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23 1970: THE YEAR IN DRUMMING

As the turbulent '60s faded in the rearview, new trends in music—jazz-fusion, singer-songwriter, funk-rock, heavy metal, blues-rock—began to form and capture listeners' imaginations. This month we examine the work of five drummers who were at the cutting edge of their respective corners of the musical universe, at the beginning of what many consider the greatest decade in music ever.

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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

Reflections of My Life

Hi, and welcome to 1970! We editors really enjoy doing these theme issues, and we hope you take as much pleasure from them.

In 1970, I was thirteen years old and had been playing drums for about five years. This was around the time I started playing in bands, and I was glued to my record player and radio. One of my heavier rock influences was our cover artist—for the first time ever, if you can believe it—Black Sabbath's Bill Ward. Sabbath was my introduction to what was considered then to be "real heavy and dark rock." Yes, we had Zeppelin and Deep Purple, two of my faves at that time, but they weren't heavy like *Sabbath* was heavy.

As I briefly drifted into fusion, Lenny White, who we also feature this month, influenced me for a while. I was fortunate to see Lenny perform a good number of times in the early '70s, and he's *still* at the top of his game.

Those who know me are aware that I've always been a "pop head," though, and one of my biggest influences was studio drummer Jim Gordon. In 1970 alone he played on the classic live album by Joe Cocker's *Mad Dogs & Englishmen* (alongside drummers Jim Keltner and Chuck Blackwell); Eric Clapton's debut solo studio album, which included several favorites of mine like "Let It Rain," "After Midnight," and "Blues Power"; Delaney and Bonnie Bramlett's *On Tour with Eric Clapton*; yet another Clapton-led project, Derek & the Dominos' *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs* (Jim is given credit for writing the piano coda of the title track); Dave Mason's debut, *Alone Together* (Keltner, Traffic's Jim Capaldi, and another of this month's featured drummers, Johnny Barbata, also appear); and George Harrison's masterpiece, *All Things Must Pass*, which also featured Ringo Starr, Alan White, and Ginger Baker.

Skip to 1972, and we hear Gordon on another one of my favorites, "You're So Vain" by Carly Simon. In 1974, he played on the title track to Frank Zappa's *Apostrophe (')* album, which listed him alongside Zappa and Jack Bruce as songwriter. That year Jim also appeared on most of Steely Dan's *Pretzel Logic*, including the single "Rikki Don't Lose That Number." Another favorite, Harry Nilsson's 1971 classic, *Nilsson Schmilsson*, featured Gordon, Roger Pope, and Jim Keltner on various tracks. Jim was an early influence on Keltner before he discovered his own style and sound; he was also his good friend, and that's why we decided to speak to Keltner for this month's piece on Gordon. Years prior, Hal Blaine played the role of major influencer on Gordon himself, and essentially taught Jim how to become the kind of studio drummer who knew exactly how to turn a song into a hit.

Jim wasn't just a "song guy," though. He got to show off his serious technical chops while touring with Delaney and Bonnie, Mad Dogs & Englishmen, and Derek & the Dominos. In fact, in Eric Clapton's 2007 autobiography he says, "To this day I would say that bassist Carl Radle and drummer Jimmy Gordon are the most powerful rhythm section I have ever played with. When people say Jim Gordon is the greatest rock 'n' roll drummer who ever lived, I think it's true."

Of course we all have our own personal favorites, and it's a hard call to say who the "best" rock drummer of all time is. But Jim Gordon is certainly one of them! Enjoy the issue.



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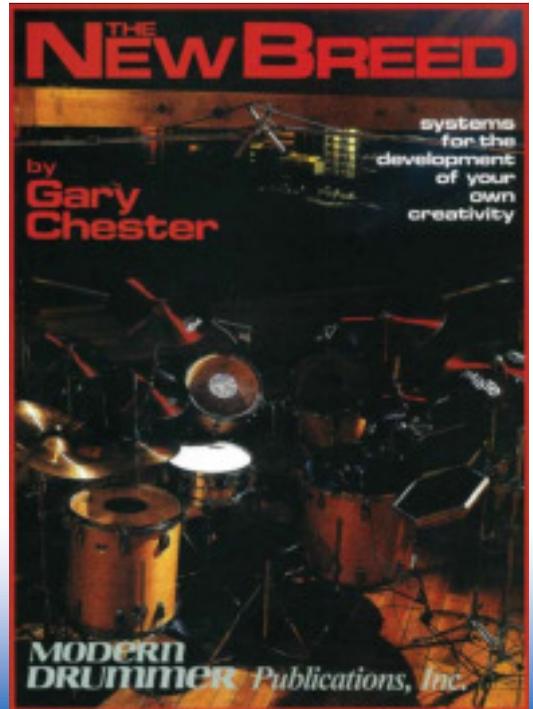
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What's the Hardest Song You've Ever Had to Play?



"Zero Signal" by Fear Factory
Adam Jones

"Achilles Last Stand" by Led Zeppelin
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"Climax" by Jackie McLean
Olcay Turhan

"The First Circle" by Pat Metheny
Sergio Gonzalez

"Forty Six & 2" by Tool
Jeff Marshall

"Lonely Boy" by Andrew Gold
Stephen Martinez

"Bleed" by Meshuggah
Slava Veremey

"Hot Bottom Feeder" by Clutch
Horacio Farias

"La Villa Strangiato" by Rush
Cullen Tiger

"You Enjoy Myself" by Phish
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"The Black Page" by Frank Zappa
Luke Brueck Seeley

"West Side Story" by the Buddy Rich Big Band
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"Channel 1 Suite" by the Buddy Rich Big Band
Justin Rampy

"50 Ways to Leave Your Lover" by Paul Simon
Ricardo T

"The Woven Web" by Animals as Leaders
lorenzkaube

"Everlong" by Foo Fighters
Jonathan O'Hehir

"777-9311" by Morris Day and the Time
mjobiop

"Vital Transformation" by Mahavishnu Orchestra
Roberto Morales

"Bugz"/"Eigenvalue" by Pete Peterson, "Dr. Jackle" by Miles Davis

Travis Orbin

"Kodokunohatsumei" by toe and "Erase You" by DJ Shadow
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The Pretenders' Martin Chambers

The band's founding drummer finds himself back on tape for the first time in years.

If you've seen Martin Chambers live with the Pretenders in recent years, you can't help but think that there aren't many men pushing seventy that can get away with wearing sleeveless, form-fitting shirts, and possess the kind of stamina required to pilot a hard-driving rock band through a two-hour show. He's still every bit the showman, utilizing full extension to whack his oversized China cymbals, and regularly bouncing sticks off his snare. (The key to a successful ricochet, according to Chambers? A perfectly flat snare.) And the drummer remains completely on top of his game, flashing the same kind of power, groove, swing, and reckless abandon he did when the Pretenders burst onto the scene forty years ago.

Practice is a big part of Chambers' tour prep. When *MD* caught up with him he was working through songs from the band's new album, *Hate for Sale* (the first Pretenders album featuring Chambers since 2002's *Loose Screw*), on a Roland electronic kit set up in his home. He says proper diet and near-constant activity are also necessary to function at a high level over the course of a lengthy tour at this stage in his career.

"I keep saying, 'After my seventieth birthday I'm going to start eating,'" says Chambers with a laugh. "You have to keep yourself trim. It's a mostly vegetarian diet. Rice and beans is a good staple. And I'm from a meat-eating county. I'm a different shape than most of the men in my county. And I'm physically working all the time. I'm doing a lot of work on my home conversion, driving a digger, everything. Putting a hole underneath a wall in solid ground, it's hard work. I moved ten tons of concrete blocks about a year ago, all by hand.

"I'm very healthy considering all the stuff I've been through, all the investigations into my heart and into my body—that wonderful pace of life you have when you have your first number-one. I'm not doing too bad."

On recent Pretenders tours, Chambers has been playing a DW kit in custom black-and-white wrap. The drums are modeled after the black-and-white kit he used during the band's early days, made by the late custom U.K. drum maker Eddie Ryan. "Eddie Ryan was next door to where we rehearsed in Covent Garden," Chambers recalls. "He had to make each panel fit the drum. Today they just make it in vinyl and wrap the drum. Back then you had to join everything together. Somebody borrowed that kit back in the early '80s, and I never saw it again. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame wanted it and I said, 'Well, if you can find it, you can have it.'"

Chambers says there's talk of possible headlining U.K. dates in the fall, and then maybe a tour of Australia and New Zealand or a return to the States. Wherever he is on tour, he'll be working on finishing the autobiography he's been chipping away at over the last few years, and trying to secure a publisher to release the book, which he promises will include "every single little forensic detail" about his time in the band and his famously combustible relationship with lead singer Chrissie Hynde.

"Chrissie's pretty pragmatic; she knows she's been [difficult]," Chambers says. "She's said so to me and I said, 'No, you've been worse than that.' My thing is, if you dish it out, be prepared to take it. I will very respectfully tread that line of telling the absolute truth with great respect. I love the woman. We've had such a harrowing journey. It doesn't stop me telling what happened to me. It's my book. She'll be absolutely fine about it. I just need to find the right publisher. Nobody really wants to give a book deal to a drummer, apparently. But I'll get that coming out one way or another in the next couple of years."

Patrick Berkery

Martin Chambers plays DW drums and Zildjian cymbals, and he uses Shaw drumsticks.





Alan Bayley



John Niekrasz

of Method Body

The Language of Rhythm

Portland, Oregon, drummer and poet John Niekrasz converses like he plays, with an intense, burgeoning energy that manages to touch on a myriad of disparate inspirations at a rapid, fluent clip. This dovetails with his lifelong obsession with language and the ways in which it intersects and inspires his rhythms and composition. These preoccupations come into focus with the self-titled debut album from Method Body, his long-running duo project with keyboardist Luke Wyland.

Pulling inspiration from an encyclopedia of experimental sources that include

Terry Riley, La Monte Young, German experimental rockers Can, and the '60s New York psychedelic duo Silver Apples, the album resonates with a clarified power. Despite the heady reference points, the music is not a staid shuffle through progressive music clichés. Listeners will recognize the album's rigor and technique, but its charms do not end there. *Method Body* overflows with ideas, passion, and maturity; it's an innovative album that feels natural and lived-in. We caught up with Niekrasz at his Portland-based studio.

MD: You came up in the Chicago punk and post-punk scenes in the '90s. How did you become fascinated with language and the ways it can inform rhythm and composition?

John: I was always interested in jazz, so that language was there for me. I got a talking drum when I was sixteen, and that got me thinking about language. I started studying West African drum ensemble music. I studied music from Ghana, Ewe ensemble drumming, and music of the Ga and Ashanti people, and it spoke to me instantly. Even in the music I write today, there's often something like a bell line and a multitone melody going on.

I was a writer, and I decided that I wanted to go to graduate school for writing. Even at sixteen I realized that my music and writing were not totally disparate worlds. In Africa they talk through their drums, and in India someone can speak their entire tabla composition—those things struck me. I started listening to tabla players Zakir Hussain and Alla Rakha and studying their music, and then composing based on text. To this day the majority of my composing starts with text—usually my own but sometimes other people's. The rhythms of

language are really complex and beautiful.

MD: This conception is not common in Western drumming. Can you talk more about that?

John: For composing, there's something I came up with called syllabic notation. The most basic way uses syllabic scansion, which they teach in high school Shakespeare. I'll mark the accented and unaccented syllables in a sentence. The binary accent system is the most obvious and the simplest way of doing this, and it applies well to bass and snare or ride and floor tom. A Danish linguistic theorist, Otto Jespersen, posited that even in English there are five levels of accents that are discernible. So I've done some composition based on that—two to four levels of accents are my comfort zone in a given line. I also listen to the melody and tonality of the spoken text, sometimes looping a spoken phrase until it becomes more musical sounding to me.

MD: On the new record, in "Claimed Events Pt. 2—Overheard," it sounds like the drums are playing along to the vocal syllables.

John: Yes, for sure. That piece starts with a drum ostinato playing the rhythm and melody. When the voices enter, you realize

that the drums are playing the melody and rhythm of the lyrics.

The whole A side is actually riffing on a shorter phrase that we've elaborated on for almost two years, and it birthed all these other rhythmic and melodic ideas. That's why the suite is called "Quiet." The phrase is, "He didn't come here to tell us to be quiet, he came here to tell us now that we're quiet." A little bit about tyranny!

MD: Tell us more about the writing process for this record.

John: At first we thought the whole album would be fast, ecstatic, and complex. That's what we've always been good at. But what surprised us was that this wasn't satisfying. It was right after the 2016 election, and we were asking a lot of questions like, How can we help? and feeling like, What's the point of showing off right now? We spent a lot of time asking ourselves what our usefulness could be in music and the world. We came to the conclusion that this band is about our relationship. If Luke and I can be this model for nurturant masculinity and creative love—that would be great.

John Colpitts



Harmony Hart

Latin-Jazz Great Jimmy Branly

We recently caught up with Cuban-born/L.A.-based drummer Jimmy Branly before a gig at the famed Baked Potato music club. There's an obvious goal of versatility when it comes to Jimmy's gear. In addition to the fusion-style setup shown here, Jimmy also has a 16x16 floor tom and a 14x24 bass drum to use when bigger sounds are required, as well as a smaller 14x18 kick for more traditional jazz-type situations. Branly explained that with these sizes available to him, he effectively has three different setups to use for different gigs.

When it comes to cymbals, Branly chooses his setup depending on the dynamics of the music and the acoustics of the room. If it's a small club like the Baked Potato, he quiets the cymbals by placing small pieces of carpet underneath them that cover a small portion of the bell. "When you quiet the bell, you quiet the cymbal," Jimmy explains. "A lot of people might not think about that, but I do because I don't like being loud." Jimmy's favorite cymbal in this setup is the controlled-sounding K Light flat ride, which he takes everywhere.

"For every gig that I do," Branly says, "I'm going to pick the best instrumentation for the music. I like mixing pop and rock sounds with jazz. I often need more decay in the sound, so I use Ambassadors, and I tune the toms a little higher to get more melodies out of them. Then on the cymbals, I like to go lighter so I can get more dynamics out of them."

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Angie Boylan

Angie Boylan's Brooklyn, New York–based band, Freezing Cold, was on the verge of releasing their debut album, *Glimmer* (Salinas Records)—a set of buoyant, '90s-inspired punk-pop produced by J. Robbins of Jawbox—when she received a call that upended their plans. Sleater-Kinney, the iconic Portland, Oregon, rock trio who have inspired cultish devotion for more than two decades, asked her to fill in for departing drummer Janet Weiss. "Freezing Cold kind of had to take a back seat when I got offered the touring role in Sleater-Kinney," Boylan says. "We were going to do a short DIY tour when the record came out, but we had to postpone that. I think my bandmates understand!"

Understand indeed. This was no ordinary side hustle. Named "America's best rock band" in 2001 by revered music journalist Greil Marcus and many others, Sleater-Kinney were breakout stars of Riot Grrrl, the '90s punk-rock movement that strove to empower women in music and beyond. Over the course of nine studio albums, their distinct sound—the jagged guitar interplay and vocal weaving of Corin Tucker and Carrie Brownstein, atop Weiss's classic-rock heft—earned them a fervent fanbase, one that included Boylan. "I grew up listening to them," she says. "I actually played drums in a Sleater-Kinney cover band at a party once, so... I did have a little bit of an advantage there." [laughs]

Boylan's familiarity with the group's music is the least of her bona fides. The self-taught drummer has gained acclaim playing with numerous New York–area bands, such as Aye Nako and Little Lungs—all while earning a master's degree in education, working a day job, and giving drum lessons. She even found time to volunteer at the nonprofit Willie Mae Rock Camp for Girls in Brooklyn, a "radical and open community," as

Boylan puts it, run by women who mentor aspiring musicians and help build their confidence. "Have fun! That's the whole point of this," she tells her students. "You just have to believe in yourself and know that you deserve to be up there."

Still, Boylan had to employ those techniques herself when she ascended the throne vacated by Weiss. Not only was she walking into a much-loved band, she hadn't played the larger venues that Sleater-Kinney easily fill, nor was she accustomed to the lengthy sets of a headlining act. "It was definitely intimidating to step into this role, and I think at times I've been struggling



with some kind of impostor syndrome or something," she says. "I just never in my wildest dreams could have imagined having this opportunity, and I was in shock when the band asked me to go on this tour."

Boylan's first gig with Tucker and Brownstein was a one-off at Hopscotch Music Festival in Raleigh, North Carolina. "I've never been so nervous in my life," she says. "That was definitely the biggest show I'd ever played. I still have a lot of nerves before the shows, but nothing will compare to that first one."

Finding her place in Sleater-Kinney's trenchant sound came down to figuring out how to channel the parts Weiss had written.

"She's the one who did all the work as far as working with Corin and Carrie's unique style and coming up with parts to complement that," Boylan says. "I think one of the hardest things for me in playing Janet's parts is the fact that I generally lead with my left hand and I believe she leads with her right hand. I've had to retrain myself to start fills with my right hand."

Some of the perks of playing with a more established band helped Boylan make the transition from indie rocker to an all-star team. "I've been fortunate enough to get a sponsorship from C&C for this tour, and I love the kit so much," she says. "It's their 12th & Vine Big Band Classic. For Sleater-Kinney, I added another crash cymbal—so two total—and I'm playing a Roland SPD-SX [sample pad] on a couple of the songs from their new album. Other than that, it's pretty much the same setup I always play. At home, I have a Tama Rockstar with similar dimensions as the C&C kit; only difference is the Tama has an 18" floor tom.

"What I have on this tour that I will truly miss is a drum tech, crew, and in-ear monitors," Boylan adds. "They really know how to spoil a drummer." When she broke the heel off her trusty DW 7000 kick pedal, it was a member of the crew who saved the day. "I had a near panic attack, but my drum tech swapped a different heel on and salvaged it for me," she says.

Tucker and Brownstein have also been instrumental in making Boylan feel comfortable in her new role. "[They] have been nothing but supportive, patient, and encouraging, so I'm grateful for that," she says. "I'm so honored that I get to have the opportunity to play in a band that I love."

Meredith Ochs

Angie Boylan plays C&C drums on tour.

High Pressure/Low Maintenance

Boylan says that the most difficult aspect of joining Sleater-Kinney on the road is the increased physical demands, which have her adapting her touring lifestyle. "I've been playing drums for most of my life and touring for about fifteen years, but this tour feels like a brand-new experience," she says. "The longer sets do take more of a toll on your body, so I am trying to come up with new strategies to take care of myself on the road, not something I've ever really had to worry about in the past, but now suddenly I have to stretch every day. I get a lot of blisters on my fingers and playing night after night, there isn't much opportunity for them to heal. I bring New-Skin and Band-Aids to every show. I couldn't survive without those. The skin on my fingers has started splitting as

well—another new phenomenon for me. For that, I use Working Hands [moisturizer] in the mornings. Then before the show, two coats of New-Skin, Crazy Glue, and top it all off with a Band-Aid."

"Sleeping on the bus has been a true challenge for me," Boylan adds, "but luckily I'm along for the ride with seasoned vets, so there are a lot of herbal sleep aids floating around."

Though Boylan calls herself "low maintenance" and doesn't ask for anything special on the band's rider, the Long Island, New York, native happily imposes her love of Italian food and diners on her West Coast counterparts. "Who knows what they'd be eating without me!" [laughs]

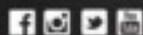




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ddrum

Canopus

Type-R Drumset

A deliberately more aggressive-sounding option from Japan's premier boutique brand.

Canopus started in 1977 primarily as a custom shop specializing in remaking some of the most coveted American drums of the twentieth century. The company went on to develop innovative ideas that provide drummers with fresh sounds and more efficient hardware to better serve contemporary playing applications. The recently introduced Type-R series drumset and snares, which are designed to support more aggressive rock styles, represent Canopus's boldest offerings yet. For review this month we were sent a five-piece Type-R drumkit with a matching snare, all in Corona Metallic finish.

Specs

Type-R drums are available in a limited range of sizes. Bass drums come in 17x22 and 14x24, rack toms are 8x10, 8x12, 9x13, and 10x14, and floor toms are offered as 13x14 or 15x16. We received a 12/13/16/22 shell pack.

All of the toms and bass drums are built with 8 mm hybrid 10-ply maple/birch shells. The small tube lugs used for this series are machined from solid brass and are plated in black nickel or chrome. (Our kit had black-nickel hardware.) The rack toms come with removable suspension mounts, and all toms are outfitted with standard 2.3 mm triple-flange hoops. The floor toms have traditional shell-mounted brackets and legs. The bass drums have sturdy telescoping spurs, drum-key-operated claws, and matching wood hoops.

Type-R snare drums are available in three models. The Bullet drums have 10-ply maple shells, in 5.5x14 or 6.5x14 sizes, with either triple-flange or die-cast hoops. The Type-R Magnum snare features a 6.5x14, 3 mm solid-brass shell with triple-flange or die-cast hoops. The Cannon model has a 6.5x14, 2 mm carbon-fiber shell with triple-flange or die-cast hoops. All of the snares are offered with chrome or black-nickel hardware plating on all parts, including the throw-off and tension rods. We received a Bullet snare in matching Corona Metallic finish and black-nickel hardware.

Exclusive to Type-R drums are Canopus's 2-ply black-coated ASPR batter heads. The toms and snare are finished with single-ply clear bottoms, and the bass drum has a solid ASPR black-coated front.

Sounds

These Type-R drums are designed for maximum projection and presence, and they achieve that—at any tension—without sacrificing Canopus's trademark clean, focused, pure tone. They were easy to get in tune with themselves as well as in concert with one another, from the quicker, snappier attack of the 12" tom down to the punchier thump of the 16" floor tom and the chest-shaking boom of the 22" bass drum.

The maple in the shells helps open up the resonance, while the birch introduces cleaner articulation and shorter sustain. As a result, no muffling was required on any of the toms, and only minimal internal dampening was needed in the kick to create a tight, focused punch.

The snare had a dense, thick tone that helped support the quick, chunky attack with a nice balance of focused low-end, even when tuned super tight. Overtones were minimal, so no dampening was required, which served to maximize the drum's power and projection. My favorite tuning for the snare was high and tight, while the toms had the most usefulness for me when tuned lower, especially when I was going for a big, punchy Dave Grohl-type vibe. The bass drum had some serious wall-shaking low-end when tuned fairly high, but I found that it sounded best for most modern rock situations when both heads were tensioned just above the wrinkle point. That tuning had a shorter decay, the deepest pitch, and a bit of guttural growl that blended well with distorted guitars and overdriven bass.

Check out a demo of the entire tuning range of this Type-R drumset and Bullet snare at moderndrummer.com.

Michael Dawson





Dream

Eclipse Series Cymbals

A full range of half-lathed B20 models designed for maximum versatility.

After considerable success with the original 21" Dark Matter Eclipse ride, Dream decided to flesh out a full setup of partially lathed cymbals. These new Eclipse series models include 15" hi-hats, 17" and 19" crashes, and 21" and 23" rides. They're all handcrafted from B20 bronze in Asia under the guidance of the Canadian company's expert R&D team of professional drummers and percussionists. We received an entire set, plus a high-quality 22" Deluxe cymbal bag with dividers, so let's give them a closer look and listen.

15" Hi-Hats

All Eclipse models are fired in an oven and hand-hammered before being immersed in a saltwater bath. After another bake in the oven, the cymbals are lathed with a thin knife from about the center of the bow to the edge. The 15" hi-hats have a greater portion lathed (outer 5"), which helps open up the tone while retaining some dryness and tonal variety.

The top cymbal is medium weight, and the bottom is heavy. They have a fairly bright, cutting tone, with a clean open bark and shimmering sloop, and a touch of vintage-style breathiness. They respond nicely to varying degrees of foot pressure and stroke location, from a tight, pinpoint "tick" when held together tightly and played lightly on top, to a wider and denser chop when you

ease up on the pedal and strike with a firmer stroke on the edge. These hi-hats favor more contemporary musical situations, especially ones requiring a focused but cutting sound, while introducing some of the more nuanced complexity of thinner, jazzier models.

17" and 19" Crashes

Like the hi-hats, the 17" Eclipse crash is lathed on more than 50 percent of its surface. As a result, it has less ride capability. It's basically a bright, full-sounding crash with a strong, clear bell tone. I can imagine some percussionists, especially timbaleros, putting this crash to good use for accents and bell patterns. But in most drumset applications, it's most appropriate as a general-use medium-thin crash.

The 19" Eclipse, however, doubles very nicely as a light ride and a big, wide crash. I was also able to utilize the raw section of the bow more effectively for drier/earthier ride tones, while striking the lathed portion with the stick tip elicited more high-end sparkle and spread. It's thin enough to open up easily when playing lighter crashes, but it has enough control to not get overrun with overtones when articulating fast patterns. And it's heavy enough to project through dense/loud mixes when crashed more aggressively. For minimalist setups with a single do-all crash-ride cymbal, the 19" Eclipse would be perfect.

21" and 23" Rides

The transition between the deep, dry





articulation achieved by riding on the raw section of the 21" Eclipse to the washier, wider tones living near the edge is seamless. In fact, if I had listened to this cymbal blindfolded, I wouldn't have known that it sported a dual finish. The feel, however, is quite different between the two surfaces, with the raw area having a more rigid and responsive rebound while the outer section being softer with more give. These two different feels made my hands automatically shift to different touches, which made for an almost subconscious shift from playing with slower, looser strokes at the edge

and a sharper and more front-heavy posture when playing near the bell. I like cymbals that make my hands respond in different ways, and the 21" Eclipse did just that—while providing warm, all-purpose tones.

Conversely, the 23" Eclipse ride has the most drastic tonal variety between the raw and lathed portions. The bell is very strong and direct, and the unlathed center portion produces extremely dark, dry tones. The lathed section has a much looser feel and a wide, trashy tone. The transition between these two sounds is immediate, almost as

if you're playing on separate 23" cymbals, one raw and one lathed. Paired with the 21" ride, you'd have a wide array of tones at your disposal that would sound great in a variety of situations, from super light and delicate to loud and aggressive. Throw in the 15" hi-hats, one or both crashes, and a set of lighter 14" Bliss or Contact hi-hats, and you'd have pretty much all your bases covered—and then some.

Check out a demo of the entire Eclipse series at modern drummer.com.

Michael Dawson



PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

Welch Tuning Systems

Artistry Series Drumset

A smooth, strong, and stable method for tensioning an entire drum with a single key.

Starting from founder Samuel Welch's desire to create a drum tensioning system that allows the user to quickly "tune for the room," Colorado-based Welch Tuning Systems offers American-made maple snares and drumkits featuring nearly free-floating shells with 90-percent fewer holes and hardware on each drum thanks to a slick

cable-tensioning setup. While not the first company to use cable to tension a drum, Welch has engineered and patented several unique components that it believes makes its system far superior to all previous offerings.

Specs

The Artistry series drumset we received for review included a 9x12 tom, 12x14 and 14x16 floor toms, a 14x22 bass drum, and an 8x14 snare. The toms and bass drum are constructed from 8-ply maple shells with double 45-degree bearing edges. The snare features a 10-ply maple shell with single 45-degree edges.

The drums came fitted with Evans drumheads, with G2 Coated batters and Genera Clear bottoms on the toms, an EMAD2 Clear batter and EQ3 Resonant on the bass drum, and a G1 Coated batter and Snare Side 300 bottom on the snare. The toms had 2.3 mm triple-flanged rims, and the snare was outfitted with die-cast hoops.

First Glance

The first thing that drew my attention to these drums was the prominent look of the metal cable and pulley system against the satin-black finish on the shells. The snare has a natural glossy finish. The pulley fixtures are attached to the hoops, where you'd otherwise find tension rods on a conventional drum. This means that the only fittings that come into contact with the shells are the tuning mechanism—which is similar to a large tuning peg found on an upright bass guitar—the snare throw-off, the bass drum spurs, the floor tom mounts, the vent gaskets, and the badges. As a whole, the kit is strikingly beautiful.

Sounds

When set up with no muffling applied to any of the drums, this Artistry series kit was easy to tune for the room, and it projected beautifully. At low tensions, the toms had a deep growl that retained clarity and punch. Even when placed on a snare stand, the 12" tom sounded larger than its size would suggest. The drums choked up a bit when placed under a lot of tension, but there was plenty of headroom to explore between choking and completely loose in which the toms and bass drum produced deep and resonant tones. They also blended very well with each other.

Even though it's relatively shallow, the 14x22 bass drum produced a deep and





resonant boom. Only a small bit of muffling was used to dial in the resonance for a more controlled sound when recording. The snare had plenty of sensitivity at tensions from low to medium-high, but it did tend to choke up a bit at high tension. Center hits yielded fat backbeats, while rim shots spoke with the deep, authoritative “knock” you’d expect from an 8”-deep shell.

When the drums were under microphones while tracking a mid-tempo rock song, they absolutely sang. The toms were open, full, and punchy, and the bass drum, which had a small packing blanket inside and lightly touching the heads, lent a massive low-end punch. The only other drum that needed a bit of dampening to eliminate unwanted overtones captured by the microphone was the 14” floor tom. That said, it took very little time to get a pleasing mix of the kit through the studio monitors.

Points to Consider

No fine-tuning of the top versus bottom heads is possible with the Welch tuning system, since there are no individual tension rods that allow for it. If desired, the tension of the tuning pegs can be changed via an adjustment screw, allowing you to lock down the tension of the cable once you’ve found your tunings. In the few days that we spent playing these drums, the tuning stayed put.

To test the process of swapping drumheads with this cable system, I disassembled and reassembled the 14” floor tom before the session. Although it was a slightly more involved process, it was relatively simple to put everything back together, and I was able to get a good sound from the drum very quickly.

At the moment, Artistry series drums are available in four finishes: Satin Black, Gloss Cherry, Gloss Maple, and Gloss White. These finishes comprise twelve coats of lacquer. Three-, four-, and five-piece shell packs are offered, and street price ranges from \$1,149 for a snare to \$5,795.00 for a full five-piece kit. Find out more at welchtuningsystems.com.

Nick Amoroso





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1970

The Year in Drumming

As our previous special issues focusing on the years 1967 and 1969 revealed, the contributions of the greatest drummers of the era both mirrored and drove the rapidly evolving sounds of popular music. By the start of the '70s, new trends—jazz-fusion, singer-songwriter, funk-rock, heavy metal, blues-rock—began to form and capture listeners' imaginations.

In England, what would come to be known as classic rock was feeling its creative oats in ever more sophisticated recording studios, like the one owned by drummer Barry Morgan, which housed England's first 24-track Ampex tape machine. In 1970 alone, the London studio was the laboratory for groundbreaking albums and songs like Paul McCartney's solo debut ("Maybe I'm Amazed," with drummer Joe English), the Kinks' *Lola Versus Powerman and the Moneygoround, Part One* ("Lola," Mick Avory), Rod Stewart's *Gasoline Alley* ("It's All Over Now," Micky Waller), Donovan's *Open Road* ("Riki Tiki Tavi," John Carr), Jethro Tull's *Benefit* ("Teacher," Clive Bunker), and Cat Stevens' *Tea for the Tillerman* ("Wild World," Harvey Burns).

Meanwhile, across town at Regent Sounds Studio on Denmark Street, Black Sabbath was essentially inventing heavy metal with their self-titled debut (recorded in late '69 and released in February '70) and its follow-up, *Paranoid*, which came out that September. We begin this month's special issue speaking with the band's founding drummer, Bill Ward, who takes us back in time to those musically daring days, when he and his buddies, like Led Zeppelin's John Bonham, were blazing the path that so many would follow.

What was happening in the States in 1970 was no less revolutionary. George Clinton, who'd spent the previous decade finding his musical voice, introduced the nation to the word "Funkadelic," which tells you all you need to know about what was on his mind at the time: equally grooving and mind-expanding music that appealed to R&B and rock fans in equal measure. And if somehow you still missed the message, the title to the band's second album, *Free Your Mind... And Your Ass Will Follow*, also released in 1970, drove the point home. Both records, recorded in the famously funky city of Detroit, Michigan, featured the drumming of the late, great Tiki Fulwood. Here we explore Tiki's amazing work via the recollections and analysis of two men who know of what they speak: Fishbone's Philip "Fish" Fisher and longtime Funkadelic kit man Benzel Baltimore.

Back East, at New York's Columbia Studio B, Miles Davis continued challenging...well...everybody with his unclassifiable double album *Bitches Brew*, which featured his new drummer, Jack DeJohnette, in the right channel, and future fusion star Lenny White—on his first recording—in the left. (Percussionist Don Alias sat at the kit for the

track "Miles Runs the Voodoo Down," while two more legendary drummers, Billy Cobham and Airto Moreira, join in on "Feio.") White would fill the rest of his calendar in 1970 with more classic recordings, including Woody Shaw's *Blackstone Legacy*, Joe Henderson's *If You're Not Part of the Solution, You're Part of the Problem*, and Freddie Hubbard's *Red Clay*. Lenny recalls the staggering events of the year this month as well.

On the west coast, as the counterculture was feeling the strain of its own ambitions in the late '60s, a new, mellower school of rock was emerging around the Laurel Canyon scene, represented by singer-songwriters like Neil Young and Joni Mitchell (both Canadian expats), Stephen Stills (Young's bandmate in the Buffalo Springfield), and former Byrd David Crosby. When Young joined Stills, Crosby, and British singer Graham Nash (ex-Hollies band member) for the iconic *Déjà Vu* album, they enlisted Johny Barbata to do their historic 1970 tour. Barbata, who'd previously established himself as a formidable drummer with the Turtles ("Happy Together," "You Showed Me"), went on to drum on Stills and Nash's solo debuts, both of which are considered high points of the period. He tells us all about it this month.

Finally, we discuss the astonishing work of Jim Gordon with the equally legendary drummer Jim Keltner, a friend and peer who knew him well before his career came to a horrific end due to the effects of mental illness. For many drummers even today, Gordon is considered one of the greatest players to ever walk the earth, and if you were to only look at his 1970 output, as we do this month, it would be difficult to disagree. From Derek & the Dominos' *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs* to Dave Mason's *Alone Together* to Joe Cocker's *Mad Dogs & Englishmen* and beyond, it's clear that the most important rock artists of the day understood that Gordon was the man, and our chat with Keltner goes far to help us understand the genius behind his historic recordings.

We hope you enjoy and take away something important from each of these pieces; it was a profound time indeed, and it still feeds our imaginations and inspires our music-making.

Adam Budofsky
Editorial Director

Bill Ward

Metal Drumming

Godfather

by Jeff Potter

“Oh no, I could never have imagined it,” says Bill Ward with a long pause of disbelief. The drummer is recalling last year, standing alongside his Black Sabbath bandmates, Tony Iommi and Geezer Butler, to receive the revered Lifetime Achievement Grammy. And he is remembering a half-century before now, when the legendary heavy-metal band recorded their first album. “I never really had any thought about the future,” he explains. “I only cared about making a good record.”

The band’s premiere 1970 LP, *Black Sabbath*, followed by *Paranoid* a mere seven months later, delivered a one-two punch now considered to be the formative pillars of heavy metal. The debut opens with the sound of a drenching thunderstorm punctuated by a tolling church bell. Suddenly, the eerie tableau is shredded by the demonic three-note theme of Iommi’s gargantuan guitar assault, bottomed by Butler’s throbbing bass and Ward’s thunderous kit flourishes. When vocalist Ozzy Osbourne finally enters, spinning a yarn of a face-to-face encounter with Satan, it’s clear heavy metal has arrived. If the hippy bands of that era were saying, “Spread love, it’s the Age of Aquarius,” Sabbath was warning, “Run for your lives; the apocalypse is nigh!”

Although sporadic building blocks of metal had hit record racks before 1970—including contributions by Cream, Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, and even the 1964 distorted power-chording of the Kinks’ “You Really Got Me”—no other band so clearly defined the ethos of heavy metal, both sonically and thematically, as Black Sabbath.

Ward ferociously drove the dark, occult-themed quartet, digging deep on the two-fisted grooves while embellishing around the massive monster riffs and drawing from his influences in blues, rock, R&B, and—though surprising to some—his love of early jazz heroes.

In that decade alone, Ward fueled the band through six additional highly successful LPs and tireless world touring, establishing them as one of the globe’s top acts. And in the following decades, their successful reign continued. Ward eventually departed the band in 1980. He subsequently manned the throne for shorter stints in 1983, 1984, and 1985, then for longer stays from 1997 to 2006 and 2011 to 2012. In addition, Ward released a string of solo albums, starting with 1990’s *Ward One: Along the Way*. Although Black Sabbath later folded in 2017, Osbourne has publicly expressed

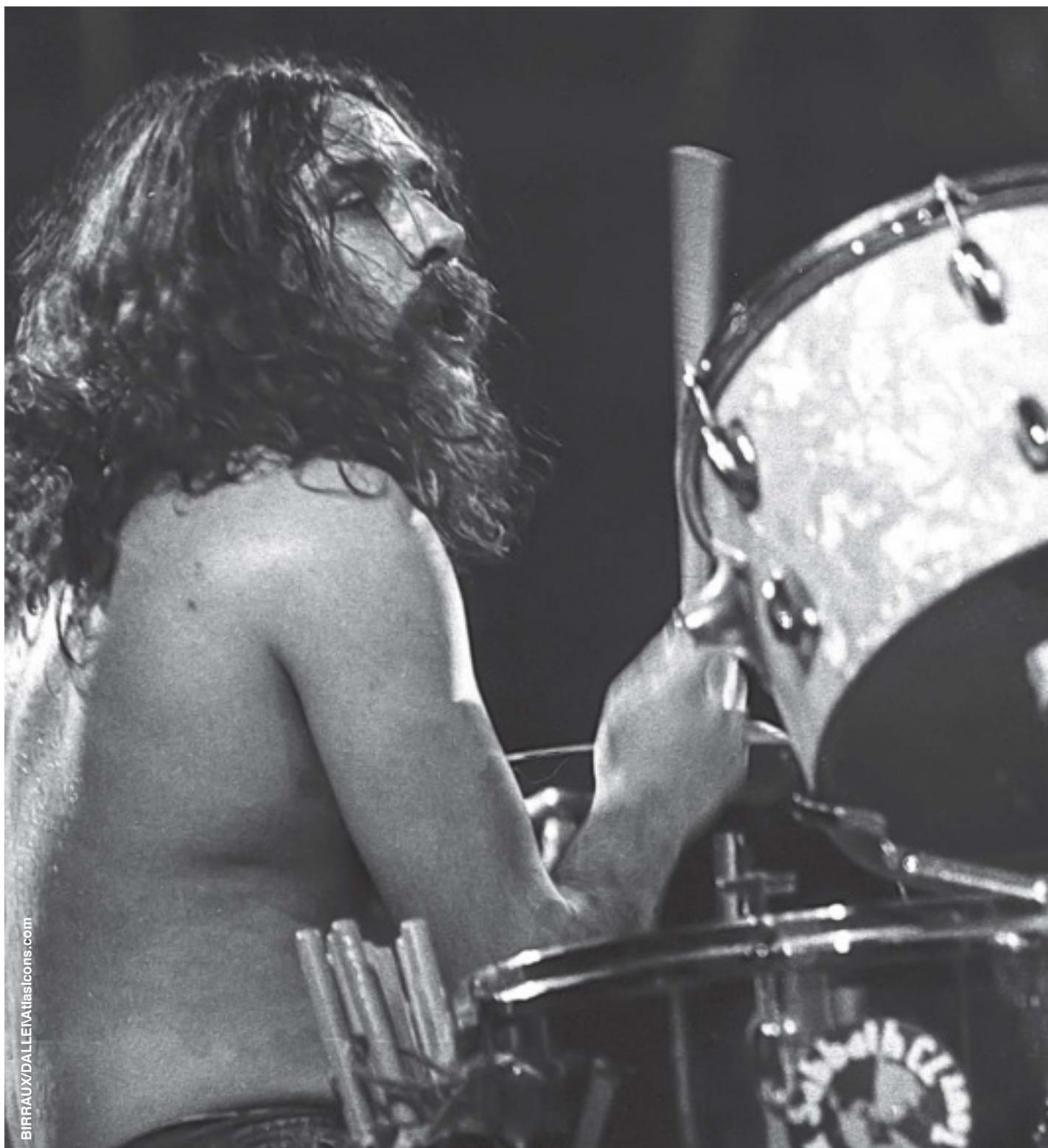


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interest in future one-off concerts with the original lineup.

Today, at seventy-one years old (he turns seventy-two on May 5), Ward is as avid about drumming as ever, while actively engaged in composing and leading his two bands, Day of

Errors and the Bill Ward Band. Summing up his long journey in the big time, the powerhouse drummer says, "Whatever I did on the first album, I was learning to become a better drummer beyond that. I strive for that. I'm still doing that: striving to be better than wherever I was a few weeks ago."



MD: In 2017, *Rolling Stone* placed *Paranoid* at #1 on their 100 Greatest Metal Albums of All Time list. That speaks to its long-lasting influence.

Bill: I'm truly honored. Honestly, I give a lot of credit to our peers, other bands after us, who credited us. That really helped to bring Black Sabbath into a fortified place, as far as travelling through the '90s and the 2000s.



MD: The band had become more focused on *Paranoid*—and with a stronger groove. A lot of the credit for that goes to you.

Bill: We were quickly getting better. After the first album, we were playing better venues and becoming more confident. We were becoming more *outrageous*: allowing ourselves to let go of previous influences and be more ourselves. I think that's what happens with bands when they have a hit first record... I feel great about everything we achieved. One of the things I had to learn about myself is that I'm not a drummer.

MD: How's that?

Bill: I play *orchestration*; I play back to what comes at me. I build structures around things. And I make allowances for the bass to sweep over me and for Tony to break through; they allow so much to happen.

I never thought about "keeping a beat" in Black Sabbath. Some things needed a groove. But groove accompaniment seemed to work and then as soon as that stopped, I would move on to where else I needed to support things.

“Just the other day, while playing with a friend, I would deliberately slow down where I could. I like to do those kinds of treatments, because it really brings out the balls in a song.”

MD: You've cited many classic jazz drummers as your main influences, including Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, and Louie Bellson. There is jazz influence in what you played with Sabbath, even though people see heavy metal as a polar opposite to jazz. Your bandmates were laying down solid monster riffs while you were responding, playing around it—syncopating, filling, providing fluidity—somewhat like Mitch Mitchell, but in a different context.

Bill: It's totally like Mitch. And it's like John Densmore—the way that he played between the Doors. He's a *remarkable* drummer. I

see him and Mitch Mitchell as orchestrational drummers also—and with amazing power. But it's more than just the playing: it's the emotion of the chord. If there was something that was so dynamic—with so much anger behind it—then I learned to produce anger from the drumkit.

Just the other day, while playing with a friend, I would deliberately slow down where I could. I would play half-time or just a really simple right-hand pattern—just so it would give the *feeling* that the track was slower than the tempo would actually be. I like to do those kinds of treatments, because it really brings out the balls in a song—playing “slow” behind something that also has huge chords. It's different; it's very menacing. And to create that, you also need the right partners.

MD: Those slower chugging tempos, with huge gravity, were a Sabbath signature. It surely was never an on-top feel.

Bill: No! If it had been on top, it would have completely ruined everything. It has to be behind.

MD: The initial '70s albums were recorded with the band playing together “live” in the studio and interacting. A lot of current metal recordings use excessive overdubs, sometimes with players laying down each track individually.

Bill: A lot of the musicians in the 1960s, including the members Black Sabbath, grew up learning how to play dynamically. We could play loudly or quietly. We didn't have machines that did that for us; we had to produce that. Dynamics were *everything*. Even in playing at the high volumes of bands like Black Sabbath.

MD: There were also some more specific references to jazz on



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“I love Day of Errors because I can play loud, which I love. I can be aggressive and be all the things that I was able to be in Black Sabbath.”

the debut, certainly on your intro to “Wicked World.”

Bill: I stole that from Krupa.

MD: Talk about those jazz-drummer influences.

Bill: When I was a child, between four and five years old, I heard a lot of big band music. I was drawn to drummers,

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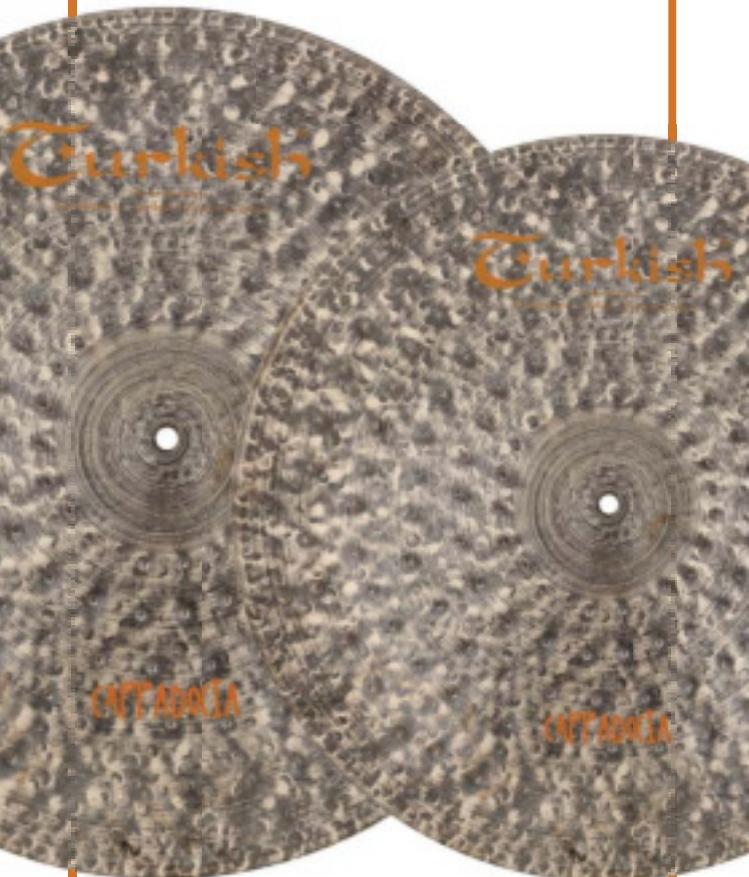
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Bill Ward

and particularly to Krupa. There was something about him that was "reckless." Buddy, however, always seemed tight and professional. That didn't put me off too much—I love Buddy's playing. But there was something about Gene that was so... almost sloppy. And I was drawn to how he went about being so in-control, yet sounding out of control. Maybe not out of control really, but very *listenable*. Very attractive as a drummer. Where he put his kicks—some of them reminded me of Earl Palmer on Little Richard tracks like "Tutti Frutti" and "Long Tall Sally." I said, "Hey, I think I've heard this before!" Maybe he'd been listening to Gene as well. [laughs]

MD: Also, you would often get away from the cymbals and snare and switch into sections using just throbbing toms, with an emphasis on the floor.

Bill: Oh yeah, I totally go there all the time. If Tony's got a low note, I'm there, man. That's a Krupa thing. I still listen to him today. When I talk to my drummer friends today, we'll sit down and talk about Krupa. We don't talk about us; we talk about the masters and swing music.

MD: You also slipped in some funky elements that gave the metal grooves a lift, suggesting that you listened to R&B and soul as well.

Bill: Well, I did. And I started listening to New Orleans funeral music when I was about six years old. I was drawn into the darkness of that music.

MD: The slow to-the-grave processionals?

Bill: I was drawn into both the slow and fast. And I started playing that. It's such an infectious groove.

MD: You've cited one of your favorite Sabbath tracks as "Into the Void" [from 1971's *Master of Reality*]. You were playing double bass then. What do you like about that track?

Bill: It's that I have to hold everything on the ground. That thing can fly away, fly away like a tortured bird. I really have to hold it. What I do is—I'm going to let you in on a trade secret—I look at Tony's left foot. I just work with his left foot and that's how I keep my end of it on the ground. I have to keep it tight, because when we go into that busier, bigger part, in order to be impactful, I have to come from an almost sullen place; I'm not being "constructive" at all by adding anything in, because the band needs to make an impact when we do come in. I have to be very strict with my time and solid in the groove. And I can't do little tom things; I have to stay away from the temptations of showing my skills, blah blah. Because that song is about the band, not me.

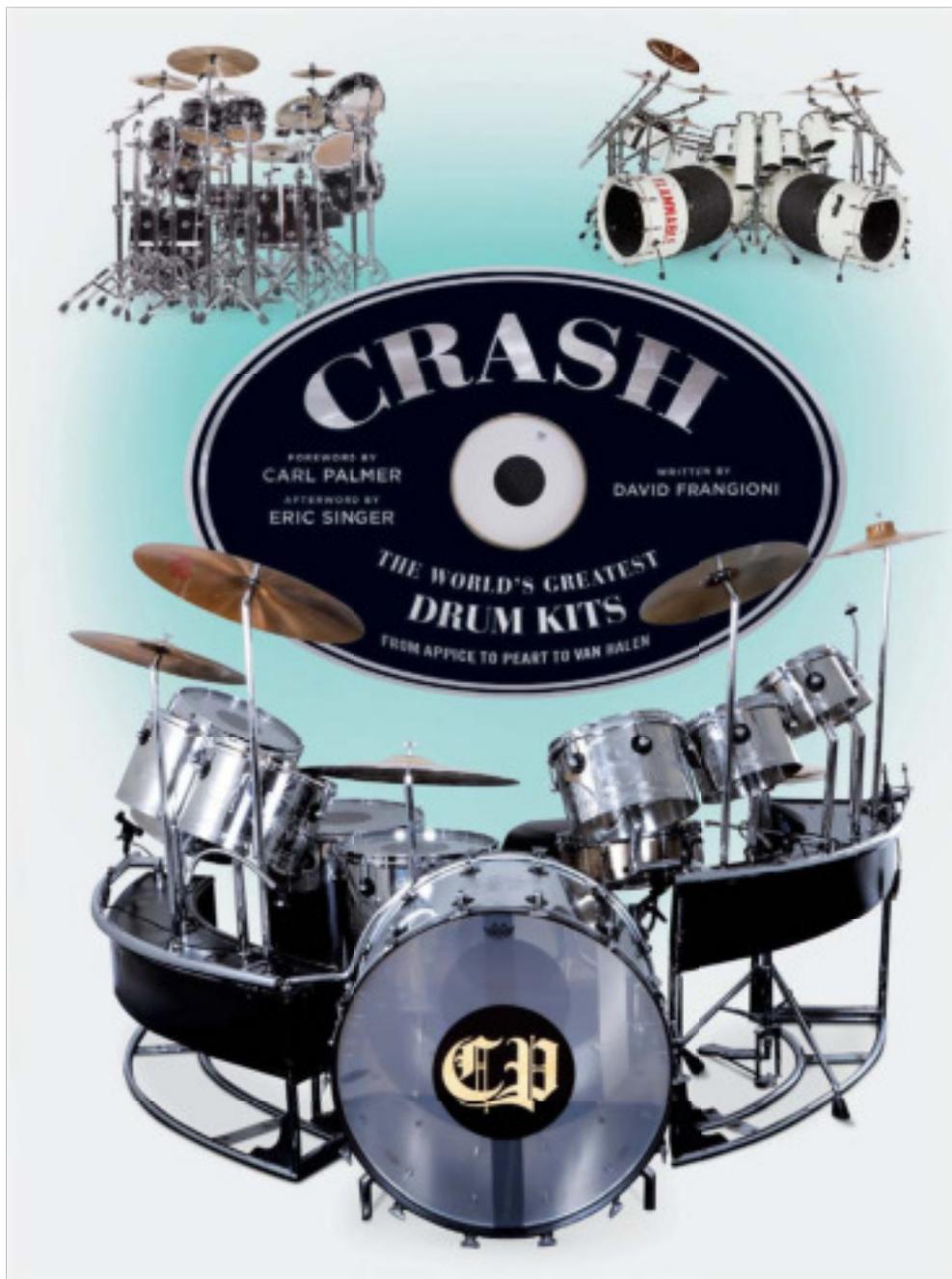
MD: Drummers naturally take in physical cues. That's why an isolated studio booth with limited visuals can be restrictive.

Bill: I know that one well. Because I have to have contact. I was brought up playing with contact. The first time I went into the booth, when we made *Black Sabbath*, I felt as if I was drowning. I need to have my cues. I needed to see Tony's fingers, I've got to see everything—the way he moves, the way he goes back and forth. It's very important.

MD: In the early tours, the drum miking, sound support, and monitors were primitive by today's standards. In that ultra-volume setting, how the heck did you do it?

Bill: I had to play really hard. Especially when we started using the amplification we had in 1970. Fortunately they did have a

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Bill Ward

sound system when we came to the United States, and that was the first time I felt like I could be heard. Other than that, I had to beat the crap out of the drumkit. We all had to kick the crap out of it. Mitch Mitchell had to do it. Some of my friends back then, like Ric Lee with Ten Years After—he *pounded* the drumkit. Corky Laing *pounded* the drumkit.

MD: With limited monitoring, it must have been difficult to keep the band together.

Bill: We were used to playing with each other right from the beginning. So going onstage, you could pretty much put any sound system up around us and we could play, because we had all the body cues, a lot of stage cues. In 1970, we did get some extra mics on my drumkit. And it wasn't too much later that I had a speaker behind my ass—my own bass drum. I had to get used to that. But it didn't stop my aggression; I've always played aggressively with Black Sabbath. You have to; the songs *make* you play aggressively.

I really didn't pay much attention to the monitors. The only thing I really needed to hear was the very top of Tony's high notes. Because in between introductions, he'd play very high and I couldn't hear them. Sometimes I'd lose them, either from the wind blowing across the stage or different technical reasons. So again, I would have to watch because I had to come in and the whole thing was hanging on me.

MD: As a godfather of metal drumming, how do you see the state of the art today, and for the future?

Bill: I like what a lot of the guys have done, including some of my buddies like Dave Lombardo, Gene Hoglan, and—back in the old guard—Johnny Kelly. I know a lot of guys and I admire every single one of them. I go and watch them up close and personal. I love what they're presenting and moving forward to. I can feel the difference in what we were doing back in the '70s and what they're doing now—moving forward. Metal has its own brand. I hope this doesn't sound cynical or dividing. But, real metal tends

Ward's Current Setup

Drums: Gretsch Brooklyn Series (except snare) in Gray Oyster finish

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- 9x13 tom
- 10x14 tom
- 16x18 floor tom
- 18x18 floor tom
- 18x24 bass drums

Hardware: Gibraltar, including telescoping cymbal boom stands with counterweights

Heads: Remo Coated Ambassadors

Cymbals: Sabian

- Hi-hats: various choices in 15" and 16" sizes: AAX X-Plosion Hats; AAX X-Celerator Hats, sometimes with two or three rivets on under side edge; AAX Stage Hats; 17" hand-hammered prototypes
- Crashes: Two crashes in various combinations from among: 18", 19", or 20" AAX Metal crashes; 20" Rock ride; 21" AA Rock ride; 21" Raw Bell Dry ride; 20" or 22" medium-heavy AAX crash
- Ride: 24" HH Power Bell (sometimes prototype 26" or 28")
- China: 26" sand-blasted finish prototype (on rare occasion)

Early-'70s Black Sabbath Setup

Drums: Ludwig in Black Oyster finish, 3-ply mahogany/poplar/mahogany, with maple rings: 9x13 tom, 16x18 floor tom, 14x22 bass drum; 5x14 400 snare with chrome finish. **Cymbals:** Super Zyn, including 14" hi-hats, 16" and 18" crashes or two 18" crashes, 20" or 22" ride



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Bill Ward

to not be about girl/boy; it tends to be about issues and about tragedy. And that's where the rubber meets the road. There are a lot of bands that *play* loud but that I was never really turned on by; they were singing about a girl or something. I like bands that get down there, f***'n get in there!

MD: Over the course of many years with Sabbath, how do you see the evolution of your drumming?

Bill: Whether I'm writing a song or playing, I look for the best possible thing I can do as a drummer that will support the music. My drumming's changed a lot. I think I became quite good. I hope that doesn't sound egotistical. I became more confident. Going back to the late 1990s, early 2000s, when we were on tour, I was kicking ass. I was kicking absolute ass. I'd been practicing and playing a lot. And so, going through the Black Sabbath songs again was absolutely incredible. I was actually adding in new things because I'd forgotten how they were originally. So I started to rebuild them.

MD: Keeping it fresh is a skill in itself.

Bill: I can't go onstage and play the same thing twice.

MD: Maybe that's another jazz influence?

Bill: It could be. But I just can't do it; I don't have that kind of ability. I mean, I'm close to it: I know we take a break and play four beats. Yeah, I know that kind of stuff, but I'm always trying something different.

We were trying to step out a little bit. When we did "Supertzar" [instrumental piece with wordless vocal choir from 1975's *Sabotage*], I was very happy about that track even though it was very controversial. I'm glad that we went there just to go there. When I played drums and glockenspiel and added everything else to it, I felt really good with my parts. It made me work—think outside of the box.

I like that. I'm not very good at basic standard chops. I can't play them anyway, truth be known: hit-hit-hit, that kind of stuff. I can't play stuff I've heard before. Especially when I've heard other drummers playing it before.

MD: What's happening with your two current bands?

Bill: Day of Errors was created in 2013 out of self-preservation. I had to; there was nowhere for me to go as a drummer. So I created my own band. We've got two records completed and a third one in the works. We just have to formally put them out and market them. Currently we have [vocalist] Dewey Bragg and Joey Amodea playing lead guitar.

I love Day of Errors because I can play loud, which I love. I can be aggressive and be all the things that I was able to be in Black Sabbath. It won't be the same as Black Sabbath, but it will be Day of Errors, and Day of Errors is unique.

And BWB [Bill Ward Band] is very healthy musically. We've been releasing singles on our own site. We've got at least another three albums right now to tour with. BWB is wide open. We basically have me and [guitarist] Keith Finch now, and we pull in a lot of guest artists that we like: bass players, drummers. We did that last year. We did a single as a dedication to the Las Vegas shooting massacre victims called "Arrows." Brian Tichy came in and played drums. I knew that he would sound so good on that. I love doing that; I don't have to be the guy in the middle of everything. I like being involved with other things as well, including writing or production.

When I did the final setup for Brian's bass drum sound, I told him a story about the way that John Bonham and I used to get our bass drum sounds back in 1965. Back then, it was not unusual to be on the same gig with John. He would be in his band, and we were in our band. But we needed to listen to each other's bass drum. So he would kick his bass drum and I would stand in front of it, about eight to ten feet slightly left, where it pinpointed. What we were looking for is a "sick feeling in the stomach." He would say, "Are you sick yet?" I'd say, "Yeah, I've got it." Then I would play my bass drum and he'd go, "No, I don't have it yet...yup, you're good." We were sixteen-year-old kids—waiting for the punch in the gut. That's how we measured the bass drum back then; we didn't have f***'n microphones!

Brian was laughing his ass off when I told him the story. But we used the same technique to get his bass drum sound. When

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Bill Ward

you play loud, there's a spot where that bass just pops right in.

MD: So you go way back with Bonham, well before Sabbath?

Bill: In Birmingham, we always bumped into each other in the clubs. That was not unusual because there was such an unbelievable boom after the Beatles came out with "Love Me Do." Everybody wanted to be in a band. Everybody was playing.

MD: Drummers were hanging out together and sharing?

Bill: There was a drummer named Mickey Evans who played with the BBC Light Jazz Orchestra. He also had a drum shop in Birmingham [Yardley's]. We would all go there in the afternoon, and there was a plethora of people. Bev Bevan would be there, Bonham was there, Bob Lamb, Charlie Grima, Pete York would pop in. I think [Jim] Capaldi came in from time to time. We'd watch Mick play and he'd say, "I've got a new Purdie record!" He'd play it and try to play what Purdie was playing.

He did a pretty good job, too. It's just a beautiful memory: being in the shop, sharing, none of us had a nick of money or anything. And everybody was bright and sharp.

One of the drummers I was hanging with was named Brian Rubin. He was a jazz drummer for the Birmingham BBC Jazz Quartet. When I was a kid, thirteen or fourteen years old, I would walk into his drum shop and he would watch me. Then he'd sit down behind his snare drum and just roll out all this shit! I felt totally intimidated. And he'd say [gruffly], "Now listen to me. Don't forget that! And I'll tell you something else: give all of this away, share it. Don't keep it to your f***'n self." Talk about someone railing on you! But I didn't know then that that kindred spirit between drummers existed. I feel blessed to have been a part of that Birmingham scene.

Even today, that same thing exists. Tomorrow, I'm going to pop over to the NAMM show, and I'm sure I'm going to

bump into drummers that I know. It's the same scene: we share. I try to do that. I hope I've never been selfish with my chops or anything that I've learned—that I've passed it on. Especially with the students.

And I'd like to say something to students: the most important thing is to allow yourself to make mistakes. And try not to beat yourself up. If you're going to beat yourself up over making a mistake or not being good enough, then don't do it too long; because everything that you do as a percussionist is important. It's not only important to you, but to other people. I encourage students to embrace who they are. I made all my mistakes. And I still make mistakes now. But my early mistakes were trying to be like somebody else, and being disappointed when I wasn't like them: I had to be me. So I have to embrace me, and I have to see what "me" is capable of. And as long as I get out of the way of myself—then it all happens with the drums.



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Lenny White

by Ken Micallef

The four-time Grammy Award winner is such a versatile and influential drummer, composer, and producer, it's easy to forget that he was barely out of his teens when he recorded four of the most important jazz records ever—and all in 1970.

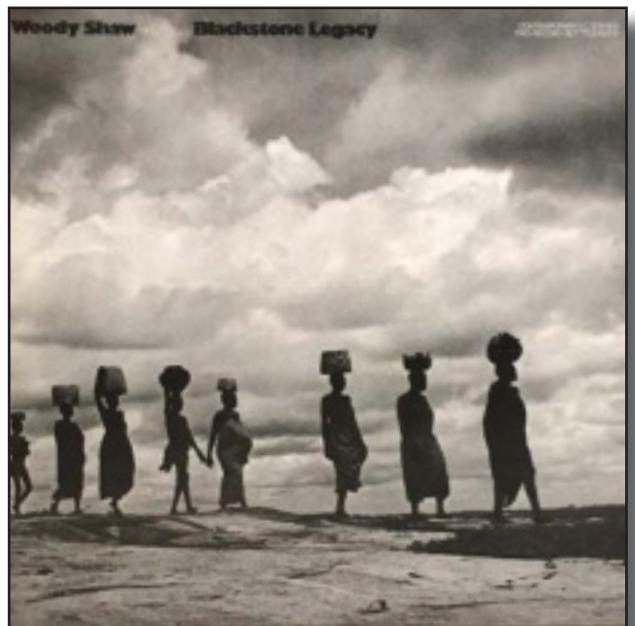
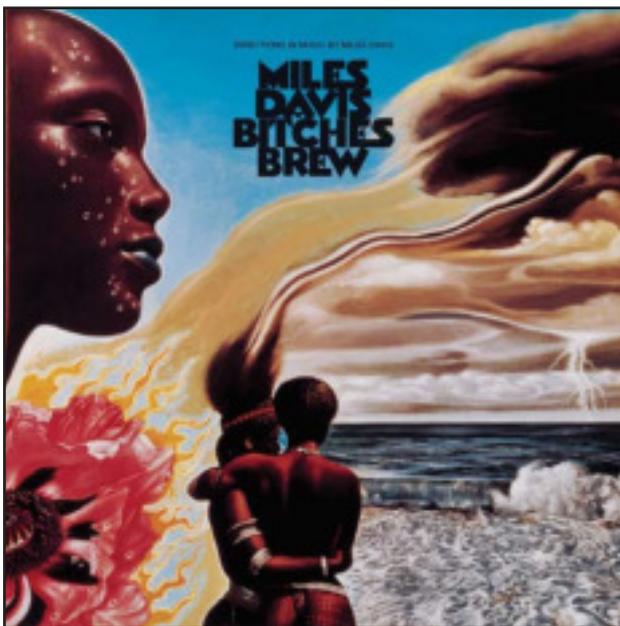
Lenny White got his professional start playing with alto sax great Jackie McLean while still in his teens. White's jazz drumming was an exotic blend of Tony Williams–like dexterity and complexity. Incredibly agile and quick-witted, he churned and burned in a jazz setting, but always in a light, even, skittering fashion. Even at its most raw and jugular, his drumming popped and sizzled, full of elegance and texture.

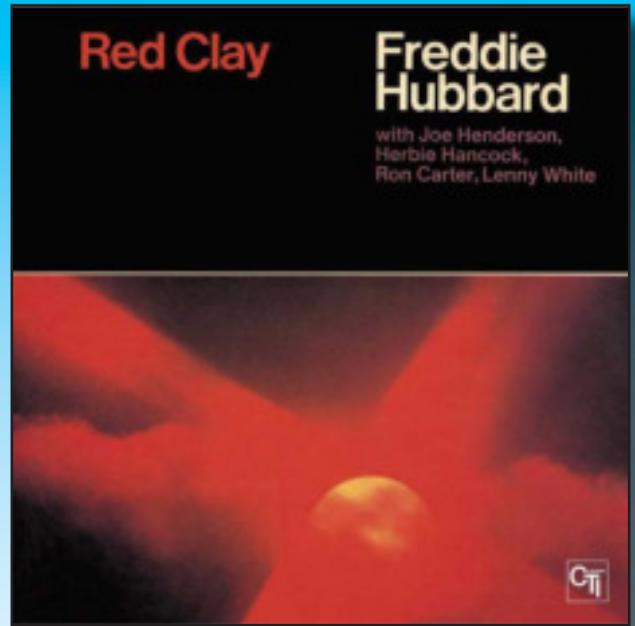
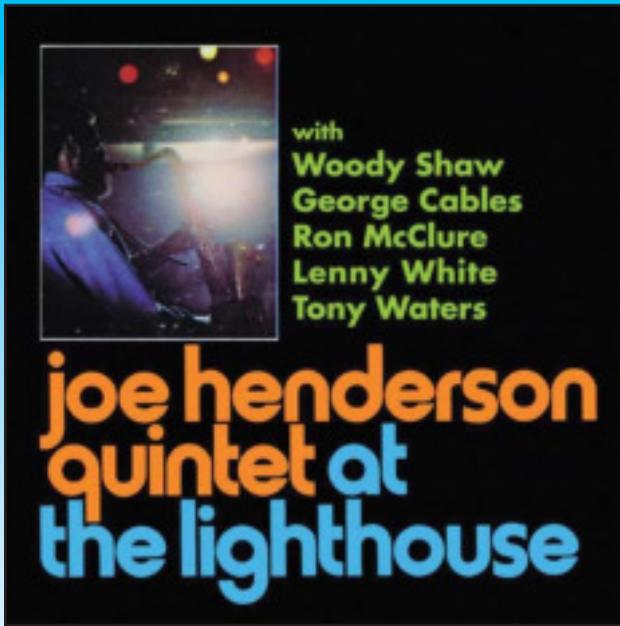
White's own projects reflect his expansive mindset: the albums *Venusian Summer*, *Big City*, *The Adventures of Astral Pirates*, and *Twennynine with Lenny White* find him carrying the fusion banner high. But his unclassifiable albums, like *Present Tense*, *Renderers of Spirit*, *Edge*, and *Anomaly*, remain touchstones, and brought White's music into the modern era. And his work with all-star groups on *Echoes of an Era* and *The Griffith Park Collection* were successful, and

led to work in wider areas of jazz.

White is most revered for his important work on Return to Forever's 1970s fusion classics *Hymn of the Seventh Galaxy*, *Where Have I Known You Before*, *No Mystery*, and *Romantic Warrior*. Today the seventy-year-old's entire body of work, which also includes recordings and performances with Gato Barbieri, Gil Evans, Stanley Clarke, Stan Getz, Al Di Meola, and Bobby Hutcherson, among many others, merits in-depth study.

For our purposes this month, though, we'll be focusing on Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew*, Woody Shaw's *Blackstone Legacy*, Joe Henderson's *If You're Not Part of the Solution, You're Part of the Problem (At the Lighthouse)*, and Freddie Hubbard's *Red Clay*, all of which introduced jazz audiences to White's sizzling, emotive, expansive jazz drumming in 1970.





MD: What was your history before recording *Bitches Brew*?

Lenny: I was nineteen, living in Jamaica, Queens. In 1969 I'd been playing locally with Jackie McLean. I was living at home; my dad would take me to gigs. Early on I played a gig in Queens at a club called the Aphrodisiac. Rashied Ali and Bennie Maupin were on that gig, too. I'd played at Slugs; my first gig was with Jackie McLean at the Gold Lounge. That was uptown at 125th Street. I played with McLean, and then by recommendation and people talking about my playing I got the opportunity to play on *Bitches Brew*.

MD: Who recommended you?

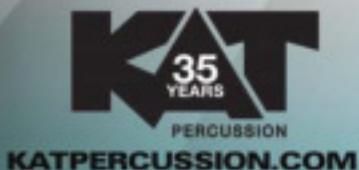
Lenny: Miles had recorded *In a Silent Way*, and he had a new project that he wanted to use Tony Williams and Jack DeJohnette on. But Tony was pissed at Miles because before *In a Silent Way* Tony had

brought Dave Holland and John McLaughlin from England to be in his band, the Tony Williams Lifetime. Tony shows up to the *In a Silent Way* record date and Holland and McLaughlin are there, too, so Tony said he would never work with Miles again. He didn't, and he recommended me.

After that, in 1970, I got a call from Freddie Hubbard. Tony Williams, Ron Carter, and Herbie Hancock were doing everybody's records, and Miles was getting upset about that. So they made a pact that they wouldn't do outside records anymore, and when Freddie called Tony to do *Red Clay*, Tony recommended me. Then Joe Henderson asked me to be in his band. I'd played with Woody Shaw in Jackie McLean's band, so Woody called me for *Blackstone Legacy*. Woody and I would talk a lot after gigs about musical

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directions. I'd played in two bands with Woody, in McLean's band and Joe Henderson's band.

MD: Going back to *Bitches Brew*, what happened when you set up the drums?

Lenny: I was playing the drums, hitting them to see how they'd sound. Miles comes into the control room and presses the talk-back and says, "Hey, Jack, tell that young drummer to stop playing."

MD: You and Jack set up next to each other?

Lenny: Yes. They used a stereo pan microphone. Fifty years later, I teach a class at NYU on *Bitches Brew*. We use the book *Listen to This: Miles Davis and Bitches Brew*. There's a lot of information about how the album was recorded with open miking, setups, etc. Back then when it was analog recording, what made all records, whether jazz or rock or classical, was the miking. From that perspective, *Bitches Brew* was pretty much over-miked; the way they panned it later became stereo.

MD: So, two drummers on the date?

Lenny: There were four percussion players: two percussionists and two drummers. I didn't go in thinking, "Jack's playing this, and I'm going to play that." It was my intention to make it sound like one drummer that had eight arms. I'd played with another drummer before. But this was my first record date.

Here's another very interesting point. I wasn't taught how to play music. I was given an opportunity to *create* music, and creating music is different from playing it. Miles Davis didn't hand me a drum chart and say, "This is what I want you to play." He said, "Think of this as a big pot of stew. I want you to be salt." Now, what musical knowledge am I going to call on to sound like salt? I had to create something that I'd never witnessed before. I had to use

Tools of the Trade

Today Lenny White plays Gretsch Custom Broadcaster drums including a 6.5x14 metal snare drum, 8x12 and 9x13 toms, a 14x14 floor tom, and a 14x18 bass drum. His Istanbul Agop Lenny White Epoch cymbals include 14" hi-hats, a 22" ride, a 17" crash, and a 19" ride. He uses Vic Firth Lenny White Signature sticks and brushes.

whatever musical knowledge I had to create what Miles wanted. Miles wanted a spice, and so I had to create that on the spot. It was whatever I heard. He told us all what he wanted, but it was up to us to create that.

MD: Did Miles hold rehearsals?

Lenny: There was only one rehearsal, at Miles' 77th Street apartment. He asked me to bring a snare drum and a cymbal. Jack was there, Chick Corea was there, as well as Dave Holland and Wayne Shorter. We rehearsed the introduction to "Bitches Brew."

MD: What drum setup did you use?

Lenny: My bass drum then was made from a metal oil drum. Miles' nephew, Vince Wilburn, has it now. It was an actual oil drum. Elvin Jones wanted to buy that drum. I used that drum, some Ludwig tom-toms, and a Gretsch metal snare drum.

Later I took that very same drumset to Rudy Van Gelder's studio to record Freddie Hubbard's *Red Clay*. I hit the oil can bass drum, and Ron Carter said, "No, no, no, no, no. You can't use that. It's too resonant and will drown out the bass." Here I get an opportunity to play with my heroes, and Ron Carter says I can't use that bass drum. So Rudy pulls out this 28" bass drum that had a painting of a moonlit lake on the front head. I think it was one of Gus Johnson's drums. So I used that on *Red Clay*. We recorded *Bitches Brew* at CBS Studio Building [Studio B] at 49 East 52nd Street.

MD: Did you and Jack discuss what you were going to play?

Lenny: No! I'd only met Jack once before. When I played at Slugs with Jackie McLean, Jack sat in and played melodica. When I played with Jackie McLean, people said, "Tony Williams and Jack DeJohnette both played with Jackie McLean, then they played with Miles. So you're next to play with Miles." When I was seventeen, I first heard *Seven Steps to Heaven*; that's the seventeen-year-old Tony Williams. Immediately he became my guy. So two years later I got an opportunity to play with Miles, too.

MD: At the *Bitches Brew* sessions, everyone was set up in a half-circle with Miles and Wayne in the middle?

Lenny: It was like an orchestra, and Miles was our conductor. We wore headphones. We had to be able to hear each other. There were no guests at that session. No photos allowed. But there was one guest that nobody talked about, Max Roach. All live recording, no overdubs. 10 A.M. to 1 P.M., for three days. After the sessions, Jack, Max, and I rode uptown in Jack's VW bus. I forget where we went.

MD: What do you teach in your NYU class?

Lenny: I have an ensemble, and I teach a lecture on *Bitches Brew*

"It was like an orchestra, and Miles was our conductor. We wore headphones. We had to be able to hear each other. All live recording, no overdubs. 10 A.M. to 1 P.M., for three days."

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called "The Miles Davis Aesthetic." It encompasses not only *Bitches Brew*, but how the aesthetic has changed. I discuss everything that has gone on since 1969, everything that led up to why Miles decided to make that change and the music that he created. *Bitches Brew* was ten years after *Kind of Blue*, which changed how music sounded from 1959 to 1969; Miles opened a whole new world with *Bitches Brew*. That's how hip-hop and all sorts of things began. Those were novel recording concepts in the jazz idiom at the time. We talk about all those things.

MD: What did you tell people when they asked what *Bitches Brew* sounded like before the album was released?

Lenny: I couldn't. Nobody had heard what that sounded like. We were creating it for the first time. There was no precedent, so there was no way that we could describe it. There was nothing that you could compare it to.

MD: What set did you play on the live Joe Henderson record?

Lenny: I again played the oil can bass drum, the Gretsch snare drum, and the two Ludwig toms. *Red Clay* was recorded in May of '70. Joe's ...*Part of the Problem* was done after *Red Clay* because I was in Joe's band by then. Woody Shaw's *Blackstone Legacy* was 1970 as well. Ron Carter was on *Blackstone Legacy*, too, and Clint Houston and George Cables. We'd all played together in Jamaica, Queens, as part of the Jazz Samaritans. That band had played in a local competition while Billy Cobham was in the group. He left to join Horace Silver's band. I also recorded an Andrew Hill album then called *Passing Ships* for Blue Note. That wasn't released until 2003. I played Rudy Van Gelder's blue sparkle drums on that session.

MD: How did you get away with playing the oil can bass drum on sessions?

Lenny: It sounded great. It sounded cool! It was killing, man, are you kidding? Everybody thought that was a badass drum. After years, Vince Wilburn refurbished it. It looked like an 18" bass drum. The edges were shaved so you could put reinforcement hoops on it, and it was drilled so a head would fit.

MD: Did they hand out charts in those other sessions?

Lenny: No.

MD: How did you all learn the music for *Blackstone Legacy* and *Red Clay*?

Lenny: My classic story about *Red Clay* is about the song "The Intrepid Fox." That's a unique and difficult song form, and we had played an entire take. And it was a great take. We got to the last eight bars of the tune, and I played this figure that sounds like I knew what I was doing. I played the figure on the other side of the beat, and I came out on the right side of the beat. I was so relieved. That's the take that's on the record. I was so glad that I got through that!

MD: It was a loose approach, but did Freddie give chord charts to the other musicians?

Lenny: Yeah, that was hard music, man. "The Intrepid Fox" is a hard tune. I don't think we did more than one take. We just used our ears, man.

MD: What about the *Blackstone Legacy* sessions?

Lenny: Woody had a bunch of music that he gave everyone, and we went in and recorded it. I don't remember if we rehearsed; I don't recall rehearsing a whole lot.

MD: And had you already been in Joe's band when you went into record Joe Henderson's ...*Part of the Problem*?

Lenny: Yes. There's a bootleg tape of us playing at the Both/And Club in San Francisco. We recorded that album with Joe Henderson at the Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach.

MD: In my twenties I studied jazz drums with a former Berklee instructor, James Baker. He made me learn your solo on "Caribbean

Fire Dance" from the ...*Part of the Problem* album. I could never get it, and that's why I'm a writer and not a drummer!

Lenny: Really? That's funny.

MD: Those gigs and recordings in '69 and '70 launched your career.

Lenny: Well, yeah, I had no career before that. No one had heard of me before those records. The first year I recorded an actual album that people could hear was 1969. Jackie McLean was the first guy that I played with that had a recognizable name. I was still in school, so I had to play close to home, like in Philly. Once I did a gig in Philly with Jackie opposite Sun Ra.

It's interesting that Tony Williams and Elvin Jones played in the era, especially in New York. They were somewhat avant-garde drummers, along with Sunny Murray and Milford Graves. They brought that edgy, avant-garde attitude to their drumming. It was the same thing with Jack DeJohnette and Clifford Jarvis. There was a wave of things that were happening, along with Max and Philly Joe Jones and all those guys. Max, of course, was very advanced and leading that. There was this edge on the music, and *Blackstone Legacy* and some of these other records had that attitude. There was an attitude about the music that represented what was going on in the black community at that time.

MD: Looking back, how does your drumming on those records make you feel now?

Lenny: I'm much better now than I was then! Honestly, I would hope that people judge you on your body of work, as opposed to certain records. It's like an actor. An actor can win an Academy Award, but hopefully not be judged by that one film. I don't get any love for the jazz records I recorded!



Studio and Touring Great Jim Gordon

In 1970, Jim Gordon drummed on at least a dozen hit albums, including eight of *the* most indelible records in rock history: Eric Clapton and Leon Russell's self-titled solo debuts, George Harrison's *All Things Must Pass*, Dave Mason's *Alone Together*, Derek & the Dominos' *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs*, Joe Cocker's *Mad Dogs & Englishmen*, Randy Newman's *12 Songs*, and Delaney & Bonnie's *On Tour with Eric Clapton*.

Brother in arms Jim Keltner helps us tell the tale.

by Ken Micallef

The 1960s and '70s were remarkable times for Jim Gordon, whose career epitomized that of the studio musician. Gordon was raised in Sherman Oaks, California, to an accountant father and registered nurse mother. It's not known how Jim acquired his immaculate sight-reading skills or natural ability to support other musicians, but he apparently gained a goodly amount of his staggering drum technique in the International Independent Order of Foresters youth band, a high-caliber marching corps. (The only available records show the corps playing a late-1950s Rose Bowl Parade.)

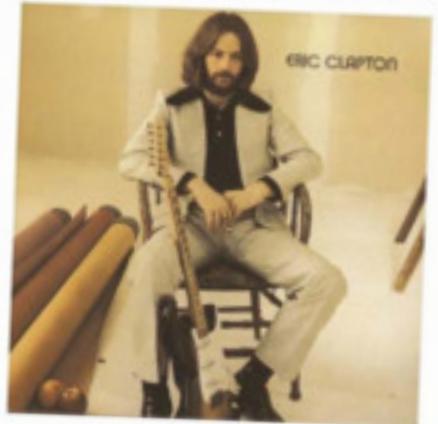
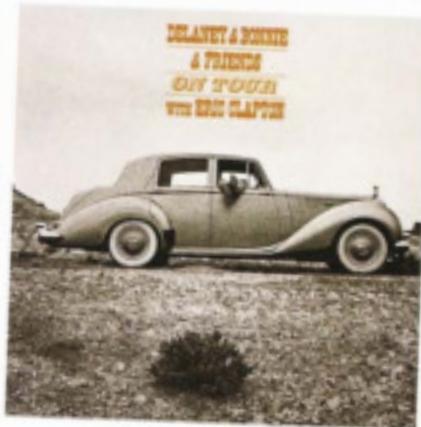
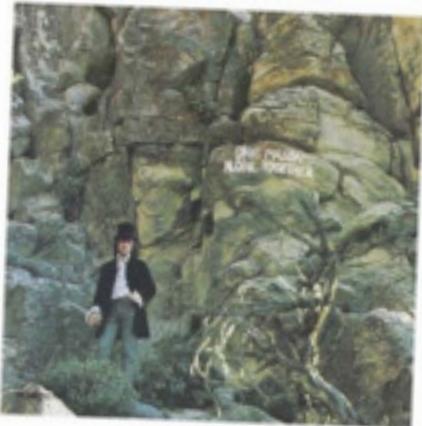
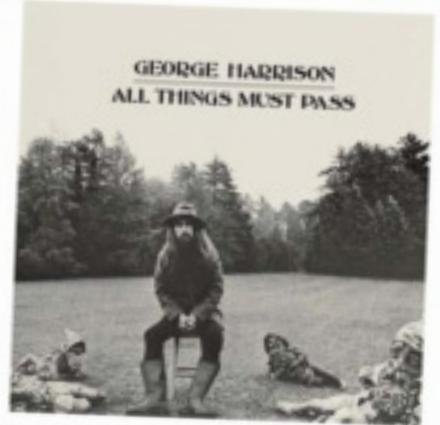
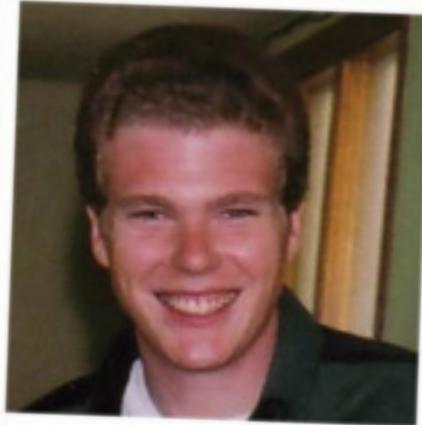
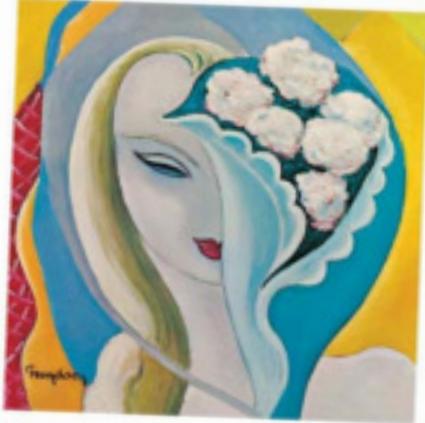
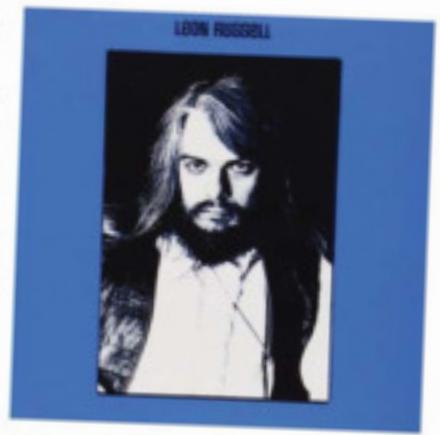
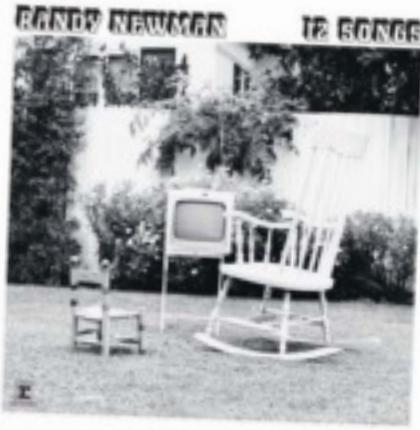
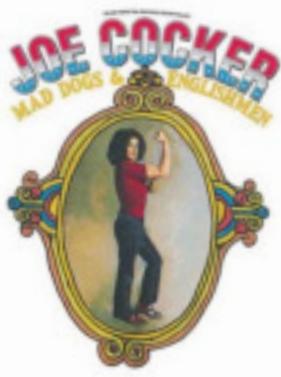
It's widely reported that Gordon passed up a music scholarship to UCLA in 1963 to tour with the Everly Brothers, at age

seventeen. Gordon's career took off as he became a mainstay in the L.A. session world. Before 1970 he tracked with rock, pop, folk, and country royalty, including the Beach Boys, the Byrds, the Monkees, Mason Williams, Tom Scott, the Buffalo Springfield, Judy Collins, Lee Hazlewood, Harry Nilsson, Hoyt Axton, Merle Haggard, Bread, and the Mystic Moods Orchestra. Post 1970, Gordon kept his Camco drums busy in sessions for John Lee Hooker, Barbra Streisand, John Lennon, B.B. King, Seals and Crofts, Carly Simon, Jackson Browne, Gary Wright, Linda Ronstadt, Tom Waits, Nils Lofgren, Steely Dan, Ringo Starr, and many others, some now lost to time.

Gordon also recorded the Incredible Bongo Band's 1972 album *Bongo Rock*.

A group in name only, the Incredible Bongo Band recorded percussion-heavy material with Afro-Cuban influences and instrumentation. The gargantuan 4/4 beat of "Apache" is prime Jim Gordon: a syncopated, swinging, spacious, bass drum-heavy, snare-popping, tom-booming, dead-in-the-pocket groove with the perfect amount of flash and edge to make it jump and burn. "Apache" became a hip-hop staple, providing the groove-bed for the Sugarhill Gang's own "Apache." Gordon's massive "Apache" breakdown beat has been sampled for hundreds of songs. It even inspired a documentary called *Sample This*.

You need only listen to Gordon's own 1969 album, *Hog Fat* (credited to Jimmy Gordon and His Jazznrops Band), or



Derek & the Dominos' *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs* to understand his extraordinary talent. His groove supported other musicians with near perfect time, natural flow, and a pocket so wide that Jim Keltner once commented that he felt he almost didn't need to play when the two collaborated on the Mad Dogs & Englishmen tour of 1970. Gordon was also exceptionally creative in the studio, where, in the extremely busy session atmosphere of the '60s, '70s, and '80s, time was money.

Hog Fat is divided into a jazz side and a "pops" side. Gordon combines a funk bottom with blazing single-stroke rolls in "Satisfaction," detonates bursting concert tom fills over a swinging boogaloo beat in the title track, executes a dirge-like jazz

beat in "Walter L," percolates a seamless 16th-note feel in "Flying Dutchman," and swings a samba in "Bluebird." Gordon's time, feel, and ideas are memorable throughout.

In 1970, Gordon lifted a piano part from his then girlfriend Rita Coolidge and turned it into the coda to one of the greatest rock songs ever, Eric Clapton's "Layla." Gordon is brilliant throughout *Assorted Love Songs*: the innovative beat turnaround in "Bell Bottom Blues," the exploding, playful, melodious, sizzling fills of "Keep On Growing," the dynamic rolls of "Little Wing," the precise, soulful 8th-note cadences of "It's Too Late" and "Tell the Truth," and the tempo-challenging flow of "Why Does Love Got to Be So Sad?"

For a lesson in groove, check out Delaney

& Bonnie's *On Tour with Eric Clapton*. Video of this amazing band (Clapton, George Harrison, Bobby Whitlock, Jim Horn, Bobby Keys, Carl Radle) performing in Europe is available online and is worth watching for Gordon's command of the groove and his utter concentration.

Unfortunately, not many at the time were aware that Gordon was an outpatient at UCLA Medical Center who was treated for schizophrenia. After some twenty-five years of heavy session work, tours, and the rock 'n' roll lifestyle, which exacerbated his substance abuse, in 1984 Gordon went off his meds, gave in to the paranoid voices in his head, and killed his mother. Today Gordon resides at California Men's Colony San Luis Obispo, where he no longer

responds to “Jim Gordon.”

For years, Jim Keltner has wanted to tell the world about his mentor and friend, Jim Gordon. They played together in Mad Dogs & Englishmen, traded gigs and sessions, and enjoyed that amazing time of music, innovation, and celebrity that was in full force in 1970, and the decade to come.

“I first met Jim in 1967,” Keltner tells *Modern Drummer*. “I had just joined this band, MC Squared. They were signed to Warner Bros. for their first record. When we went into the studio, Jimmy was there to play on the first single, ‘SST.’ It was the beginning for me, really. I’d been playing with Gary Lewis and the Playboys, then I

“What made Jim different at the time was that he played harder and with more power. Every time I saw him play, he dug right down deep, as deep as he could get.”

joined Gábor Szabó. On the MC Squared session, Jimmy played drums all by himself in the big room at T, T and G Studios in the middle of Hollywood. They hired me to be the drummer in the band, but they wanted Jim on the single. I took seeing and hearing Jimmy in the studio as a way to learn. I asked him if I could sit next to him on the floor while he played and he said, ‘Sure.’ Eventually we became good friends.

“I was twenty-five,” Keltner continues. “Jimmy was twenty-two, but he was already at the peak of his game. He was a good-looking guy, always impeccably dressed. And he had a really cool cymbal bag. At the MC Squared session he had these new Remo Sparkletone drumheads. He was playing a Ludwig blue sparkle set, like Hal Blaine’s. By the time we were doing Mad Dogs & Englishmen he was playing Camco drums.”

The first thing that impressed Keltner was Gordon’s sound. “He was coming from Hal Blaine,” says Keltner, “who played on all the big pop records of the day that I listened to. It was back in the days when everything was live: strings, horns, background singers, drums, percussion, multiple guitars, and sometimes two bass guitars. And Jimmy Gordon was oftentimes the percussionist. That’s how he picked up so much from Hal.

“Jimmy told me about playing on the Beach Boys’ *Pet Sounds* sessions,” Keltner continues. “They took a break for lunch and everyone would walk across the street to a taco joint. So during one break, he gathered

several plastic juice bottles, cut them with razor blades, and put them together in a row. He cut them in such a way that the pitch was different between each of the four bottles. And that’s what he played with his fingers on ‘God Only Knows,’ that little sound. That fascinated me. Jim would experiment, and obviously he was in the right place at the right time playing on all those sessions. Being able to hear him in the studio was like going to Berklee.

“Then he began playing more drums on sessions. He played on ‘Marrakesh Express’ by Crosby, Stills & Nash, for one. It’s just so beautifully constructed. That’s what I loved about his playing most; he had an innate

thing that he learned from watching Hal. What made Jim different at the time was that he played harder and with more power. Every time I saw him play, he dug right down deep, as deep as he could get.”

After leaving MC Squared, Keltner joined Delaney & Bonnie—a gig that Gordon coveted. “Jimmy would see me and say, ‘Hey man, I’ll trade you some record dates for a live gig with Delaney.’ Jimmy really wanted to play with Delaney & Bonnie. We were a killer band. That’s where we met Eric Clapton. I was on their record *Accept No Substitute* [aka *The Original Delaney & Bonnie*].”

As so often happens, Gordon finally got the chance he’d been hoping for when Keltner had a scheduling conflict. “We were doing a guest spot on a TV show *Harper Valley PTA*,” recalls Keltner, “but I had a record date in New York with Gábor Szabó and Lena Horne [for the album *Lena & Gabor*] that I didn’t want to miss. I got a sub for the TV show, and Delaney wasn’t happy with that and had no choice but to fire me. Jim Gordon replaced me.

The next time Keltner saw Gordon was on Joe Cocker’s Mad Dogs & Englishmen gig, which they both were a part of. “Jim’s playing was so precise and powerful,” recalls Keltner. “When we started rehearsals with Mad Dogs together, I realized, ‘There’s no reason for me to work real hard here, because Jim’s got such a strong groove.’ It was a very valuable lesson in how to play together with another drummer. And Jim

was a time machine. It needed to be strong because there were a lot of people onstage. We were a big rock revue band.”

According to Keltner, he and Gordon would share drum fills. “You can tell his fills because he had a more military feel,” he explains. “He’d had marching band experience with the International Independent Order of Foresters youth band, a high-level marching band from Sherman Oaks in the Valley.

“You can clearly hear Jim’s strength and power on the Delaney & Bonnie *On Tour* album,” Keltner continues, “especially in the songs’ breakdowns, where it’s only vocals and drums. Those kind of jump parts were originally played by Al Jackson Jr., who played on their first Stax record, *Home*. So whoever played with Delaney & Bonnie copied those parts. And Jimmy played those parts better than I did. Jimmy got to England before me, so he played with Derek & the Dominoes and got the gig, which was supposed to be mine. But I never held that against him. I knew when Jimmy played with them that he was going to get the gig.”

Keltner always enthusiastically points out how big an influence Gordon was on him. “I’ve always wanted him to know that,” he tells *MD*. “A perfect example of his drum approach is on Judy Collins’ *Who Knows Where the Time Goes* and Steely Dan’s ‘Rikki Don’t Lose That Number.’ And I always loved the way he played on Eric Clapton’s ‘After Midnight.’ This is the guy,” I told Jeff Porcaro. I said, ‘Jeffrey, don’t bother listening to my stuff, man. Listen to Jim Gordon; listen to everything that he’s playing on. And if you listen, you’re going to hear it.’ He had everything a musician could possibly want. Everything that Jimmy played on was a masterclass.

“In the studio,” Keltner continues, “Jim was a quick thinker. That’s the X factor—you don’t know how to explain it, except that it’s just there. Obviously experience helps, going from one session to another. You’ve learned what works, and you’re referencing all the time. In those days Jimmy and I were talking about different drummers. He knew that Roger Hawkins and Al Jackson were my favorites. I told Jimmy, ‘Your drumming is closer to Roger than a lot of others.’ Jim was a version of Roger Hawkins.

“I was working almost every day then,” says Keltner, who insists that he wasn’t a “proper” studio musician at the time. “I played with so many famous people that it *looked* like I was all over the place,” he says. “I would play with Randy Newman on a Saturday and then Dolly Parton on the following Wednesday, and then a Harry

Nilsson record, and then Steely Dan. It started to look like, 'God, he's *everywhere*. He's a studio guy.' But in fact, real studio guys played on all kinds of jingles and things. Jimmy Gordon was a quintessential record date guy; he played every kind of date."

Today Keltner says that the depth of his relationship with Gordon—and with other musical icons of the era—was fueled by their shared experiences and their youth. "Jim and I both played on Harry Nilsson records," he begins, "but those were the days when everyone was so loaded, especially Harry. Harry was like the ring master. But kids talk to me now and want to know about this and that. I always tell them, 'You've got to know this: There's a window of youth that's this big, and it starts to shut

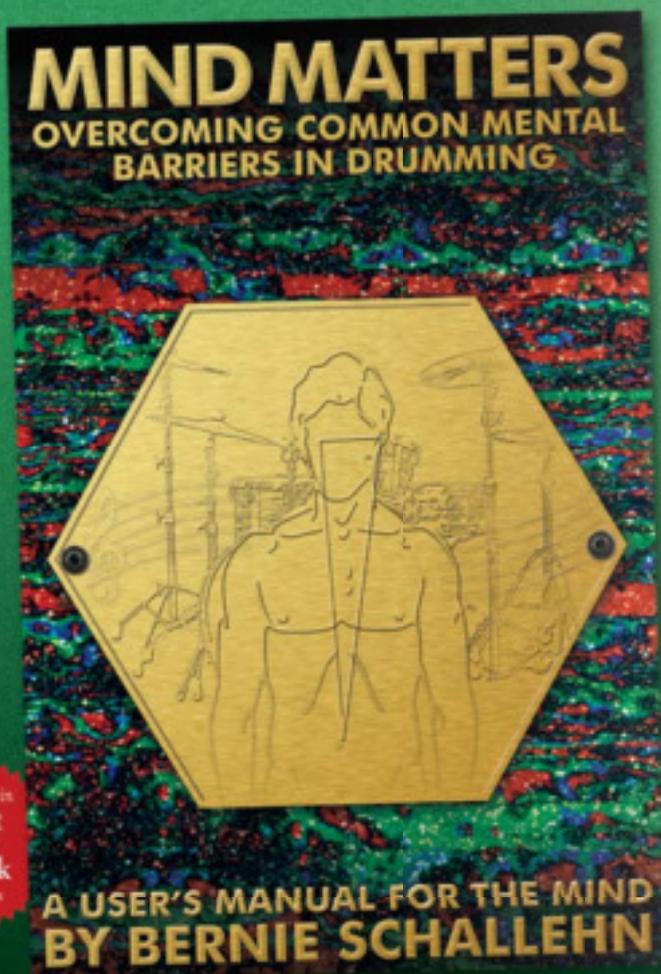
little by little the older you get.' You don't know this at the time; nobody tells you that. And even if they did tell you, you'd say, 'Okay, I'm good.' But that's the thing, man. That's why that stuff happened, all those records. That's why there were all these brilliant things happening during those days."

There were also some frightening moments, which sealed their friendship as well. "One night when we were both living in England," Keltner recalls, "I went to his place. He was working with Derek & the Dominoes at the time. We were talking—we used to talk about all kinds of stuff. He knew that I admired him as a player. And there were certain parts of my playing that he liked too. Jim instinctively knew that he was a better musician than me at that time.

But he wasn't a jerk about it. We were good friends.

"So, while I was there at his place, I wasn't feeling well. I stood up to go downstairs to use the bathroom to be sick, but at the top of the staircase, just as I stepped down those tiny little steep English steps, I started throwing up and falling backwards. I just knew I was going to hit my head really hard on the top stair—like when you're falling, and everything seems to be in slow motion. Then all of a sudden I felt somebody catch me. Jim caught me. He saved my life that night.

"I always wanted Jim to know how much I respected him as a person and a player, and how important he was to me in the early part of my career."



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Parliament-Funkadelic's Tiki Fulwood

Like Black Sabbath, Parliament-Funkadelic was a remarkably groundbreaking unit that released multiple classic albums in 1970, including Funkadelic's self-titled debut and *Free Your Mind... And Your Ass Will Follow* and Parliament's debut, *Osmium*. Here we discuss their late, great drummer Tiki Fulwood with super-fan Philip "Fish" Fisher and longtime P-Funk drummer Benzel Baltimore.

by Ilya Stemkovsky

Ramon "Tiki" Fulwood was the original drummer in both Parliament and Funkadelic, the George Clinton-led funk, rock, R&B, and soul groups that inspired countless bands and musical styles. Though album credits are somewhat confusing and memories become hazy fifty years later, it is Fulwood's distinct drumming approach that stands out on several albums and numerous tracks from this fertile period in those bands' history.

Fulwood was born in Philadelphia in 1944 and eventually became the house drummer at the city's Uptown Theater, where he would cross paths with future bandmates guitarist Eddie Hazel and bassist Billy Bass Nelson. Hired by Clinton to back the vocal group the Parliaments, the three musicians expanded the sonic palette past simple support of doo-wop singing and into something more raw and wild, and eventually morphed into the unit known as Funkadelic.

Soon there would be two groups, Funkadelic and Parliament, touring and recording albums under the leadership of Clinton. Both groups featured basically the same members but were marketed as two different kinds of funk, Funkadelic being a more rock-oriented, psychedelic band than its sister group. Fulwood laid it down hard and heavy for both collectives. Notable for his 16th-note hi-hat attack and tough, syncopated bass drum work, Fulwood appeared on classic albums like Funkadelic's 1970 self-titled debut, 1970's *Free Your Mind... And Your Ass Will Follow*, 1971's *Maggot Brain*, and 1972's *America Eats Its Young*.

Philip "Fish" Fisher, drummer for legendary ska/funk/rock group Fishbone, recalls being exposed to this new music as a youngster. "My earliest memory of hearing Tiki's playing was at my Aunt Jackie's place in Compton, California," says Fisher. "It could've been 1971 or '72, which would make me four or five years young. My older brother and I wandered into a room lit by black lights, posters on the walls, and lava lamps. Coming through the speakers was Funkadelic's 'Wars of Armageddon' [from *Maggot Brain*]. Then when I was seven, I heard

America Eats Its Young. Needless to say, it blew my young, funky mind. I listened and looked at the double album and was transported into a world of intrigue. It was spooky, exciting, humorous, nasty, and enlightening, and it was going way out of the box lyrically, musically, and in its overall concept from what was being played on radio at the time."

Fisher outlines what makes Fulwood's contribution special on those records. "Tiki is the first drummer that I attempted to learn what his drum music really is," Fisher says. "His bass drum work definitely influenced me from a very early age, before I even knew exactly



how unique it was. The grooves and patterns got me first, the speed secondary. Tiki could throw an unexpected bass drum lick into any rhythmic template without forsaking the groove. The freedom and spontaneity he possessed baffled and mesmerized me. His playing was rowdy and aggressive in a way his contemporaries' playing wasn't. Like how revolution music is supposed to feel—just the type of energy a kid like me needed to be inspired. I strive to do similar. I'm very proud to have been given the last drum of Tiki's that original Funkadelic Eddie Hazel and Billy Bass Nelson had in their possession. It's a Rogers bass drum. I keep it on a pedestal. Playing along to Tiki's drumming since I was a kid has served me beyond measure."



Benzel Baltimore, aka Benjamin Cowan, is the current and longtime drummer in Parliament-Funkadelic, Clinton's catch-all combo group that's been playing that music for decades. The son of P-Funk trumpeter Bennie Cowan, Baltimore had to closely study the drumming of Fulwood, who is still held in high regard by group members. "Tiki was one of George's favorite drummers," says Baltimore. "When I was eleven or twelve years old, one of the first records I ever practiced to was Funkadelic's *America Eats Its Young*. Everyone will tell you that John Bonham was the first to do those [bass drum triplets], but Tiki Fulwood was the first person I heard do that, and Dennis Chambers said that as well. That was a Tiki signature. And his sound was the same sound I like. Almost rock-sounding drums. I heard he might have used a 24" bass drum. I also heard, because his foot was so heavy, he would take an old bass drum head and cut out a piece and place it on top of another bass drum head. Basically a head on top of a head, a two-ply head so it wouldn't break."

"Heavy" is an apt description of the loud and aggressive sound of the early Funkadelic records. Those expecting the slick dance-floor ready action of future hits like Parliament's "Flash Light" will be in for a rude awakening when exposed to the sheer volume and rock power of Fulwood and company. But Fulwood was always in control, never letting the music fall apart around him, even while everyone was turning up.

"One of the standout things about Tiki's playing is the solid dynamic drive and repetition of hi-hat patterns," Fisher says. "The placement of open hi-hat is to be noted in these patterns, but also the opening and closing within the given groove give greater depth to the layers of rhythm he created. Tiki's bass drum work is unique to him, and the approach isn't easy to come close to, due to his ability to turn the beat upside down or go on a creative tangent, which happened often at the end of songs. He was known for having the fastest feet of his time; his doubles were swift in the groove and solid at any tempo."

Baltimore echoes Fisher's comments on Fulwood's hi-hat and kick innovations. "Tiki was the 'down south hip-hop' drummer of back in the day," he says. "He was one of the first guys to play heel/toe [bass drum technique]. The foot patterns he played are what's played today. His playing was in between a little bit of chops and a little bit of groove, as opposed to a Tyrone Lampkin, who came right after Tiki, and who was more of a marching band drummer. What I learned from listening to Tiki all the time was to be able to play 16ths on the hi-hat for a long time, and being able to do various foot patterns under the 16ths for a long time. That was a challenge of that music—playing the syncopations and still driving the pocket, but you might play some weird foot fill. But you don't do too many foot fills because it's so based on groove, all bass, snare, hi-hat. 'Loose Booty' (from *America*

Eats Its Young) is really heavy on the foot, though. It's like the first go-go beat, actually, and a huge inspiration on Washington D.C. It's like a funky Purdie shuffle with more foot in it. That beat is legendary. We're rehearsing now and we're playing 'Hit It and Quit It' [from 1971's *Maggot Brain*]. That's Tiki."

Then there are the drummer moves you've done and heard a million times, but somehow are traced back to Fulwood, like a standard floor tom/snare build. "Another Tiki thing is sometimes George would want me to do a 16th-note unison crescendo with two arms, on floor tom and snare," says Baltimore. "You can't do it with just your hands because it's not loud enough. It has to be done with your arms. It took me a long time to get that. It's not super fast, but it is super hard." Fisher points to it as well: "One of my favorite Tiki licks is his snare with floor tom flams, which are present throughout his body of work. Funkadelic's 'Super Stupid' and 'Red Hot Momma' and Parliament's 'All Your Goodies Are Gone' are good examples."

Both drummers also acknowledge Fulwood's influence on not only themselves, but a whole generation of players. "After being on the road with [Red Hot Chili Peppers'] Chad Smith, I realized that when I was growing up playing drums, I was adapting that style because it was funk-rock," says Baltimore. "When I heard [Chili Peppers'] 'Give It Away,' that was a mixture of the funk and the rock. And I feel like Tiki inspired Chad, because Chad loves Funkadelic. All of the Chili Peppers love Funkadelic. Tiki is on 'Super Stupid' [from *Maggot Brain*], and you can hear more of that foot thing. More of that double thing."

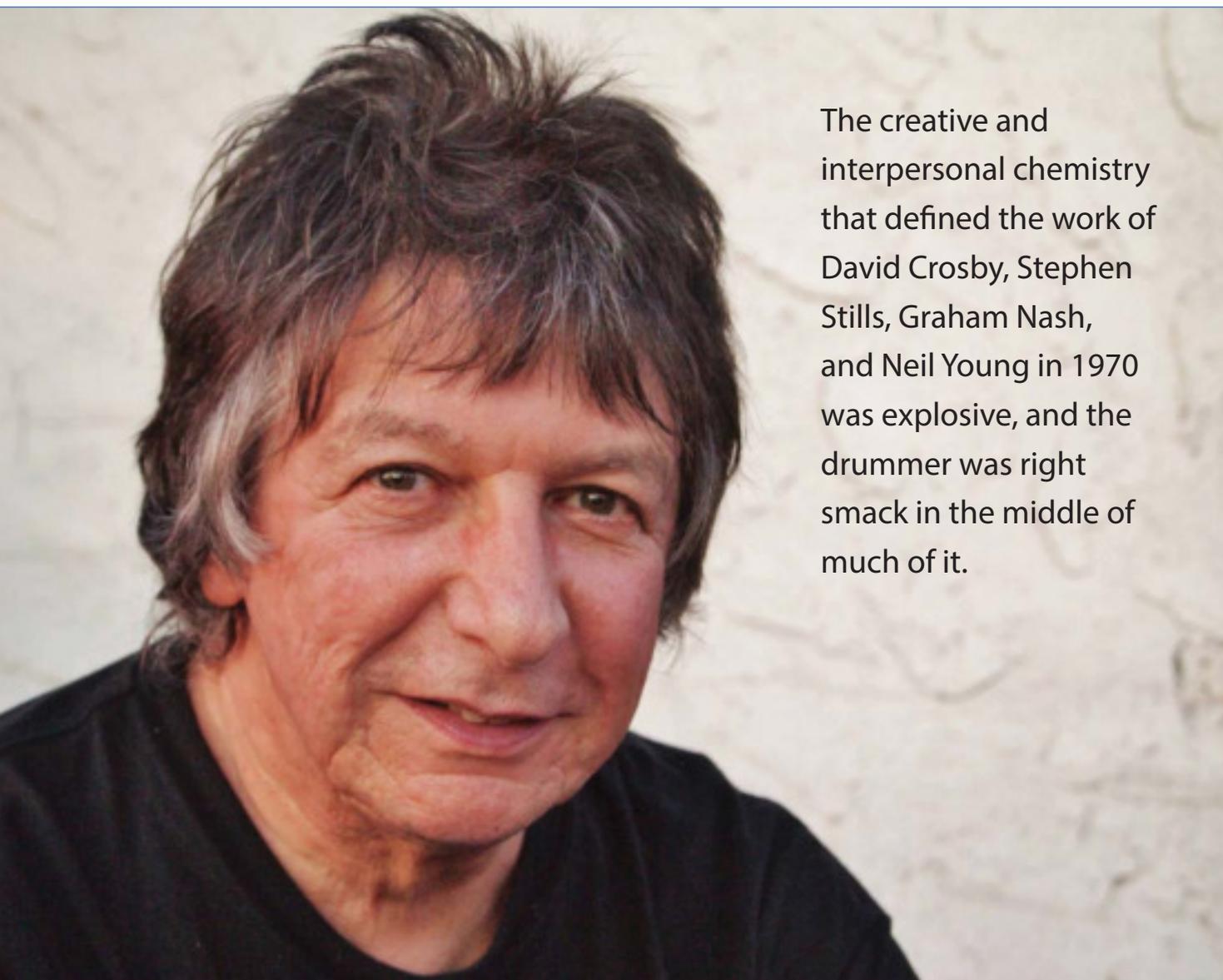
Fisher adds, "Tiki's influence is spread over many genres and generations, either directly or indirectly by his recordings in and outside of Funkadelic. No matter what genre one mainly plays in, creative musicianship will turn your head and get you open. Tiki is the archetype of what it is to be Funkadelic funky, and that means to be unapologetically, raw, uncut, and supernaturally funky. Like the drumming on 'Hit It and Quit It,' 'Wars of Armageddon,' and 'Funky Dollar Bill.' He's one of those cats that are often imitated and also sampled. His influence was immediate on those that would become his contemporaries, and from countless bands to hip-hop artists that have had hits from using his beats. Like how he'll do an 8th-note fill from snare around to floor tom. It's a basic thing, but it's the groovy, bombastic swag he puts on it, as he displays on Fuzzy Haskins' 'Tangerine Green.' Tasty ear candy that never loses its flavor. He was able to authentically adapt musically, and he had his own identity. He unapologetically demonstrated his own brand of creativity and silence of time and space while laying the foundation, being so free, serving the music, yet taking personal artistic chances."

Fulwood would go on to play with Tyrone Davis and Chairmen of the Board and form his own band, Tiki, before succumbing to stomach cancer in 1979. But his funky body of work lives on for every new generation of searching drummers to discover.



Johnny Barbata

by Bob Girouard



The creative and interpersonal chemistry that defined the work of David Crosby, Stephen Stills, Graham Nash, and Neil Young in 1970 was explosive, and the drummer was right smack in the middle of much of it.

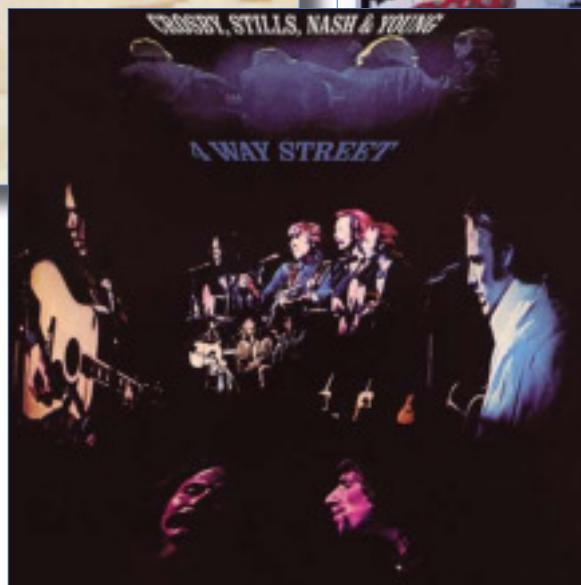
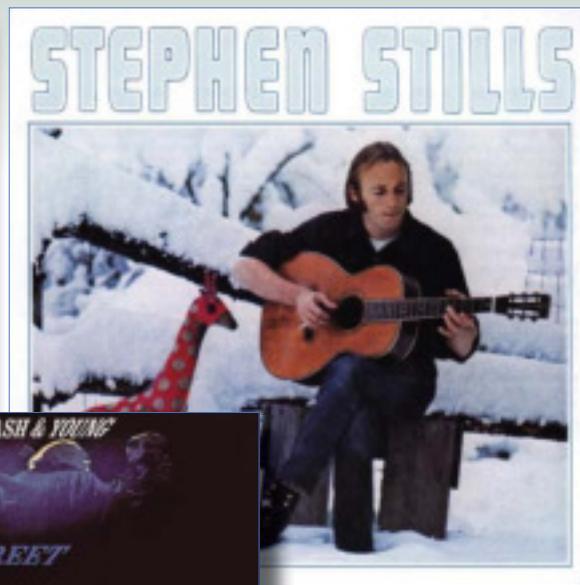
In the 1970s, Johnny Barbata had a very hot hand. The former member of '60s chart toppers the Turtles was an innovative player with great chops and a mile-deep feel to support them. Barbata instinctively knew how to make pop hits, but he also had the right musical disposition to deliver what was required of the ambitious singer-songwriters of the new era, who were breaking

ground across a wide range of styles and approaches.

When Barbata was chosen to tour with the iconic Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young collective, he was more than equal to the task, as evidenced by his powerful playing on the electric half of their number-1 *4 Way Street* double album, which documented the quartet's historic 1970 tour. Barbata would later

join the Jefferson Starship for a string of hugely popular releases, but not before adding his rhythmic voice to more classic releases emanating from the CSNY camp.

These days Barbata resides in Ada, Oklahoma, playing with and producing various artists, including his daughter, Leah. Here we step back in time with him to get a feel for headier times.



MD: When you became a member of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, it was a beehive of activity. What was the vibe like within America's first supergroup?

Johnny: I did the audition in L.A. at Warner Bros. They tried out me and bassist Chris Ethridge, and then sent us home. Then they called back, and this time Calvin "Fuzzy"

Samuels was on bass, and we became the rhythm section. I knew it was special when I went to New York City and was greeted with, "So, you're the new superstar rock drummer!"

MD: You also played on Stills and Nash's debut solo albums.

Johnny: Graham was simply great. I did two

of his solo albums and three albums that he produced. He took me all over Europe, and to this day he's still my favorite of the group.

Out of the gate, there was a lot of psychodrama in the band. I remember after my first gig at Winterland, in San Francisco, I was soaking wet and toweling off, when Stephen stuck his hand out and

said, "Welcome to the new group." From that moment on, every time Neil or Stephen would do a solo, they'd always turn around and look at me, implying they were playing off me instead of each other!

MD: Graham's *Songs for Beginners* was such a strong effort, hitting number 15 on the pop chart and netting a top-forty hit in "Chicago."

Johnny: Yeah, "Chicago" was special, especially the lyrics. *SFB* was a magic album for sure. Some of that was recorded at Graham's home-studio mansion in California. We also did David Blue, who was a Bob Dylan copy, and Judee Sill, who was a Joni

Mitchell copy. Another band he produced, and who should have scored big but didn't, was the Fool, from Amsterdam. Everything we did there was organic and recorded live.

MD: You also had some champions on the technical end, like engineer/producers Bill Halverson and Glyn Johns.

Johnny: I did a John David Souther album for Glyn, who I did not know at the time. He was having difficulty as far as knowing where we were positioned inside the songs tempo-wise. I was scratching my head, getting frustrated at "that guy," but eventually he got it. I was totally unaware of his prior

reputation with the Rolling Stones, the Beatles, Led Zeppelin, the Eagles, etc. Man, you never know, you know?

MD: What stands out as the most prominent song from *Songs for Beginners*?

Johnny: Easily it was "Chicago." I recall that there were a lot of guests hanging—extra musicians and backup singers. I played quite simply, not a lot of fills, and just tried to lock in.

MD: With the members of CSNY, you had four geniuses who couldn't be dictated to—especially by each other, correct?

Johnny: As far as songwriting went, it was a very fertile but also competitive atmosphere with all the guys, especially Neil and Stephen, trying to outwrite each other.

MD: *Stephen Stills* features performances by icons like Ringo Starr, Eric Clapton, and Jimi Hendrix, and contains "Love the One You're With," perhaps Stills' most famous solo song. The album was recorded at Island Studios in London and at the Record Plant and Wally Heider's in Los Angeles. Is it true that you recorded in London because Stephen had just purchased a house from Ringo?

Johnny: Exactly! Stephen bought it from Ringo, who bought it from Peter Sellers, who got it from Katharine Hepburn—or something like that. It was a seventeen-room mansion, and at the time just about anybody who was anybody was hanging there.

MD: What do you specifically remember about recording the tracks "Go Back Home" and "Sit Yourself Down"?

Johnny: "Sit Yourself Down" was done at Wally Heider's. We got that in one take! Looking back, it was pretty incredible. As far as "Go Back Home," they've got me listed on that track, but I think [previous CSNY drummer] Dallas Taylor initially played on that track. Stephen cut the song, and I did a few overdubs on it.

MD: What gear were you using during that period?

Johnny: Ludwig drums: a brass-shell snare with Slingerland snares. It was loud and had a big pop. I had twenty hit singles with that sound. My toms were 13" and 14", and my bass drum was a 14x22. I used Paiste cymbals. The decay was quick and never muddied up a track.

MD: When all is said and done, did you feel at the time that you were part of the "golden age" of rock?

Johnny: At the time, CSNY had the biggest-selling album in the world with *Déjà Vu*. They defined the word supergroup. Being a member of the Turtles was one thing as far as recognition went, but with CSNY? Man, those were wild times...they really were.

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— VIRGIL DONATI



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Alex Rüdinger





The journeyman heavy-music phenom and YouTube star tours the U.S. and Europe with Whitechapel, records a brilliant new record with Intronaut, gears up for the release of his new virtual instrument, and creates a slick online enterprise.

Story by Ben Meyer
Photos by Cora Wagoner

Since parting ways with British-American progressive rock supergroup Good Tiger in 2018, twenty-eight-year-old Alex Rüdinger has been anything but dormant. Between frequent domestic and international tours with Knoxville, Tennessee-based deathcore firestorm Whitechapel, Rüdi, as he's known in the industry, has recently released three technique videos via his online store and—unbelievably, given the window of time he had to write and record his parts—played on the newest release from L.A. tech metal pioneers Intronaut. As busy as he wants to be, and with his career on a steady incline, Rüdinger is winning at a game fewer and fewer have the countenance to play these days: thriving as a performer in a genre outside the mainstream, maintaining physical and mental health, and building a future for himself.

Rüdinger's signature fills and commitment to speed, accuracy, and preparation were born in the basement of his mother's home in Frederick, Maryland, the state's bucolic, second most populous city. Rüdinger was hooked on drumming almost immediately after he began playing. "I got my first drumkit when I

was thirteen," he tells *MD*. "I'd played on friends' kits before that, and I finally convinced my mom to get me one. It took me very little time to become completely obsessed with it, and I took lessons on and off. Anup Sastry [Skyharbor, Intervals, Devin Townsend] and I both took lessons from a local instructor named Matt

Thompson. Matt's not the most technical drummer, but as a kid I think he was the perfect instructor to get started with, because he made it fun. If I came in and I hadn't practiced whatever he told me to, he didn't scold me or anything. I think he understood that if kids are going to do this, they're going to have to want to do it

themselves.

"A lot of what I do just came from trial and error and using the internet as a tool for learning," Rüdinger continues. "I didn't go to any kind of music school for theory or anything. All the knowledge I have of rhythmic theory just came from messing around in Guitar Pro, transcribing stuff, and trial and





error.”

Boldly, Rüdinger auditioned for tech metal powerhouse (and fellow D.C. area residents) Animals as Leaders at the tender age of seventeen, only four years after he began playing seriously. Regarding his use of transcription in preparation for the audition, Rüdinger says, “It really started back when Periphery and Animals as Leaders were virtually at a local level. No one really knew who Animals was when I was auditioning. At that point in my life, I’d never learned [music] like that. I couldn’t learn it by ear. I just didn’t have the rhythmic vocabulary or understanding to even know what was going on. I originally started transcribing to give myself that kind of visual aide. ‘Tempting Time’ off of Animals’ first album was one of the first things I ever transcribed. It took me days to do it, whereas now I could transcribe that song in an hour or less.”

Rüdinger was among the first generation of drummers to gain international attention

from cover videos of his own and others’ playing, and nearly all of his development can be observed across his ten years of YouTube video content. He says, “I think that YouTube has been a really phenomenal outlet for me to channel some of the things that would otherwise manifest in ways that might not have as positive an impact on my life. As long as I can remember, I was sure that I’d be playing drums as a career. As a kid I almost had this arrogant sense of knowing what I was going to do with my life. Honestly, I don’t know what else I would do. That’s something I’ve thought about a lot.”

Now highly selective with what projects he takes on, Rüdinger explains his choice to play on Intronaut’s latest release this way: “There aren’t many bands that I think are cool enough musically where I would put myself through that kind of stress, but I really believe in this album and this band.” Writing all of his parts remotely and only meeting up with the band for rehearsals

prior to tracking, Rüdinger composed largely away from the kit using Guitar Pro 7, which is the preferred software for most drummers who choose to create parts in the abstract.

"It was very exciting to me to be asked to record that album," he says, "because right now I'm more of a hired gun than I was in the past. I'm touring with Whitechapel and I'm going to

continue to tour with them. I want to do challenging things, I want to do things that are exciting musically, and there was really no other project that I thought would have been cooler to get asked to do. It was more challenging in a different way from anything I've done before. I came home between tours and for three weeks basically played drums more

than I ever have in my life—and that's saying something! Then I went out to L.A. and tracked it with Josh Newell. It turned out really great." Featuring more room vibe than most similarly heavy records, *Fluid Existential Inversions* owes its sonic stamp to mixer Kurt Ballou (Converge, High on Fire, Every Time I Die), along with Newell.

Rüdinger says that he faced

some very specific technical challenges while creating and executing his parts on *Fluid Existential Inversions*, which was released in February. "For the most part," he explains, "they just come up with this crazy stuff, and they don't really know what the time signatures are. They just feel it out. They would get in a room with their old drummer and

Drums: Tama Starclassic Birch/Bubinga in Smokey Indigo Burst with Black Nickel hardware*

- A. 6.5x14 reissue Bell Brass snare
- B. 7x10 tom
- C. 8x12 tom
- D. 12x14 floor tom
- E. 14x16 floor tom
- F. 16x20 bass drums

* Rüdinger plans to take out a Tama S.L.P. Dynamic Kapur kit in a similar configuration this year.

Cymbals: Meinl

- 1. 14" Byzance Traditional Medium hi-hats
- 2. 13" Byzance Brilliant Medium hi-hats
- 3. 20" MB20 Heavy Bell ride
- 4. 18" Classics Custom Dark China
- 5. 18" Byzance Brilliant Medium crash
- 6. 12" Classics Custom trash splash
- 7. 8"/10" Generation X Electro Stack
- 8. 10" Classics Custom splash
- 9. 19" Byzance Brilliant Medium Thin crash
- 10. 18" Pure Alloy China
- 11. 18" Artist Concept Thomas Lang Super Stack

Hardware: Tama Roadpro cymbal arms, STAR snare stand, Power Tower rack, and Speed Cobra Lever Glide hi-hat stand (legs removed); Trick Low-Mass Pro1-V BigFoot double pedal converted into two singles

Heads: Evans, including UV2 Coated snare batter and Snare Side 300 Clear, G2 Clear tom batters and G1 Clear resonants, and EQ4 Clear bass drum batters and custom Whitechapel logo resonants

Sticks: Tama Alex Rüdinger H-RUDI Signature model

Electronics: 2Box Drumit Three drum module, OnTrigger Generation 3 kick triggers, 64 Audio V6 in-ear monitors, Audient audio interfaces

Accessories: Vratim Drum Shoes II (black), Reflexx CP1 Conditioning Pad, Evans RF12D RealFeel pad, Gator Protector and Titan series cases

Rüdinger's Whitechapel Live Setup



just sit there and go through parts. They wouldn't even count it, they'd just jam a part until they figured out a drum part that worked for it. That was a concern they had with doing a new album with a different drummer. They didn't know how it would work out. I dropped the first demos they sent me into Pro Tools and I tempo- and time-

mapped them like I usually would. Within two days I'd sent them back some programmed ideas, and they were shocked because they'd never worked with someone who did that kind of thing. Whereas I always create parts that way. I almost exclusively work remotely and program my ideas out. The fact that someone could even grasp their material and come

up with parts for it impressed them, I think. That just kind of started the whole project off."

Intronaut guitarist and band leader Sacha Dunable describes Rüdinger's contribution to the album by noting a "dedication to his craft like I've never seen before." Rüdinger's cymbal-smashing groove and clever fills on album opener "Procurement of the Victuals" set the pace

for his rock-solid performance throughout. Also standing out among the album's nine twisting, highly textured tracks are Rüdi's mind-bending tom pattern in the intro to "The Cull," his relentless, propulsive fills throughout "Speaking of Orbs" and "Pangloss," and the startling hand-foot combos in "Sour Everythings." Rüdinger is uniquely at home on this



album, and his precision, creativity, and natural, unenhanced tones are on full display.

Needing to supplement his income—like most full-time performers in the current era of ever-decreasing touring margins—Rüdinger is among the growing number of drummers who are taking advantage of social media and creating cottage industries out of monetizing their talents in the digital realm. Among his efforts, he's created a successful retail presence through online portal gumroad.com. This gives fans easy digital and print access to a vast collection of transcriptions of his playing on albums by Good Tiger, Ordinance, and Threat Signal, a drum sample pack from his time with Good Tiger recorded by Adam "Nolly" Getgood, and

raw, unedited drum stems from his work with Monuments, Obscura, and death metal collaborators Conquering Dystopia.

Rüdinger also recently released three detailed videos that dig deeply into his highly developed technique. Each twenty- to thirty-minute video addresses one of the most common topics he's asked about during clinic performances and on social media: his approach to establishing and maintaining foot speed and technique, his blazing hand speed and use of French grip for blast beats, and his intense daily warm-up routine. Rüdinger and Anup Sastry are also releasing a drum and cymbal virtual instrument for Native Instruments' popular Kontakt VST platform. The product, which will be called

R&S Drums, promises to be something special, given the tones both drummers achieve on their recordings and the level of audio nerdiness that each has achieved over years of trial and error.

Working up to the more technically challenging music he's played since his time as a member of the Faceless has allowed Rüdinger to step right into his recent role as Whitechapel's touring drummer and approach Intronaut's new material. "With Whitechapel," he says, "I definitely had to get my speed chops back up—not that they'd ever been completely depleted. But I've had to make some adjustments just because I play differently now. I hit a lot harder, so trying to mesh that with the kind of parts I play in Whitechapel was hard. There's not been anything major that

I've had to change, though.

"I think my overall limb independence improved from doing the album with Intronaut," he continues. "Some of the stuff on the album is pretty out there, and to execute it I had to use my body in ways I'd never had to before. I can't really just sit down and improvise something like that. Those parts were very much composed, but that kind of stuff does eventually translate into your vocabulary."

Rüdinger practices for hours nearly every day, whether he's on or off the road, and his dedication to his craft is second to none. On what motivates his monk-like commitment to honing, improving, and maintaining his staggering speed and stamina, the drummer says, "I'm very neurotic, which I think comes



out in my playing. I can be obsessive-compulsive. But I think one of the greatest things about drumming for me is that it's been an immense outlet for these kinds of tendencies. It's almost like I'm able to relieve some of those feelings and channel them into my playing. I'm definitely a bit of a perfectionist, though I've learned to lighten up a little bit. I still have very high standards, and doing YouTube videos growing up, the visual aspect of my playing became important as well. That started a whole new pursuit of trying to make things sound or look a certain way."

Rüdinger shares that he's sought professional counseling at points in his life when stress, anxiety, and exhaustion became an issue. "I'm not seeing a therapist regularly now," he says, "but I'll still go every once in a while. I think even if you don't have a lot

going on, it's good to get that kind of unbiased perspective. I don't really meditate, but I think that drumming is a similar kind of release to some extent. I also go to the gym regularly. In the last year or so, I've been able to sleep a lot easier than I have at other times. I've been able to compartmentalize things better, which I think comes with age and experience. I don't smoke or drink, but I started taking CBD oil and I like it a lot."

"Mental health awareness is something that I've talked about a lot," Rüdinger continues. "I talked about it pretty in depth in a podcast I did with Craig Reynolds [*The Downbeat* podcast]. I was very reluctant to open up about some of that stuff, the massive bouts of severe depression and anxiety that I've had. But I decided to talk about it on that podcast, and I ended up getting a lot of positive feedback. To this day I get

emails from people saying that they listened to that podcast and that they related to it and appreciated it. I was surprised by that, and I encourage people to get help if they need it."

Though his presence on social media has waned slightly due to his intense touring schedule with Whitechapel, Rüdinger still tries to keep his friends and fans up to date. "I do a little less than I used to," he confirms. "It's changed a little lately in that Stories have become the primary thing on Instagram. I hadn't posted a new YouTube video for a couple of months, because I was on tour that whole time and I wasn't able to finish editing a bunch of stuff I'd shot while I was home. I still do post random stuff on Instagram, but it's slowed down in the last year. I think sometimes I just need to take a step back and try to enjoy more of what's in front of me. Nothing else has really

changed with social media. I still try to post on it, and it's why I have a career. It really is. I think it's important, but with mental health and stuff in mind, I think people need to take it all with a grain of salt."

Though he's often knee-deep in the music he's playing on tour or preparing to record, Rüdinger is inspired by both his contemporaries and forebears alike. He lists Anika Nilles as someone whose creativity he's impressed by, and his top three metal drummers include Eloy Casagrande of Sepultura, Dirk Verbeuren with Megadeth and Soilwork, and Kerim Lechner (a.k.a. Krimh) of Decapitated and Septicflesh. When asked if he still has goals, given all that he's accomplished, Rüdinger says, "There are always dream gigs, like if I could fill in for [Tomas Haake with] Meshuggah. I don't even know if I could do that—but it would be sick!"



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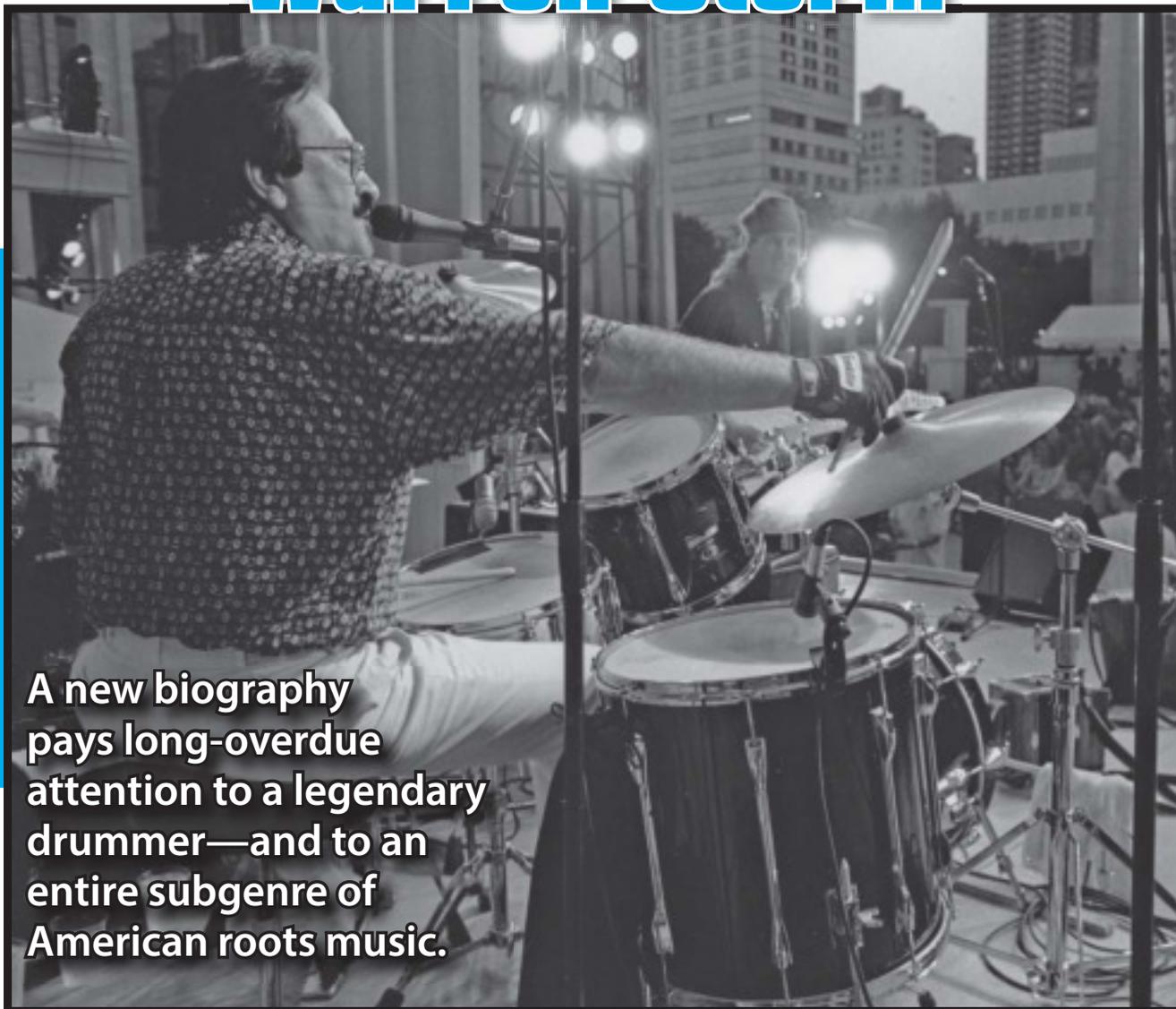
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WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT...?

Warren Storm



A new biography pays long-overdue attention to a legendary drummer—and to an entire subgenre of American roots music.

Devotees of southern Louisiana music love to heap superlatives on drummer/singer Warren Storm. In the small city of Abbeville, where he was raised, 150 miles west of New Orleans, a “Welcome” road sign reads “Home of Warren Storm, Swamp Pop Pioneer.” He’s been billed as “King of the Dance Halls” at the Ponderosa Stomp, a biennial New Orleans–based festival dedicated to artists who shaped American roots music. And on the cover of his new biography, *Taking the World, by Storm: A Conversation with Warren “Storm” Schexnider*, his designation is “The Godfather of Swamp Pop.”

In the 1950s, Storm helped create swamp pop—a hybrid of Cajun, New Orleans R&B, blues, and early rock. The genre went without a name for nearly twenty years, but it had a recognizable sound centered around an irresistible beat that lured couples to the nearest dance floor, from Bobby Charles’ buoyant mid-’50s classic “See You Later, Alligator” to Freddy Fender’s recklessly romantic 1975 hit “Wasted Days and Wasted Nights” (written in 1959). “It’s really Louisiana rock ‘n’ roll with a touch of rhythm and blues,” Storm says. He’s been playing it for more than seven decades, as a solo artist, studio musician, and

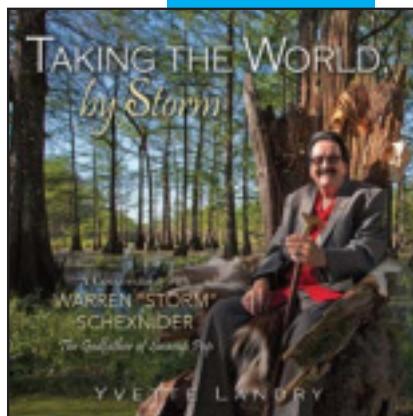
member of numerous acts, including Cajun “supergroup” Lil’ Band o’ Gold.

A quick flip through the numerous photographs in *Taking the World, by Storm* reveals why you need to know Storm if you’re not already familiar with him: he has influenced, played with, and hung out with a who’s who of music icons. Storm’s early work, both as a swamp-pop singer and as a session drummer behind some infamous bluesmen on the Excello Records label, had an impact on British Invasion bands and American artists. The Beatles’ “Oh! Darling” was so redolent of the swamp-pop sound that Louisiana musicians thought it was

written by one of their own. Led Zeppelin singer Robert Plant, who recorded and toured with Lil' Band o' Gold in the mid-aughts, bought Storm's 1958 hit "Prisoner's Song" on 45rpm as a kid in England. Billy Gibbons, who grew up in Houston, went to see Storm play and sought him out backstage to say hello; the ZZ Top front man's mother had been a huge fan, too. When Creedence Clearwater Revival's John Fogerty traveled to Louisiana to record a version of Rockin' Sidney's "My Toot Toot" for the 1985 album *Centerfield*, Storm was behind the drumkit. Fogerty also sings on Storm's new album, which shares the book's title.

It's not just classic rockers who've been inspired by Storm's work, either; his influence is multigenerational. Lil' Band o' Gold drove swamp pop into the twenty-first century, touring the world and attracting fans such as British pop singer Lily Allen, who hired them to play at her 2011 wedding. And a new generation of admirers and musicians flocked to Storm's sets at the Ponderosa Stomp, where he performed his own songs and drummed as part of the "house band" behind Phil Philips (who sang the swamp-pop hit "Sea of Love") and others.

The book's cover, too, shows why Storm



is a character worth getting to know.

Rather than sitting on a drum throne, Storm appears on a throne carved (by singer Marc Broussard) from a bald cypress tree near the swampy environs where he has spent all of his eighty-two years, dressed in a grey suit and a vibrant scarlet shirt, his thick hair and chevron mustache still worn shoe-polish black. The smile on his face reflects pure joy of the music and laid-back culture of Louisiana that runs through his veins. He's not only an innovator but an emissary of this particular patch of Americana, unique to the region and often left out of the conversation on rock history.

Storm, who was born on February 18, 1937, grew up watching his dad play drums and learning the "hillbilly" music, as he calls it, that was popular locally. Simon (Schexnyder, as he's billed on the rare recording he made, or Schexnailder, as he's named in the book—"There's six ways of spelling it," according to Storm) was a sharecropper by day and multi-instrumentalist by night. While still in single digits, Warren started playing his dad's drums at home. One Saturday night when Simon was too sick to play his regular gig, Warren filled in, making his professional debut. He was eleven years old and so small, he jokes, that the crowd could barely see him over the 28" kick drum.

Life wasn't easy for the aspiring musician. His first language was French, and he was held back a year in school. When he wasn't playing drums, he helped his family out by picking cotton, sweet potatoes, and cayenne peppers (one of the area's defining culinary flavors). The Schexnidlers' home didn't have electricity, so Warren's escape was listening to the Grand Ole Opry on a battery-operated radio. Hank Williams and George Jones became his vocal "teachers" as he studied their soulful delivery. Storm found jazz as well, idolizing the splashy



Warren Storm

drumming of Gene Krupa and the strength and speed of Buddy Rich, picking up licks he'd use for a lifetime. But it was Fats Domino and his drummers—legendary session man Earl Palmer and his renowned backbeat, and funky Charles “Hungry” Williams’ heavy foot—that catalyzed his musical life.

Storm and other young musicians in the area began playing what would come to be known as swamp pop, spun from 6/8-time Cajun waltzes and ballads and percolating with the rhythmic punch of New Orleans R&B. The songs could be rooted in a wistful waltz or propelled by a jumpy Fats Domino–style piano triplet. While struggle and heartache fit the narrative of many traditional Cajun folk ballads, “Laissez les bons temps rouler” (or “Let the good times roll”) is also a defining Cajun expression; it could be happy or sad, as long as it got folks dancing.

Borrowing his dad’s drums, Storm found a steady stream of work with local bands thereafter, earning enough to buy his first kit when he was still in high school, a Slingerland (“because that’s what Krupa played,” he says) and Ludwig and Rogers later on. He also changed his name. “Schexnider was too big to put on a 45 record!” he says. By age twenty-one, he landed a gig as a session player with J.D. “Jay” Miller, a songwriter and producer whose studios in Crowley, Louisiana, would later attract Fogerty, Paul Simon, and others seeking the sound of the region. As the house drummer, Storm recorded with “swamp blues” artists such as Lightnin’ Slim, Lonesome Sundown, and Lazy Lester, absorbing their boggy rhythms, as well as zydeco legends Clifton Chenier and Rockin’ Sidney.

But Storm had a voice, too: a smooth, dimensional high tenor imbued with his Cajun heritage that added subtext to anything he sang. Miller, in fact, first hired him as a singer. He never wrote songs, but he landed his nascent genre in the Billboard Hot 100 chart the week of August 25, 1958, with a heavily Domino-influenced version of “Prisoner’s Song.” Elvis Presley liked Storm’s take on this old chestnut so much that he played it on piano one night at Graceland—in front of Storm and a room full of guests—but when he sang, he changed the lyrics to an X-rated version. “Could you believe that!” Storm says with a laugh.

In the decades that followed, Storm was signed to several major labels and played

in a succession of bands. He became known for putting his drumkit at the front of the stage and his eye-catching style of playing while singing. Tucking one stick under his arm until he needed it, he’d slash at the drums and cymbals with one hand, which left the other free to move the microphone around for dynamic purposes as he sang.

Storm recorded at studios across the South from Houston to Nashville, including Cosimo Matassa’s legendary Cosimo Recording Studio in New Orleans’ French Quarter, where he met and worked with some of his heroes, like Dr. John. He got to know Fats Domino well, and appreciated his sense of humor. During one of their first meetings, “I told him, ‘I’m a big fan of yours,’” Storm says. “And Fats sang [his hit], ‘Ain’t that a shame!’”

In the 1970s, Storm signed with producer and one-time radio personality Huey “the Crazy Cajun” Meaux, whose artists stretched swamp pop’s musical and geographic reach westward along the Gulf Coast to Beaumont, Texas, with Barbara Lynn’s “You’ll Lose a Good Thing,” and to Houston with Freddy Fender’s “Wasted Days and Wasted Nights.” Storm and Fender became friends, and Storm played drums on his album *Swamp Gold* and other cuts.

After some time away from behind the kit, Storm joined forces with Lafayette-raised guitarist C.C. Adcock, Mamou Playboys accordionist Steve Riley, and other regionally well-known musicians to form Lil’ Band o’ Gold in 1998. Storm had to make a minor adjustment to his playing because of the band’s relatively high volume; he reversed his sticks and hit the drums with the butt end, adding a pair of gloves to keep a firm grip on the tips.

The nine-piece ensemble toured across the United States and traversed the globe several times, as far as Australia and New Zealand, introducing a high-revved version of swamp pop to new fans, and reigniting love of the genre amongst old fans, including Robert Plant. When Plant joined the band to record a tribute to Fats Domino in 2007, he wanted to take a trip to Crowley to visit the places Storm had recorded nearly fifty years earlier. Plant drove out to Storm’s apartment in Broussard to pick him up and met his family, posing for photos with his wife and granddaughters (they’re in the book), before hitting the road. The two men talked about music and the region all the

way up to Crowley. “He was looking at the crawfish ponds, saw the traps—he wanted to know all about that,” Storm says.

Taking the World, by Storm is loaded with such personal anecdotes from Storm’s career and travels as told to Yvette Landry, a Lafayette-based musician and writer who felt this local legend should be known farther and wider. It’s a Q&A that takes place at Storm’s home and nearby spots where he sometimes holds court and where folks greet him with a friendly “Comment ça va?” The conversational, nonlinear format captures the unhurried vibe of the region. It puts readers right on the porch with Storm and Landry, listening to first-hand accounts of sessions, gigs, and meeting celebrities who were often just as excited to meet him, rifling through his private photo albums and collections of vinyl records, playbills, and newspaper clippings, all while weathering the bayou swelter with a tall glass of sweet tea. Notable friends drop in throughout with their recollections and admiration of Storm. The result is an oral history not only of his life and work, but an exploration of the way swamp pop connects to rock ‘n’ roll and popular culture.

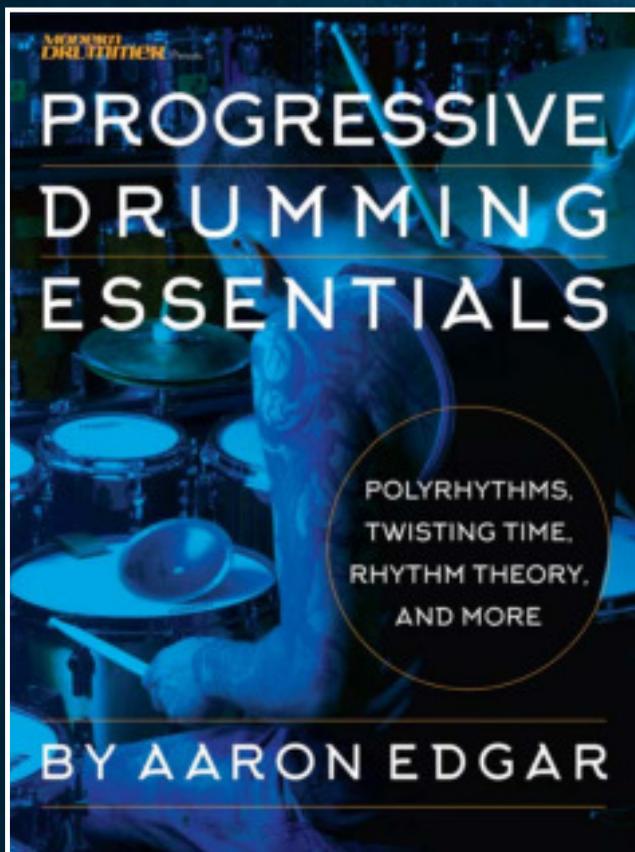
Storm’s new album serves as both an audio companion piece to the book and a swamp-pop primer, with re-recordings of songs that were hits for him and his cohort, like “Mathilda” (Cookie and His Cupcakes), “Rainin’ in My Heart” (Slim Harpo), and “Prisoner’s Song,” alongside Fogerty’s “Long As I Can See the Light,” Fats Domino’s “Let the Four Winds Blow,” and others.

At eighty-two, Storm’s vocals are astonishingly pliant, but he rarely feels up to the physical demands of playing a full kit and doesn’t keep much gear at home these days. “Just three snares and three cymbals,” he says, including one Dunnett snare with a golden finish by luthier James Trussart given to him on his seventy-fifth birthday, when he was in Lil’ Band o’ Gold. One of his floor toms, signed by him, is in nearby Ville Platte, on display at the Louisiana Swamp Pop Museum. He still plays, though. If you happen to be passing through Breaux Bridge on the right Thursday of each month, you can catch him performing alongside Landry at Buck and Johnny’s restaurant—with a snare, a hi-hat, and a microphone.

Meredith Ochs



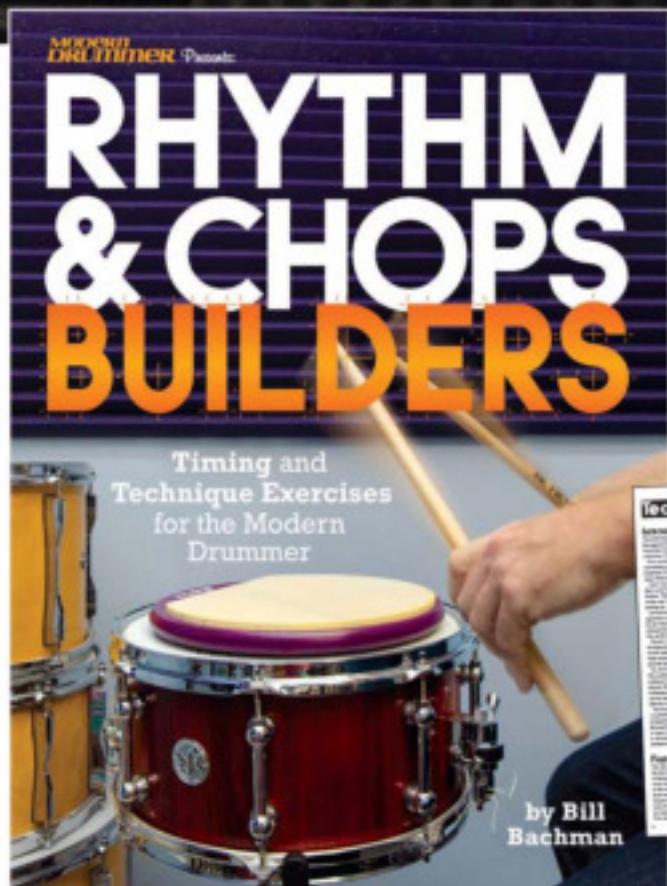
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The Big Beat of Hard-Bop Great Art Blakey

by Steve Fidyk

In both deeds and words, Art Blakey was the definition of a dedicated jazz musician, mentor, and musical messenger. His driving, thunderous, and propulsive playing style synthesized the rhythmic approach of West African drumming coupled with American blues.

Among equals in the pantheon of jazz masters that set the pace in the 1940s and '50s, Blakey brought a new style of swing and efficiency to jazz drumming. Anchored by a persistent hi-hat pulse and the deep sound of his 22" K Zildjian rides, Blakey streamlined the swinging beat of bebop, making it less busy and erratic. Polyrhythmic rim clicks, a roaring press roll, and strong Afro-Cuban influences were just a few of Art's distinct contributions to the drumming vernacular.

"I wanted to become a great drummer, but just in the sense of having musicians want to play with me—not to be better than Buddy Rich or to compete with someone," Blakey stated in his September 1984 *Modern Drummer* cover story. "I will not compete that way; I'll compete through my band. I always liked to innovate with different sounds on the drums, because I came out of that era when the drummer played for effects."

Blakey was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1919. He began his musical journey on piano, but switched to drums after meeting virtuoso pianist Erroll Garner. "The drum is the second human instrument," Blakey stated. "You can take a drum and just move the earth; you can just transport people. I was taught by Chick Webb that, if you're playing before an audience, you're supposed to take them away from everyday life—wash away the dust of everyday life."

After a short stay in New York, in 1937 Blakey returned to Pittsburgh to form his own band, which featured pianist Mary Lou Williams. In 1939 he joined the Fletcher Henderson band and stayed for three years. This experience led to an opportunity to join the band led by singer Billy Eckstine, the most advanced big band of the 1940s and a proving ground for young players who would become jazz royalty over the next twenty years. In that ensemble, Blakey worked with bebop luminaries Dexter Gordon, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Fats Navarro, Miles Davis, and Sarah Vaughan. "The idea of that band was for a big band to play like a small combo," Blakey said. "They didn't read music. They gave you two or three weeks to learn the book, and if you didn't commit it to



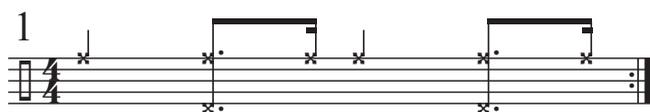
memory, you were fired. You followed the first alto, who was Charlie Parker, and whatever he decided to do that night, you had better follow. The last time I saw Charlie Parker, he told me, 'Make sure the kids play the blues, Art, because it hasn't all been done yet.'"

After the Eckstine experience, Art formed a short-lived seventeen-piece big band called the Jazz Messengers. Emerging from the ashes of that band was the small group he led for the next several decades. Blakey's groups featured a who's who in jazz history, including Horace Silver, Kenny Dorham, Lou Donaldson, Gene Ramey, Johnny Griffin, Jackie McLean, Hank Mobley, Clifford Brown, Benny Golson, Lee Morgan, Bobby Timmons, Wayne Shorter, Freddie Hubbard, Cedar Walton, Chuck Mangione, and Keith Jarrett. The list of world-class musicians who graduated from the University of Blakey is vast.

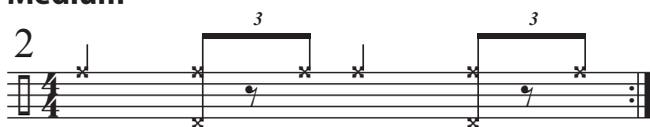
Ride Cymbal Phrasing

Blakey's wide and consistent cymbal beat is likely an outgrowth of his experience performing with the big bands of Fletcher Henderson and Billy Eckstine. His ride phrasing changed with the style and tempo of the tune. For example, at slower tempos and implied double-time, he would often use a dotted-8th and 16th-note interpretation. At a medium pace, he would phrase the pattern with an 8th-note-triplet subdivision. At faster tempos, his ride beat would straighten out to an 8th and two 16ths.

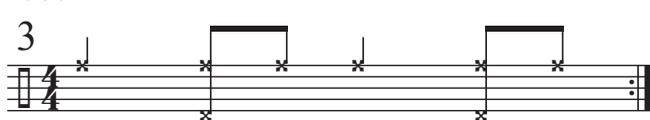
Slow



Medium



Fast

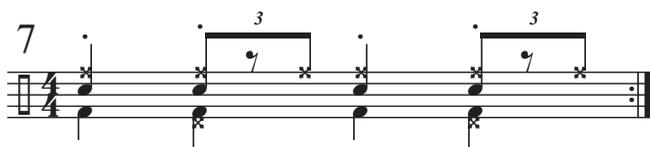


Coupled with his ride cymbal was a feathered bass drum that provided buoyancy to the swing feel. "A lot of drummers have no bottom," stated Blakey. "They talk about punctuating, but they don't keep that feeling in there, and that bass drum is the basis of the whole thing."



Dead Sticking

For added articulation, Blakey would often play soft quarter-note dead strokes on the snare in unison with the bass drum. This helped to add point and forward motion to the swing feeling.



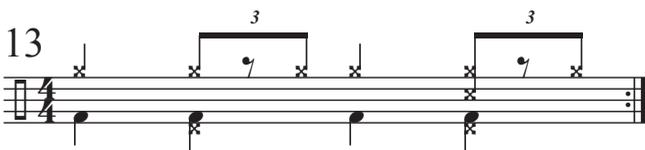
Riffing

The next batch of exercises illustrate the riff-style snare and bass drum combinations that Art often used while accompanying melodies and soloists. Play each with a crisp hi-hat on beats 2 and 4.

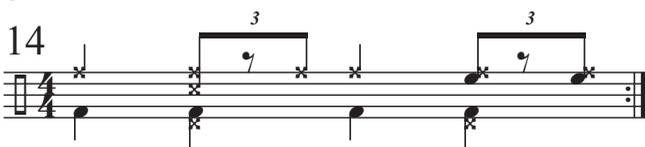


Signature Rhythms

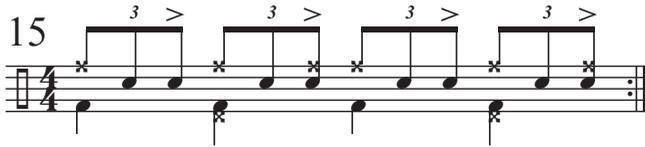
Blakey often played a sharp rim click on beat 4 to lock in the time during ensemble passages and when supporting soloists.



Art would sometimes incorporate an Afro-Cuban conga rhythm between the rim click and small tom to create a more grounded groove.



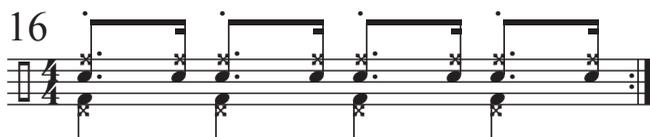
Blakey also often comped using the second and third partials of the triplet. He would frequently pair this with the hi-hat playing quarter-note triplets on the downbeat or displaced by an 8th-note rest.



Another trademark is Art's roaring press roll, which he played at the ends of phrases or as a lead-in to a new soloist. "Dynamics are so important to making the music relaxed and exciting," Blakey stated. "Sid Catlett would always tell me, 'Art, when you're in trouble, roll!'"

Shuffles

Art Blakey was the king of the jazz shuffle. Listen to recordings of "Moanin'," "Dat Dere," and "Blues March" to hear this groove in action. As you practice the following examples, work on them slowly so that you can develop control of the dead-stroke technique Art used within the shuffle.



Jazz Mambo

Art's mambo variations had a beautiful lilt and swing to them. He played them with a light touch.



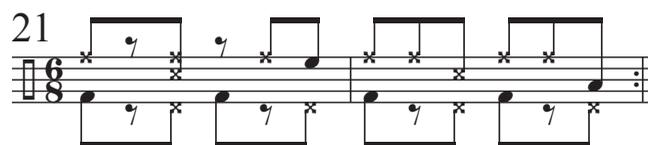
The Art of Blakey: A Select Discography

Art Blakey Quintet *A Night at Birdland Vol. 1 and Vol. 2* /// **Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers** *A Night in Tunisia, Moanin', The Big Beat, Jazz Messengers!!!!, Mosaic, Buhaina's Delight, Caravan, Free for All, Indestructible, The Freedom Rider* /// **Thelonious Monk** *Genius of Modern Music Volumes 1 and 2, Monk's Music* /// **Cannonball Adderley** *Somethin' Else* /// **Jimmy Smith** *The Sermon* /// **Lee Morgan** *Tom Cat* /// **Hank Mobley** *Roll Call, Soul Station*



6/8 Bell

West African influences are prevalent in much of Blakey's music. He played the following 6/8 rhythms on the tune "Caravan."





Solo Motives

Blakey's solo language centered on single-stroke rolls orchestrated around the drumset. He also often played unison 8th-note patterns between the snare and toms. He favored lower tunings, deep-sounding ride cymbals with rivets, and full-bodied but crisp hi-hats. He regularly superimposed 3/4 phrases over 4/4.

22

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

23

24

25

26

27

Steve Fidyk plays with saxophonist Walt Weiskopf and guitarist Jack Wilkins and is a member of the Jazz Orchestra of Philadelphia. He is also on faculty at Temple University and the University of the Arts.



Rhythmic Emotion

A Masterclass in Applying Tension-and-Release to Your Drumming

by Aaron Edgar

Music has the uncanny ability to evoke emotions in the listener. For example, songs composed using major scales often sound happy, while minor chords can evoke melancholy. As drummers we might seem limited in this regard when compared to other instrumentalists, since we generally don't have the ability to play melodies or chords, but there's a lot we *can* do. For instance, we can make things feel exciting or aggressive when we play on top of the pulse with a lot of energy. Or we can evoke feelings of lethargy or sadness by pulling back to the opposite side of the beat. With a strategic use of dynamics and tension-and-release, we can in fact contribute greatly to the emotional impact of the music.

A single musical note played in isolation expresses no tension. But when you add another note, you start to create a feeling or mood. However, a lot of the feelings we can convey on the drumset depend on the music we're accompanying. In other words, a beat that creates a feeling of mystery in context can fall emotionally flat when played on its own.

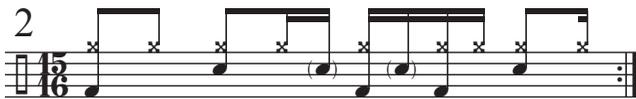
In this column we're going to explore some ways to utilize tension-and-release on the drums. These ideas can make fairly extreme statements. Use them sparingly, as the more you repeat an idea, the less effect it has on the listener.

Example 1 is a standard groove that we'll use as a base to apply tension-and-release concepts in the following examples.



Changing the time signature is a great way to create tension. When you set up something like Example 1, the listener expects the pulse to arrive consistently every quarter note and for beat 1 to return after four pulses. Adding or subtracting a quarter note (5/4, 3/4) creates subtle tension, while 8th-note adjustments are a little more abstruse (7/8, 9/8). Smaller 16th-note changes introduce much greater amounts of rhythmic tension.

Examples 2 and 3 are in 15/16 and 17/16, respectively. Once you get the hang of them in isolation, try inserting them at the end of an eight- or sixteen-measure phrase to get a feel for how the unexpected offset pulse shakes up the established 4/4 feel.



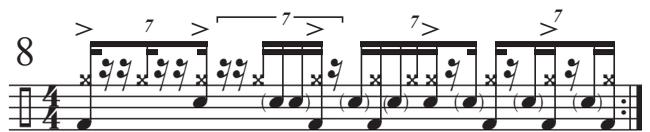
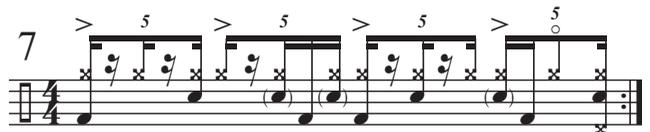
Permutation is another tool perfectly suited for adjusting the pulse to increase rhythmic tension. Example 4 keeps the hi-hats in 8th notes while pushing the kick and snare pattern forward by a 16th note.



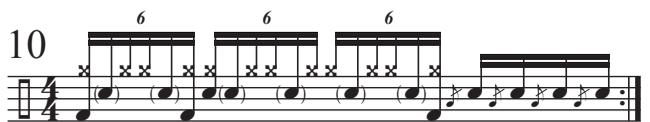
Implied metric modulation is another excellent tool that is used to either spread out or shrink the accent structure away from the primary pulse. Example 5 shrinks the accent structure into a 3/16 spacing, and Example 6 expands to a 5/16 spacing, each with matching hi-hat patterns.



For more extreme tension, you can utilize less common subdivisions to offset the pulse. Example 7 is based on quintuplets and has a hi-hat pattern that accents the quarter note. Example 8 uses septuplets with a lot of rests and a hi-hat pattern that ignores the pulse almost entirely.



You can create subtle rhythmic surprises that have a hint of tension by changing the subdivision without obscuring the pulse. Example 9 showcases a short triplet figure within the original groove from Example 1. Example 10 sets up a 16th-triplet shuffle with a straight 16th-note flam figure as a fill.



Examples 11 and 12 explore subdivision-related tension within a couple of short but odd-sounding fills.

Technique Vs. Musicality

Remove Yourself and Let Nature Guide You

by Bill Bachman

A lot of drummers like to pit technique and musicality against each other as if they're polar opposites. But they're actually very closely related. Many associate technique with speed or chops, but in reality technique is simply how you go about doing something. It's very possible for one player's quarter notes to sound great while another player's don't. Much of the reason for that is simply about the technique with which they're played.

So how do we determine what is good technique or bad technique? Simply, if something sounds good and is well executed, then that's good technique. I'd only criticize someone's technique if it produced a bad sound, elicited pain or led to injury, or prevented him or her from being able to execute an idea.

Obey the Laws of Physics

One of my foundational concepts on technique is based on the age-old struggle of man versus nature. Mankind is inherently flawed and prone to making mistakes, whereas the laws of physics and nature are perfect and constant. Our objective is to manipulate the stick only as much as is necessary to articulate the desired stroke type. Doing so will always result in more consistency, flow, speed, and endurance. How do we accomplish this? By employing good technique.

A Case Study

I've watched many students greatly improve their musicality, time, and groove within minutes simply by modifying their technique. An example of this happened at a clinic I did at a college in Texas a few years ago. The percussion studio consisted of about twenty-five students, who I'd gathered in a semicircle around a drumset. I invited a student up to play a simple rock groove with beats 1 and 3 on the bass drum, beats 2 and 4 on the snare, and 8th notes on the hi-hats. He played it, but it didn't feel good. So I simply addressed his technique one limb at a time.

Starting with his right hand, I showed him how to shut off his wrists and instead use the whip-and-flop (or Moeller) technique on the hi-hat. We orchestrated it so that the quarter-note accents were played with the shank of the stick on the edge of the cymbals and the upbeats with the bead on top. I also had him take his index finger off the stick, since it wasn't required when playing at that moderate tempo and dynamic level. The index finger should generally only jump in when playing things that require a combination of low and fast finesse.

For his left hand, which was playing the backbeats on the snare, we talked about how to whip the stick using the arm instead of the wrist, how to relax the front of the hand by taking the index finger off, and how to land a consistent rim shot. Finally I had him play heel-up on the pedal to add more power in order to better balance the bass drum with the hands.

After a few minutes of tweaking his technique, I had the student play the groove again, and after about two bars everyone around the kit was bobbing their heads and smiling. There was no question that modifying his technique to maximize the use of physics and natural flow resulted in tangible improvements in musicality and groove.

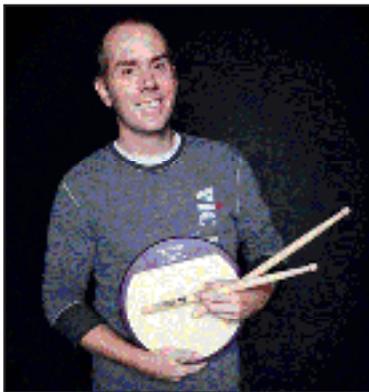
So how did all of this work? Essentially I helped this student transition from using his energy to hit the instruments to letting the sticks simply crash into the drums and cymbals on their own, which resulted in more velocity and less inertia. Also, the muscles generating strokes shifted to those located farther away from the sticks, so that the upper arms and shoulders pumped the forearms while the wrists were shut off and finger interaction was removed. There is definitely a time to use the index finger to micromanage the stick when maximum control is needed. But whenever the rhythms that you're playing allow, try to use bigger muscle groups. This will result in better musicality, sound, consistency, and flow.

Constant Motion

Another technical element we should strive for in order to increase consistency, flow, musicality, and groove is constant motion. When the notes you play string together naturally, there's going to be more consistency in that motion. By loosening up and playing lighter and with bigger motions, you can get your strokes to connect in a way that alleviates herky-jerky stop/start motions.

To get practical, any time that subsequent strokes are played at the same dynamic level or stick height, use free strokes to smoothly connect them. For accent patterns that you want to smooth out, use the Moeller whip-and-flop technique in order to maintain constant motion. And the more rhythmic space there is between the notes, the bigger the motions should be. In other words, fill the time with motion in order to maintain a constant flow, and manipulate the stick only as much as is necessary to get the job done. Techniques like the free stroke and the Moeller whip-and-flop are great for connecting notes to maintain consistent motion. (Refer to my book *Stick Technique* for an in-depth description and exercises on the different stroke types.)

When refining these techniques, which minimize your physical influence on the stick, it's common for people to feel out of control at first. However, once you dial them in, you'll realize that



they provide a much easier way to play, and your sound is greatly improved. Scrutinize your technique and strive to perfect it in order to maximize the natural flow and minimize your physical influence. The music will thank you.

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



Exercises in African-American Funk

Mangambe, Bikutsi, and the Shuffle

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

by Jonathan Joseph and Steve Rucker



Chapter 4: Half-Time Shuffle-Funk

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

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

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



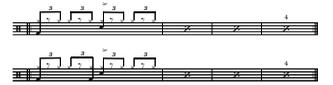
Although these exercises are written with six-note triplets for consistency, you might also conceptualize them as six-note triplets. That interpretation would put the backbeat on beats 2 and 4 of a bar of 4/4. So Hand Pattern 3 would look like the following.



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



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



Chapter 6: Bikutsi

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

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



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



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



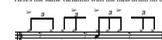
Here's a shuffle-funk variation with the bass drum on the first beat only.



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



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



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

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

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Tama **Starclassic Walnut/Birch** **Drumkits**

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MXL Microphones **Greetings from California** **Microphone Series**

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mxlmics.com





Latin Percussion

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PDP

Concept Series Additions

PDP Concept series maple drums are now available in Twisted Ivory, Satin Pewter, Satin Olive, Satin Seafoam, and Satin Black finishes. The company has also added a Carbon Fiber finish with black-nickel hardware. Concept series Exotic drums are now available in Honey Mahogany finish.

New configurations for the Concept series include a compact bop setup for drummers playing with a lighter touch, a large rock configuration for more hard-hitting styles, and a fusion kit for more varied playing. The toms and bass drums are constructed with 7-ply European maple shells. The snares are 10-ply European maple and feature the DW MAG throw-off. All PDP drums come fitted with True-Pitch tension rods and Remo drumheads.
pacificdrums.com



TRX Cymbals ICE Series Mega Bell Rides

The ICE series now includes 18", 20", 21", 22", 23", and 24" Mega Bell rides. These extra-heavy cymbals feature the company's "diamond" finish and a 9" unlathed bell. Intended for modern rock and metal drumming, the rides are said to have a clean, clear, cutting sound.
trxcymbals.com



Toca Custom Deluxe Wood Congas and Bongos

The Custom Deluxe wood conga series is now available in Sahara Gold finish. The drums, which include a 12.5" tumba, an 11.75" conga, an 11" quinto, and matching 7" and 8.5" bongos, feature Asian oak shells and are outfitted with chrome hardware, top-grade bison heads, and EasyPlay hoops.
tocapercussion.com





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This new fully adjustable rail mount features a hinge bracket that grips a 1" knurled bar to ensure secure and precise tom positioning. A geared tilter holds a 12.7 mm L-arm to allow for additional positioning. The mount can be ordered with a kit or as an aftermarket part to fit any size bass drum.

gretschdrums.com



Latin Percussion Toro Bravo Cajon

Created with percussionist Efrain Toro, the Toro Bravo cajon is constructed using an optimized grain orientation soundboard with a Rapid Response Curve shape. Additional features include a quarter-sawn, solid cedar body, angled playing surface, self-aligning rubber feet, and four adjustable phosphor-bronze strings.

lpmusic.com

Promark Classic 747 FireGrain Drumsticks

These drumsticks, which measure .551" in diameter, feature a thick taper, a large oval tip, and Promark's patented FireGrain heat-tempering process, which is said to increase durability. List price is \$22.60.

daddario.com



RETAILER PROFILE

Rubix Drums London, England

Rubix is the newest drum retailer to open in London. It's a drum store with a difference, whose proprietors are also trying to *make* a difference.

The shop is only part of what the Rubix team does to serve the drumming community. As demanding a time as it is now for drum retailers and manufacturers, Rubix thrives by not trying to compete with major brands and established retailers. Rubix is a unique, boutique one-stop shop that brings drummers and drum services together under one roof to meet the needs of the community, one drummer at a time.

MD spoke with Bence Bolygo, who, along with his partner Peter Ward, has built Rubix over the past five years in the bustling Park Royal area of West London.



Rubix is much more than a drum store. We aim to position ourselves at the core of London's drumming ecosystem. We're here for everyone—local professionals, touring drummers, famous artists, and musicians at all stages of their hobbies and careers. We have a lounge where drummers can hang out. We have a workshop where we repair drums, with a four-hour emergency turnaround service for people passing through London on tour. We provide a service to help international drummers obtain U.K. work visas. We store drummers' kits and display them for customers. Right now we have gorgeous touring kits for Brian Blade, Derrick McKenzie, Harvey Mason, Pete Ray Biggin, and more.

Our ethos means we don't sell all the brands or accessories you might expect to see in a typical drum store. However, we own and store many kits from all the big manufacturers, so our customers can try them out and record with them.

Most instruments we sell are made by craftspeople we know well and trust. We like to build close relationships between the maker and the buyer. Smaller companies struggle to compete in the global marketplace, so by supporting niche manufacturers, we can support a more diverse marketplace and keep the small, bespoke

manufacturers solvent.

One company Rubix works with is Snareweight, a small U.S. firm producing an amazing product. We also provide U.K. distribution and European artist relations and support for legendary Canopus drums. We stock beautiful drums by ASBA, Angel, FG, British Drum Company, INDe, Rogers, and more. By providing U.K. and European distribution, we increase market awareness, which benefits the brand and, most importantly, more end users. We're helping to build a more sustainable economy for all.

At Rubix we allow you to take a drum home for trial purposes without paying for it. If it's not the right drum for you, you can bring it back and choose a different one. We want to nurture a mutually respectful musical community, and not just sell people stuff because they liked the way it looked in the shop window.

We're obsessed with the heritage of drumming and drums.

That's why we have Slingerland Radio Kings, Rogers kits, and a super-cool pink Hollywood Meazzi kit played by Max Roach, among many others. Bridging the past and the present is the concept that underpins our Rubix house brand of drums, Vintage Soul. Every Vintage Soul drum starts with a classic vintage shell, which





"Be true to yourself," says Bence Bolygo. "Be open to trying new things and to exploring the products we sell. Once we find out your individual needs as a drummer, we will not stop till we meet those needs. We often source items at short notice for no profit so that a client can go on tour, make a recording session, do a big show, etc. Logistics are a big part of what we do.

"We have an educational app called *Faster Hands* to help musicians monetize their music. We worked with the sensational American fusion band the 4orners (J-rod Sullivan) and British drumming sensation Pete Ray Biggin from Level 42 with his band PBug to test-drive it."



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Shopper's Tip

"When you visit a drum store," says Bence Bolygo, "go there to explore and to learn. We aim to build community at Rubix. All drummers feel welcome here. Come to Rubix to learn about what drums and cymbals you like. Come here to record a drum track. Come here to take lessons or to browse our huge collection of vintage and contemporary drumkits. Come and learn about how design impacts the sound of a drum. Come buy a truly unique Vintage Soul snare drum. Let us know how we can help you, and we will."

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We work with several big music colleges, helping them create more diverse programming with world-famous drummers. We help them to provide master classes on all aspects of drumming and the music industry. We work with important industry hubs such as Ronnie Scott's and Tileyard studios. This benefits the professionals of the future by improving education opportunities for them, and it provides good paying work for musicians.

It's important for us to feel good about what we do, so that drummers and other service providers in our community feel good about what they are doing, too. We care about treating people well, and this attitude extends from our customers to the suppliers and manufacturers with whom we work. Is the person making your drums being fairly compensated? Are the materials they're using ethically sourced? How can we support expert craftsmen and craftswomen across all sectors of the drum industry? If we don't do our bit to take care of all members of the drumming community, then that community will cease to exist. We believe we can all thrive if we lift one another up.

Interview by Gareth Dylan Smith



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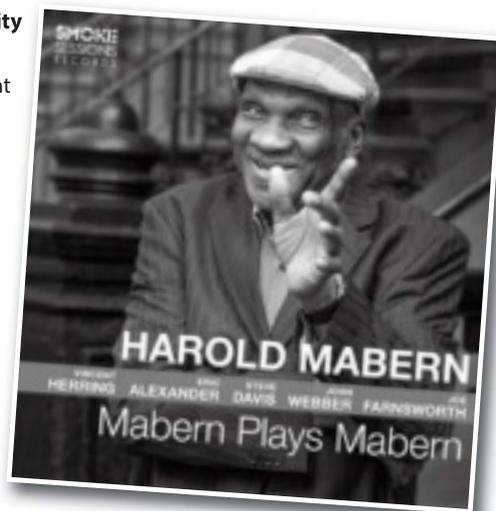
CRITIQUE

RECORDINGS

Harold Mabern *Mabern Plays Mabern*

The recent release by the late, great pianist beautifully demonstrates how familiarity can bring inspiration to a group.

Muscular, rich piano chords set the mood; a ride cymbal joins beneath; a three-horn front line launches into a theme...Harold Mabern's group opens a smoking live set! Mabern, who passed in September 2019, was a pianist with history, having played with many key hard-bop players from the end of the 1960s onward. The past two decades saw him releasing numerous well-regarded albums, filled with harmony and dexterous runs across the keys. In that time he worked consistently with players like saxophonist Eric Alexander and drummer **Joe Farnsworth**, all of them developing the musical telepathy of a band. On *Mabern Plays Mabern*, recorded live at Smoke, the group, rooted in a straight-ahead hard-bop tradition, variously reaches heights with burning solos and pulls back for more contemplative moments. Farnsworth, a veteran of New York's jazz scene with numerous gigs and sideman credits, shows why his classic style is in such demand. His ride cymbal pulses along while bass and snare accents both frame and prod the music forward. Check out "Mr. Johnson" for some prime playing all around, or "Edward Lee," which flows with a jaunty midtempo swing. "It's Magic" shows a softer side, with brushes providing counterpoint for a sax solo. Uptempo fireworks can be found in Farnsworth's closing solo on "The Lyrical Cole-Man," where flams and single strokes burst from a four-piece in authoritative fashion. (Smoke Sessions Records) **Martin Patmos**



Amendola Vs. Blades *Everybody Wins*

The latest from this dazzling duo expands the palette.

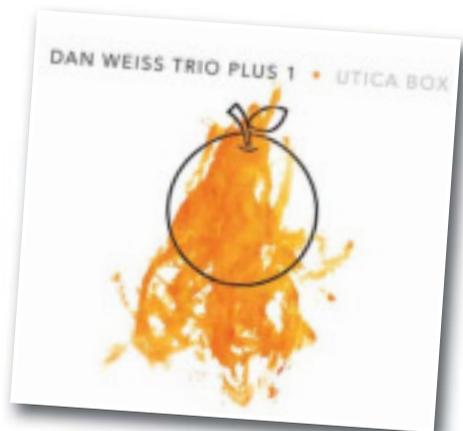
When drummer and live-looping maven Scott Amendola and keyboardist/bassist Wil Blades recorded their debut in 2016, they put a different spin on the classic jazz organ trio. This time around the musical partners are assisted by friends, including guest percussionist **Cyro Baptista** (Paul Simon, John Zorn), among others. This significantly larger musical tent is propped up by Amendola's often funky, intricate grooves. The slightly sing-song-y drum pattern and Steely Dan-ish chord progression of the opener, "Hi-Lo," co-written by Amendola, bops along with jazzy bounciness until breaking loose and traveling an odd-time trajectory. With ringing, rattling snare, Amendola lays down something resembling an edgy second-line figure that shuffles through "Fess Up (Before Ya Mess Up)," and, in "Metropolitan Hustle," he drops droopy dub beats amid dizzying electronic squeaks and zaps. (Royal Potato Family) **Will Romano**



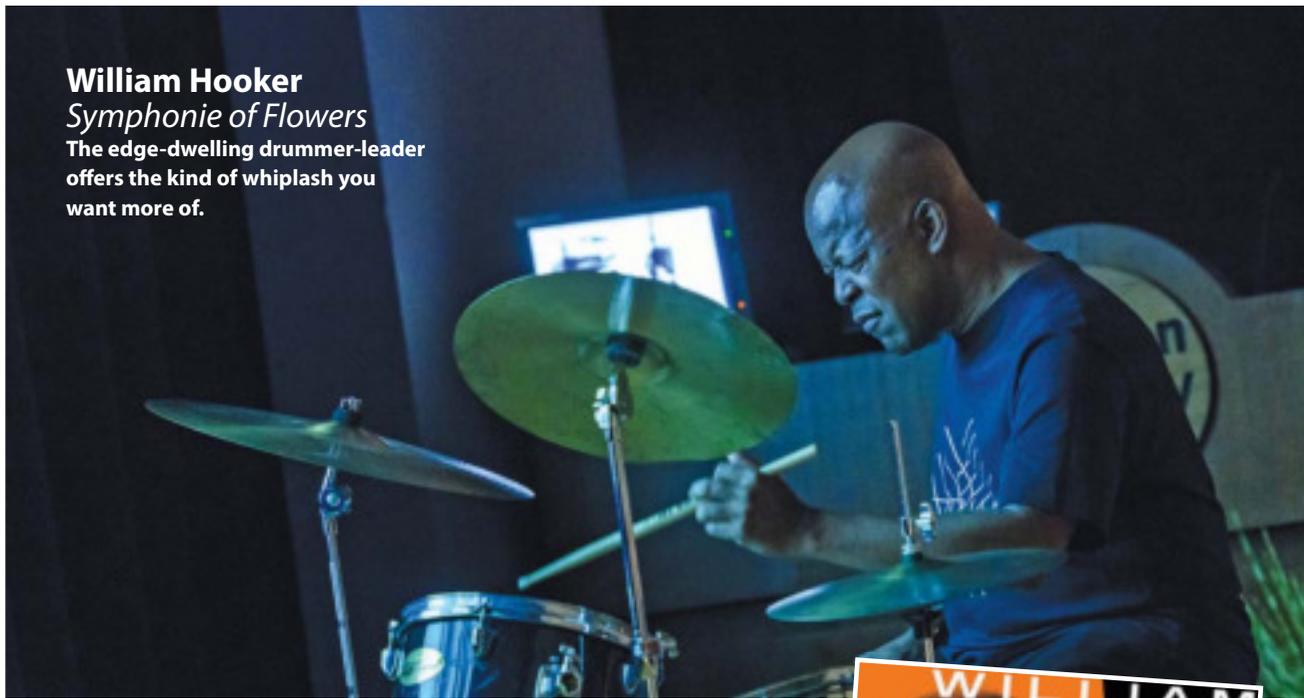
Dan Weiss Trio Plus 1 *Utica Box*

Yet another unique chapter in a gloriously unpredictable drumming career.

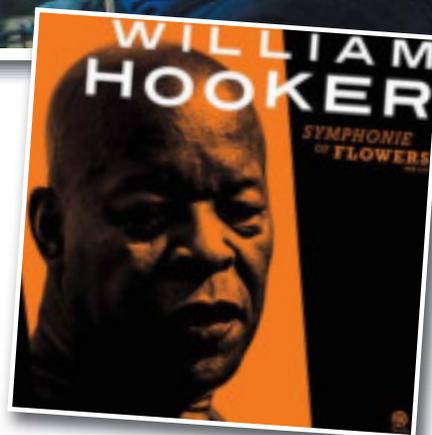
The latest entry in Dan Weiss's ongoing evolutionary writing process makes it difficult to define and divine the division line between conscious and spontaneous composition. Adding to this excitement, Weiss conceptualizes time well, plowing through changes and confidently allowing patterns to resolve themselves, especially in the opening title track. "Please Don't Leave" is shaped by a fast-moving bass-drums convo simmering underneath a sweeping piano melody; "Orange" messes with repetition; and "Bonham" not only recalls Led Zep's Bonzo, but also Jack DeJohnette's frenzied ride cymbal work and Gary Husband's controlled chaos, circa early 1980s. (Sunnyside Records) **Will Romano**



William Hooker
Symphonie of Flowers
The edge-dwelling drummer-leader offers the kind of whiplash you want more of.



William Hooker has cut a prolific profile in avant-garde music, collaborating with everyone from composer Elliott Sharp to Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore. With *Symphonie of Flowers*, the experimental jazz drummer has composed a three-section movement anchored by driving rhythms that intersect with jazz-induced freak-outs in the form of alternating drum tracks. The effect on album opener "Chain Gangs" is mesmerizing, like hearing John Bonham interrupted by Billy Higgins. On "Freedom Riders," Hooker morphs a double-stroke cousin of the Purdie shuffle into a swung triplet feel, deconstructing a variety of intense, complicated grooves as the song reaches cruising altitude. Unlike many drum-heavy experiments, however, Hooker's technical prowess remains purposive, musical, and fun. (Org Music) **Keaton Lamle**

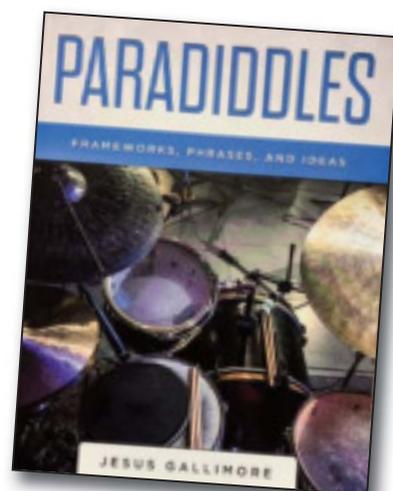


BOOKS

Paradiddles: Frameworks, Phrases, and Ideas by Jesus Gallimore

Fresh ways to squeeze the most out of a basic drumming tool.

While most drummers learn the basic RLRR-LRLL paradiddle, and a few venture further into traditional sticking patterns, it seems increasingly common for players to avoid diving deep into rudimental work. This can leave them without adaptability when it comes to translating pattern ideas into smooth, real-time playing applications. Jesus Gallimore's *Paradiddles* focuses on taking the basic rudiment through a series of complex, variable sticking exercises refracted through different tempos and time signatures. The exercises allow players from a variety of skill levels to find ways to expand their palette when it comes to sticking expression across the kit. Step by step, the book builds practice frameworks that mutate basic paradiddles into the kind of chops that allow your hands to run free of your imagination. Gallimore's text offers great exercises in sticking, starting with the basic and advancing into more complex two-bar double paradiddles spread about the kit. (\$11.99, jesusgallimore.wordpress.com) **Keaton Lamle**

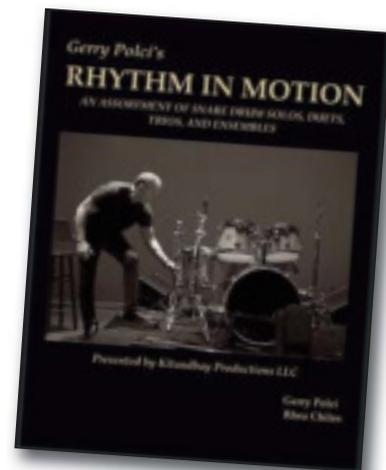


***Rhythm in Motion: An Assortment of Snare Drum Solos, Duets, Trios, and Ensembles* by Gerry Polci**

More snare exercises to push your reading and control to the next level.

Drummer and author Gerry Polci, who also happened to drum *and* sing lead on the Four Seasons' hit "December, 1963 (Oh, What a Night)," presents a series of snare drum exercises as "rhythm stories," citing that each one has a beginning, a middle, and an end, like a novel. The pieces start at the intermediate level and then accelerate in difficulty. Polci studied with Joe Morello and occasionally cites the famous Wilcoxon rudiments book and emphasizes counting. "If you can say it, you can play it," Polci stresses, and in between the pages are often inspirational passages about the process of practicing and his ideas about stroke and motion. After examples in 5/8 and 9/8, Polci introduces solos for hands and feet and later duets and trios that will test your sight-reading as much as your execution, so going slow and focusing on dynamics should yield the best results. There's not a ton of insight or explanation into the individual exercises, but that shouldn't matter, as the challenge is right there on the page. (\$19.95, Kitandbay-productions.myshopify.com)

Ilya Stemkovsky

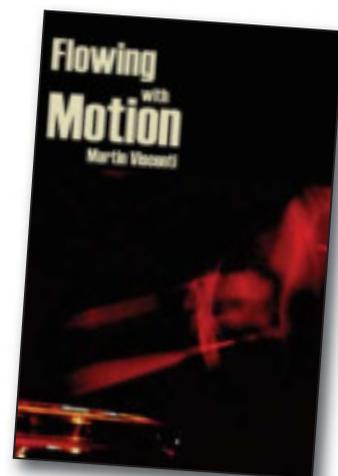


***Flowing with Motion* by Martín Visconti**

A book for those seeking out the conceptual, not just the rudimental.

Argentinean drummer and author Martín Visconti's new book intends to "focus on the movements we use when we play drums, leaving style aside," according to press materials, so it makes sense that much of *Flowing with Motion* is about the philosophy of *why* you do things, instead of just concentrating on the *how*. That's not to say Visconti avoids discussion of technique or the usual rhythmic hurdles many drummers face, such as triplets or odd meters. But avoiding the presentation of specific genres allows him to dive deep into his own general philosophy, which could and should benefit all musicians. Split into five chapters—Movements, Exercises, Sound, Spaces, and Musicality—the book jumps from the correlation of martial arts and drumming, to different flams and paradiddle notations, to ideas on developing one's own sound. So there are plenty of hands-on sticking challenges to bite into, as well as more esoteric fare like a section on "Transforming a Melody into a Groove." (PDF: \$12, paperback: \$20, martinvisconti.com)

Ilya Stemkovsky



MULTIMEDIA

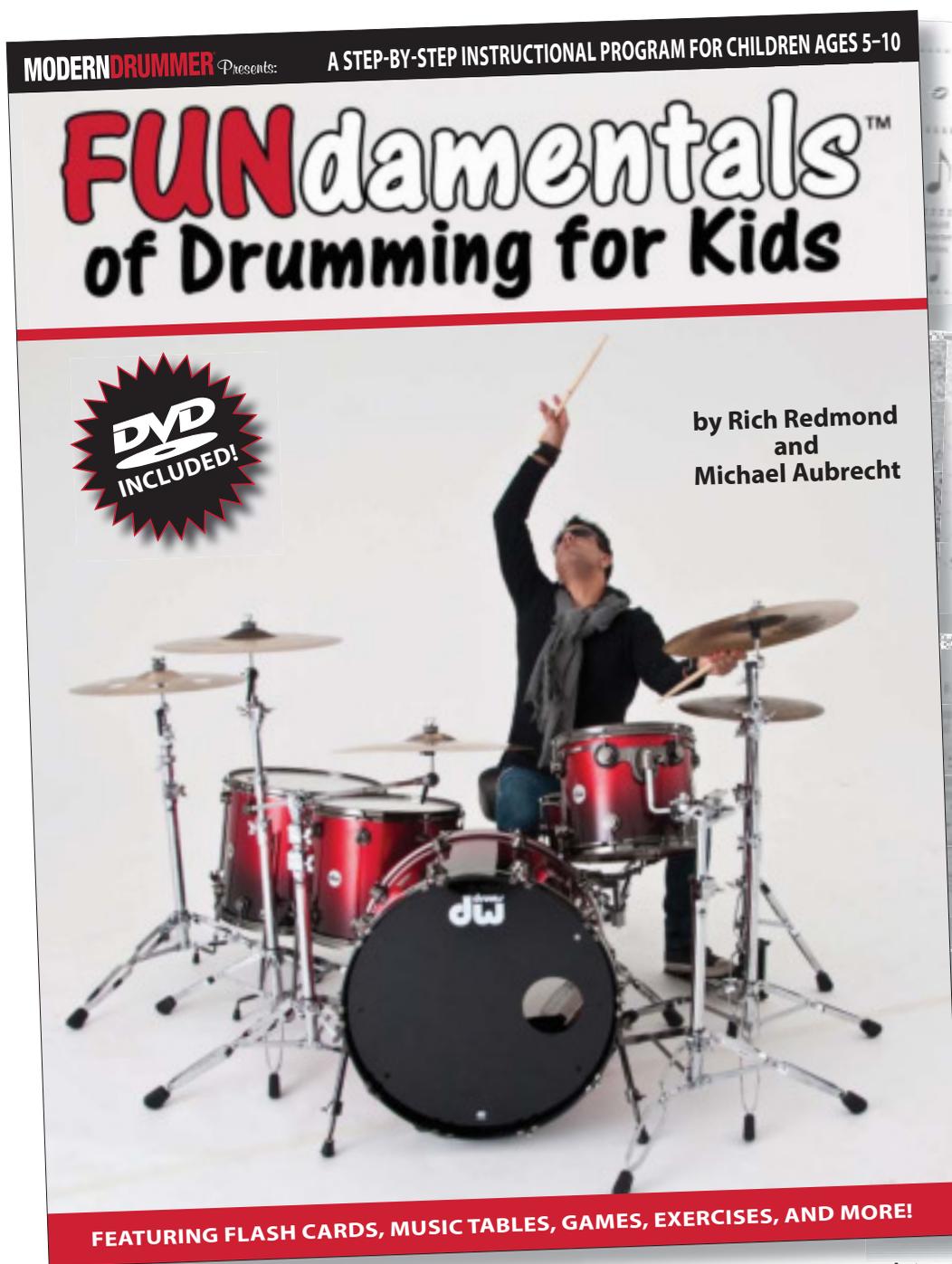
***The Bailey Method 2: Advanced Sounds* by Dan Bailey**

Studio owner, session musician, and Father John Misty beat-keeper Dan Bailey's second online course takes a deeper dive into more advanced topics for recording drummers.

Last year's *Bailey Method 1* focused on the fundamentals of drum maintenance, tuning, mic placement, and studio playing. This course, which clocks in at two hours and fifty-one minutes, comprises fourteen chapters that progress from exploring the full sonic range of your gear to dampening techniques, building drum parts, and engineering/mixing your tracks. Bailey continues with the casual, conversational flow that was established in the first course: he maintains an air of expertise honed from decades of recording experience gleaned from his own trial-and-error experiments or from working on sessions with various top producers and engineers. Although the overarching theme of both courses is that there simply are no secrets to capturing great drum performances in the studio, Bailey does a great job of demystifying the process through his own tried-and-true approach. Highly recommended for any aspiring session player. (\$150, vimeo.com) **Michael Dawson**



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Jaki Liebezeit: The Life, Theory and Practice of a Master Drummer

It's no accident that the rhythm-centric music of the German band Can is still considered cutting-edge decades after they first came to prominence. As a new book makes clear, much of their iconoclasm originated with their fascinating drummer.

The late, great drummer Jaki Liebezeit (his last name translates into "Love Time") is best known for his revolutionary playing in the sui generis German band Can. His signature beats from that era combined power, finesse, and repetition and suggest rhythmic paths that still sound fresh fifty years later.

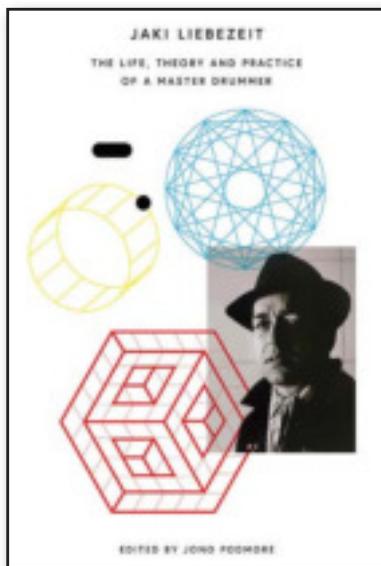
While the music that Can created between 1968 and 1976 remains essential, little was known about Jaki Liebezeit's musical and rhythmic theory beyond the recorded evidence on the band's classic albums. Cue Jono Podmore's new anthology of writings and essays about Liebezeit, which stands as an introduction to the worlds that Jaki mapped and documented over the course of his life in music.

As demonstrated by this absorbing anthology, the Can years were only the beginning of Liebezeit's foray into rhythmic and harmonic theory. Podmore first met Liebezeit long after his time with Can, during a 1997 recording session for Can keyboardist Irmin Schmidt's opera *Gormenghast*.

Podmore, a producer and recording engineer, recently told *MD*, "Irmin and I went through the whole of the opera and made very complex tempo maps with speeding up and slowing down; then we got Jaki to come down and play the basic drums. I had never worked with someone who was actually pulling the rhythms apart to express the pulse better. From that moment on I was an acolyte."

From their first meeting, Podmore had many detailed conversations with Liebezeit about harmony and rhythmic structure and encouraged him to write a book based on his theories. A 2004 interview with the drummer in this magazine mentions that a book was in the works. Unfortunately that book was never completed. So in 2017, when Liebezeit passed away at seventy-eight of pneumonia, Podmore had "a case of mild panic" and realized that all of his knowledge, idiosyncrasies, and notation system were in danger of being lost. Podmore scrambled to get the members of Liebezeit's long-running percussion ensemble Drums Off Chaos and other people with an abiding interest in the late musician to write chapters about elements of his musical insight, outlook, personal history, and discography. The resulting book covers his playing technique, dot-dash notation system, rhythmic and harmonic theory, and instrument setup, all of which goes against convention in one way or another. While it should come as no surprise that a drummer whose musical output broke so many boundaries went against the prevailing grain, it's still shocking to learn about certain features of his technique.

For instance, Liebezeit's theories about what constitutes ergonomic playing seem to run contrary to conventional understandings of "proper" percussion technique. In later years he played with a self-



described "hammer" form, with a lot of forearm motion and a still wrist, all while deeply in tune with gravity. Some extant film from the Can years shows that he's not quite as uncompromising as this and uses plenty of finger technique for double strokes and rolls; nonetheless, this revelation was surprising.

The few videos of Drums Off Chaos that exist show the drummers playing with little exertion while creating a powerful roar. Podmore and the musicians in Jaki's ensemble attest to the ergonomic system behind Jaki's playing resulting in a lot of power generated with modest movements.

The dot-dash notation system and rules outlined in this book for Drums Off Chaos seem deeply considered and rigorously explored, even though ways to apply these insights practically by a curious drummer who loves the beat on Can's classic "Vitamin C," for instance, are not readily apparent. But these theories are

practically applied to music that is created within the confines of Drums Off Chaos.

Most of the material in this book feels radical when approached from a conventional percussion background, and that's certainly by design. Liebezeit was a musician who was focused on tearing down the Western idea of bar lines and even the concept of "syncopation," i.e. offbeats. So for those of us steeped in Western drumming tradition, the defamiliarizing elements of this book come at a breakneck pace. It's a method that will reward careful and patient study. How its insights might be applied to the drumset are less clear, and that's probably fine.

A chapter on Jaki's equipment and use of ropes to tune conventional plastic drumheads is particularly eye-opening. Podmore says that Jaki's use of colorful climbing rope influenced Cologne's drum community. You still see drummers walking around the city with climbing rope on their drums, threaded through the plastic Remo frames and laced to their conventional shells.

What seems radical to contemporary drummers might be simply a deep sense of classicism and conservatism on Liebezeit's part for the deep history of drums and drumming that's only recently getting attention in the West. He rejects the four-limb orthodoxy of the drumset, prefers rope to lug tuning, and feels like Western notation does a disservice to the performance and dissemination of rhythms. Everything we take for granted about using a drumset, tuning, rhythm, and notation are dismantled in this book. Whether we should take these concepts as gospel is another question. But for anyone interested in the mind that created the powerful beats of Can and Drums Off Chaos, this book is essential.

John Colpitts



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One night at the Blues Bar, Danny Aykroyd was playing the rough tapes of the *Made in America* album—the Blues Brothers album that no one has heard of. Keith Richards was there, and he came over and said, “What’s that shit, man? It sounds like a jazz drummer.”

[laughs] So you can’t win.

About four years ago, I finally took the challenge. Sonny Rollins was asking me to play. He had approached me a couple of times before, but I would always cancel because I didn’t think that I was ready to play with a legend like him. But finally I did, and I overcame that. It was the last thing I had to overcome to prove to myself that I could play.

Steve Jordan
Modern Drummer, June 1985



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