaining our own authenticity and unique musical voice. Playing something incorrectly is not the same as playing it differently. Learn correctly but then improvise and make it yours. Use your imagination and find your own way. Identify a problem and create your own solution and path.

Find

In addition to the importance of purposeful practice, I'm adding one other indispensable and often overlooked piece—purposeful play. This is a time reserved to explore different ways of playing in a risk-free, non-judgmental setting, when we purposefully stretch our own individuality and seek to find our own drumming voice. I sometimes call this process "What If or Why Not," where I try to knock down students' imaginary or self-built walls, rules, and regulations to find

some different ways to play something.

Charles Limb, a neuroscientist, researcher, and surgeon at the University of California, San Francisco, has found that brain areas associated with focused attention, inhibition, and self-censoring turn down when musicians are creating and improvising. "It's almost as if the brain turns off its ability to criticize itself," he says.

Drumming should be much less about rules and much more about individuality, personal satisfaction, and extending the boundaries. Purposeful play is a way to do exactly that.

It sometimes helps to listen to master drummers and study their ways of playing in order to identify things that make them unique and their playing great. In addition to playing the patterns and ideas they created and recorded, I ask my students to transcribe and study what these innovators did. In other words, don't just imitate their playing; imitate their drumming imagination and the process that got them there. Study and analyze what they did and apply those methods and that process to your own playing. Many of our drumming heroes were self-taught and experimented a great deal, relying on their own intuition and imagination. Often it's best to forget about the right/wrong and good/bad of drumming, and just play!

In Closing

We're all students of the instrument, and all of us can benefit from using the four Fs. Learning and practicing correctly are often frustrating, and feedback, even if it's constructive and honest and comes from ourselves, can be difficult to take. Don't compare yourself to anyone else—only compare yourself to you yesterday.

It's important to surround ourselves with positive people and avoid those who use negative, abusive statements and actions and employ irrational criticism. Find supportive, understanding, knowledgeable, qualified teachers and good friends who reinforce your aspirations and provide encouragement. Stay away from social media "experts" and critics, and trust your own judgment and those close to you. Drumming is a long journey—be patient and enjoy the ride!

Marc Dicciani is the Dean of the College of Performing Arts at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, a drumset professor, and an international touring artist and clinician. For more information, and to reach him, head to dicciani.com.



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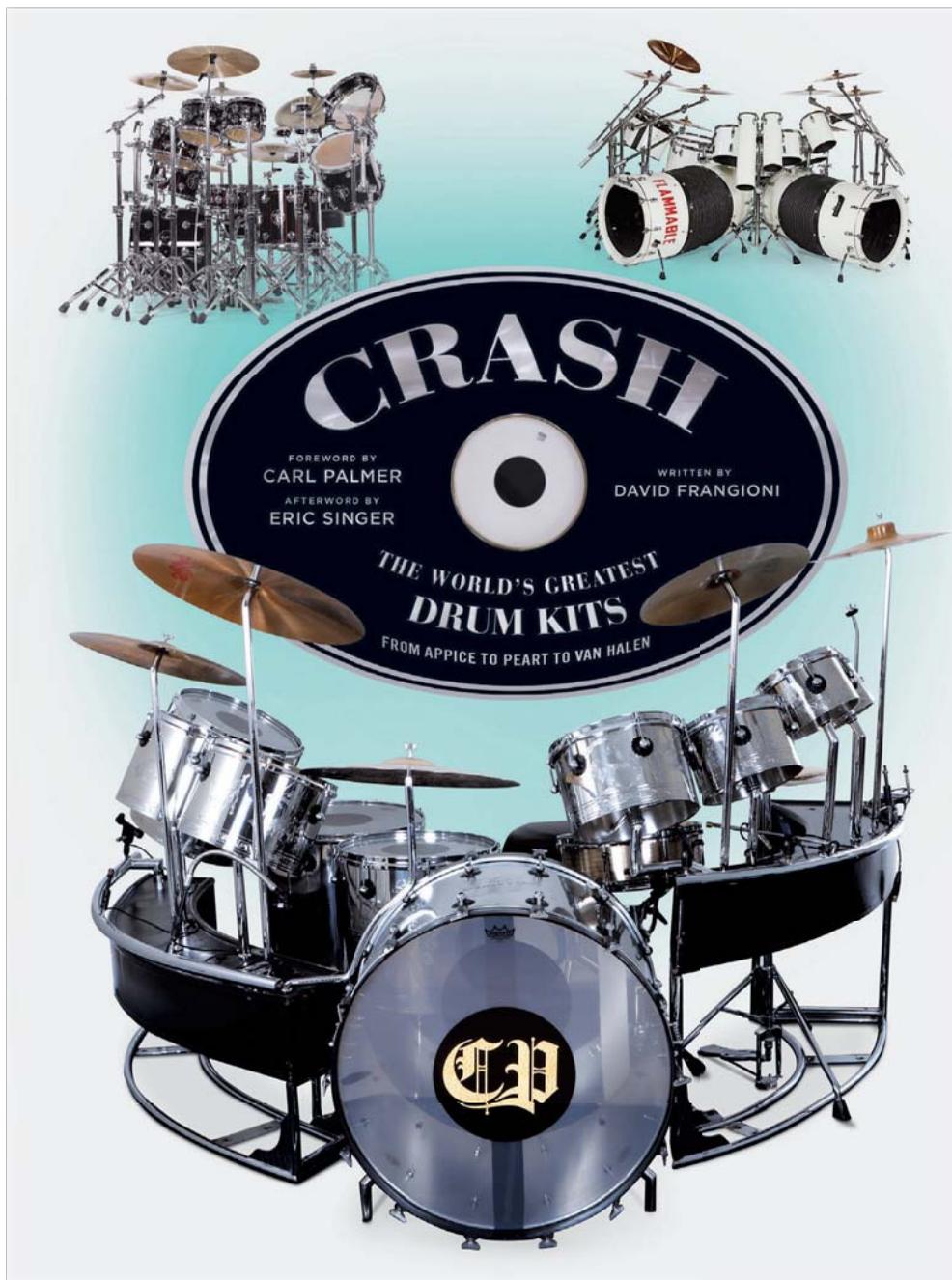
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Both of these headphones are equipped with 50 mm drivers and oxygen-free copper coils. The K361 model is designed to deliver clear, detailed, and balanced lows, mids, and highs across an extended frequency range (15 Hz–28 kHz), while the K371 headphones sport titanium-coated diaphragms to deliver more detail across a wider frequency range (5 Hz–40 kHz). Their over-ear, closed-back design provides superior isolation, and the foam pads offer comfort and less low-frequency leakage. The ear cups swivel 90 degrees for single-ear monitoring. Both models include a protective carrying pouch and detachable cables. The K371 lists for \$149, the K361 for \$99.

akg.com

Ear-Q Earplugs

Ear-Q earplugs combine a reusable foam earplug with a high-fidelity water- and sweat-proof acoustic filter. The foam has an open-air passage that is said to provide a natural and balanced sound. These ergonomic one-size-fits-all plugs offer 17 dB of noise reduction.

ear-q.com



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The Elite series offers polished contour rims and a choice of shell materials in Thai oak, seamless fiberglass, or a blend of both. Three new lacquer finishes include Mocha Burst, a high-contrast grain pattern over a deep brown burst; Merlot Burst, a deep wine-red grain finish complemented with gloss black; and Carmel Brown, which focuses on the rich brown texture and grain of Thai oak with a matte finish. All Elite series conga finishes are available with matching bongos.

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Pattern-Seeking Animals *Pattern-Seeking Animals*

An unpredictable Spock's Beard spinoff featuring drummer **JIMMY KEEGAN**.

Those hoping for lots of dense muso-centric epics from this Spock's Beard side project will likely be disappointed. The band's self-titled debut, largely written and cowritten by Spock's collaborator John Boegehold, does, however, worm its way into your psyche via glorious melodies, occasional retro sonic cues, and deep-pocket grooves by drummer Jimmy Keegan. Keegan skates in the multisectional "Orphans of the Universe" in what feels like 7/8, and later, in the whirling instrumental midsection, he charges with an approximation of Bernard Purdie's funky halftime shuffle. Loping, tom-heavy fills perfectly capture the slightly comedic mood of the quasi-spooky "We Write the Ghost Stories," while the hauntingly beautiful closer, "Stars Along the Way," benefits from Keegan's restraint and sense of drama. Although some of this material recalls 1970s classic rock, plenty of musical surprises (not to mention Keegan's air-drum-worthy fills) make this offering a strangely familiar, if not addictive, listen. (Inside Out) **Will Romano**



Sacred Reich *Awakening*

The thrash metal standard-bearers offer their first new material in twenty-three years and celebrate the return of drummer **DAVE MCCLAIN**.

Offering a healthy helping of classic '90s thrash elements to satisfy their still-loyal fan base, Sacred Reich's new eight-song LP, *Awakening*, sounds at times like it could have been written in their mid-'90s heyday, sparing the thick, modern production. Dave McClain, a member of the band in the early and mid '90s and recently departed long-time member of metal titans Machine Head, performed all of the parts on *Awakening* despite his absence during pre-production due to touring obligations. Falling easily back into step with bassist and lead vocalist Phil Rind, McClain's playing here is just as bombastic, choppy, and aggressive as the band's earlier material. Stand-out moments include his smashing intro/verse groove and hand/foot combo fills on album opener "Awakening," classic thrash drive on "Divide & Conquer," and loping 12/8 cowbell groove on "Death Valley." (Metal Blade Records) **Ben Meyer**



District 97 *Screens*

The band's fifth album offers more of the same—meaning, a wholly different kind of modern progressive rock.

It's nearly impossible to envision these mixed-genre tracks without the presence of bandleader and drummer **Jonathan Schang**. When Schang isn't shadowing guitar lines with pinpoint accuracy ("Forest Fire") or adorning his grooves with textural accents and tricky kick-snare combinations, he's announcing the opening of songs with idiosyncratic drum riffs ("Trigger"), letting things chill in "Bread & Yarn," and bolstering the compositional structure of this diverse material with polyrhythms and what feels like over-the-bar playing. The complexity of Schang's playing seems to unfold upon repeated listens. Songs such as "Sea I Provide" and "Sheep" are shaped by double-kick pedal workouts, while the latter settles (momentarily) into a kind of metallic jazzy-funky pocket during the verses. The eleven-minute closer, "Ghost Girl," the apogee of Leslie Hunt's visceral vocal performances here, sees Schang at his most lyrical, if not avant-garde—a strangely appropriate rhythmic aspect capping off an enjoyably sideways affair. (Cherry Red) **Will Romano**



Lisa Maxwell's Jazz Orchestra *Shiny!*

The saxophonist and composer blends low culture with high art, while her rotating cast of veteran drummers keep things swinging.

Lisa Maxwell's Jazz Orchestra's *Shiny!* draws on both classic jazz and the funky feel of television theme songs from the 1970s. The saxophonist's first full album of original material is anchored by precise, airtight grooves from **Steven Wolf**, **Danny Gottlieb**, and **Ben Perowsky**. From Wolf's fresh variation on the infamous Purdie Shuffle, which drives "Son of Creeper," to Gottlieb's herky-jerky patterns in "Hello, Wayne?," Maxwell's arrangements impress on a technical level without sacrificing accessibility. In fact, accessibility seems to be part of the point. Even simpler songs like "Israel" offer Perowsky chances to strategically alter traditional snare accent patterns in favor of spastic fills that build tension while maintaining a healthy sense of swing. (Uncle Marvin Music) **Keaton Lamle**

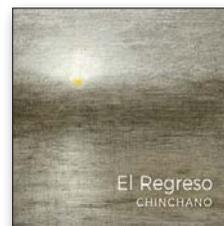


TAKING THE REINS

Chinchano *El Regreso*

JUAN PASTOR forges an intriguing international hybrid.

"El Regreso" ("The Return") refers to drummer/percussionist/composer Juan Pastor's emotional full-circle journey. An emerging artist in Chicago's jazz scene, Pastor returned to his native Lima to accept a university position. But within a year he sorely missed his stateside musical community and relocated to Chicago yet again to resume leading his quintet, Chinchano. Their third disc again brilliantly blends jazz with the fascinating folkloric rhythms of Peru—along with other South American influences—in upbeat, melodic, and thoroughly modern interpretations. Upping the ante, this outing includes guests, with an emphasis on percussionists. Pastor is fabulously grooving and expressive, playing a hybrid kit including cajon and multipercussion, creating the illusion of a multilayered rhythm "section". The added percussionists lend him even greater freedom, as heard during his soaring solo on "Resistencia". Noted alto saxophonist Miguel Zenón also cameos with brio. Inventive, joyful, and overflowing with mind-boggling rhythmic experimentation. Welcome back. (Quinto Pulse) **Jeff Potter**



Other Drummer-Leds to Check Out

Jimmy Cobb Remembering U /// **Gerald Cleaver and Violet Hour** Live at Firehouse 12 /// **Samuel Torres** Alegria /// **Jason Harnell** Total Harnage /// **Mareike Wienig** Metropolis Paradise /// **Paul Edelstein** Drums + Emotion

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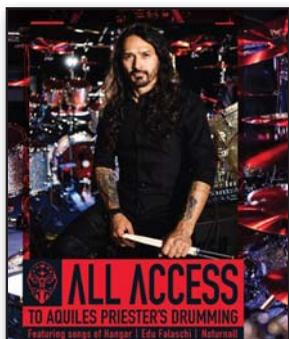
Aquiles Priester *All Access to Aquiles Priester's Drumming*

More razor-sharp power metal drumming from the Brazilian master.

All Access isn't Aquiles Priester's first live-in-the-studio performance video, but this intense Blu-ray/DVD offering might just be his best. Captured with twelve HD cameras, every angle of Priester's playing is documented with startling detail, and the audio recording is near-perfection for a rock kit mix.

Priester runs an assortment of tunes from bands he's associated with, including selections from Brazilian prog-metal group Hangar's latest disc, *Stronger than Ever*, and songs from three albums he recorded with Brazilian metal group Noturnall. With his beautiful silver sparkle kit and red cymbals, Priester brings serious power to this material, laying down massive tom fills in between intricate patterns that use splashes and mini timbales. His double bass precision is equally impressive over the course of seventeen tracks, so as an instructional aide, have your kick chops at an apex if you want to take a crack at your own covers.

Any thirty-second segment here could serve as your homework over the next year, from the left hand-lead action in "Saint Trigger" to the choked cymbal and foot combos in "The Revenant." In Portuguese with English subtitles and clocking in at four and a half hours, with behind-the-scenes footage and Priester's helpful thoughts on drum tuning, this package delivers. (Hudson Music) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



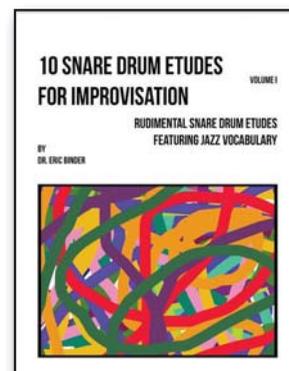
10 Snare Drum Etudes for Improvisation, Volume One by Dr. Eric Binder

An exercise in variation on classic rudimental themes designed to challenge jazz drummers.

Subtitled *Rudimental Snare Drum Etudes Featuring Jazz Vocabulary*, *10 Snare Drum Etudes for Improvisation* functions less as a collection of "pieces" to learn than as a series of increasingly difficult exercises designed to help jazz drummers perfect their ability to improvise snare fills, accents, and grooves. (Note: While the term "etude" is sometimes casually used to mean "composition for a single instrument," it technically denotes a piece designed to develop specific instrumental skills.) As such, the book succeeds, featuring a natural progression of difficulty across the ten etudes, and gradually implementing new, challenging patterns just when learners start to get comfortable with its prior rudimental themes.

Binder, who has performed with Joel Frahm and Christos Rafalides in addition to releasing two records as a bandleader, takes an academic approach to the compositions, creating difficult sticking patterns and counterintuitively phrased fills as a way to deconstruct different players' drumming tics and rhythmic "blocks." While it should be noted that this book is targeted at more accomplished players, anybody hoping to increase their ability to improvise around standard rudimental ideas could benefit from playing through it. (ericbinder.bigcartel.com)

Keaton Lamle



Bobby Morris's *My Las Vegas—With Elvis, Sinatra, Streisand, Darin, Prima & More*

From the Bronx to the Borscht Belt to Vegas, he saw it all on his way to the top.

The next time you look back on a gig in anguish because the monitors weren't great, or your kick drum was creeping, or you clammed a couple of fills, just remember, it could've been worse. At least you didn't have a dead body thrown in your direction.

Bobby Morris actually experienced this extreme job hazard as a young drummer trying to make a name for himself on New York City's big band circuit in the 1950s. As he writes in his new memoir, *My Las Vegas—With Elvis, Sinatra, Streisand, Darin, Prima & More*, the incident happened during the second night of a two-night engagement at a rough joint in the Bronx appropriately called the Bucket of Blood. Morris says everything went fine the first night. Midway through the second gig, however, a huge brawl broke out. A loud bang followed; Morris assumed it was a gunshot. Then said dead body went flying through the air. So what was the young drummer's first thought upon seeing a lifeless body headed in his vicinity?

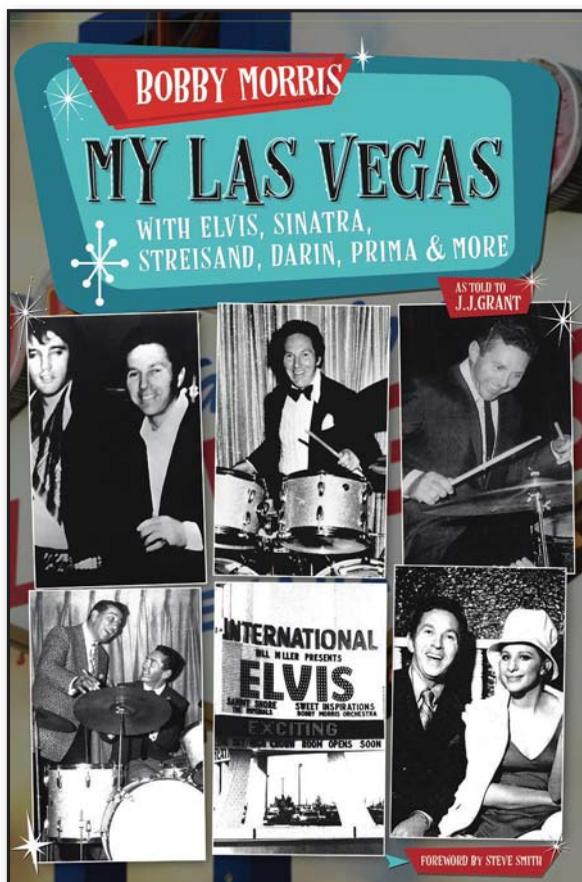
"It was *duck*," Morris remembers with a laugh. "As quickly as I could, I got right the hell out of there.

"After the body was thrown at me, I ran out the back door and never looked back. Fortunately the drums belonged to the club. I just took my sticks and it was 'Bye!' I didn't care about getting paid or anything."

Morris says once you've been put in that type of predicament on the bandstand, you can pretty much handle any situation, from being tapped to sub with Frank Sinatra at a moment's notice, to helping Elvis make his live comeback as both drummer *and* conductor, or starting a booking and management company from the ground up—just a few of the more notable entries in his mind-boggling resume.

"It helps you develop an unflappability," Morris explains. "And you need that in this business. It's like going through bootcamp."

As a Polish immigrant who arrived at Ellis Island during the Great Depression at age ten without knowing a word of English, Morris knew about tough gigs. He endured a long, hard slog to the top of



his profession. Before he was working his way up from the Catskills to Vegas as a drummer, he shined shoes, mowed lawns, delivered newspapers before dawn, worked in factories, and served sandwiches down at the docks, practicing the rudiments he was learning from the legendary Henry Adler on the countertops.

"As soon as I came over, I realized, you've got to work," Morris says. "So I did whatever I could to help out my family."

After ditching school to watch Gene Krupa play with Benny Goodman—for twenty-five cents!—drumming became an all-consuming endeavor for the young Boruch Moishe. (Morris legally changed his name once he started playing professionally.) When he wasn't stringing side hustles together to bring home money for his family, he worked tirelessly on his drumming, a pursuit his father viewed as frivolous.

"Right before I started working in the Catskills, my father said, 'What are you practicing so hard for, five or six hours a day on that drum pad?,' Morris recalls. "He said, 'Nothing is going to happen. You're not going to amount to

anything.' Well, I did amount to something."

Morris hilariously recounts in the book how his father got to experience that his son *did* amount to something. After a show with Eddie Fisher at the Waldorf Astoria in the '60s, his father not only got to see Morris play to a packed house behind one of the most popular entertainers of the day, he also witnessed him getting paid for the week.

"It was \$1,500 in cash—very good money for those days," Morris recalls. "My father thought I robbed a bank! I said, 'This is what I get paid, dad.' He said, in his broken English, 'Wow, that's *vonderful!*'"

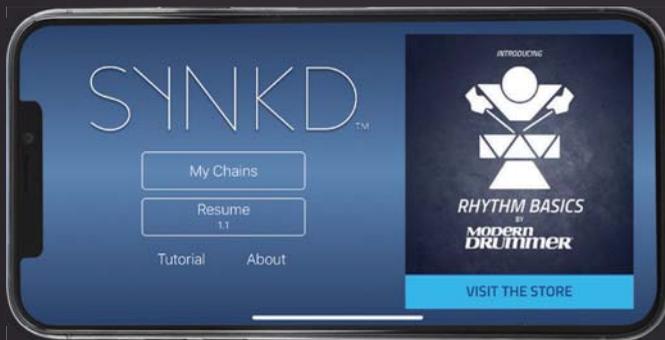
Morris isn't hustling so much these days. He splits his time between Las Vegas, Utah, and Florida, booking acts here and there and doing the occasional drum clinic, imparting the lessons he's learned from so many years in the business. "I've been trying to help out young musicians and young drummers," Morris says. "I try to give them instructions on behavior and how to network and how to practice hard and work hard. I tell them you can't give up. I didn't, and look what happened for me."

Patrick Berkery



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THE 2019 CHICAGO DRUM SHOW

The Chicago Drum Show, which was founded by historian Rob Cook and is now in its twenty-ninth year, is one of the largest and longest-running drum exhibitions in the world. At the show's latest edition, held this past May 18 and 19 at the Odeum Expo Center in Villa Park, Illinois, attendees feasted on two days of phenomenal clinics, master classes, and more than 200 booths that featured rare vintage, custom, and modern drums, cymbals, and accessories. There was ample opportunity to meet top talents, collectors, authors, educators, historians, and fellow drummers alike.

Fourteen-year-old up-and-comer Jake D opened the clinics. The drummer started playing at age three, began formal lessons at seven, and is now training with seasoned pro Hannah Welton. Jake impressed the audience with his talent and a few life lessons. "Be able to play everything," he shared during his performance. "And be humble."

Next Welton took the stage on her signature Gretsch 3rdeyegirl drumkit that she used with Prince. The drummer played through some classic Prince tracks and spoke about first meeting the pop icon. "That one big gig was all that I needed," she said. "It was his dream to have an all-girl rock band. It was an honor to be part of that. Prince took me in and wanted to work with me, helping my evolution as a pocket player. He was monumental in my development and taught me to live my life in the moment. He said, 'You should be your favorite drummer and love yourself.'"

Next Paul Wertico, a former teacher of Welton, took the stage.

Wertico has won seven Grammy awards with the Pat Metheny Group and has played on recordings with Larry Coryell, Randy Brecker, and Ramsey Lewis, among many others. The drummer is also an author and highly regarded educator. In his clinic, Wertico talked about his unique perspective on drumming. "When you play, you channel something bigger," he said. "With music, enjoy the ride. When I was in high school, my band director let me do what I wanted to do, not just what was written or expected. Education should be about students finding themselves." Wertico also discussed some lessons from his book *Turn the Beat Around*. "Be aware of beats 1 and 3—the front and back beats," he explained. "It kind of drives the music. I'm not listening to the click but to the band. As long as I know where the center is, I can play ahead or behind the time." Wertico then demonstrated various ways of playing ahead or behind the click while maintaining a sense of consistent time.

Perry Wilson, renowned for his drumming with the Temptations and legendary jazz saxophonist and bandleader Sonny Rollins, followed Wertico's performance. Wilson was joined by his group, the Life-Size Trio, which included Dwayne Armstrong on sax and Vashon Johnson on bass. The drummer recalled some humorous and insightful stories about Rollins. "I was playing with Cassandra Wilson when I got a call to play with Sonny," he said. "I thought it was a joke and hung up! But Sonny called back and asked me to audition. I met him and the late bassist Bob Cranshaw at a big room in SIR Studios in New York. We played 'Falling in Love with Love.' After that, we played



Kotche

'Oleo.' Sonny and I traded fours, and it was a spiritual experience. He then asked me for my social security number to give to his wife, the tour manager. I had the gig. It was the most culturally enriching experience of my life. There was no set list, and he was notorious for changing the keys on us."

Glenn Kotche, a versatile composer, percussionist, and two-decades-long drummer for the band Wilco, led the last clinic of the day. Kotche said he was very much into "non-traditional work" and liked to vary his drum setups often. "It's not unlike the early drummers, like Chick Webb," he said. "He had a lot of traps and sounds, providing sound environments and moods." Kotche's Sonor kit was complemented by a variety of auxiliary percussion and triggers. The drummer also expressed his desire to explore abstract

sounds, saying, "I like to use anything that elicits a sound and adds a splash of color." In his exploration of sound, Glenn has created unique percussive instruments like threaded rods with springs at the end. His playing was a lesson in musicality, dynamics, textures, and technique, and he impressed with a few flashy one-handed rolls.

On the second day of the show, Carl Allen took the stage. The drummer, composer, educator, and bandleader has more than 200 recordings to his credit with such artists as Freddie Hubbard, Branford Marsalis, Phil Woods, and Lena Horne. Allen opened by asking the audience, "How do you hear music? How do you know what to play so that it's going to be happening?" For the drummer, it was about not being afraid to make mistakes. "If your goal is to be perfect, then you can't be in the moment," he explained. "I encourage you to take chances. Art Blakey once said, 'Do you play the drums, or do the drums play you?'"

Allen went on to say that everyone in a band needs to embrace the time. "It needs to be felt rather than heard," he explained. "We let measures limit us. Think of a perforated bar line. It allows you to hear larger phrases. I play to let others feel the groove and allow them to lay their parts on top. Sometimes it's best to keep it simple and meet the music where it is."

Last up to the clinic stage was Denny Seiwell, who's well recognized for his drumming with Paul McCartney and Wings, TV and film music, and the Denny Seiwell Trio. He's played on numerous records and toured with the likes of Joe Cocker, Donovan, and the Who with the London Symphony Orchestra. Seiwell reflected on his days in the studio with Wings, saying that McCartney generally let him craft the drum parts but stepped in on "Uncle Albert" because he "wanted a different part; more orchestral sounding to go along with the vocals." Seiwell played some memorable Wings tunes, like "Live and Let Die," "The Back Seat of My Car," and "Another Day," as well as a song from the movie *Waterworld*. "I'm seventy-six and still working,"



he said. "If you don't challenge yourself, what's the point?"

The show also featured various educational and historical clinics. Gary Astridge, the curator of Ringo Starr's Beatles kits, shared his extensive knowledge and passion about the drummer's gear. Donn Bennett, who founded the Donn Bennett Drum Studio in Bellevue, Washington, spoke about documenting the Elvin Jones collection.

David Frangioni, newly appointed publisher of *Modern Drummer*, also shared his vision for the magazine at the event. "*Modern Drummer* is a place for drummers of all styles, ages, and interests that is digitally savvy with an analog soul," he explained. Frangioni displayed pictures of some amazing kits that are part of his Florida-based drum museum. These kits and more are featured in his book *Crash: The World's Greatest Drum Kits*.

The showroom floor this year featured plenty of amazing drum and percussion gear. The vintage side featured some rare gems, including a 1928 Slingerland DuAll snare, a 1932-34 rose pearl Slingerland DuAll snare, a 1940s Ludwig "Top Hat" kit, transition badge and pre-serial brass Super-Ludwig/Supraphonics, several Gretsch-Gladstone snares, and jazz/orchestral drummer Viola Smith's original Billy Gladstone snare.

There was no shortage of superb modern drums from A&F, Acoutin, Billy Baker, Black Swamp, Chicago Drum, Doc Sweeney, Dunnett/George Way, DW, Ellis, Fugate, Gretsch, Independent Drum Lab, Infinity Drumworks, Holloman Custom, Jenkins-Martin, Ludwig, Mattoon, Noble & Cooley, Rogers, Sonor, Stone Custom, Trick, WFLIII, and Yamaha. Cymbals were on display from Amedia, Byrne, Centent, Dream, Legado, Paiste, Sabian, and Zildjian, and accessory manufacturers included Cymbolt, Evans, Gibraltar, Humes & Berg, Kelly SHU, Low Boy, Latin Percussion, Promark, Remo, and Tackle.

The Chicago Drum Show plans to return to the Odeum in 2020 for the event's thirtieth anniversary.

Story and photos by Bob Campbell

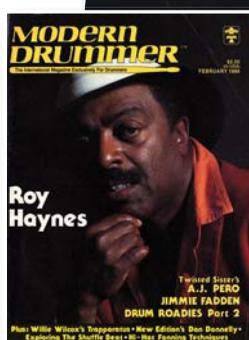


BACK THROUGH THE STACK

The bus is waiting. Louis Armstrong's big band is ready to depart. The drummer has become ill, and a last-minute substitute is needed for one week.

Just out of his teens, Roy Haynes already has a strong word-of-mouth reputation among musicians, so Armstrong takes him on. Roy steps aboard for the week-long journey—no rehearsals, no drum charts. He will just get on the first bandstand and swing Satchmo's big band. Under these circumstances, it would be quite understandable for a musician to be a little nervous, or perhaps downright... "Scared? No, I was never scared," says Haynes. "What was there to be afraid of? You just come in like a little man and do the job. I was a Boy Scout when I was twelve years old. The motto was 'Be prepared.'"

Modern Drummer, February, 1986



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