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After slaying it in front of hundreds of thousands on Ariana Grande's *Sweetener* tour, he is taking the reins as drummer and music coordinator for the hit TV show *The Masked Singer*. It's just another chapter in a sterling career.
by Stephen Styles

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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

When in Doubt…

I have no idea why, but as I sat here staring at a blank Word document, contemplating which angle to take for this month's overview, the title of progressive drumming great Bill Bruford's out-of-print transcription book, *When in Doubt, Roll!*, popped into my head. I didn't even own a hard copy of that book, nor have I practiced anything from it, and yet…how apropos, right? In these crazy times, is there any other healthy way to react than to simply roll with it?

As Bruford states in the intro to the book (which I've since tracked down), "This…is an attempt to describe how one drummer has managed to survive all the lunacy that goes with a professional musician's life, and still retain the desire to sit at the drumset and play." Bill wrote that in 1988, but as I and all of my gigging drummer friends have had our performing careers come to a screeching halt overnight, it seems even more important in these exceedingly trying times to check in with ourselves and remember how important drums and drumming are to our daily well-being. Can you imagine going through all this chaos without them by your side? I cannot.

I realize not everyone has been lucky enough to have been socially distancing in a place with a set of drums nearby that you can retreat to for at least a few minutes each day. But just having a pair of sticks, a practice pad, and a metronome at hand should provide some much-needed relief. Like everyone, my daily schedule has been completely out of whack. But I've made a point to maintain a consistent morning practice routine—one that I implemented several years ago, long before the current global crisis. After I finish my morning coffee, I grab a pair of heavy drum corps sticks and a small rubber practice pad, cue up the metronome, plug in my earbuds, and shed some 16th-note sticking patterns. After a few minutes, I shift into playing through a few old rudimental solos that I memorized many moons ago. Then, if time allows, I'll venture down to my basement studio, create a weird loop with my WaveDrum and Line6 pedal, and improvise grooves, melodies, or abstract textures on the drumset. All of this transpires within the first hour of waking up, but the emotional and psychological benefits stay with me throughout the day, regardless of how stressful things might become. If you don't currently have a morning routine that incorporates a little drumming, I urge you to give it a try.

Hopefully as you read this issue, which features three of my all-time favorite drummers—R&B/pop great Aaron Spears, alternative-rock legend John Stanier, and modern-jazz torchbearer Ali Jackson—the tides are beginning to turn back towards some sense of normalcy. But even if you're still stuck social distancing, remember that we're all in this together, your double-stroke roll could use some work, and there's always forty-plus years of *Modern Drummer* archived online to help pull you through. Stay safe, and enjoy the issue.

Mike Dawson

Mike Dawson
Managing Editor

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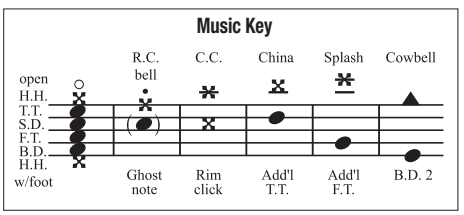

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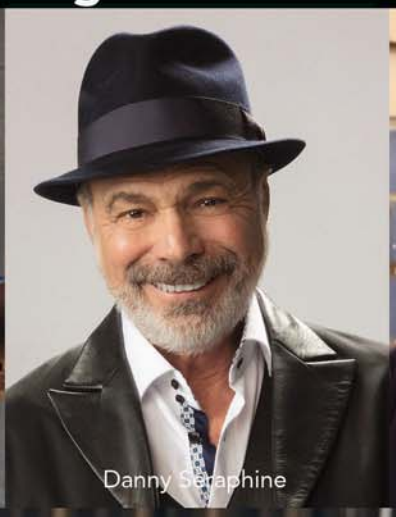
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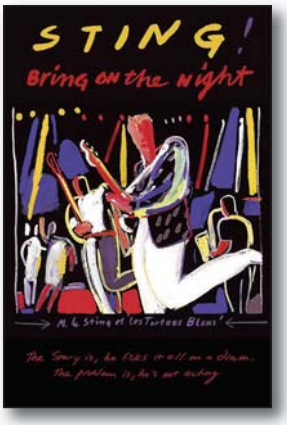
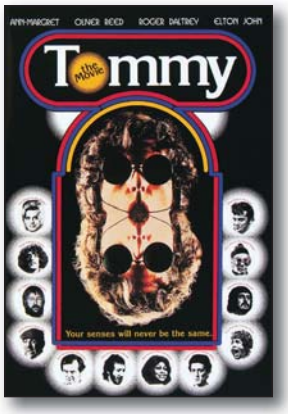
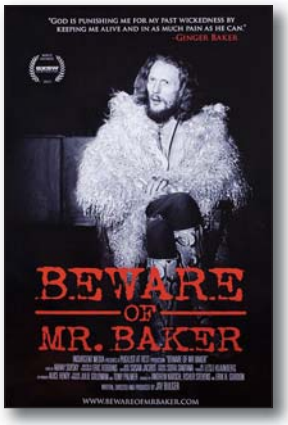
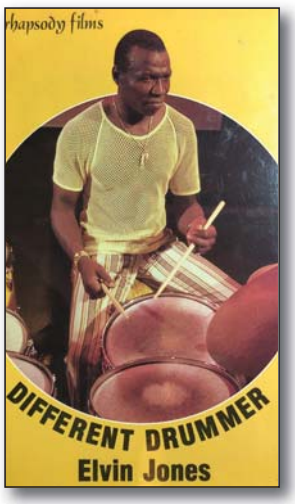
What's Your Favorite "Drum Movie"?

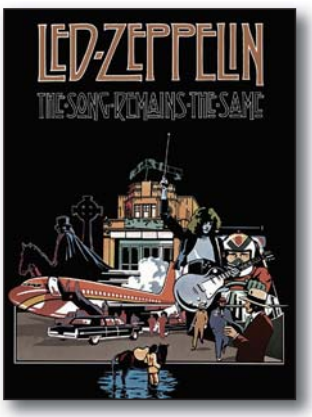
As we've all begun to lean heavy into our streaming services in recent weeks, the *MD* editors got curious about what our readers' favorite movies are that feature drumming—whether documentaries, dramas, or comedies, as a central theme or a passing reference. Here's what you told us.

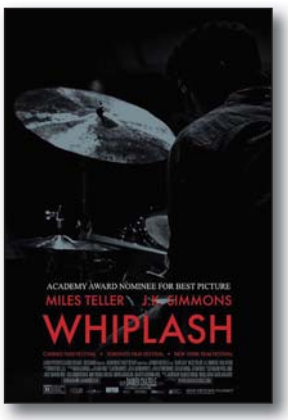












The Gene Krupa Story
Max Sperber, Greg Ross, Keith Alexander, Randy Taylor, Beto Calvillo, @silvio_gaetti

Different Drummer [Elvin Jones]
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Led Zeppelin's *The Song Remains the Same* [John Bonham]
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Sting's *Bring on the Night* [Omar Hakim]
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The Who's *Tommy*. The rerecorded version of "Sparks" is epic. Keith Moon at his absolute finest and utterly bombastic.
Jimmy Keegan

That Thing You Do
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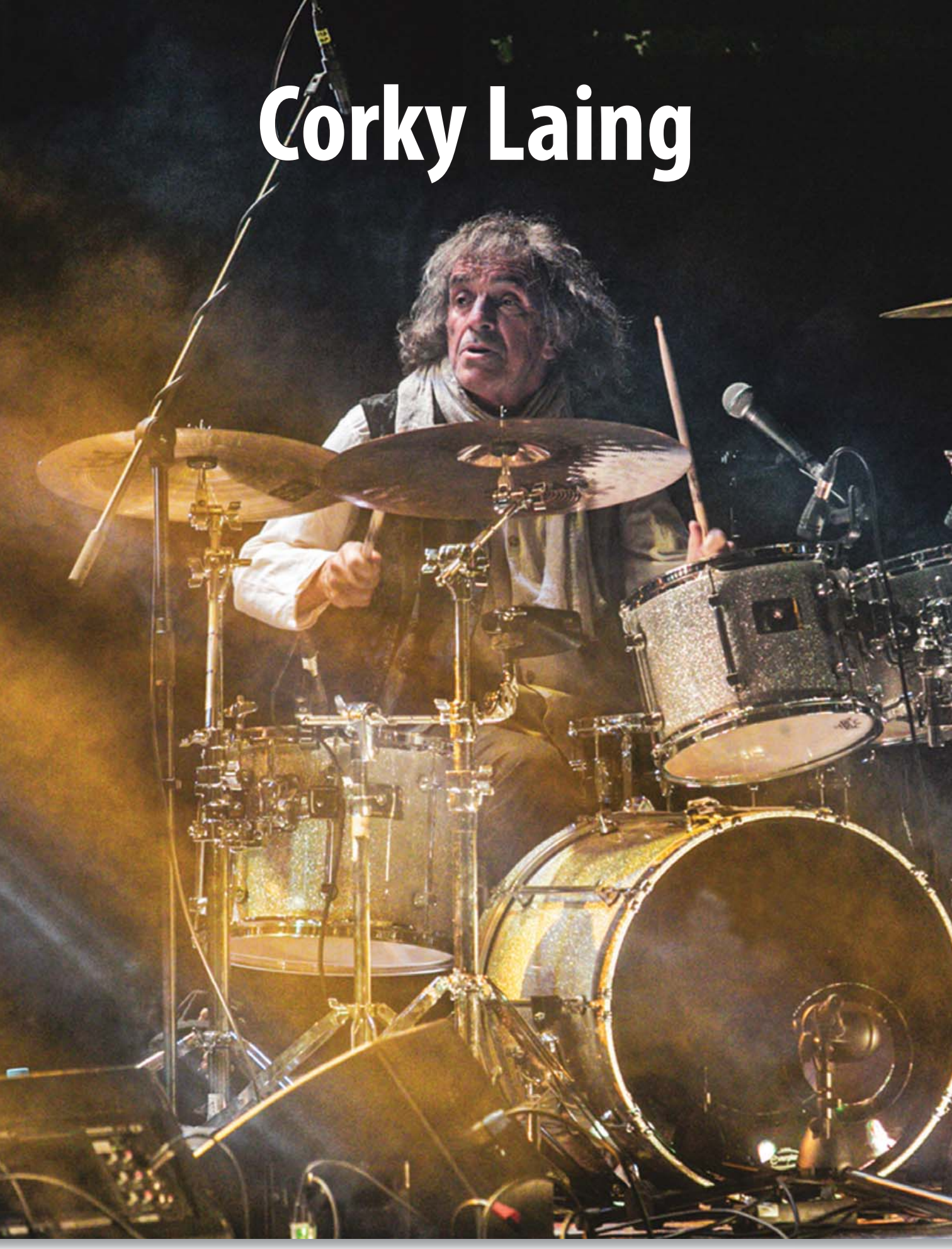


Ioana Bobes

His new album reminds us why we loved him with Mountain all those years ago, and why we love him still.


Joachim Jüttner

Throughout his legendary, five-decades-long career, Corky Laing's energy has defied logic. The man might be seventy-two, but his youthful passion toward drums and drumming is inspiring to players of any age. Following the release of his stellar 2019 memoir, *Letters to Sarah*, Laing again finds himself in the national spotlight.

The drummer's new album, *The Toledo Sessions,* is a potent blend of classic-meets-contemporary rock, beautifully engineered by Jason Hartless and Chuck Alkazian. The album carries with it a decidedly "Mountain-esque" vibe, but while its '70s sound is retro in concept, there's a kind of modernity to its—as Laing describes it—"uncivilized" rock approach. Corky's playing is massive, his fills perfectly setting up verses, bridges, solos, and choruses, all while retaining the musicality within each song. For an example, check out the thunderous rhythm of his double bass drums in the intro of the opener "Beautiful Flies."

When asked how he musters the energy to play drums like a person half his age, Laing says, "It may be corny, but every time I sit down at the kit I think it could be the last time. And I play accordingly. As long as I can tap into the zone, I love it."

In the late '60s and early '70s, bands like Cream, the Jimi Hendrix Experience, and Mountain defined the genre of "power rock." Today, Laing and his young contemporaries *burn* as if no time at all has passed. How did he find such a perfect fit, and capture it so well? "It was strictly old-school," says Laing. "We did it all live and let the tapes roll. Working with bassist/producer Mark Mikel was like working with [Mountain's] Felix Pappalardi again. Besides being a phenomenal bassist, he knew the nuances and idiosyncrasies of the studio process.

"I met Chris [Shutters] through Ginger Baker's son Kofi," Laing continues. "We toured together with Kofi Plays Cream, and Corky Plays Mountain. Chris is not only a formidable guitarist, but an amazing singer as well."

So were they purposely going for a retro sound? "Absolutely," Laing responds. "We finessed it enough to sound like a monaural record, but mixed it with all the digital bells and whistles of today." Highlight tracks include "Something's Gotta Give," "Information Overload," and "Earthquake," which sounds like it could have been an outtake from the Beatles' *White Album*.

As we went to press with this issue, musicians the world over were—and likely still are as you read this—adjusting to severely curtailed touring schedules, but Laing has specific plans for when things return to normal. "I'm going out as Corky Laing's Mountain," he says, "because I don't want to imply that this band is the same as the original Mountain of the 1970s. However, it is the fiftieth anniversary of the album *Mountain: Climbing!*, and there's quite a number of folks out there that recognize that. What I'm getting at is we're using what we *had* and reminding people of what we represent now, musically speaking…and that live performance is truly alive and well."

Bob Girouard

Lamb of God's Art Cruz

Twenty-five years in, the iron-jawed Virginia metallers and their new drummer release their tenth, self-titled LP, a sonic exclamation point that poignantly and ferociously punctuates the present moment.

In 2018, Art Cruz played his first shows with Lamb of God, fulfilling a rock 'n' roll fantasy of performing with his favorite band. Then in 2019, the fantasy became cemented in reality when he became Lamb's official drummer. As the newest and youngest member of LOG, Cruz has injected a fiery spirit into the veteran outfit's signature sound.

MD: Drum sounds have been an important part of the overall Lamb of God sound. What were the discussions like when coming up with drum sounds in the studio for the new record?

Art: As I've progressed as a drummer, I've learned a lot about how to make a full *band* album, not just a drumming album. We came into it agreeing that we wanted to beef up the drum sounds. They're still snappy, punchy, and quick, but it's a little more organic. I used a 7x13 snare as opposed to the 12" that [former drummer] Chris Adler had used. The fans will definitely hear a difference, but it's not far off. I also used larger cymbals for added warmth and sustain. We recorded all the music at Dave Grohl's 606 studio. That live room is unbelievable!

MD: And it has the famous Neve board that used to be in Sound City.

Art: Hell yeah, man! The sound out of that board is insane. I have some raw footage filmed on a camera phone from the control room while I was playing in the live room, and you can just hear that room talking through your drums. To my knowledge, I think this was the first time since the band's first album where the music was recorded all at the same place. There was a remarkable energy. Vocals were done at our producer Josh Wilbur's house, but everything else was tracked at 606.

MD: What was your process for tracking?

Art: This is not a common thing, but I actually tracked my drums last. I first tracked drums on a Roland V-Drums kit, which gave the bass and guitars a skeleton of the structure to record to, but if something changed, I could easily change it so they had a solid foundation. MIDI, when used like that, is a game changer and time saver. Then, when the structures were set, I did my real drums, and I was able to build my parts around the vocal patterns.

As for tracking, what worked best was recording the songs all the way through and then coming back and focusing intensely on all the fills—so there were definitely punches. But I had to be able to play through each song several times to make sure I was hitting the right vibe. This approach allowed for some spontaneous moments, because I had the freedom to just record and let things happen. I tend to be more creative in that space. Josh comes from a drum background, in addition to being an experienced, knowledgeable, flexible, *and* intense producer. He will make you dig in and reach the next level of your playing. He really helped me bloom.

MD: What are some of your favorite moments on the record?

Art: The opening track, "Memento Mori," was one of those songs that was practically already written; I just added some spice that comes with my background in music. I often get asked who my favorite drummer is, and I always say, "Santana!" He's not a drummer, but to *me* he is because the band had an overall sound that, to me, *is* a drum sound. Santana is what got me into drumming, and then I discovered Tower of Power, Rage Against the Machine, as well as all these great metal bands, and Chris Adler is hands down my favorite metal drummer. So I'm just pulling from different influences, and that will naturally show up in my playing and add a flavor that wasn't there before.

"Checkmate" was the first song we worked on together. If I could show you [guitarist] Willie [Adler]'s demo of that tune, it's the perfect example of how it started as something totally different and the outcome being the result of our chemistry during pre-production. That song is very special to me. It has a classic LOG sound that was natural for me to fall into, and I didn't overthink it. It just felt right.

MD: Is the intro snippet from pre-production?

Art: Yeah, how cool is that! Josh didn't tell anyone that he was keeping that as the intro; it was a surprise when he started sending us the initial mixes. That was legitimately the second time we had played through the song, and I'm playing on the rim of the snare trying to come up with a pattern to the riff. So not only was it the first song that we ever worked on, it ended up being the first single, and my voice is on the track counting in the song. My friends and family were freaking out when they heard it!

"New Colossal Hate" is my favorite drumming song, because they really gave me the green light to just fly. It's extreme but it's also groovy and funky. "Bloodshot Eyes" may be one of the first LOG tunes that has a closed hi-hat groove. During pre-production I would always be messing around playing David Garibaldi grooves from "What Is Hip?" and "Soul Vaccination," and Josh heard the hi-hat work and commented that he'd never heard that in this workspace. So the verse groove is part Tower of Power with some Abe Cunningham vibes thrown in. The pre-chorus has this tricky linear tom pattern, too.

MD: What was the biggest thing you learned from this experience?

Art: I'm in my favorite band ever, so there's all this pressure, and going back to Josh being my MVP, he really helped me understand that all I had to do was be me. I didn't have to emulate anything, because at the end of the day it's almost instinctual for me to play for this band because their sound is ingrained in me. Not to mention the support I received from the guys in the band as well. They gave me the platform to speak my mind and give my two cents on the songs.

David Ciauro

Art Cruz plays Ludwig drums and Meinl cymbals and uses Vic Firth drumsticks, Evans heads, Trick pedals, Gibraltar hardware, Cympads, Gator cases, PureSound snare wires, and Reunion Blues cases.

Chris Jogo

Gerry Gibbs

His recent performance video may be untitled, but from a drummer's standpoint, it's saying a lot.

Gerry Gibbs pays the bills playing various forms of jazz, and has swung his proverbial behind off with Kenny Barron, Ron Carter, and other luminaries. And as a leader, he's released several albums that defy easy description. But for fun he records videos that also aren't easily pigeonholed, with cohorts including Terry Bozzio. Recently Gibbs presented a nine-minute tour-de-force of soloing with brushes, sticks, fingers, and imagination.

The untitled piece, which is viewable on YouTube (search "Gerry Gibbs Drum Channel Video 1") and on his Facebook page, is a through-composed electronic fun-ride that features some truly inventive drum soloing over his own computer-generated music programming, which at first sounds like a keyboard section from your favorite 1970s progressive-rock group. "I'm writing music for a new quintet—vibes, flute, piano, bass, and drums—with string quartet," said Gibbs. "So [I continued] to write some stuff on the computer. I've worked with a lot of electronic artists, like Flying Lotus. So I composed the music and programmed it and just soloed to it. I didn't want to do it and be reading. I wanted to play free on it, so I just memorized it. I'd listen to it in the car, and then I'd start soloing. And I'd think, Okay, I didn't get lost. I was able to stay together with it, so I'll use this one."

The piece begins with some lightning-fast brush work over snares and toms, before moving into an ominous section where Gibbs' dynamic control is as impressive as his hand speed. Gibbs employs the lightest touch with his fingers on the drumheads while rolling brushes or playing with the butt-end wire. There are grooving and uptempo swinging and different time signatures and pulses going by before your brain has time to settle, and it's remarkable to think that he's improvising his solo the whole time.

"It was hard because the tempos are constantly moving, so the click track is constantly moving," said Gibbs of the technical challenges getting the piece down. "And I've done so much studio stuff that playing to a click track is like someone playing cowbell next to me. But the click doesn't play all the way through. It plays in between the sections and sets them up, so I could tell where the tempo is. I ran my GoPro and two iPhones [with my wife, Kyeshie, helping], and then edited it all together."

The piece moves into sections of calypso-like stick playing, some crooked funk, wacky Zappa-esque cowbell licks, and big band–style jabs that present the drummer's musicality and excellent rudimental mastery. And it's all done with a sense of humor, with random zoom-ins that don't always focus on Gibbs' hands, making the video alternately dramatic and amusing. "I want to make a series," said Gibbs. "I almost added some other footage that had nothing to do with music, but it took away from the drumming. But I will in the future."

Ilya Stemkovsky

Gerry Gibbs plays DW drums, Zildjian cymbals, and LP percussion, and uses Evans heads and Vic Firth sticks.

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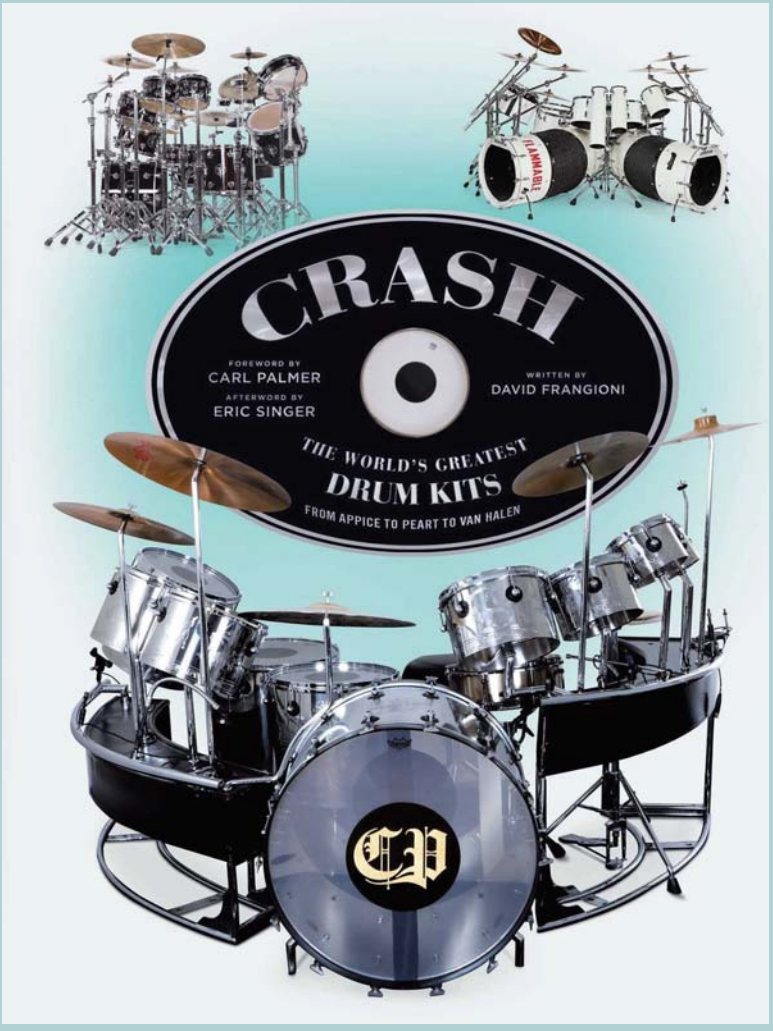
By David Frangioni



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Mark Weiss

GEARING UP *ON STAGE AND UP CLOSE*

Bauhaus's Kevin Haskins

Drummer Kevin Haskins of iconic goth-rock band Bauhaus got interested in music as a teenager in the late '70s, when his brother took him to a punk-rock festival in the basement of the 100 Club in London. The headlining band was the Sex Pistols, and the Clash was the opener. Other punk legends, including Siouxsie Sioux of Siouxsie and the Banshees, were there, too. This particular show was really exciting to Haskins. As he recalls, "I thought, 'I can do this! I don't have the chops to be John Bonham, but I have the chops to play in those bands.' It was a huge inspiration to me."

Haskins got his start on a four-piece Premier drumset in Red Sparkle finish, with a 15" floor tom placed to the left. These days the traditional-grip drummer has embraced the advancements in electronic drums, most notably employing an entire V-Drums drumset for Bauhaus's recent reunion show. "I went out to Roland and saw the whole kit set up," Kevin says. "They really got this dialed in now. It sounds like a real kit, and it felt easier." After playing the new TD-50 kit, Haskins told Roland's Igor Len, "I'd like to use this as my kit from here on.

"When we did the Resurrection tour over twenty years ago," the drummer continues, "we actually got the original 2" tape and took samples [from it] to trigger. So I was triggering stuff then. The song 'Spy in the Cab' is very minimalistic, so now with this Roland kit, I can trigger the little guitar notes that were an overdub on the original record. I can now listen to the records and find sounds that really suit each song, like on 'Bela Lugosi's Dead,' where the kick drum was recorded in a cheap studio and it sounds really boxy and small. When I go see bands from back in the day, I want to hear everything verbatim. This kit also lends itself to that. After every rehearsal [for the most recent shows with Bauhaus], our singer Peter Murphy's reaction would be, 'I can't believe how good this sounds now."

Although he's using a lot of the internal sounds in the TD-50 module, Haskins gets creative with effects. "I'm using a lot of reverb, especially," he says. "In 'In Fear of Fear,' we used a phaser on the cymbals. So for every song, not only does the character change with the guitars and bass, because they're using different effects, but I can also change the effects on the entire kit as well.

"I've had members of Nine Inch Nails, top producers, a lot of musicians and friends, come up to me and say, 'Your drums sound amazing—your sound guy's amazing!' Haskins concludes, "He *is* good, but that was me and Roland."

Drums: Roland TD-50KVX
A. 14" PD-140DS snare V-Pad with a three-layer mesh head
B. 10" PD-108-BC dual-trigger V-Pad tom
C. 8" PD-85BK dual-trigger V-Pad tom
D. 12" PD-128-BC dual-trigger V-Pad tom
E. KD-220-BC bass drum (KD-A22 kick drum converter in a 22" acoustic drum shell)

Cymbals: Roland
1. 13" VH-13 V-Hi-Hat
2. 14" CY-14C V-Cymbal
3. 18" CY-18DR V-Cymbal

Additional electronics: Roland SPD-SX multipad, played by singer Peter Murphy throughout the show

Sticks: Vic Firth 5A Vic Grip

Hardware: DW MCD bass drum pedals, 5000 series two-leg hi-hat and snare stand, and a 9120AL Airlift throne; Roland MDS-50KV rack and KT-10 kick trigger pedal

In-ear monitors: Ultimate Ears 18+ Pro

Interview by John Martinez
Photos by Alex Solca


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D

Gretsch USA

5x14 and 6.5x14 Black Copper Snare Drums

Stealthy-looking, bold-sounding offerings from one of America's most treasured brands.

The Gretsch company has been producing world-class drums since 1883, which precedes the birth of the modern drumset by several decades. With such rich history comes great responsibility, and over the years Gretsch has had to choreograph a delicate dance that upholds company traditions while also adjusting its catalog and business plan to best serve ever-evolving musical and manufacturing demands and expectations.

Several issues ago, we reviewed the new 5.5x14 Brooklyn Standard snare, which drew from traditional and contemporary design elements to create a workhorse wood option that excels in all musical applications. Also new for 2020 are the more modern-leaning Black Copper snares, which we have for review here. These drums are available in two sizes, 5x14 and 6.5x14, but are otherwise identical. Let's give them a closer look.

Check out demos of these snares at moderndrummer.com.

Shared Specs

The foundation of these two drums is a thin 1 mm copper shell that has integrated bearing edges and snare beds. The shells are powder-coated in black, which gives them a flat-black appearance and a textured feel. The paint also helps control overtones of the highly resonant copper alloy. Both drums come with Gretsch's classic Lightning throw-off, which has a quick-release latch on one side and a tension adjustment knob on the other. Forty-two-strand snappy wires are included, as is a slick Snap-In drum key holder that allows you to store a Gretsch drum key within a hole in the shell. The heads are Permatone by Remo: a coated single-ply batter and a hazy bottom. Both drums are also outfitted with die-cast hoops and slick laser-engraved round-badge logos that expose the rich copper shell underneath the powder-coated finish.

5x14 G4160BC ($899.99)

The shallower Black Copper snare features eight of Gretsch's double-ended G5472 lugs. This number of lugs helps open up the tone of the drum while providing maximum tuning stability and flexibility. The die-cast hoops rein in some overtones while also adding incredible power and snap to rimshots and density and clarity to rimclicks.

Of the two sizes, the 5x14 proved to have more tuning versatility, especially in the often troubling medium-low and low register. I felt this drum performed best in the upper range, from medium-high up to piccolo-tight. The tighter tunings allowed for superb sensitivity and dynamic response, while also providing a strong "crack" followed by rich yet controlled overtones. If you're looking for a drum with a unique and lively voice that also records beautifully without any muffling, check this one out.

6.5x14 G4164BC ($929.99)

This deeper model features ten double-ended lugs and boasts a more powerful and vibrant tone. Like the 5x14, it's extremely sensitive and articulate, and rimshots have a very strong, dense attack. The tuning range is truncated by comparison; the batter head seemed to disengage from the shell below medium-low tension, which resulted in an overly flappy, distorted sound. But within the higher registers, there's a lot of big, bold tones to explore, from a super-singing and smacking Chris McHugh–type tone at medium tension (check out the Keith Urban tune "Sweet Thing" for reference) or a brighter modern-rock ping, à la Deftones' Abe Cunningham or the Chili Peppers' Chad Smith, when the batter head is cranked. Again, even though the overtones were prominent, the deeper Black Copper snare recorded beautifully.

Be sure to check out our demo videos of these two Black Copper snares at moderndrummer.com.

Michael Dawson


GRETSCH
DRUM MAKERS
SINCE 1883

5x14


GRETSCH
DRUM MAKERS
SINCE 1883

6.5x14

Meinl

Artist Concept Deep Hats and Bullet Stack

Warmer and more controllable, but still fast and trashy.

We reviewed Meinl's new 8" Benny Greb Crasher hi-hats and the aggressive 18" Thomas Lang Super Stack a few issues back. This month, we're going to take a look at two additional Artist Concept special effects combos: the 18" Anika Nilles Deep Hats and the 12"/16" Luke Holland Bullet Stack. These pairings have unique voices within the short, aggressive, trashy tones that define the modern-day stacker.

18"/18" Anika Nilles Deep Hats ($1,276)

"What I really like about my Deep Hats is that they have so many musical applications," says international drum star and co-designer Anika Nilles, via meinlcymbals.com. "They fill the sonic gap between my main hi-hats and my crashes. I play them half-open as a timekeeper—very similar to crash-riding—however the Deep Hats sound softer and more articulate." These oversized hi-hats comprise two thin 18" Byzance series cymbals. Both cymbals are made from B20 bronze that's hand hammered, lathed with a narrow blade, and sandblasted to a soft traditional finish. The top features four round and four oblong holes evenly spaced around the circumference.

The Deep Hats come with an X-Hat boom arm and a clutch, which allows you to mount the cymbals to another stand. The tension between the cymbals can be adjusted to produce a loose, washy sound or a tight, trashy smack. Of all the Artist Concept stacks, these were the least aggressive-sounding and had the softest feel. These would be an excellent choice for players looking to incorporate a big, trashy stack that's a bit subtler, warmer, and more dynamic than a typical China/crash combo.

12"/16" Luke Holland Bullet Stack ($647)

This unique combo pairs a thin, sandblasted 16" Byzance B20 crash with a small 12" B10 Classics Custom crash. Both cymbals are perforated: the 12" is punched with four large circles and four smaller circles in the center of the bow, while the 16" has four large circles and four oblong cutouts. Designed to be set up inverted with the 12" on top of the 16", this stack has a super-quick, abrasive attack and very fast decay. While it offers the fast, trashy attack associated with stackers, its tone is a bit more subdued than expected. Instead of jumping atop grooves and fills, the Bullet Stack provides an interestingly integrated effects sound that is a bit more dynamically balanced with other elements of the kit. And the decay can be expedited to an abrupt cutoff by clamping down the tension on the wingnut. It's sharp, fast, and aggressive, but not deafening. Tons of fun, too.

We will complete our roundup of Meinl's Artist Concept stacks in a future issue. Be sure to check out the full video demos of each at moderndrummer.com.

Michael Dawson

Check out demos of these cymbals at moderndrummer.com.

PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

Liberty One

Mount-All Rack

A simple, modular option for creating compact, custom auxiliary percussion stations.

Liberty One is the in-house brand of top percussion retailer Steve Weiss that was created to provide quality products at affordable price points for students and professional drummers and percussionists. The Liberty One line comprises a range of mallets, cases, bags, drums, percussion, sticks, cymbals, brushes, accessories, and hardware, including the compact and versatile Mount-All rack we have for review here.

What You Get

The basic Mount-All rack ($59.95) includes an 18x1x1 rectangular bar that has ten 8 mm mounting holes in the front and back sides and nine mounting holes in the top and bottom. The bar affixes to a standard cymbal, drum, or microphone stand via a removable V-clamp. The V-clamp requires two mounting holes, which leave eight more on front and back and all nine on top and bottom for creating a custom configuration of the six included knurled stacker rods. These rods, which come with a cymbal seat, felts, and a thumbscrew on one end, connect to the bar on any side via three double-sided threaded posts.

The Mount-All comes preconfigured with three stackers on the top of the square bar and three on the bottom. This setup accommodates a very compact setup for attaching small percussion instruments such as bells, blocks, splash cymbals, and mini-hats, or electronic trigger pads. You can also stack two or more of the cymbal holders on top of one another for a more vertical configuration of instruments.

Expansion Options

Liberty One also offers a few additional mounts for the Mount-All rack for setups utilizing instruments that don't affix via 8 mm rods. These include the Single Crotale mount, which has a thin threaded rod and a plastic lock nut welded to a threaded 8 mm rod. This mount can be connected directly to the rack bar via an included 8 mm bolt, or it can be threaded atop one of the stacker arms.

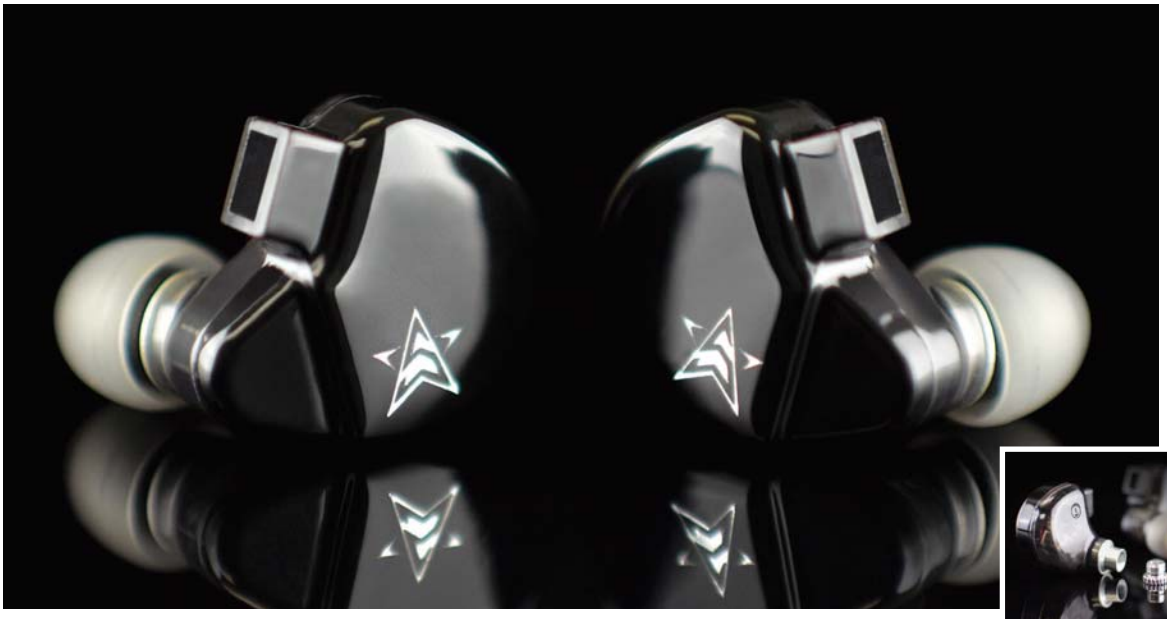
If you own string-mounted instruments like gongs and triangles, you can get a two-pack of 8 mm threaded hooks ($5.95) to allow you to hang those instruments from the rack bar. You can also expand your setup in infinite ways by purchasing additional bars. Available in 18", 36", and 48" sizes ($19.95–$24.95), these supplemental rack pieces provide exponentially more options for building fully customizable configurations that will best suit whatever setup you envision. The Liberty One Mount-All rack is basically an Erector Set for your drumset.

Michael Dawson

Clear Tune Monitors

AS-7 Universal Fit In-Ears

A professional-level, seven-driver option for drummers.



Clear Tune Monitors is a Florida-based in-ear manufacturer that focuses on providing precise sound for performing musicians, audio engineers, and general music listeners alike. CTM offers a wide array of products, from high-end custom molds like the ten-driver Da Vinci X, to more affordably priced universal-fit options like the single-drive CT-100. All of the company's monitors are designed to feel like a natural part of your ear and are guaranteed with a thirty-day free re-fit warranty.

Last year, CTM collaborated with this month's cover artist, Aaron Spears, to create its first signature model, the AS-7. These seven-driver monitors are available in custom or universal-fit options and are priced at $960. We received a pair of AS-7 universals to review.

Sound Design

The primary goal of the AS-7 is to reproduce the entire frequency spectrum for the most natural, balanced sound possible. These professional-grade IEMs feature seven drivers and a four-way crossover, which means the audio signal coming into the monitors from the source is split into four frequency ranges (low, low-mid, high-mid, and high) and then fed into the appropriately tuned drivers (or miniature speakers). The AS-7 reproduces sounds that span the entire range of human hearing (20 Hz to 20 kHz) and provide -26dB of sound reduction, which is nearly as much protection as a pair of shooting-range earmuffs.

What You Get

The AS-7 IEMs have an 1/8" (3.5 mm) input connection, and they come with a 50" cable and an 1/8"-to-1/4" adaptor. A CTM hard case contains a small cleaning tool, interchangeable sound filters, small/medium/large silicon and foam tips, and double-flange silicon tips. The different tip sizes and shapes are included to ensure that each user can find an optimal fit that seals the ear fully while remaining comfortable enough for extended use. The three different sound filters are tweaked to provide different EQ curves (Bass Boost, Reference, and High Boost).

Feel and Sound

Although no universal-fit IEMs will perform as well as comparable custom-mold models, the AS-7 has a large but ergonomically shaped casing that feels a lot like the custom-mold IEMs I've owned over the years. The ear tip extends far enough into the ear canal to deliver clean audio right up to the eardrum, and various ear tip covers offered plenty of size variety for me to find one that provided a tight but comfortable seal. I could use the AS-7s without listening to music, as high-quality earplugs during practice sessions and band rehearsals. And when using the AS-7 during recording sessions, I could keep the volume of the reference music and click relatively low to prevent hearing damage or fatigue, even when playing the drums at full volume.

The three filters included with the AS-7 monitors allow you to tweak the balance of highs, mids, and lows of the music you're referencing without having to adjust the EQ of the track itself. For general music listening, I preferred the fuller low-end response of the Bass Boost filters. But when playing or recording drums, I preferred the crisper and cleaner sound of the High Boost option. Then when mixing and reviewing my recordings, the Reference filter provided the most accurate representation of the sounds that were captured. At no point in my review period, which included extensive drum recording and casual music listening, did I experience ear fatigue, discomfort, or a loss of seal. I've not experienced that with universal-fit IEMs in the past.

If you're in the market for a pair of drummer-designed in-ears, check out the AS-7 by CTM. They're reasonably priced, professionally made, and as sonically pristine as anything else out there.

Michael Dawson

3D-Printed Snare Drums

Panic at the Disco!'s Dan Pawlovich Teams Up with Stratasys Direct Manufacturing to Turn Fantasy into Reality

Panic at the Disco! drummer Dan Pawlovich has always been interested in exploring ways of making his instruments sound and look better. About eight years ago, after stumbling upon a YouTube video demonstrating 3D printing of a crescent wrench, Pawlovich realized that this innovative construction process could conceivably improve drums in a way not previously possible using traditional manufacturing methods.

"This stems from when I was a young drummer with my first drumkit," says Pawlovich. "I didn't know that much about drums at the time, including that they needed tuning or what the T-shaped pieces of metal were that came with it. A couple of years later I started to get bored with how the kit looked, and that was the first time I took a drum apart. I repainted it this really bold blue color, and that was really exciting because I got to see the inside of the lugs, which are normally hidden. I also got a sense for how light the drum was without all the metal hardware on it. I pondered how you could refine or design a drum in a way that could include lugs as part of the shell. The only way I could think that would be possible was if I became a whittling artist."

The video of the 3D-printed wrench revealed to Pawlovich that he didn't need to hone his carving skills. "The gear and jaw had been printed at the same time, so no assembly was required," he recalls.

Finding a CAD designer was the first step in developing a 3D-printable drum. "What we had to end up with were exact measurements down to one hundredth of a millimeter for this drum to pair with industry-standard rims," Dan says. "It also needed to pair with drumheads and the throw-off. The angles of the bearing edges needed to be specific, and the snare beds took us probably six or seven months to get right. Even the vent hole was something to solve, since we printed it as part of the shell as well.

"The bedrock of making this whole thing possible was ensuring that I could attach tension rods to the drum and put tension on the head," Pawlovich continues. "The initial thought was that we print the threads in the plastic lugs. But I remember stripping metal inserts in my old kit just from over-tightening, so I knew that wasn't something we should do in plastic. The first thing I drew by hand was a hex-shaped channel that went into the lug that would accept a hexed-shaped insert,

Panic at the Disco!'s Dan Pawlovich with his 3D-printed snare (above) and Stratasys Direct Manufacturing's Lewis Simms (left)

which I found online at Drum Factory Direct. It took about a year and a half to get the channel perfect. The whole process took about three years to get to where I felt comfortable that the design we saw on the computer measured up perfectly. Then I met with a representative from Stratasys Direct. We talked about a couple different design elements, including what color I wanted. Then it was in their hands."

Stratasys Direct Manufacturing, which has offered 3D printing and custom manufacturing since 1991, brought Pawlovich's vision and design to fruition. "Our job is to understand customer requirements and translate that into an actual part," says Lewis Simms, Stratasys solutions marketing and communications manager. "We work in a wide array of industries, from medicine to auto, oil, gas, and even the music industry. It boils down to listening to the customer and trying to understand what they need this product to do, how long they need it to do that, and what environment the product is going to be [used] in.

"Dan had some unique challenges that we were excited to find a solution to," Simms continues. "When you're looking at this drum and you look at the CAD, it looks simple. But because it's a drum, resonance becomes a huge component. The way this piece functions is so incredibly important from an auditory standpoint, and simple things like poor fitment can cause issues."

One distinctive challenge Pawlovich and Simms faced was that the drum had to survive the rigors of touring. "It might be 30 degrees one day and 90 the next," says Simms. "Any sort of material is going to shrink or expand based on the temperature, so you need something that has a low coefficient of expansion that can remain pretty stable and also look good. We started with our glass silk nylon material. It provides rigidity and stability, so there's not a lot of shrinking and swelling based on the environment."

Pawlovich adds that the nylon glass-filled material has similar properties to wood. "That was a big deal for me before I even held one of these things in my hand," he says. "The first show of our last winter tour was in Buffalo, and it was minus-30 in the trucks overnight and the venue warmed up to 72 degrees. The drum needed to withstand that by taking on and expelling humidity. I read about the material and thought it sounded like wood."

The first drum was printed using Laser Sintering (LS), a process that uses a CO_2 laser to fuse a plastic material in layers. The nylon, presented in an eye-catching red using a proprietary dyeing process called Colortek, not only withstands temperature and humidity fluctuations but also is impervious to UV damage. "The glass-filled version resulted in a pretty dense finished product," says Pawlovich. "And more density means more mass, which means a higher pitch."

The second iteration, a 5.5x14 snare in matte black, had the same features, except Stratasys Direct printed it using Fused Deposition Modeling (FDM) technology and a Nylon 12 carbon fiber–filled shell. "I put the same heads on each drum and tuned them as closely as I could," says Dan. "The density of the nylon carbon fiber–filled drum was

greater, so the fundamental note was much higher. The Laser Sintering version was half of that, and it was a great deal lower."

Stratasys Direct printed a third drum using the FDM technology, but with ASA material, which is similar to ABS but with more UV stability, according to Simms. This resulted in a drum with an extremely low density and a subsonic tone that was difficult to detect. "The carbon fiber–filled version, the highest-pitched one, sounds like a thick maple snare, somewhere between twelve and fifteen plies," says Dan. "The ASA version sounds reminiscent of a brass shell. It's pleasantly bright and has a nice low end to it.

"I couldn't believe it," the drummer continues. "We have the same exact drum printed three different ways, using three different types of printing and material, and they all sound drastically different. This is a place where 3D printing can rise above the traditional woodworking. I don't want anyone to think I'm saying 3D drums sound better than wood drums—I think all drums sound beautiful. But if someone hears my 5.5x14 carbon fiber–filled, FDM-printed snare and wants to get one, we can print it, and it is going to sound exactly the same."

Pawlovich explains that the sound of a wood drum can't be perfectly replicated, even if you use the same specs and materials. If the wood used for two drums is cut from a different tree, or different parts of a tree, they're not going to sound alike. "That's cool," says Dan. "That means that all wood drums are unique. But [with 3D printing] we can play with materials, methods, thicknesses, and densities, and give someone exactly what they want. And 3D printing is the only method currently available that allows for a completely homogeneous drum. The lugs, bearing edges, and even the holes for the snare wire mounts are one piece on a molecular level."

Although Pawlovich holds patents for the 3D-printed drum, he has no current plans for mass production. "Panic's team has been extremely supportive of this whole thing," he says. "In fact, they're a big part of why I pursued the patents in the first place. But I like being a musician, and I have an amazing job right now."

When asked if a 3D-printed drumkit is in the works, both Pawlovich and Simms mention that the size of the build box offers some limitations, especially with a bass drum. But it is a possibility. "When experimenting with other technologies that provided Dan alternative solutions, we also opened the door to build these larger parts, more material variations, or even more color variety," says Simms. "Things like that make it interesting from a commercial standpoint, and I'd love nothing more than to see a fully 3D-printed drumkit."

Adds Dan, "This industry is going to keep innovating and growing naturally, but there are methods we haven't used yet because the materials don't have the shelf life I'd like for the drum to have. But the 3D printing industry is still young. It changes every day."

Pawlovich is enthusiastic about the future of 3D drums and their place in the drum community. Although unprecedented in construction and composition, 3D-printed drums remain modeled after their conventional counterparts. "I want to show that we can hang out with established companies and traditional drums," he says. Concludes Simms, "Dan and I connected not by doing something just because you can, but by actually making something better. It's innovation in an area that hasn't seen a lot of innovation in quite some time, while still maintaining a highest level of respect for the intent, the industry, the design, and the expectations of the product. It was very interesting and fulfilling."

Interview by Brandy Laurel McKenzie
Photos by Jake Chamseddine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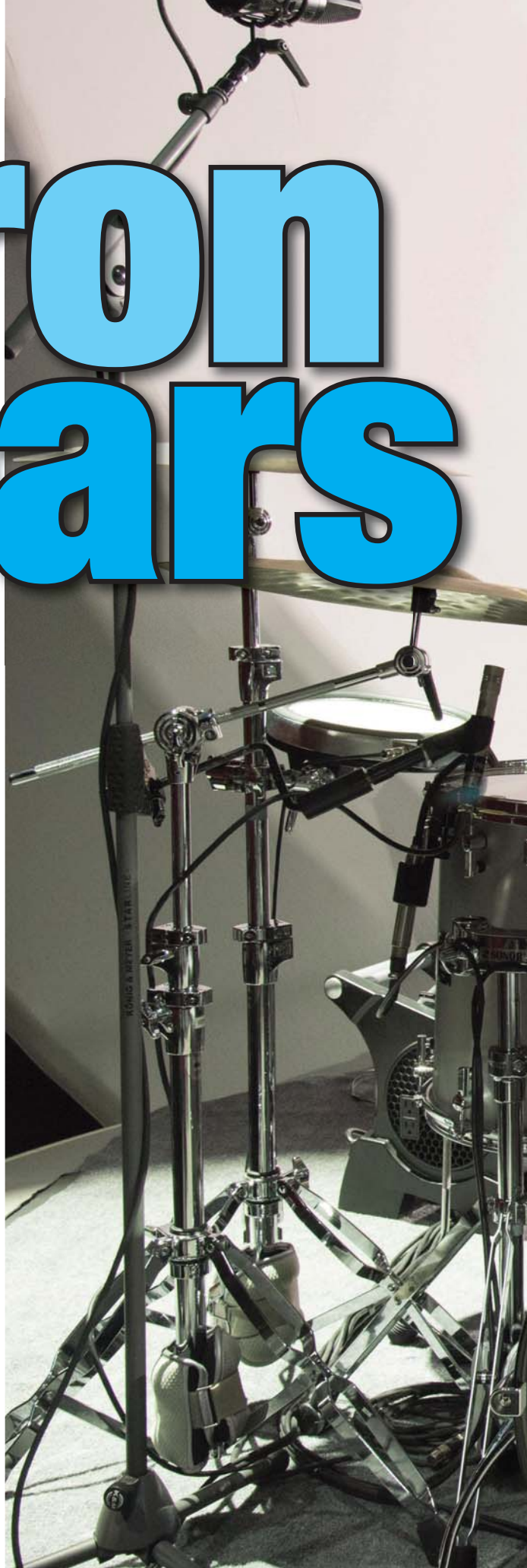
Aaron Spears

by Stephen Styles



After bursting onto the scene with pop/R&B superstar Usher during the artist's *Truth* tour in 2004, Washington, D.C. native Aaron Spears has earned the admiration and respect of his peers and fans with a drumming style that is often described as "beastly."

With his infectious energy, killer chops, and laser accuracy, Spears further cemented his place in the psyche of drummers the world over when he blazed the stage during the 2006 *Modern Drummer* Festival. First, he tore it up with his solo performance to Usher's "Caught Up." Later he shared the stage with a group of his dearest friends and mentors for what was dubbed an R&B and Gospel Summit, which featured Marvin McQuitty, Gerald Heyward, and Teddy Campbell, along with live beat production by drummer/producer Nisan Stewart. As McQuitty, Heyward, Campbell, and Spears traded fours to Stewart's on-the-spot produced track, Aaron seemed to pick up steam with each turn, playing combinations and phrases with such speed

Michele Sandberg

and precision that it left viewers laughing in disbelief. After the others peeled off the stage one by one, Aaron was left with his kit and Stewart's track, the subtle implication being, "We've brought it this far, and we're turning it over to you." It was a passing of the baton of sorts that Spears has clearly continued to run with, and he's only gotten better with time.

Since then, Spears has achieved what most players can only dream about: performing with many of the biggest artists on the world's greatest stages. Following his ten-plus years with Usher, Spears continued building a career, providing the backbeat on a diverse and extensive list of tours, shows, and recordings with Lady Gaga, Israel Houghton, Lil Wayne, Chaka Khan, *American Idol Live!*, the Backstreet Boys, Carrie Underwood, Adam Lambert, and his current employer, Ariana Grande.

Spears recently began working for the Fox TV show *The Masked Singer*, where he executes the dual roles of the show's music coordinator and the house band's drummer. We caught up with him soon after he'd taken the gig.

Michele Sandberg


Colville Heskey

MD: One of the things that has made you so popular among drummers is your aggressive approach. How did you develop your bold sound and the confidence to take liberties like playing fills across the barline when you first came on the scene?

Aaron: The way that I'm known for playing started in what's called "the basement." [laughs] The basement is really a space in my house. I had four drumkits set up in my basement, and every other Tuesday a group of us would get together. Guys like Paul "Buggy" Edwards, Tim Steele, JJ Williams, and I would get together and play. We were shedding, and it was like a training camp. Doing that helped build my confidence. It strengthened my timing, sense of tempo, and aggression, and it taught me to be mindful of the people I was playing with. The time I spent in the basement with those guys really prepared me to take that sense of musicality to the gig. When I got on the gig with Usher, there were times when I had to lay in the pocket and play the parts verbatim. Other times they gave me the liberty to play whatever I imagined, as long as it fit in the proper space.

MD: How was that liberty identified? Was it an explicit conversation, or more like you'd try something in rehearsal and if it worked, they'd let you keep it?

Aaron: It was a combination of those things. A lot of times it was based on feel, where the music dictated that something was needed. Other times we focused on transitions between song sections or from one song to another in a medley. That was something that came naturally from playing in church, and it worked well because the guys in that band came from the same background as I did. Sometimes I would play something and they'd say, "I like that, but it was too much," or, "That was cool, but it needs to be more dramatic." Sometimes they'd want me to really make a musical statement with an

exclamation point and say it with my chest.

I was the new guy there, coming behind LaDell Abrams, Brian Frasier-Moore, and Mike Clemons, who'd all laid such an incredible blueprint with Usher. I was trying to follow what those guys did and make it my own. I wanted to have the precision and power of Big Mike. I wanted to have the imagination and fluidity of Brian Frasier-Moore. I wanted to take the precision that LaDell had—he played so cleanly, you had to ask, "Is he playing, or is that the track playing?" [laughs] I wanted to take all those components that those guys had brought to the table, and then bring the things that I'd worked on shedding with the guys in the basement and had been playing in church and with the Gideon Band. Usher gave me that freedom, and it was just a beautiful marriage of imagination and creativity on that gig.

MD: How did you land the *American Idol* tour?

Aaron: Mr. Rickey Minor was the music director for *American Idol*, and one night he came to see Usher's show. We were kind of hanging out backstage after the concert, and I asked him straight up, "Mr. Minor, what did you think of the show?" He said, "I enjoyed it, and you did a good job tonight, man. But you need to get rid of those headphones and get yourself some in-ear monitors. You look like you're directing planes at LAX." He said that and walked away. [laughs] Later I switched to in-ears. But with the *American Idol* tour, I honestly think Teddy Campbell put in a word for me. I didn't audition or anything for it. I just got the call.

MD: Did you ever take lessons coming up?

Aaron: I did, for about three weeks. I was about ten years old, and the teacher was taking me through the rudiments, but it was all stuff that I was already playing. I remember getting in the car after the first lesson and telling my mom I didn't feel like I learned anything. She felt I needed to at least try a couple times before giving up. I went back the second week, and it was the same. After the third week, we stopped.

For a long time I was self-taught. I was blessed to learn in other ways, thanks to my experience growing up in church. I also got a lot of early experience thanks to my dad. My pops played percussion and is a very good singer. He was kind of the go-to person when people wanted live singing for their wedding or different special events. That was my first professional experience, holding it down on

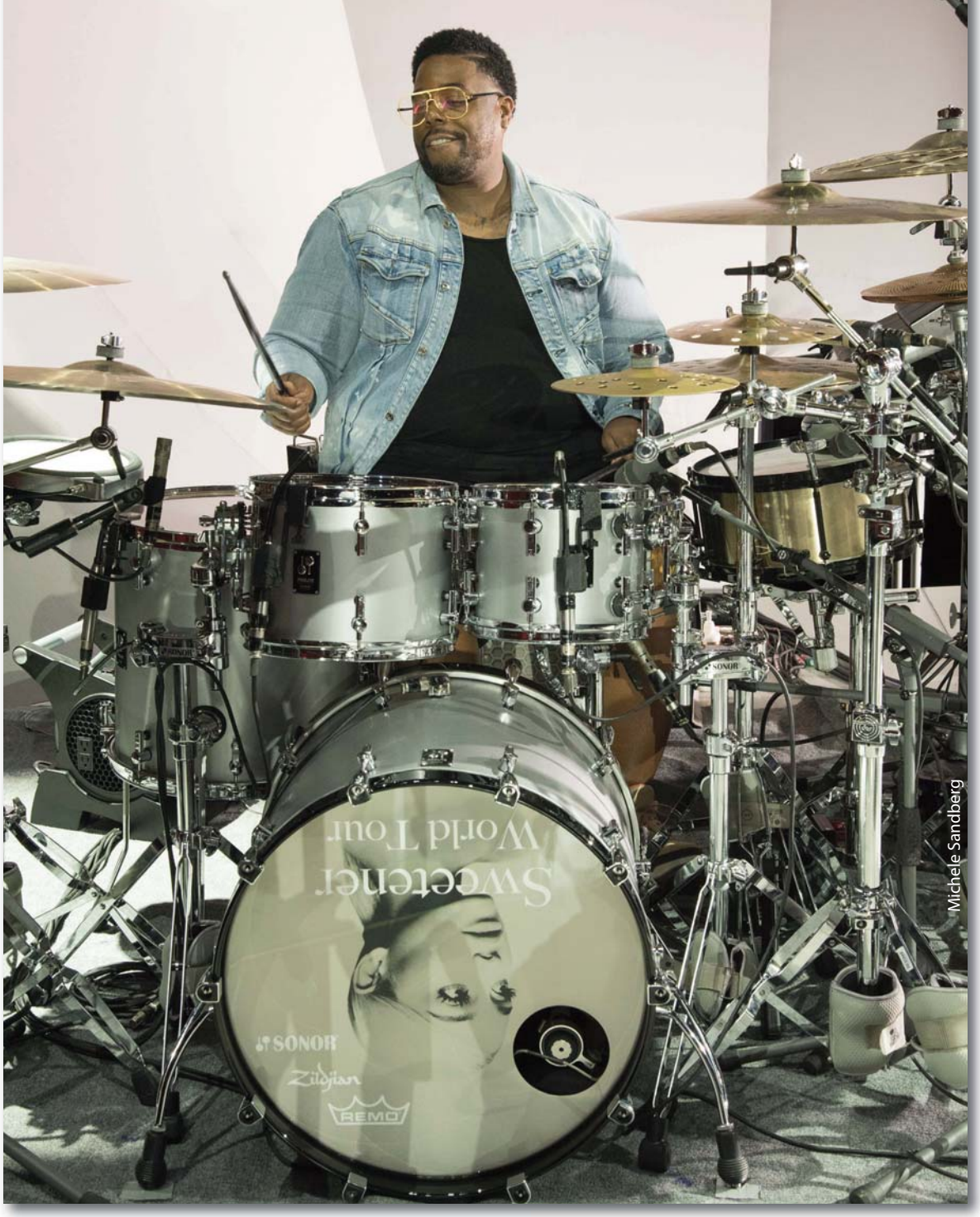
Drums: Sonor ProLite with maple shells
A. Yamaha DTX-MULTI 12 pad
B. Yamaha XP120T pad (for high-pitched 808/marching snare sound)
C. 6x14 Zildjian/Noble & Cooley snare (tuned low)
D. 6.5x14 Sonor One of a Kind snare (maple/birch shell)
E. 7x10 tom
F. 8x12 tom
G. 14x16 floor tom
H. Yamaha XP120T pad (for hand-clap sound)
I. 18x22 bass drum

Heads: Remo, including Powerstroke P77 Coated snare batters, Colortone Smoke tom batters and Ambassador Coated resonants, Powerstroke P4 bass drum batter side and Powerstroke P3 front

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 12" Gen16 hi-hats with Spiral trash inside (on a remote stand)
2. 19" prototype
3. 15" K Custom Special Dry hi-hats
4. 19" K Custom Fast crash (prototype)
5. 10" EFX splash
6. 10" EFX stack
7. 21" Articulation ride (prototype)
8. 20" K Cluster crash

Hardware: DW, including 9000 series bass drum pedals, hi-hat stands, and Airlift throne

Sticks: Zildjian Aaron Spears signature model



Michele Sandberg

the kit as my dad's sideman. It was a good time, though, and I was able to learn and improve from that.

I didn't start with lessons or anything formal again until middle school. To be in concert band you had to read, so I learned the basics of reading notation in middle school. In high school I was in concert band and marching band. But the real lessons I've had I got in the basement. That to me was a course that could be taught at Berklee. There were so many things that can be learned from sitting with someone and watching their approach, soloing ideas, and playing techniques. There are so many things I learned in the basement that have stayed with me and that I benefit from even to this day.

MD: How often do you get to do that these days?

Aaron: Jamal Moore and I get together when we can. Jamal and I also get a chance to sit with a group of guys we call the Nephews here in Maryland. The nephews include Brendan Mills, "Haze" Abraham, Rod Holcomb, and others. I'm proud of these guys because they're already great players, and they get together usually once a week to shed at the home of a gentleman who has been instrumental in my life and the lives of many others, Milton Smith, affectionately known as "Uncle Milt."

Back in the day, when I was working in retail and later as an IT rep, there was a time I started to get down on myself about drums. I'd gotten the call to do a couple things, but

"I challenged myself to simplify my setup. My goal became, simple setup, complex ideas."

Colville Heskey

nothing had really panned out, and I was discouraged. Uncle Milt was the first one to say to me, "Aaron, what you do is special. There's going to be a day when people are going to see what I see, and you'll be doing what you dream of." He was there for me even to the point of putting money in my pocket.

I go [to Uncle Milt's] as often as I can, and we have some really intense musical conversations. I get to learn what they're pushing to get, and I share things with them that I've learned or am currently working on. Sometimes the guys from New York will come down, like Devin Harris or Gerald Heyward when he can. We have a box setup with four kits, and it gets really intense in there. We play everything from funk to jazz to odd times, and it gets to be kind of crazy. It's good for me, and I think it helps all of us, because we all push and learn and grow together. Iron sharpens iron.

MD: Can you walk us through the drumkits you've played through the years?

Aaron: The first kit I ever played and felt like was my kit was the Pearl Export that belonged to my church. Those were the drums I learned to play on, and I tried to take care of them as if they were my own. My first kit that I had at home as a kid was a Yamaha Recording Custom that my parents got me. Later I had a black Tama Swingstar that I played for years. I was playing the Tama kit up and down the East Coast with the Gideon Band. We were starting to gain notoriety, and I was working a lot.

Gerald Heyward helped me a lot with pursuing endorsements with Remo, Zildjian, and Vic Firth, and he recommended me to DW, even though at the time I wasn't doing anything with any major artist. He just put the word out for me. When I got the gig with Usher, I actually sent a packet to DW and a packet to Yamaha. It's funny because the guy who was the artist relations person at Yamaha at the time is currently my rep at Zildjian, and I tease him so much about this: back then, Marvin McQuitty recommended that I send my packet over to his guy at Yamaha. I also did what Gerald told me to do and sent my info to DW. To this day we laugh about it because Yamaha never got back to me! [laughs] When we've talked about it, he's apologetic, like, "Aaron, I'm sorry, man, it must have just fallen through the cracks." I tell him, "Man, it would've been cool to be with Yamaha, because my first kit was a Yamaha."

DW actually hit me back, and was like, "What's happening? What are you doing?" By then I was just starting out with Usher. I didn't have the top-level endorsement arrangement at the time, and even though I bought that first kit at a discount, it was still expensive. But I was so hype, and that kit was massive. It was two kick drums, four snare drums, five toms, a double rack, like fourteen cymbals. [laughs] It was so much, man. Usher's mom, who was managing him at the time, was kind enough to purchase it for me and allowed me to pay it back on a weekly basis until the balance was paid off. As my career continued and my relationship with DW grew, eventually I received a full endorsement and was able to get anything I needed, and that was great. There were several situations when I needed a particular type of drumset, and they were really supportive.

MD: So what led to your transition to Sonor after thirteen years with DW?

Aaron: There was a point when I began to feel like I'd exhausted the range of sounds and tones that I could get out of those drums. There's no question that they're quality drums. But I had kind of maxxed out what I could get from them, and I wanted to push for more. One thing that's very important that I want to emphasize is that I didn't leave because Sonor paid me. That simply is not true at all. But unfortunately, after the change I received calls from various people, including distributors overseas, saying that they'd heard I'd asked to be paid and left because I was told "no." That's completely untrue. I left because the drums couldn't support the sound and tones I was going for. Sonor does.

MD: How did you land on Sonor?

Aaron: The first time I played the drums, I was with Chris Coleman at his spot, shedding. They sounded really good, but I wasn't investigating them too deeply at the time for tone and tunability. In a shed with Chris Coleman, I'm focused on staying alive and still having my dignity when I walk out! [laughs] I connected with Sonor because of a friend of mine named John Janssen, who runs Adams Drumworld in Holland. John recommended that I look into Sonor and gave me the contact info for their rep, Thomas Barth, and I reached out. We had a good conversation on the phone.

This was around the time the NAMM show happens. Because things at NAMM are so busy, Thomas changed his travel schedule to stop over in D.C. on his way home so we could meet for dinner and talk, which was major. Thomas invited me to check out the drums and said I could go to their facility in Nashville, or come over to Germany. I said, if I'm going to make a change like this, I want to go see where the drums are made, meet the people that do the work, and check out the whole process. So I went to Germany to see the factory and really check out the drums, and I fell in love.

The guys at Sonor did what they said they were gonna do. I was comfortable

and felt like I was with people who were being honest. There's a sense of trust and transparency that I really appreciate in working with the team there. Everything they promised, they delivered, and the follow-through is on point. Their artist relations match the stellar quality of the drums.

I know people hate to hear this kind of thing, because any time someone switches to a new company it's like, "These new drums are the best in the world!" But man, it's true. The tones and the feel of these drums right out the gate are just incredible. And it's not that I couldn't get great tones from my DW drums, because I could, and I did. They're great drums. But with Sonor, it doesn't take as much effort to get to the tone that I want. It's much quicker and much easier to get the sound I'm looking for, and the drums are more consistent. I played every kit they had set up in that factory and settled on the SQ2s. When I played those drums, I was blown away. With the heads just finger-tightened, they sounded incredible.

MD: Another noticeable change compared to when you first came on the scene with Usher is that you scaled your kit way down. What led to the change to the five-piece setup you've used for several years now?

Aaron: I had to challenge myself about why I wanted all that stuff up there. Some of it was just because I could and, you know, it's every drummer's dream to go crazy like that at least once. [laughs] But I challenged myself to simplify my setup, and my goal became, simple setup, complex ideas. I pushed myself to use that smaller setup because it's enough to get the job done. It's all about making sure I have enough to get the job done and the right tools. Usually that's a five-piece kit, a side snare, and my electronics. That's enough for the types of gigs I do.

MD: Does your side snare function for triggering?

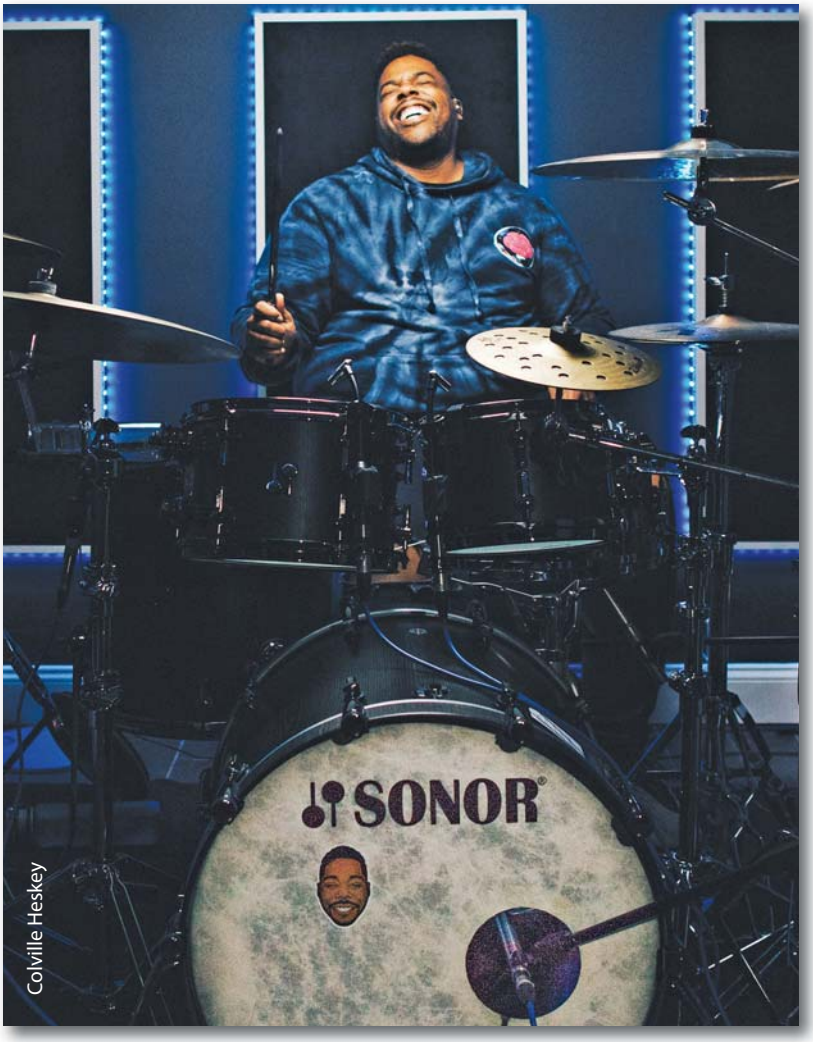
Aaron: No, it's actually a deeply tuned snare drum that I use for specific parts or for certain songs.

MD: From your earlier days to now, your sound has evolved quite a bit. Your 2019 Zildjian Live performance features some pretty sophisticated syncopation and phrasing. What's behind this change in your sound in general, and how did you construct your parts for that performance?

Aaron: Thanks for that question. As far as my sound goes, I'm constantly trying to find new ways to express myself and come up with new ideas and be strategically clever. I don't want my playing to be normal. I work out with my imagination and by practicing alone. It also comes from the time I spend with the fellas in the basement. I get a lot of inspiration from those sheds. That environment gives me an opportunity to bring out different things I've been working on and try them out to see how they feel.

That Zildjian Live experience was a lot of fun. In a way, the idea for that arrangement came from the basement back in the day. Years ago, we had Sput [Robert Searight, drummer with Snarky Puppy and MD, keyboardist, composer, and arranger for Zildjian Live] down to the basement, back when he was stompin' all over the country with Kirk Franklin. He came to shed with a group of us, and at first it took a minute for him to get comfortable. But after a while he was right there feeding into the circle and challenging us to keep up. At some point, we flipped the feel to a shuffle and he started going in. He was bringing something different. To be honest, we all were cool playing a shuffle, but it was a bit of a challenge soloing and shedding over that feel, so it took a few of us a minute. He brought that challenge to the table and kind of made us take a deeper look at how to express ideas within that shuffle vibe. It was different for us.

Then when Sput and I were talking about ideas for the Zildjian Live performance and he asked me what I was thinking, I immediately was like, "It's got to be a shuffle vibe and something with an odd time." He was like, "Bet," and went to work. It ended up being a great time and a cool way to have that personal throwback to that earlier moment. What I played kind of came naturally from listening to the track and making sure I knew where everything was. The way everything was set up, there wasn't a whole lot of time for rehearsal or to do a bunch of takes. It was about learning the parts and then getting up there and having fun. I hope that came through.



Colville Heskey

MD: You worked on Zildjian Live again for 2020, but this time as host. What led to your new role?

Aaron: The 2019 event was a great time, but it was a long process. Mike Dolbear was hosting, and I kind of volunteered to help out. Throughout the day I'd check in with the audience and tried to help keep the energy up between performances and stuff like that. I just naturally stepped into it. Afterwards I told the folks at Zildjian that if they ever needed someone to do that kind of thing again, I'd be open to it. When

they were planning to do it for 2020, they mentioned that idea to the folks that were recording, and that's how I ended up being invited to do it this year. That was another full-circle moment for me because, coming up, I remember watching Zildjian Day with Dennis Chambers. He's one of the heroes on the kit that I looked up to. To be back this year and hosting an event that he's been featured on was a huge honor for me.

MD: What is the nature of your work for *The Masked Singer*?

Aaron: I have to give props to my friend and brother Johnny "Natural" Najera. He and I have worked together since I first started with Usher. He's the music director for Ariana Grande and has worked with a ton of other artists. He's also the MD for *The Masked Singer* this season and gave me the opportunity to come on as the music coordinator. As

a musician, I still play drums for the show. As music coordinator, I'm responsible for setting up recordings and making sure we get exactly what's needed for a particular moment or part of the show.

We have to make recordings for each piece of music that's performed onstage. For example, if we have ninety seconds for a song that's originally four minutes long, it's my job to facilitate the recording of that arrangement. As MD, Johnny will make the arrangement and speak with the producer. I work to schedule those sessions and book the engineer. It's my job to get whatever is needed for each particular recording. If it's drums, I'll record the drums. If it's horns, guitars, background vocals, or whatever, then I'm responsible for hiring those musicians and facilitating other elements to make sure everything happens like it needs to and the music gets the proper treatment.

I'm also responsible for making sure we get proper invoices and submit those to accounting. If someone doesn't get paid, they report back to me, and then I've got to run that payment down. It can be pretty fast-paced. We've cut twenty-five songs in a week and a half. It's a cool experience.

MD: You recently embarked on a multicity clinic tour in Asia. How did that come together?

Aaron: I was contacted by some friends of mine in China that run 9 Beats music schools. They expressed an interest in having me come to Japan and China. As we were planning, the idea expanded since I hadn't been on that side of the world in a while. We started having conversations with different promoters and companies in other countries in Asia to add other cities to the tour, and we ended up scheduling shows in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, plus Japan and China. I reached out to several of the local promoters and venues myself to try to put it together, and I appreciate my companies because they came on board to help sponsor this as well. Unfortunately, we had to cancel the China dates because of the travel ban due to the coronavirus situation. I hope to be able to go back and do those dates in the future.

MD: With your international clinics, is it ever difficult to explain certain ideas because of the differences in language?

Aaron: Not really. Usually there's a translator in those times when there may be people who don't speak English. The cool thing is that music and drums is a universal language that we can all appreciate and understand. If someone has a question or I'm explaining an idea, it might take a little longer because everything has to be translated in both directions. But it's really not a big deal. I enjoy being able to connect with people all over the world through the music.

MD: When you present your clinics, do you go in with a set game plan each time?

Aaron: I'm always prepared to share certain information that I think is valuable and that I feel like I can offer a unique perspective on. Most of the time the first thing I do is play a little bit and then ask if anyone has questions. From there I let the audience kind of dictate how the clinic flows. If there are a lot of people that have questions, I'll try to take the time to answer them.

Sometimes you can tell people don't want to say something because they're afraid it's not a good question, so I'll try to loosen things up. I might do that through humor or by showing my own vulnerability. I want everyone to be comfortable so that nobody leaves feeling like they missed something. If there's a question on something very specific, like linear fills, then I'll give a demonstration and break down my approach. Or if someone asks about odd time signatures, I'll explain the way I count different meters to help make sense of those.

MD: What other ventures have you been working on?

Aaron: One thing I'm excited about is this project that I worked on with a friend of mine named Tim Buell. It's a website where if someone wanted to check out transcriptions of things I've played, they go on there and get a book with a bunch of those transcriptions along with audio files. The website is aaronspearsnotation.com.

MD: How do you balance your work life with being a husband and father?

Aaron: You know, the thing that some people don't get is that my family is the most important thing in the world to me. More than music. More than drums. More than any of that other stuff. I'm blessed to have a beautiful wife named Jessica. We've been married since 2012, and we have an amazing son named August Preston. Those are my babies, man. That's my heart.

When I'm home, I try as much as possible to spend my time at home. Thankfully, when I'm away we have technology that has made it easier than it used to be to stay connected. I do my best to check in every day with my wife and talk to my son, even with the time difference when I'm in other parts of the world. Because he's small, he's still in the process of understanding what I do and why I have to be away so much. That's the hardest part, being away. We'll talk and he might ask, "How many sleeps until you're home again?" And I'll tell him, "It'll be twelve sleeps" or "five sleeps" or whatever the number of nights it is.

As often as possible I'll fly home if there's a gap in the schedule, especially if I'm on a domestic run. If we have a day or two off, I'll jump on a plane and go home. When I'm home I try to pick up around the house and run errands and take care of certain duties to try to switch it up for my wife, because it falls on her so much when I'm away. Even though it's short, that time is important, and I'm grateful I can get those moments in. Playing drums and having the chance to earn a living and see the world doing what I love is amazing. It's dope to meet new people and sometimes have people recognize you. That's all good. But none of it compares to family. That's always the most important thing, family.

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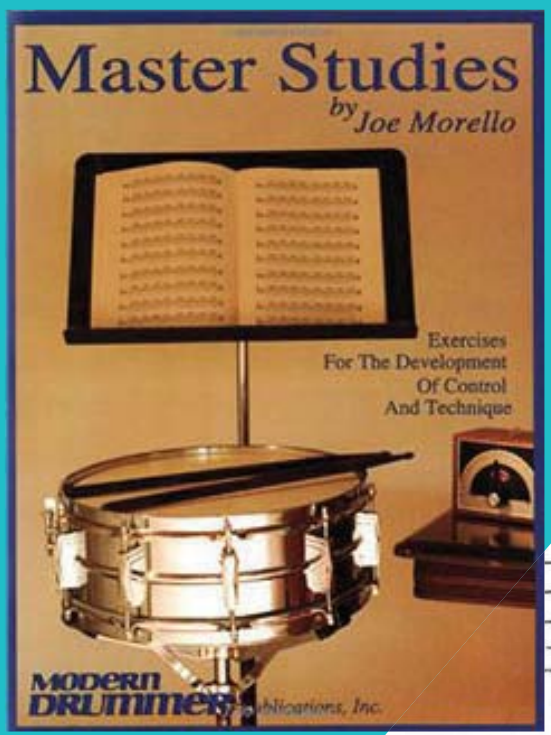

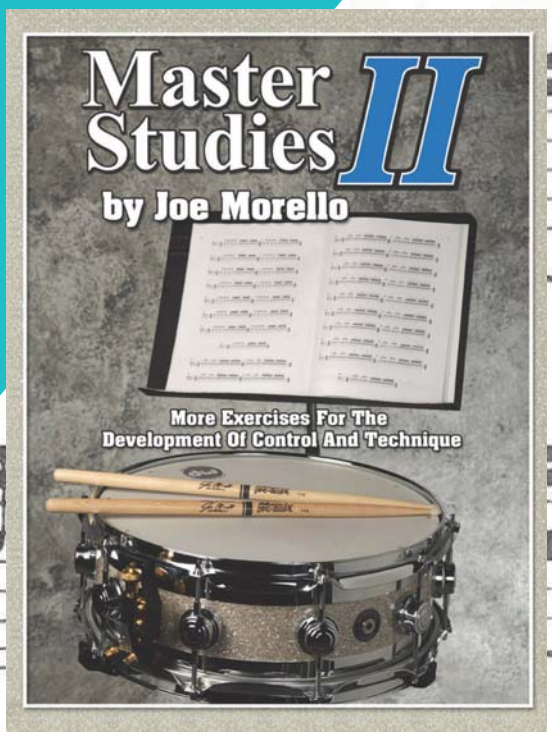

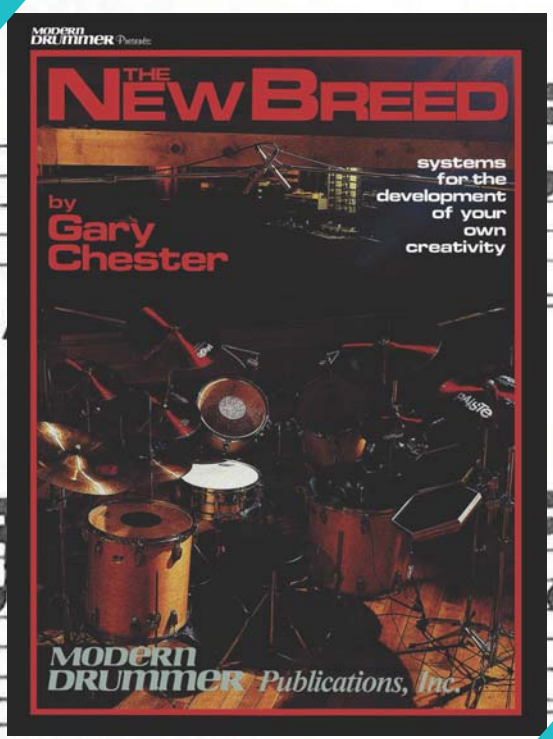

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Battles' John Stanier

The drummer sits down with fellow New York City indie-rock drummer **Keith Carne** to discuss his years in the city, how that setting has informed Battles' latest release, and his loving frustration with the cymbal, perched ridiculously high above his kit, that has become Battles' visual calling card.

Photos by Alex Solca

John Stanier will tell you flat out that he's been lucky in finding work as a musician. He's had "like, three careers," as he puts it: playing drums for the alternative-rock band Helmet, with former vocalist Mike Patton in Tomahawk, and, for the last eighteen years, with the indie-electronic pioneers Battles. During that time Stanier has witnessed New York's shifting ethnographies through the prism of rock music. He's homesteaded in Gowanus, Williamsburg, and the East Village, New York City neighborhoods now infamous for being hip and recreationally over-the-top. When Stanier was there decades back—when these neighborhoods represented places where broke musicians lived, rehearsed, *and* played shows—they looked nothing like they do today.

All that time in New York has made an impact on Stanier's personality. He speaks about the city's changes in population and culture with the tinge of both affection and annoyance you only learn how to affect after decades spent living through them. He speaks fondly about his formative days in the East Village, and about how fun Williamsburg was before it got lame, as he puts it. (Even though many today see Williamsburg as an adult promised land, Stanier has witnessed the way big money has washed away the neighborhood's character and integrity.)

And he'll admit that this city finally seems to have seeped into his music.

Reviewers have described Battles' latest album, *Juice B Crypts*, as maximal, cluttered, chaotic…and these are terms of affection. Battles' sound is built on synth and guitar loops stacked atop other loops, stacked atop quirky melodies and sound effects, all connected by Stanier's raggedly aggro, explosive dance grooves. There is a lot of theme and variation in their sound, and within the record. Stanier and bandmate Ian Williams take seemingly contrary sections of music and place them adjacent to one another in the same song. Alternatively, multiple songs on the record stem from the exact same loop, and it's only the textures around the loop that change (yet these songs sound completely distinct from one another). It's similar to the way veteran New Yorkers can recognize certain street corners, but not the business and people that populate them.

Battles as a unit has undergone similar shifts. With the recent departure of bassist Dave Konopka, this album is the band's first release as a duo. (They began in 2002 as a quartet.) We begin by talking about the city that still defines so much of what they're about.

MD: You've been active in the New York City music scene since the late '80s, playing drums with Helmet. I imagine you've seen a lot of things change here.

John: The Music Building [a legendary twelve-story building of rehearsal and recording spaces on Eighth Avenue in Midtown Manhattan] was the first place I'd ever rehearsed with Helmet—that was in the late '80s, early '90s. It was all metal bands. Helmet eventually moved out of there, but then Battles came back years later and spent about ten years there. It's where we wrote *Juice B Crypts*. It's just really changed now. I feel like it's all rap production studios now.

I can go all the way back to 1989, but that's not even worth talking about. I feel like the last "scene" in New York was kind of like early-2000s Williamsburg. I'm not saying that there isn't stuff going on now—of course there is. It's just all spread out. That's the last time everything was concentrated into one area. In the '90s it was the East Village and Lower East Side; that's where you would live *and* rehearse. Then that got too expensive so everyone moved to Williamsburg.

Then there was the class of 2003: Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Interpol, Liars, TV on the Radio, Black Dice…I could go on and on and on. And we were all rehearsing in the building that is now Vice Media. That was a really fun time. It was *just* when Williamsburg was about to become super lame.

MD: And despite the fact that New York City has been Battles' home base for eighteen years, you've only now released what you consider the band's first "New York" record.

John: *Juice B Crypts*, as corny as it sounds, really is our New York record. We're not the kind of band that's going to sit down and go, "Okay, let's write a New York record!" I don't even know what that means. What does that mean? It's just going to sound like early Talking Heads? Is that a New York record? I don't think so. You can mimic a certain *era* of New York, sure, but everyone's already done that. It's a New York record in the sense that it's the first time we've ever recorded a full-length record in New York and we could go home at night.

MD: What role did New York play in shaping the record's sound?

John: I hate the neighborhood where the Music Building is. It's gotten disgusting and only gets worse and worse, and it takes an hour to get there, and there's so many people in the subways now…that comes out somehow in your songs. That's how it's a New York record. We recorded it there. It's funny how that works. It's very subliminal. It's in there, but there's nothing deliberate. It's not like, "Let's record in Barbados and jet ski during the day. Then it'll have this *reggae* tinge to it." It's not that blatantly obvious.

MD: You recorded the album at Red Bull Studios in Chelsea [Manhattan]. How was that different from recording at Machines with Magnets, the Rhode Island studio where Battles has recorded all of its previous

albums?

John: Recording it in New York meant that we had a producer, Chris Tabron, who was really cracking the whip and forcing us to make decisions then and there. We had limited time to record in this studio and limited time to mix. In the past, all of Battles' records were done in this compound in Rhode Island where you sleep and live. That's great, too, but I don't think I'd be talking to you right now if we worked there: we'd probably still be recording. It's an amazing place. But we needed a change, and I'm very happy we did it in New York.

MD: The drum sounds on *Juice B Crypts* are wildly diverse. Some songs have drums that are so resonant they sound blown out; others sound tiny and dry. What drums did you use on the record?

John: Ninety percent of the record is my main Tama setup, the yellow Artstar II from '97, which they don't make anymore. I always go back to the yellow Tama. It's this monster, and I feel the most comfortable with it. Every record I've done, I use that kit.

Chris Tabron is an extreme drum nerd. I think he had ten snare drums: Vistalites, Black Beauties, and old Slingerlands. I ended up using my Tama brass snare a bunch.

I still have the snare drum that I used on the very first Helmet EP, *Strap It On*. It's a 6.5x14 metal Slingerland from the '60s. I think it's the first drum I ever got. I kind of restored it. All it needed was a rim and some new snares. [laughs] So that's on the record, and it's special to me.

On a couple of songs we used a 16" kick drum with a blanket over it in an isolated room, and like 12" hi-hats. It was the absolute driest, tiniest drum sound you could imagine.

MD: Sometimes the drum sounds change mid-song. Did you experiment a lot with mic placement?

John: We did a lot of switching up the drum sounds in the middle of the song, which I thought was totally amazing. The drums are recorded differently, and I love that.

[On our previous records] we'd work really hard to get this great drum sound, and then just use that for the entire record. There's nothing wrong with that, but on this record every song has different-sounding drums. It's all the same set with a different snare on every song. Then we'd take a couple hours and change the mics. And it was a lot in the way [Tabron] mixed it as well.

MD: *Juice B Crypts* is Battles' first album without bassist Dave Konopka. How did going from a trio to a duo change your songwriting and recording process?

John: It changed both completely. Obviously there's only two of us now, not three or four. Before everyone had a million things to say that they had to get in, and everyone had to be happy—"Oh, I can't do this because this person isn't able to change what they're doing. Therefore I have to wait until…." It was just this assembly-line process of doing just one song. It's maddening.

Now all of that has completely gone away. There was still a ton of material to weed through, but it was faster, easier—and it was fun! We'd go into the Music Building during the day and then go home. Not waking up at 3:30 A.M. to track while everyone else is asleep. It was a more relaxed, adult way to make a record.

With a duo there's way more musical real estate that's opened up, and decisions are made much faster. We didn't have these arguments anymore, because it's either going to work or it's not. It was a beautiful thing that happened to us in a weird way.

MD: How has the transition to a duo affected the live show?

John: Now we have way more responsibilities. At first we weren't going to play *any* old songs, but that's ridiculous. And we can't do all of our old songs; we didn't want to do this thing where Ian presses a button and we just kind of stand there while a backing track plays. So we weeded through the ones we can do. Ian is going crazy with the amount of stuff he's doing. And now I've introduced a Roland SPD-SX to my setup.

MD: How does the SPD factor into your setup?

John: I'm *really* using it now live—way more

than I thought. I'm using it in every song. I have triggers on my kick and snare that [fire] samples of the drums from the record, and I layer those from the SPD with my own drums.

At first it was just to have those samples. Then as we were getting closer to touring I was just learning more and more. It's a work in progress. Sometimes Ian needs a bit of time between songs—if he has to change a guitar or reload something—so I do these "skits" with the SPD-SX, which is basically a sample that I play along to. I kind of go crazy with it. I'm also turning stuff off and on.

We're trying to do as much as we possibly can live. Of course we have to play along to certain things—like obviously the singer isn't there. There's certain things that are coming in and out [of the mix], and there's only the two of us. We didn't want to hire another band just so we could play it live. I'd rather just play 90 percent of it live.

MD: Vocalist Tyondai Braxton left the band in 2010, and since then Battles hasn't had a consistent singer in the group. Yet you often prominently feature guest vocalists on your albums. How did you decide which vocalists to collaborate with?

John: That was the easiest part of making the record, believe it or not. Everyone on the record we have some kind of connection to.

Xenia Rubinos is a really good friend of ours. She's toured with us, so she was a totally obvious choice [for "They Played It Twice"]. Jon Anderson [singer from the band Yes]: about nine years ago I got an email from his management saying he was a really big Battles fan and asked if I wanted to play drums on a song for his solo record. I couldn't do it for some reason but thanked him and told him I was flattered. Then Jon emailed me and offered to collaborate with Battles and for us to feel free to reach out. Just super personable and mellow. I was like, *Okay…Jon Anderson…* [laughs, sounding somewhere between surprised and starstruck]. Then we were in the studio and we did this song ["Sugar Foot"], wishing we wrote it nine years ago, because we could have asked Jon Anderson [to do vocals]. I literally just searched through my email, found the thread, and emailed him back. He was just like, "Yup! Send me the track!" and he did it and it was the easiest thing in the world. When he eventually sent us the track he just *nailed* it. We did zero editing to his take. It was fantastic.

We never really know if a song will have vocals. Some are obvious. Like the Shabazz Palaces song ["IZM"], someone should be rapping over that of course. Again, it was super easy. Sal [Principato of Liquid Liquid, on "Titanium 2 Step"], Xenia, and Shabazz Palaces were all like one take.

Stanier's Setup

Drums: Tama
A. 6x14 brass snare
B. 11x12 tom
C. 12x13 tom
D. 16x16 floor tom
E. 16x24 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian Ks "all day"
1. 14" hi-hats
2. 22" ride)

Electronics: Roland SPD-SX

MD: Your yellow Tama kit has become emblematic of the band. It's pretty much the first thing I think of when I think of Battles. That, and, of course, the way you position that cymbal.

John: Yeah, for sure. I only do that with Battles. In all honesty it started out as a joke at our very first show. When the band first started out, I wanted to be as minimal as possible. It was going to be kick and snare and no cymbals at all. Then I realized I needed hi-hats. Then I said, I'll use one cymbal, and when I do hit it, it'll be a really big deal. I wanted to get it out the way, so I just raised it really high. It's an optical illusion as well. At first I thought it was funny, and everyone said, "Leave it, leave it!" so it just turned into our thing.

MD: Has positioning it up there changed the way you play long-term? Has it made you more conscious of hitting cymbals in general?

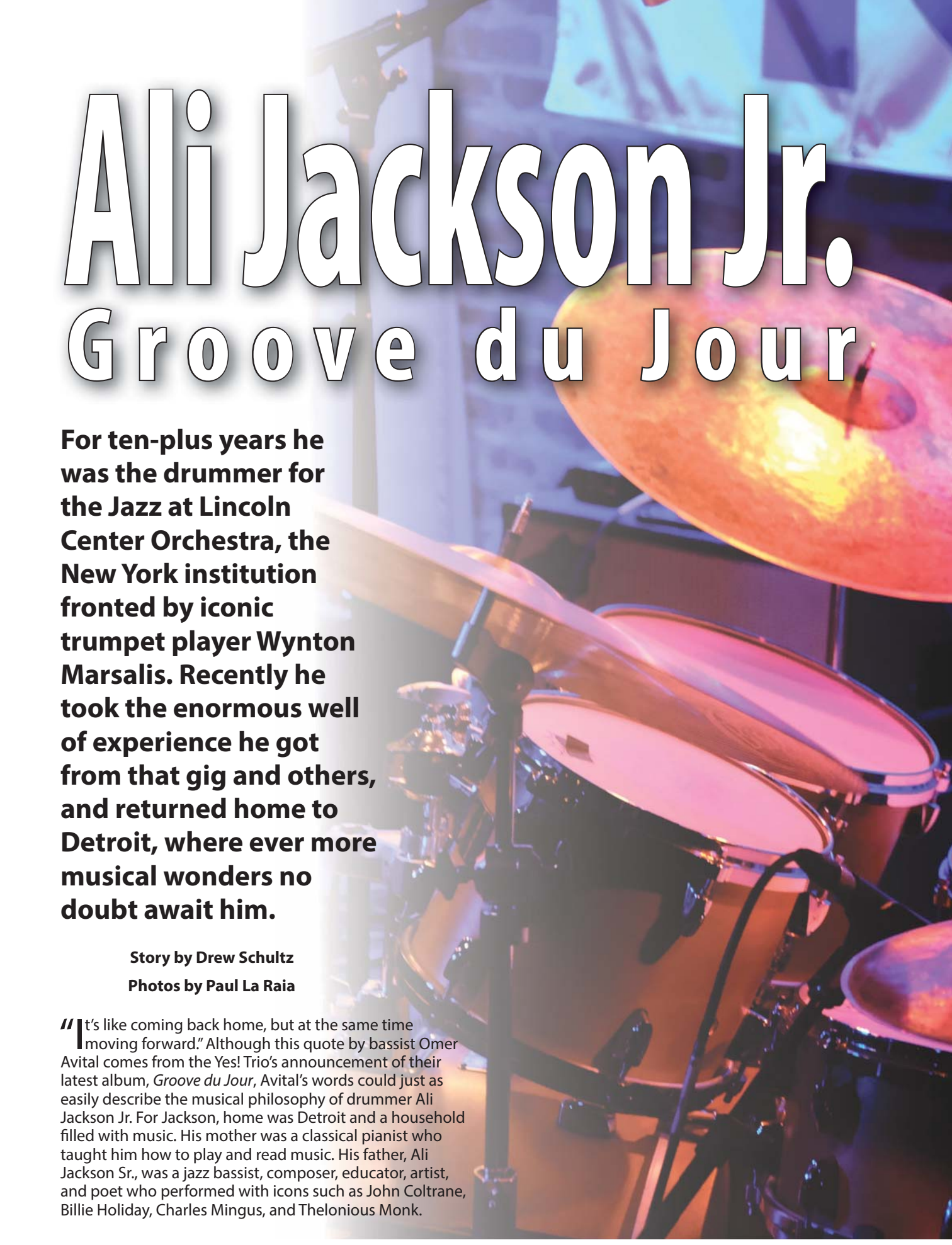
John: No, I don't think so. I use the cymbal now way more than I did on the EPs. There are times where I'm like: [faking an anguished voice] "Why did I do this…*why*?" It's kind of exhausting. But aesthetically it looks crazy, and it's very recognizable and people seem to like it, so I just stay with it.

MD: How sick of that question are you?

John: [Laughs] Not at all. It's ridiculous looking, so people ask, "Why the hell do you have your cymbal that high?" Some people think it's funny. Other people think it's stupid. Drummers who don't have a sense of humor are like, [sounding professorial] "Well, if you lowered your cymbal, you could…." It's like, "Yeah…I know."

Ali Jackson Jr.

Groove du Jour



For ten-plus years he was the drummer for the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, the New York institution fronted by iconic trumpet player Wynton Marsalis. Recently he took the enormous well of experience he got from that gig and others, and returned home to Detroit, where ever more musical wonders no doubt await him.

Story by Drew Schultz

Photos by Paul La Raia

"It's like coming back home, but at the same time moving forward." Although this quote by bassist Omer Avital comes from the Yes! Trio's announcement of their latest album, *Groove du Jour*, Avital's words could just as easily describe the musical philosophy of drummer Ali Jackson Jr. For Jackson, home was Detroit and a household filled with music. His mother was a classical pianist who taught him how to play and read music. His father, Ali Jackson Sr., was a jazz bassist, composer, educator, artist, and poet who performed with icons such as John Coltrane, Billie Holiday, Charles Mingus, and Thelonious Monk.

At a young age, Ali Jr. was making lasting impressions on older musicians, displaying not only talent but also a drive to learn. He made early connections with trumpeter Wynton Marsalis and went on to study privately with drumming legends Max Roach and Elvin Jones. Moving from Detroit to New York City, Jackson earned his degree in music composition from the New School university. He's released multiple albums as a bandleader and appeared on recordings by a diverse range of artists, including Joshua Redman, KRS-One, George Benson, Dee Dee Bridgewater, and Bobby McFerrin. He's performed with everyone from Eric Clapton to the New York City Ballet, and he spent more than a decade in the drummer's chair with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra.

While studying at the New School, Jackson connected with Omer Avital and pianist Aaron Goldberg, beginning a friendship that has lasted more than twenty-five years. In 2012 they released their first recording as Yes! Trio and performed internationally. Last year saw Ali return to Detroit from New York with a triumphant homecoming show at the Detroit Jazz Festival and the release of Yes! Trio's *Groove du Jour* album. The recording includes three original compositions by Jackson, including the title track, the explosive opener "Escalier," and "Claqué," which features rhythmic motifs played on the drumkit and tambourine.

Throughout the album, the trio alternates between fearless improvisation and airtight delivery of melody and groove as a unit. True to its name, *Groove du Jour* offers danceable rhythms and singable melodies while not shying away from exploratory solo sections. "C'est Clair" evolves, with Ali stirring brushes underneath a waltz cymbal pattern, fluidly sticking and comping, and then moving into a joyously unexpected Gospel-esque tambourine outro. "Dr. Jackle" moves between fierce uptempo swing and minimalist experimentation, culminating in Jackson and Goldberg trading inventive solos that display melodic ideas, time manipulation, and a wide usage of the drumkit's sonic palette. "Tokyo Dream" provides a bluesy melody that dances around the quarter-note pulse and a virtuosic drum solo. Another highlight is the cowbell interplay combined with expressive drumming on "Flow," which concludes with another mind-bending drum solo over the hypnotic bass and piano groove.

Ali Jackson Jr.'s return to Detroit provided a quick springboard into an international tour with Yes! Trio, and he was kind enough to speak to *Modern Drummer* while still on the road, discussing returning home while moving forward. Like the imagery Omer Avital's quote evokes, Jackson manages to look simultaneously behind and ahead, drawing inspiration from the past masters while continuing to use his own skills to push musical boundaries.

"You have all of these different styles and time periods that you can draw from, each with its own vocabulary, and you have specific styles of drummers within each era. Improvisation becomes all about how someone organizes all of that and becomes relevant in the moment."

MD: Your musical story starts at such a young age. What was it like being surrounded by such amazing music and musicians as a child?

Ali: As a kid, just the vibe of being around great musicians…we had great musicians coming through my home all the time, and for me they were just people. If I were to start roll-calling people, it was some of the greatest musicians in the world, period, but for me they were like extended family. I had a huge connection with the older generation, and I saw what the music meant to them. I just knew at eight years old that I wanted to be a musician, and it's taken me on an amazing ride. My father was a jazz musician, my mother was a classical musician, and I just wanted to be around

the best musicians possible. I've been out here a long time, and I don't play for accolades; I play for the respect of other musicians that are very serious and respectable.

In jazz music, it's always generational, and the older generations are like the leaders or the guides. I don't want to use the word "gatekeeper," but older people have more experience and more information. That's just nature. So I was fortunate to be around older musicians often, and open to the information. I wasn't biased like, "Oh, they're old so, I'm not going to listen to them; I'm doing something new." There's always a respect for the older cats, because they paved the trail.

MD: How do you feel that studying the masters before you has influenced your own music?

Ali: From my first record, I wasn't studying Duke Ellington. I wasn't studying Wayne Shorter. I might have been listening to them, but I wasn't studying them. Studying requires you to really sit with the song and to break it down to its essence. As a composer, over the years I've learned how to write things that make sense, that fit on other people's instruments, and how to write for specific people and what is in their wheelhouse of playing. What is it that they play that makes them sound good, and can you write something that fits their conception or how they like to play? For my first recording, I was heavily influenced by John Coltrane, McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison, Elvin Jones—that amazing band. That was a huge influence in how I wrote and how I heard.

Now, fast forward twenty years, and I've had the opportunity to listen to and play the whole canon of jazz. To play all of the great arrangements, to play with different masters from places like Ghana, Brazil, Berlin, London. Playing with orchestras, learning and playing the music of other members of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. It's been an extremely diverse experience of music that I'm synthesizing and putting into a new context. It's new because you have a unique set of experiences, putting it into the now. I take a lot of information from all over the world, and put it into a context that's new.

MD: When you made the move from Detroit to New York, did you already have professional opportunities lined up?

Ali: Actually, I had a lot of scholarship offers, and my older cousin Carlos McKinney, a piano player, was in New York a couple of years before me in the scene. I had auditioned at all the big schools, and I pretty much was accepted everywhere, including Juilliard for classical percussion, Manhattan School, and the New School. Those were the schools to be at in New York, and I was focused on being there.

I ended up going to the New School, but I didn't have a gig or anything. I was just going there to learn. My attitude was that I wanted to be around the best musicians in the world, and hopefully I could hang. I was just focused on trying to learn as much as I could possibly learn with an approach of ultimate respect for the music.

MD: While at the New School, you studied with Max Roach and Elvin Jones.

Ali: Yes, for years!

MD: Can you tell us some of the lessons you learned from these legends?

Ali: I met Max Roach back in Detroit. He

Tools of the Trade

"I've been playing Yamaha drums for almost twenty years now," says Ali Jackson. "Elvin Jones introduced me to Takashi Hagiwara, the godfather of Yamaha drums. So I came to Yamaha through Elvin Jones. I use Remo Ambassador or Renaissance Coated heads, a pretty classic setup. I play a five-piece kit: 5.5x14 snare, 10", 12", and 14" toms, and an 18" bass drum. I normally play the Phoenix or Maple Absolute series. I like Yamaha for the fact that they're real consistent, and I can get my own sound out of almost every kit.

"I played Zildjian cymbals for a while," Ali continues, "but people know me more for playing the Bosphorus Master Vintage cymbals. I've used those on many recordings, and that's what people are used to hearing me play. But I'm not a super gearhead guy—I believe a good musician can make anything sound good."

was playing at the Detroit Jazz Fest, and I had the opportunity to be recognized as a young percussionist and to play at his workshop. That was my first interaction with him. I had an opportunity to play at his workshop, and he gave me a really valuable lesson. I might have been twelve years old. I played a long solo drum piece. Max stressed knowing when to end, when to stop, and that resonated extremely deeply from that first encounter.

I saw him again maybe a couple years after that, during a celebration for J.C. Heard [Detroit-based drummer who worked with Louis Armstrong, Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington, Ray Charles, Nat King Cole, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and many more] at Orchestra Hall in Detroit. I had an opportunity to go to the rehearsal and soundcheck, and I had another one-on-one exchange. He taught me how to tune the drums, and I continued my studies with him in New York. I would go to his apartment in the Upper West Side and take lessons. I'd just ask him a million things, a lot of it historical and conceptual. It was very impactful as a young musician.

Many musicians, including Max and Elvin Jones, lived in the same building. Elvin was like a god-uncle to me. He was very helpful and supportive, just on a human level. We never really talked about drums; we talked more about concepts in life, which was really more helpful than talking about

music. For a jazz musician, it's not always about the technical aspects—it can be more about the spiritual things. It's about the embodiment of stories you can tell about life. But I think one of the seminal points I want people to know is that I'm a musician first. I'm not a drummer. I'm a musician who happens to play drums.

MD: What are some of the qualities that make someone a large-scale musician as opposed to a practitioner on an instrument?

Ali: For one, it's having an understanding of the science of music—melody, harmony, rhythm. Understanding what makes a song a good composition, what is a good melody, what is good time. The fundamental things are the building blocks of good music, and you have to have an investment in those fundamentals. Having a strong understanding of theory, of form, and then moving to arranging, orchestration, quality of performance, analyzing everything you've heard to understand what makes it good or bad, using references of people of high quality. Those are all elements of what makes someone a good musician.

Understanding the function of each instrument—the bass is functioning to play roots, or to play countermelodies based in roots while also being responsible for the rhythm. You may play good roots, but not have good time—does that make you a good bass player? Same for piano. Piano is like a mini orchestra, so how does the pianist orchestrate harmonically? How do they phrase a melody? All of these nuances are important to what goes into the science of making good music. Those things have always been important to me, especially as a younger musician. I consider listening to others as being a part of my technique. I never just looked at it as playing drums or having technical prowess on the instrument.

MD: That said, you display incredible technical prowess in your solos. Can you give us some of your own advice about improvising on the drums?

Ali: First, you have to know the song. Knowing the melody of the song, knowing all of the intricacies. I prefer to solo over the form, not just take a free solo. It may sound free, but if you listen, I'm dropping bread crumbs of the melody or of themes that are in the song. People use the term "melodic drummer." My approach is very musical, in a pure sense of the term, because the drums are just an orchestra of percussion instruments. Just because they're not tuned to specific pitches doesn't mean that they're not melodic.

There are lots of ways to approach soloing. You could take a solo based on rhythmic themes. You could take a solo based on different timbres, like the low range of a cymbal, that can be your sonic canvas. You could take a solo based on independence; you could take a solo low drums and high drums or call-and-response. You could take a solo based on the relationship between the bass and the snare, or different parts of the drumkit for different sections of the song. You could play a solo with the use of space only, being minimalist, or play a solo with the use of contrasted dynamics. You could use different kinds of grooves, and base a solo with a melodic vibe within a groove. There are lots of devices you can use, so my approach is extremely vast. And you can use all of them! Then you have musical taste and personality. That's something you can't really describe—it's based on your personal experience and knowledge.

You also have all of these different styles and time periods that you can draw from—

Revolutionary War snare drum playing, ragtime, early jazz, swing era, big band era, bebop era—each with its own vocabulary. Then you have specific styles of drummers within each era. So you have a huge range to draw from. Improvisation becomes all about how someone organizes all of that and becomes relevant in the moment.

MD: In addition to the Yes! Trio, what are you focusing on now?

Ali: I'm composing a concerto for percussion for a symphonic percussion section, highlighting soloists from different instruments throughout the world—the pandeiro, drumset, triangle, mallet percussion. It will be about six movements that feature different percussion instruments with the orchestra in a call-and-response dialog format. Also, I just recorded a solo drum project. It's about thirty vignettes of solo drums, songs for drumset. Melodies, different grooves, tempos, timbres, different uses of the drumkit.

MD: You've done so much in your career so far. Have there ever been any "lesson-learned" moments, or times where you had to fall down and get back up to keep going?

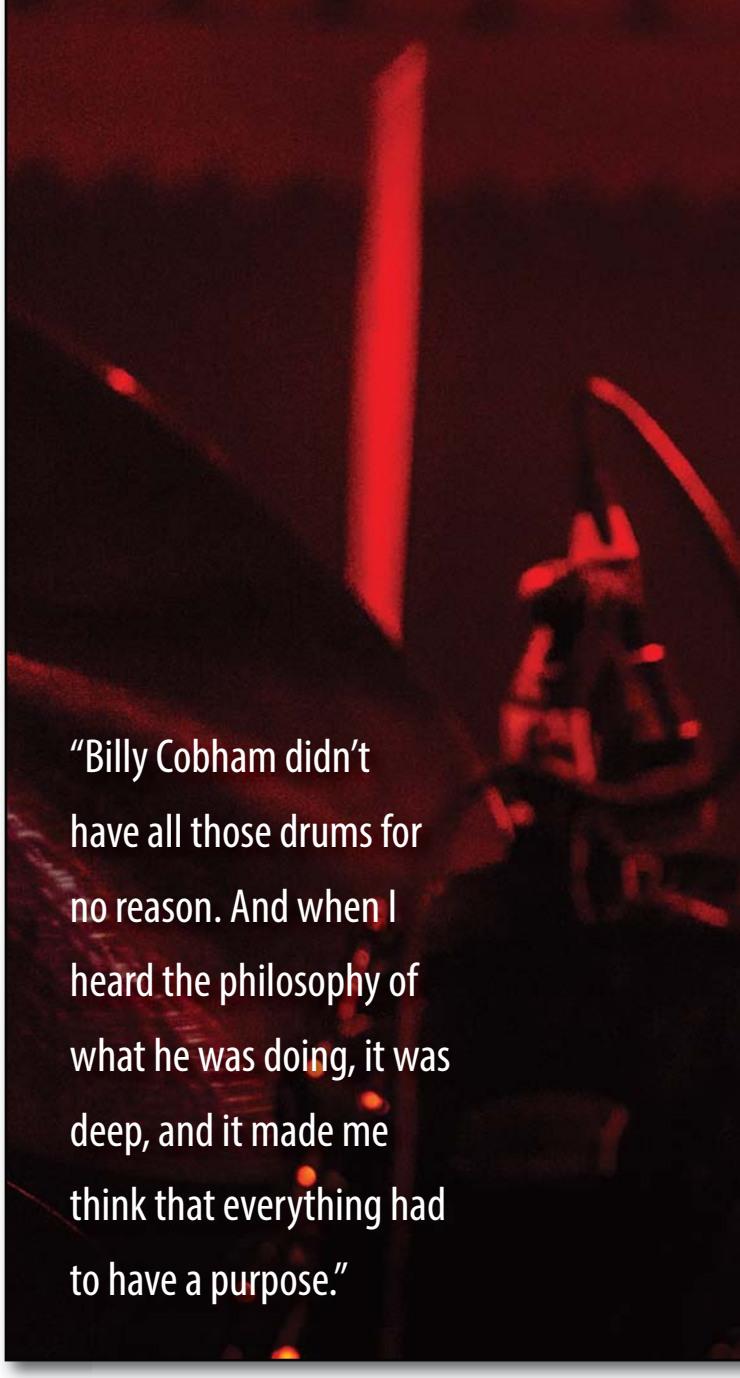
Ali: Earlier in my career, when I was around twenty, I was asked to do a radio show in D.C. called *Making the Music* on NPR. It was with a legendary big band lineup, an all-star group. I was probably the youngest guy there, and I was playing in the drum chair. In that setting the drummer is like the quarterback of the team. We were playing Duke Ellington's "Harlem" suite, and it is very involved. There are a lot of meter changes, and it's intricate and detailed. I got the music in advance, and I was diligent in practicing, but it was a case of me just not having the experience. It's a deep thing. It's hard. You hear it all the time in sports and athleticism; you hear it in life.

It was one of those moments where I didn't have the experience, and the band was just pushing me around. They did what they wanted to do, and I didn't have the respect of the band. That's not an aggression thing, like playing louder or forcing them to follow my time—it was a confidence thing. Knowing that you have the confidence is a very subtle but very tangible thing. When someone has a certain level of experience, they're relaxed and in the moment. They've done it a million times, so they know what they have to do to give what everyone else around them needs to be successful in what they're doing. I didn't have that, and I was let go. It was at a rehearsal, and I had my lady friend with me at the time, and I got fired off of the gig in front of everyone.

They got a great drummer, Herlin Riley, to come in the next day to do the recording. I went back to New York. I was so curious and hungry for what the difference was, I got back on a train at 6 A.M. from New York City back to D.C. to make it to the recording session the next day. I walked back in, right past all of the people who knew I got fired, and I watched the whole recording session and took notes. I knew that what Herlin had, I did not have, and my desire to be better, to improve, to gain knowledge and information, that was my goal. It's a simple word: humility. However popular or successful one gets, it's all about humility, and no one is above the music. Whatever name you put out there, the music is always at the top of the food chain. Not the musician, the *music*.

Yussef Dayes

The U.K.-based drummer and producer is making a name for himself on the modern-jazz scene, and he's fine being referred to as a jazz drummer. Just don't box him in.



Yussef Dayes' father came from Jamaica to New York in the 1970s, bringing along the family and a huge record collection of jazz-fusion and reggae music. By the time he was four years old, the youngster was drumming and playing along to records. Billy Cobham was his guy, and when the great Mahavishnu Orchestra drummer came to the U.K. for a week-long drumming course, Dayes attended.

Dayes' family was one of those where everyone played *something*, and as the drummer's abilities expanded, he never lost sight of the importance of collaborating with those nearest and dearest to him. Along with his brothers, Dayes made music with the group United Vibrations and later with keyboardist and producer Kamaal Williams as the duo Yussef Kamaal, releasing the album *Black Focus* in 2016. Both bands mixed jazzy grooves with drum 'n' bass flavors for a sweet modern stew, while Dayes studied and incorporated into his playing everything from Afrobeat and West African music to rock and funk sounds. His playing, even if mimicking machines or throwing in fluttery breakbeats, always retains an organic element. "You're human," says Dayes. "Your heartbeat doesn't beat perfectly in time; it has a movement to it. It's the same with music."

Lately Dayes has collaborated with keyboardist Charlie Stacey and bassist Rocco Palladino in a trio that improvises onstage with surprising results. Their song "Duality," which is a combo of two distinct tracks, spotlights Dayes' eclectic interests and developed skills. The first half is a leisurely, chill keys vibe, while the second half switches gears radically and ups the tempo and snare ghost notes. Look for a live record from the group soon. Dayes' most recent release is *What Kinda Music*, a joint album with guitarist and producer Tom Misch.

MD: What kind of things rubbed off on you when spending time with Billy Cobham?

Yussef: It was about understanding who you are and what your style is, and finding the best techniques and ways to express that, instead of trying to be someone else. When I was younger, I saw that a lot of my favorite drummers were all making records, which is the ultimate goal. I'm interested in making a wicked record. And Billy didn't have all those drums for no reason. And he explained why he had them, and why he tuned them that way. When I heard the philosophy of what he was doing, it was deep, and it made me think that everything had to have a purpose.

MD: Was the drum 'n' bass and fusion stuff more informative, or was the less chops-oriented reggae thing more influential on your playing?

Yussef: It was a mixture of everything. When I was a kid in the 1990s, drum 'n' bass and jungle was a big thing. My room was next to my older brother's, and there would be all those records coming out of his room, and I'd just drum along to them. At the same time my dad might play a James Brown or Harvey Mason record, so I was getting all these influences and hearing these beats that were all about a groove and a feeling. And then there was a lot of the Wailers with Carlton Barrett, one of my favorite drummers. Of course you have to have the technical ability, but a lot of my favorite drummers, it's about the feeling, the groove. Sometimes if you can make the simplest rhythms feel good, that's the art.

MD: Did you spend time with traditional books and normal chops-building exercises?

Yussef: I used to practice for hours, and I had a teacher for a couple of years. But I'd go through stages where I'd spend months just focusing on what Tony Williams was doing. And then I'd get Alan Dawson's book. And sometimes I'm uptight, but I kind of like that, because when you're playing breakbeats you need to be kind of firm with it, because you have to get the power out of the drums. But sometimes the tune doesn't require that, and my shoulders come down and I'm relaxed. I'm not the most technically sound drummer, for sure. But my focus went away from that. And I've spent a hell of a lot of time recording, and learning how to tune my drums and what cymbals work where. But I want to get back to practicing. I want to re-up on my technique, to expand my vocabulary. I can't


Florian Joahn

stay stagnant. But a lot of my playing comes from the people who surround me, my environment and my family.

MD: And you can't study that out of a book.

Yussef: I don't think people talk enough about things like groove and feeling and emotions, not as much as they do about the technical thing. I like musicians who have character and express themselves. If that's something I can share more of with people, then that's what I want to do. Drums are a good instrument. It's physical. Your brain is active; you have four limbs. There's so much going on.

MD: So you play "solo" shows with your trio, but you're releasing a joint album with Tom Misch?

Yussef: The record with Tom is a studio album, and it's a production. There will be visuals and a different kind of energy. My thing with my trio is raw, improvised, and in the moment. It's high energy. Call me what you want, a jazz drummer or whatever, because if it's allowing me to be free with who I work with and to express myself in different ways, I'll rock with that. I'll go with that.

MD: For your trio, do you come up with the material for the jams?

Yussef: I'm the producer. My job is to produce and arrange the thing and to put the set list together. Obviously Charlie will write his part and Rocco will write his part, but I bring people together, and I control the sonics, the arrangement. People don't know that side of me, but that's what I do.

MD: What's the musical goal for the future? To lay down some beats for Kanye West? Or to get your trio to back someone up or keep playing shows together?

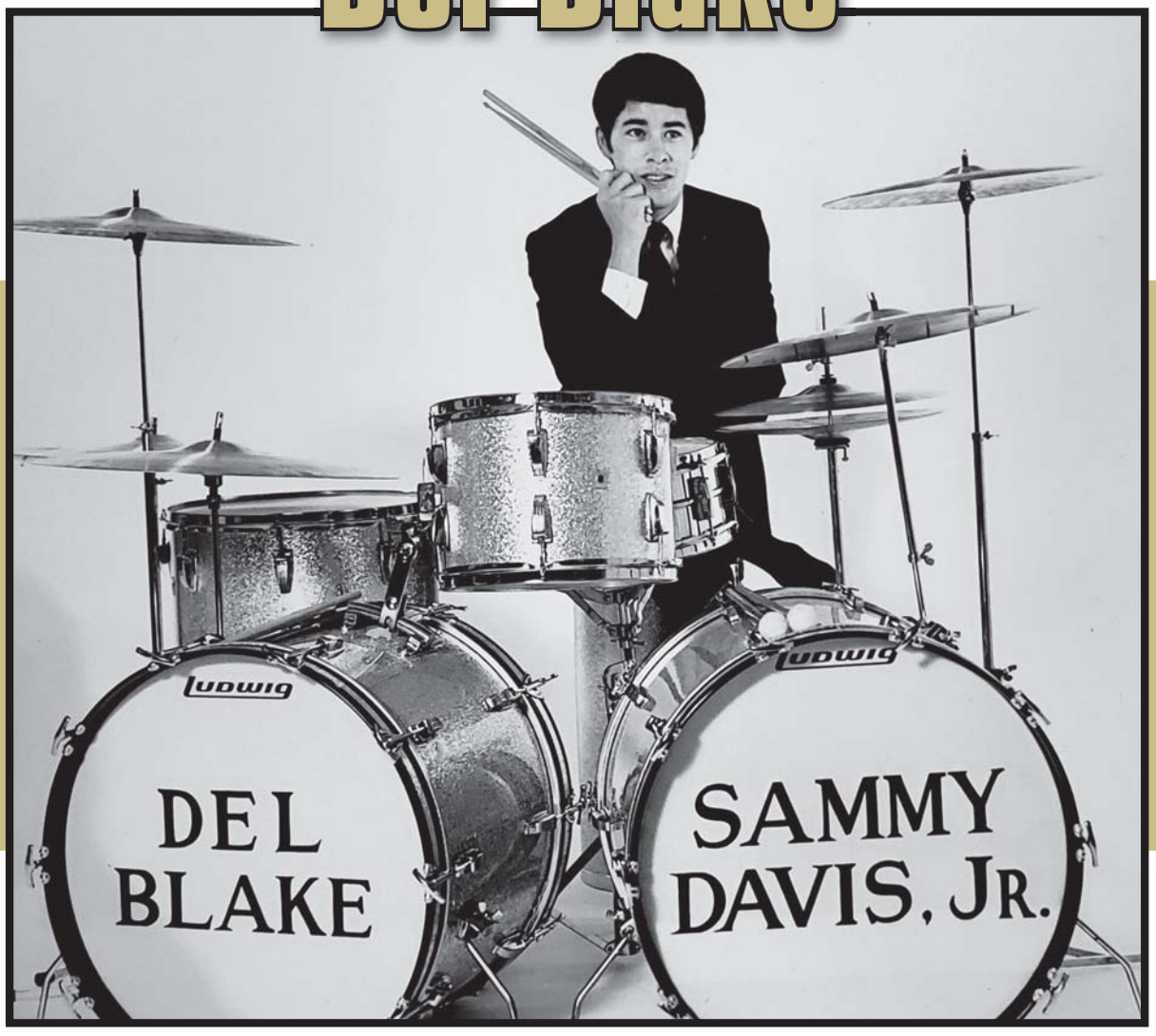
Yussef: I love collaborating with top musicians who will make me up my game. A lot of people are stuck in boxes. But I'm free to release my record with Tom and my live album with my trio and [later] my own studio solo album. But I'm down for whatever. I want to produce someone else's album or do a soundtrack to a film. Wherever my heart's taking me.

Ilya Stemkovsky

Yussef Dayes plays Yamaha drums, Rototoms, and Istanbul cymbals.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT...?

Del Blake



Sammy Davis Jr. proclaimed during a high-profile concert at Carnegie Hall that Del Blake, at age twenty-seven, was "the greatest drummer in the world." This, while the famous entertainer was on tour with Buddy Rich. Friend, coworker, and fellow drummer Stephen Boudreaux tells his tale.

I'm not certain which trait fascinated me most about Del Blake, his brilliant command of rudimental and set drumming or his tenacious and tireless work ethic. I met Blake around 1997, when I hired him to train network engineers at a regional tech firm. It was nearly two years that we had worked together before I even knew he had any background in drumming. His fiancé at the time said to me, knowing I was a moderately successful regional drummer myself, "Did you know Del plays drums, too?"

At first I was taken aback. When I asked him about it, he told me, "Oh, I used to play drums, but it was dominating my life. I went through too many relationships that always took a back seat to my practice time. I would practice six to eight hours each day, and people just didn't understand. So I gave it up about fifteen years ago, sold all my stuff, and here I am in the technology business."

Del's fiancé quickly interjected, "Del played with Sammy Davis Jr.!" That was it for me. I knew at that moment that if Del had been hired by Sammy Davis Jr.—a fine drummer himself—then he had to be one of the top players in the world at the time. Right then and there I challenged Del to pick up the instrument again and come play with me. He refused at first, and his fiancé agreed. Del, although most likely not properly diagnosed, suffered from some form of extreme obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). Selfishly, the only thing that mattered to me was hearing Del play the drums.

Del Blake was born in a Japanese internment camp in central Idaho in 1942, and by the time of the family's release in 1944, his mother, Lorraine King, had become single, and she moved her and her son back to Spokane, Washington. Lorraine had been a blues singer in the late Vaudeville days through the 1930s, and had always encouraged her son to appreciate music. When Del was four years old, his mother had noticed he had artistic qualities and thought it would be a good experiment to have Santa Claus bring him a drumset for Christmas that year. Young Delbert was beside himself and took to the instrument right away. Unfortunately for him and his mother, the drums were cheaply made of card paper, and Del accidentally fell into them and "smashed the whole lot!" as he recalled.

Del Blake at Gonzaga University in 1963, the year he won the National Rudimental Snare Drum Championships

By the time Blake had turned fourteen in 1956, he was working three paper routes, from which he earned nearly $1,000 to pay for lessons, sticks, and a new drumkit. Practicing in an apartment was difficult, so he would set up his drums at a local rock quarry to get the full effect. By 1959, Blake had discovered rudimental drumming and picked up lessons with local Spokane drum guru Howard E. Robbins, who at one time was the drummer for swing legend Stan Kenton. Robbins would go on to teach

Blake surrounded by some of the percussion pieces he brought home from his world tours.

Del Blake

Eddie Money drummer Glenn Symmonds as well as found the Percussion Naut Patriots fife and drum corps.

That year, the local VFW sponsored an annual State Rudimental Drumming Competition in Yakima, Washington, and Blake entered and took the title in his first try. While there, he met Mike Stefanowicz, who was a former National Snare Drum Champion from Connecticut. Stefanowicz had relocated to Washington and introduced Blake to the Eastern method of rudimental drumming. Having caught the bug, Blake was in hot pursuit to compete for a National title. He would become a relentless correspondent with Stefanowicz and others, including John Dowlan of Philadelphia, who was a five-time National Snare Drum Champion himself and considered by many at the time to be the best in the world at the craft.

Dowlan became a member of the World Drum Corps Hall of Fame in 1987 and is unofficially credited with having institutionalized the backsticking technique in 1938 as a way of improving left-hand strength and coordination. Blake would send dozens of taped recordings of his playing to Dowlan and ultimately prepared a Dowlan-penned piece for his own National Championship run. Keep in mind, Blake was still a high school student at the time.

Blake, at left, performing with Sammy Davis Jr.

By the time he graduated from high school, Blake had won two State Rudimental

Snare Drum Championships along with a number of local titles and earned a full-ride music scholarship to Gonzaga University. By 1963 he'd entered the National Rudimental Snare Drum Championships and become the first entry ever from west of the Mississippi to win the title.

Blake forwent the remainder of his university studies to pursue a music career in New York City. Landing a job as a page at NBC, he was lucky enough to bump into Robert "Bob" Rosengarden, who was a successful studio drummer and with NBC from 1949 to 1968, drumming for Steve Allen, Johnny Carson, and *The Dick Cavett Show* on ABC, where he also served as bandleader. Rosengarden recommended Blake for the house drummer job at the famed Concord Resort in the Catskills, where he was able to drum for the legions of stars that frequented the place.

It was Bob Rosengarden too that later recommended Blake for the opening in Buddy Greco's band, which moved him out to Las Vegas. Greco was part of the famed Rat Pack, along with Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., Frank Sinatra, Joey Bishop, Peter Lawford, and others. After touring the world with Blake behind the kit, Greco accepted a residency at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas alongside Davis Jr. When part of Sammy's band—including his drummer—quit to return to L.A. after a musician's strike, Blake was offered the job to drum for both him and Buddy Greco. When Sammy opted to go on a world tour, Blake had to choose. He chose to go with Sammy, and when he told Greco of his decision, he was cussed out and nearly beaten by him in the lobby of the Sands!

The twenty-seven-year-old Blake provided the highlight moment of each show, even according to Sammy himself. Sammy was so fond of Blake's playing that he gave him a lengthy drum solo section along with a vocal/drum duet medley. In the 1969 Zildjian guide to the cymbal setups of the most famous drummers in the world, Blake appears alongside all the greats of the day.

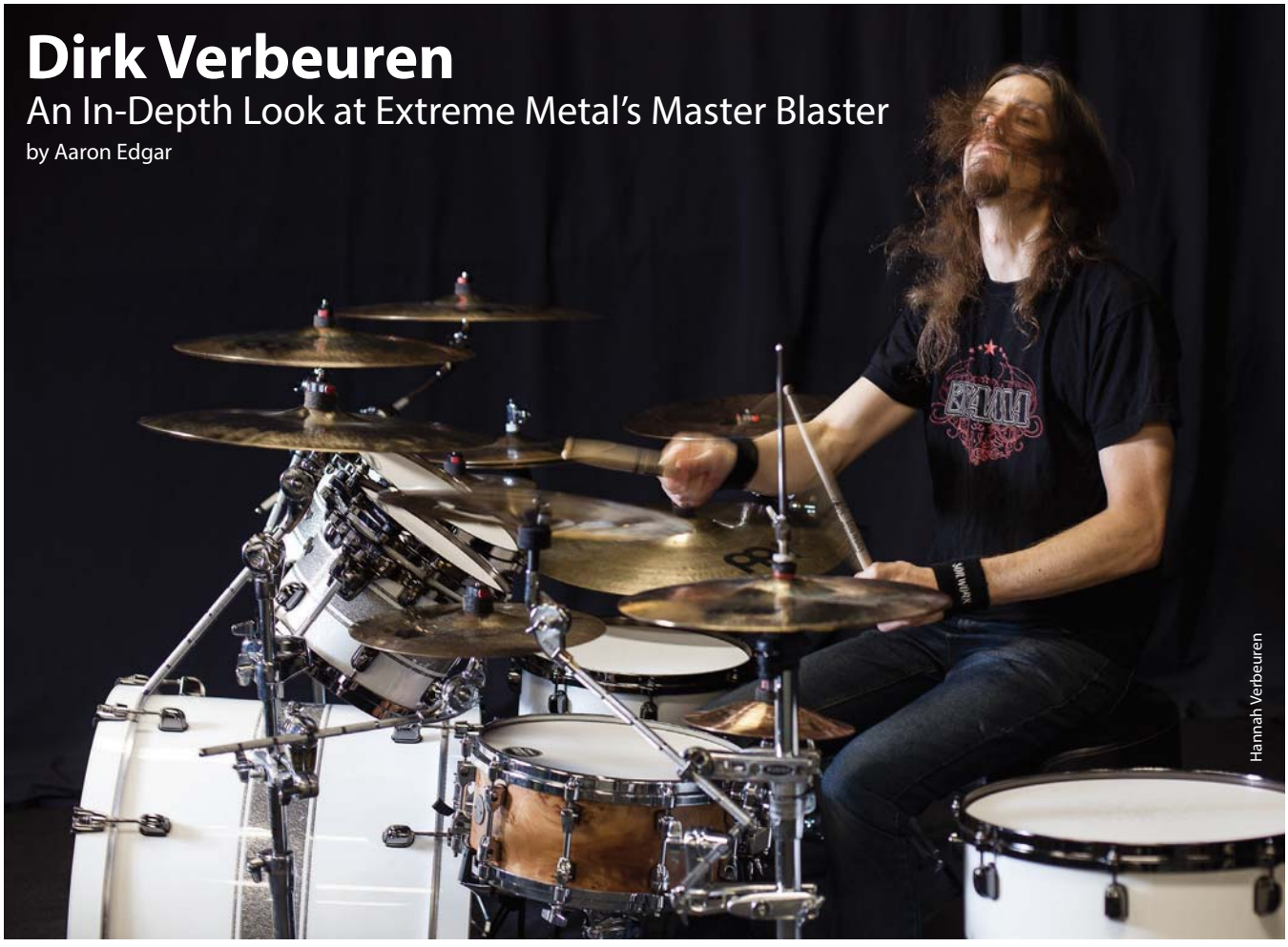
After a few years of touring, Blake left for L.A. to pursue studio and freelance work, which included a world and South African tour with Tom Jones in 1976, as well as performances with Englebert Humperdink, Connie Stevens, Connie Francis, and others. Through his tours, Blake began to collect all sorts of world percussion pieces and developed a proficiency in all of them, including mallet instruments. Blake landed gigs for television show soundtracks popular during the early 1970s, including *The Rockford Files*, *Hawaii Five-O*, *The Tonight Show*, *Mission: Impossible*, *TJ Hooker*, and *The Bing Crosby Show*. When back in L.A., Blake was never out of work and more driven than ever. He picked up gigs with Mel Tormé, the Count Basie Orchestra, and the Woody Herman band. He supported such diverse stars as Rich Little, Ann-Margret, Barry Manilow, Mitzi Gaynor, Jack Benny, Pearl Bailey, Vikki Carr, Shirley MacLaine, Milton Berle, the Osmonds, the Lennon Sisters, Burt Bacharach, Don Rickles, Liza Minnelli, Marilyn Maye, Jim Stafford, and Debbie Reynolds, to name just a few. Blake was literally a drummer to the stars.

After Blake had been coaxed out of retirement, his obsessive ways led him to relentlessly pursue a chance at becoming a World Champion Pipe Band Snare Drummer. He practiced as much as six hours per day and even flew to Scotland and England to study with renowned champion Jim Kilpatrick and follow the lineage of legend Alex Duthart. Blake was hoping to accomplish this within three years, until he fell ill. Finding it easier to sit, he decided to pursue mastery of the piano, and covered material in over 200 books in the two years prior to his passing on November 4, 2019, at the age of seventy-six.

Dirk Verbeuren

An In-Depth Look at Extreme Metal's Master Blaster

by Aaron Edgar



Hannah Verbeuren

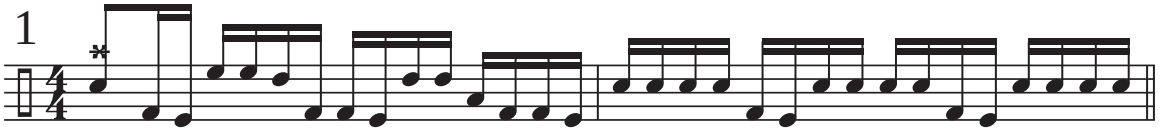
In addition to his superhuman speed and power, Dirk Verbeuren has brought a wide spectrum of influences into extreme metal. He has expert execution of rudiments, as well as unique rhythmic phrasing, all of which combine to create a sound and style of his own.

Verbeuren has played with an array of iconic metal artists, including Devin Townsend, Soilwork, Scarve, Danzig, Sybreed, and Megadeth. And the multitalented musician doesn't stop at playing drums. In his band Bent Sea, he also composes, writes lyrics, and even plays some of the guitars.

In this article we'll explore Verbeuren's drumming from throughout his career, with commentary interspersed from the man himself.

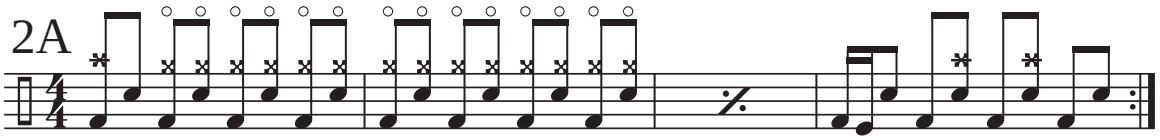
Soilwork, "Late for the Kill, Early for the Slaughter," *The Panic Broadcast* (2010)

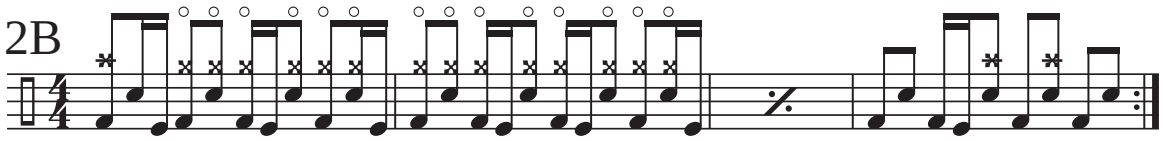
"The intro sounds like it could lead to a ballad, until the drums come in," says Verbeuren, in reference to the blistering intro fill that charges relentlessly into a series of blast beats. "This is indeed a monster!"



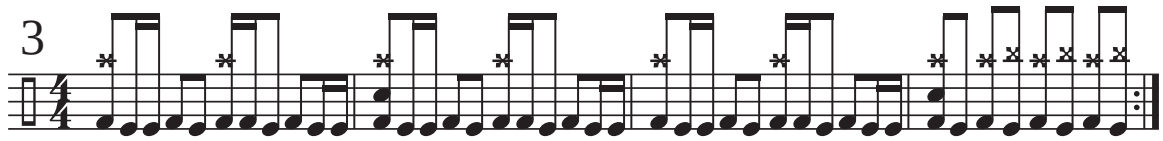
"'Late for the Kill' wasn't easy to master on drums, but it was extremely fun to play," says Verbeuren. "The right-hand technique gets put to the test with those continuous 16ths throughout most of the song, and 230 bpm 16th-note kicks are obviously quite punishing. It took me a few years to feel comfortable playing this one."

In the verses, Verbeuren plays a skank beat that stays straightforward in the A section, and then shifts into a syncopated double-kick pattern in the B section that matches the guitars. Note how the right foot plays quarter notes while all the offbeat notes are hit with the left.





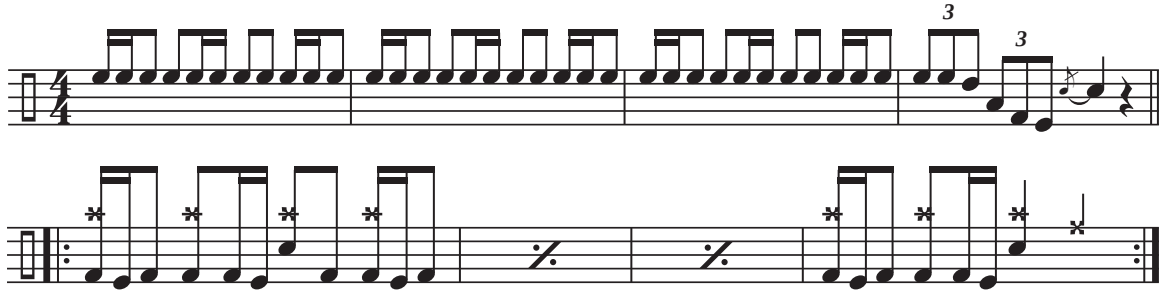
The outro of the song has a heavy half-time double-kick beat featuring doubles with both feet.



Soilwork "Nerve," *Stabbing the Drama* (2005)

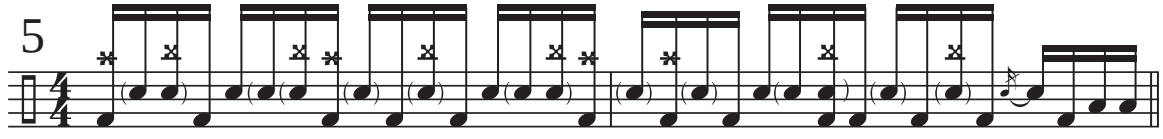
"This is one of those riffs where the kick drums follow the guitar staccatos note-for-note," Verbeuren explains. "As I recall it, I tried to use double strokes on both kicks for the 16th notes first, but that didn't feel great. I ended up playing 8th notes with my right foot and filling in the 16ths with my left, turning the song into a balance and stamina exercise." It's interesting to note how "Nerve" worked best when played with singles, while the similar outro kick rhythm in "Late for the Kill" was better with doubles.

Leading into the final chorus, Verbeuren reapplies the main rhythm on the toms, transitioning with an ultra-heavy triplet run.



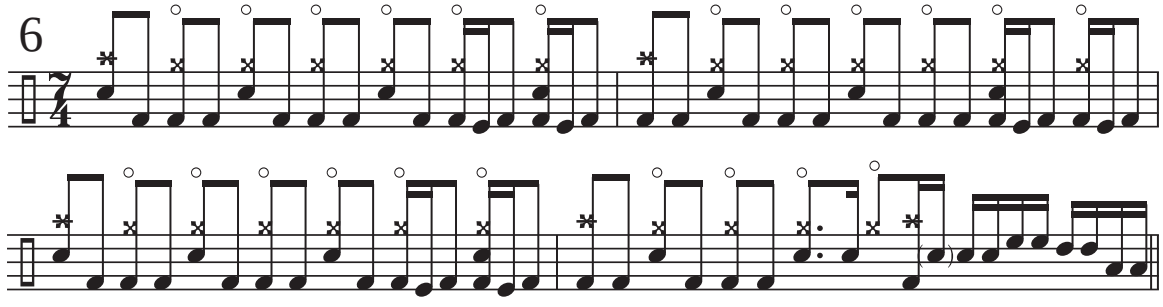
Soilwork, "Night Comes Clean," *The Panic Broadcast* (2010)

The chorus groove in this track is funky and syncopated. The left hand plays the ghost notes, while the right plays all the snare accents and all the cymbal notes. Says Verbeuren, "I especially love those tricky ghost-note patterns in the second half of the chorus. They require some quick right-hand switches between the snare and ride bell."



Soilwork, "Enter Dog of Pavlov," *The Panic Broadcast*

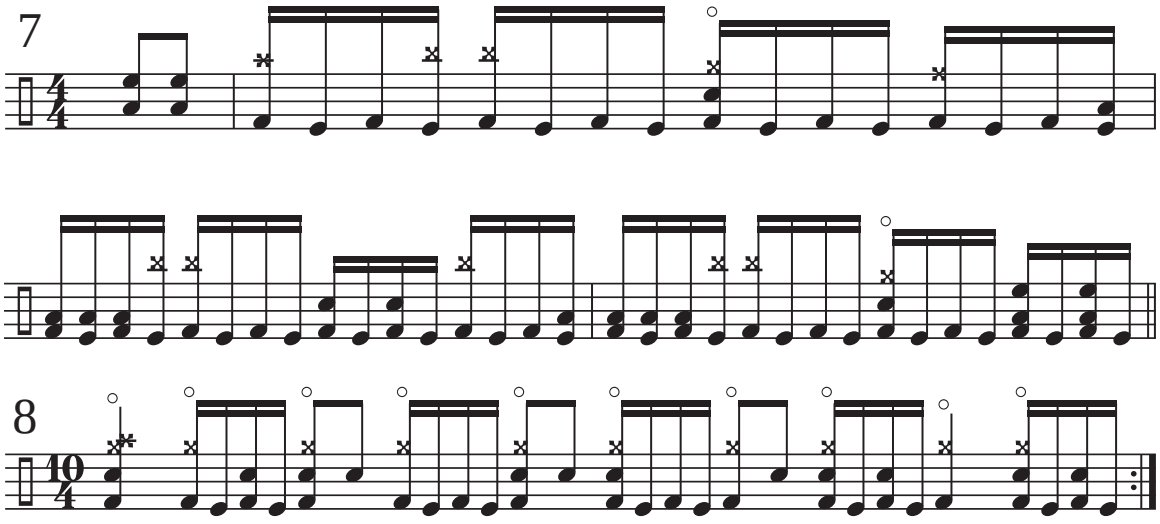
"A lot of the beats and fills came together as we were recording them," Verbeuren explains. "That's actually one of my favorite ways of working, because it preserves a spontaneous energy, which you tend to lose when you're over prepared." As the song intensifies, Verbeuren flips the beat by playing a straight hand pattern across 7/4 time.



Scarve, "CrustScraper," *Luminiferous* (2002)

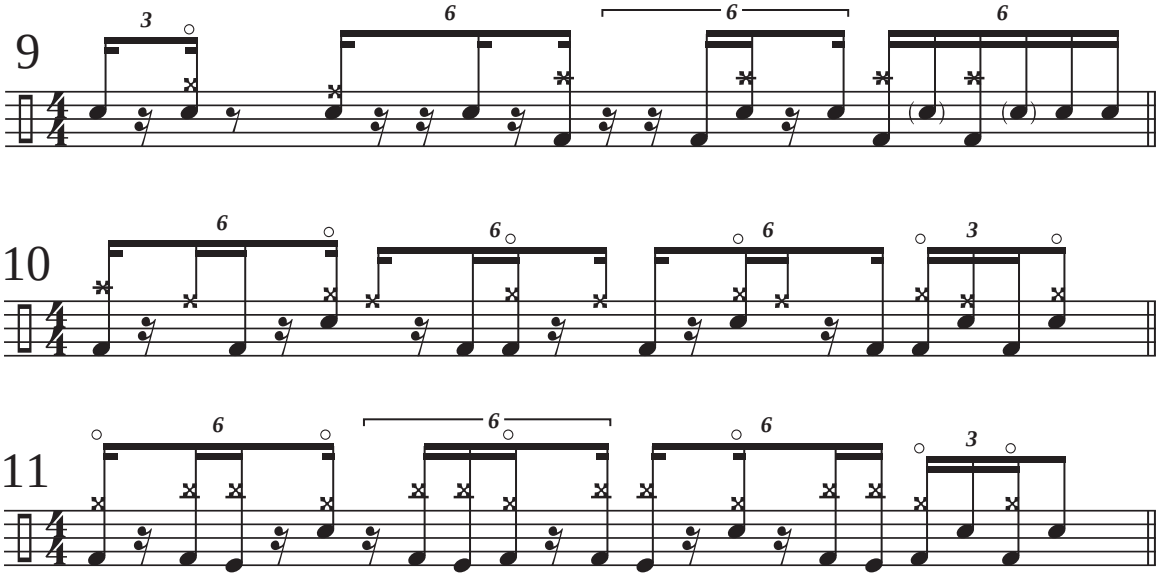
"Scarve was my first real band," says Dirk. "I was experimenting with polyrhythms quite a bit at that time, while also obsessed with the speed and intensity of bands like Morbid Angel. The drum parts in this song make that pretty evident." The track opens with a blistering three-bar phrase with offbeat cymbal accents and toms (Example 7) that transitions into the polyrhythmic verse (Example 8).


Hannah Verbeuren



Scarve, "Asphyxiate," *Irradiant* (2004)

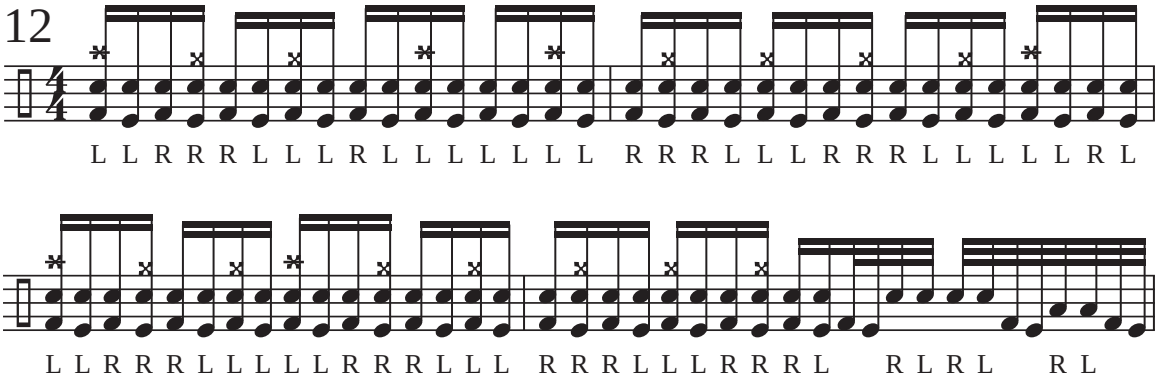
"I was messing around with a shuffle beat over 4/4, which led to an impromptu jam session that became 'Asphyxiate,'" says Verbeuren. "We were trying to fuse the shuffle feel with Meshuggah-like heaviness." Offbeat accents and rests are the name of the game in this track. The rhythmic theme intensifies from the intro (Example 9) to the verse (Example 10) to the chorus (Example 11), with the addition of short, tasty double-kick groupings. "Cymbals play an important role here," Verbeuren explains, "switching between the ride, secondary hi-hat, and a ton of splash accents."



Sybreed, "Dynamic," *Antares* (2007)

"I'd never recorded blast beats at 280 bpm before," Verbeuren says. "Instead of playing a straight blast, I also wanted to follow the accents in the guitar riff. In the end, I came up with a variation of my signature blast beat, the 'Dirk Blast,' which is a flam accent applied to the snare and hi-hat with kicks underneath."

12



After that intense section, the theme switches to a pair of polyrhythm beats. The first one is five-over-three and the second one is four-over-five.

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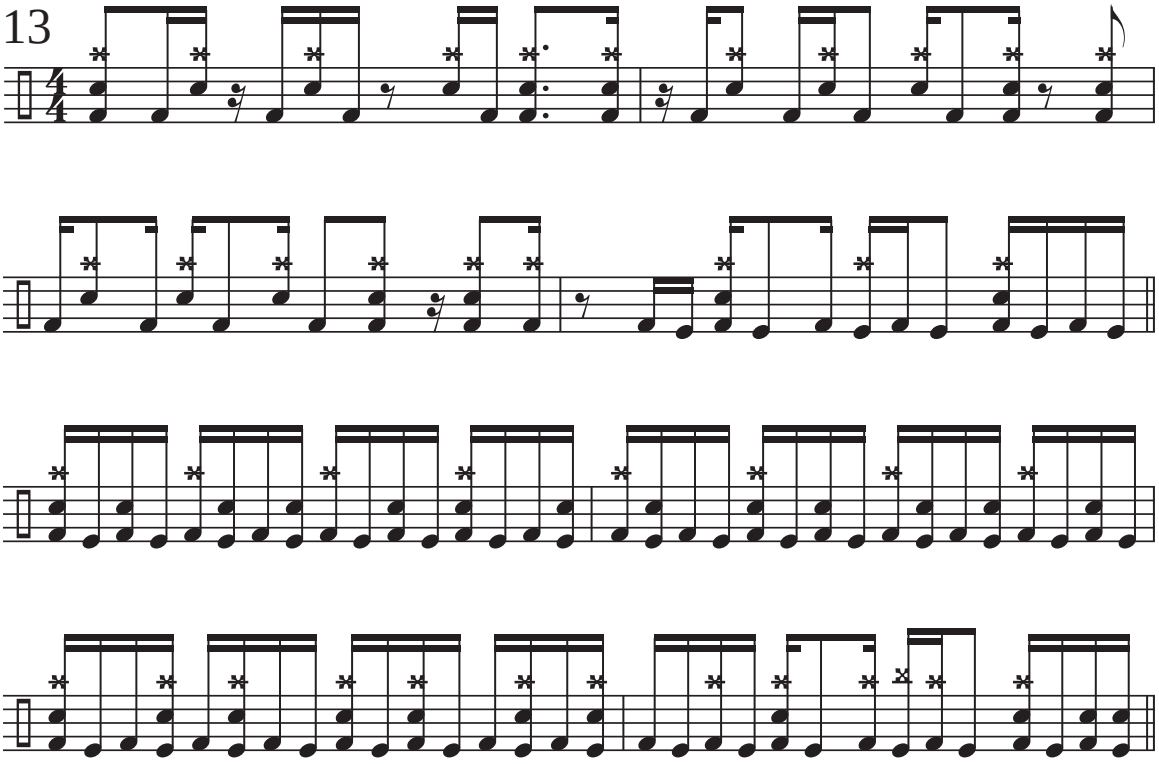

Sybreed, "Revive My Wounds," *Antares*

This track opens chaotically with sporadic bursts of 16th-note triplets, 8th-note triplets, 8th notes, 16th notes, and rests.

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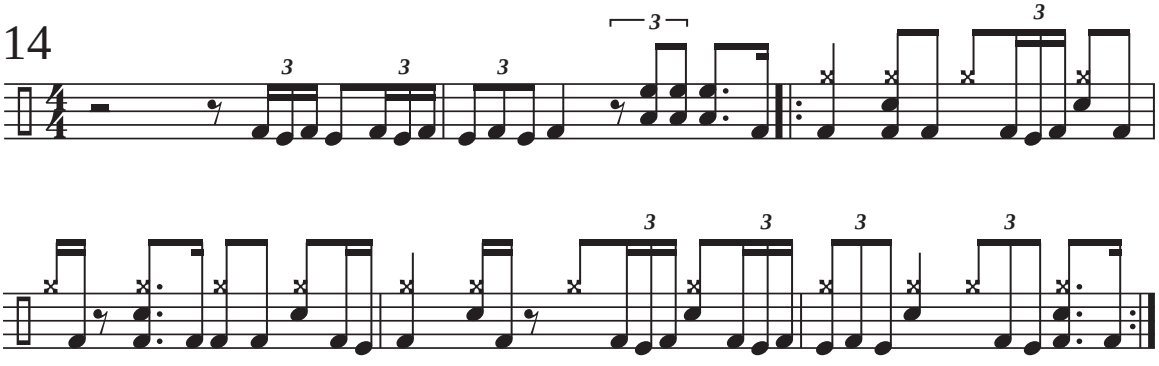
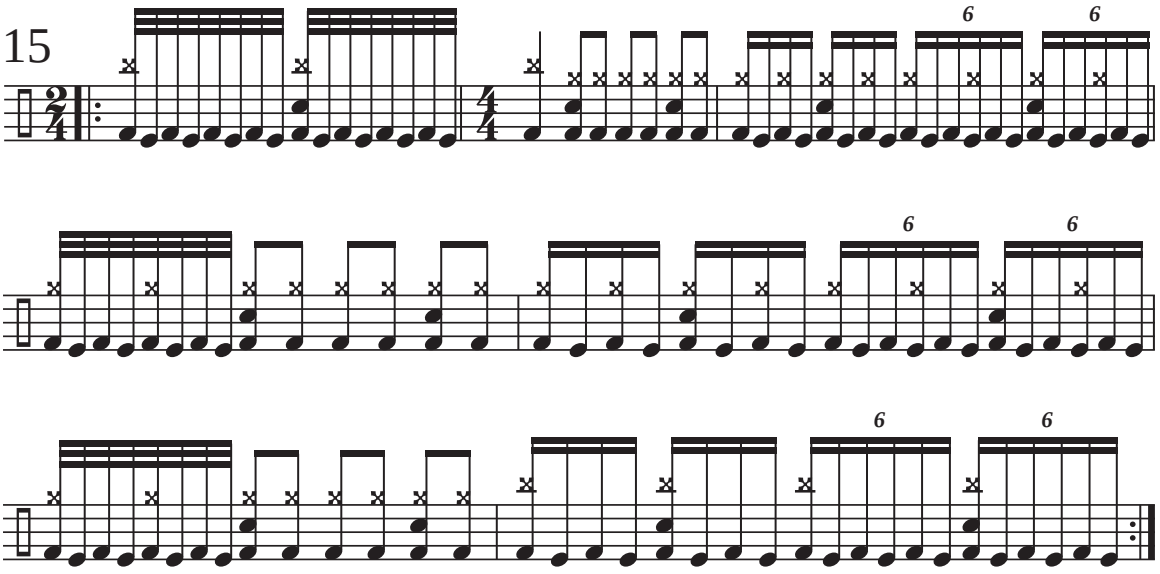
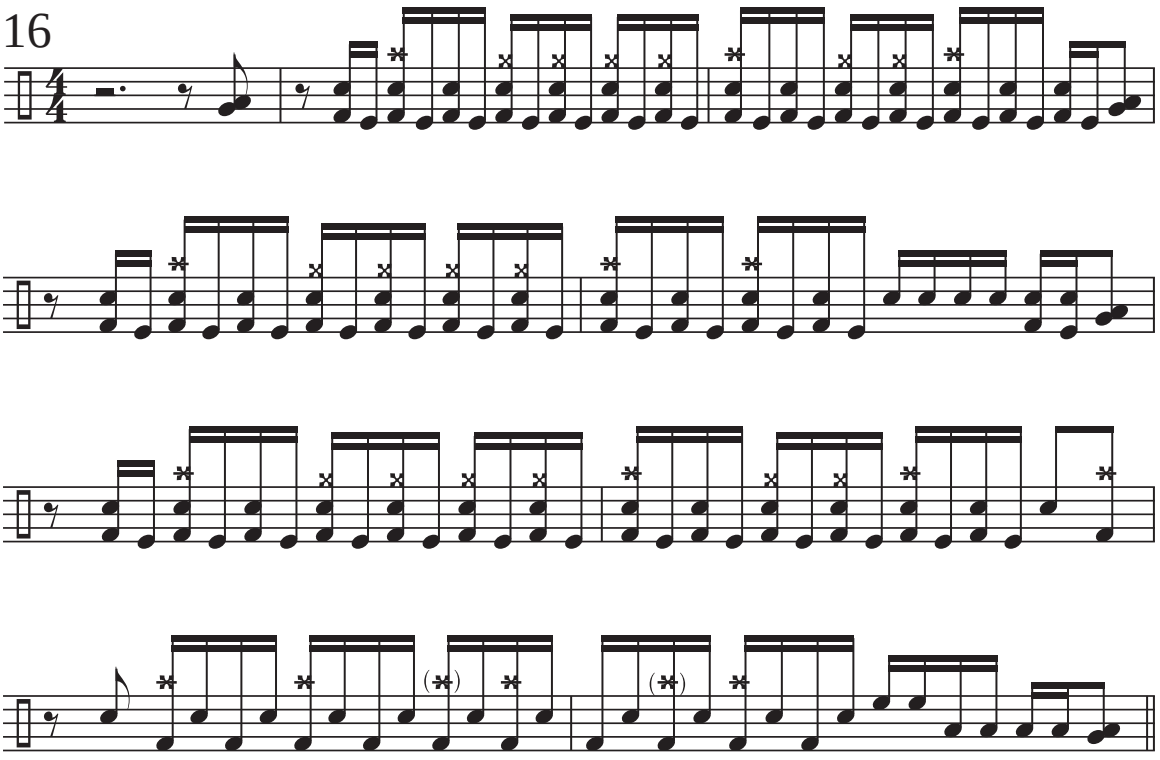


Near the end of the track, the shifts intensify to a machine-like solid double-kick groove, which increases the subdivision continually as the pattern progresses. "What I love about this pattern is how it seemingly keeps accelerating," says Verbeuren. "Electronic artists like Squarepusher, Aphex Twin, and Autechre use such rhythmic trickery a lot. We are heavily into that kind of stuff."



Bent Sea, "To the Extreme," from a split 12" with To Dust (2016)

When asked to describe the writing process with Bent Sea, Verbeuren says, "Improvise drums, then write the guitars, bass, and lyrics using those drum structures as inspiration. In the case of this song, the syncopated blast beats clearly dictated the guitar riffs and vocal patterns." Offbeat stops and shots combined with rests on beat 1 create a unique feel in this relentless track.



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

Making Simple Ideas Extraordinary

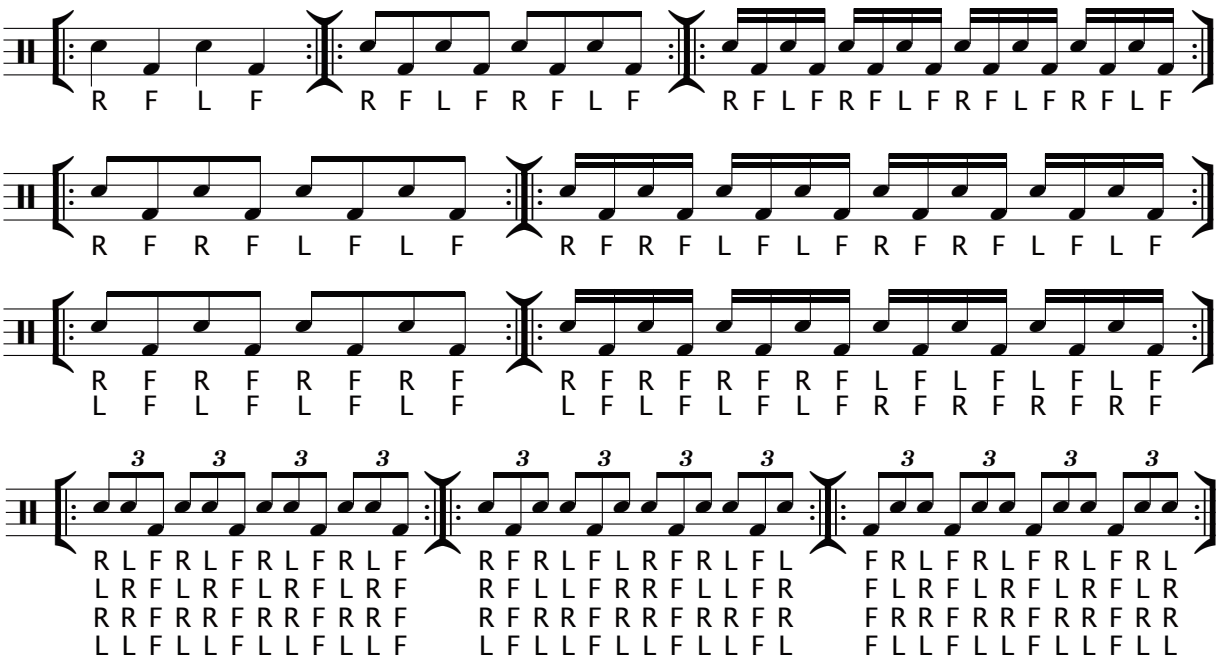
Modern Pop/R&B Great Aaron Spears on How to Milk the Most from Basic Quarter Notes

See Aaron demonstrate this lesson now at moderndrummer.com.

"Drums are an extension of who you are," says modern pop/R&B great Aaron Spears in a recent video lesson for DrumChannel.com. "The way you play them is up to you. There is no right or wrong way to play, as long as you stay within the parameters of the music. My advice is to go for it, have fun, make stuff feel good, and enjoy yourself.

"A lot of times we get caught up in trying to please people," Spears continues. "You're wondering if they're better than you or what their thoughts are. You can't worry about that. My motto is FTW: Forget the World. Be the best you that you can possibly be. If people don't like that, that's their loss. I feel that way really strongly when I'm playing.

"[But] a lot of times people forget what their job is on the drums," Aaron adds. "Your job is to be the glue that keeps everything together. When you have the opportunity to express yourself, go for that. It's important to be balanced."



R = Right Hand
L = Left Hand
F = Foot

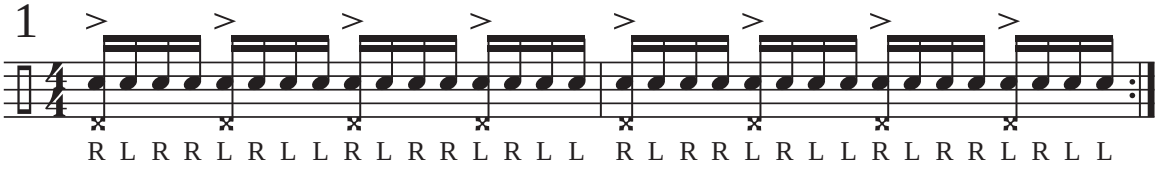
Displaced Paradiddles

A Progressive, Grid-Based Approach to Developing Modern Licks from an Ancient Rudiment

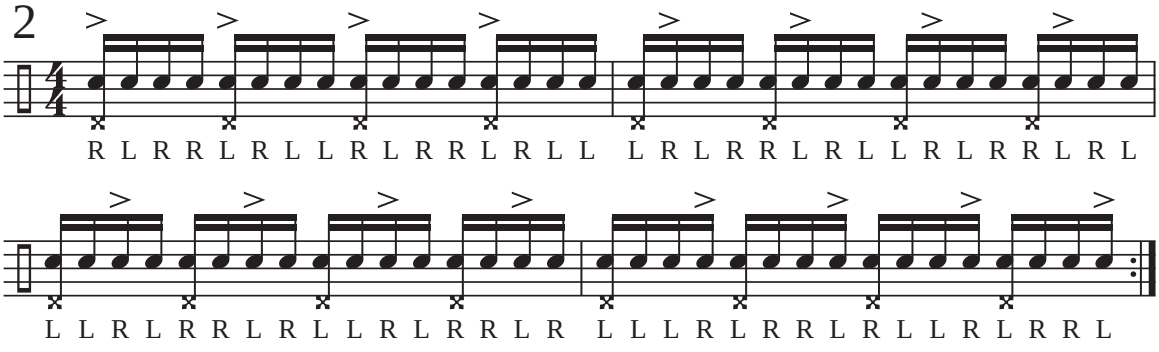
by Nick Costa

One of the most common ways to practice displacing rhythms so that they start on different partials of the beat is by applying them to the grid, which is a classic exercise that involves shifting the accent pattern back one subdivision at a time across a measure of 16ths or triplets. In this lesson we focus on applying the single paradiddle to a 16th-note grid.

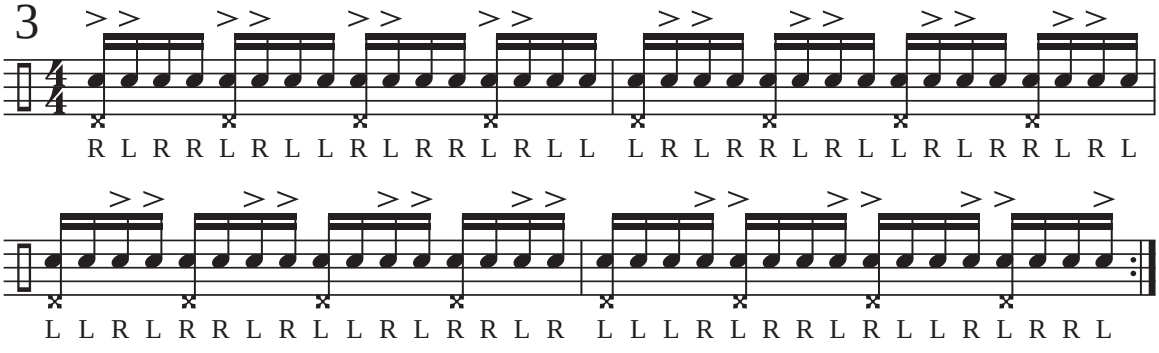
When playing paradiddles as 16th notes, you're already accenting the quarter-note pulse. Keep a quarter-note pulse with your hi-hat foot to ensure that everything is locked in time.



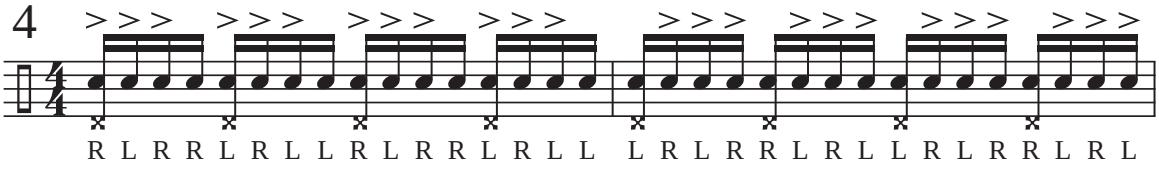
To shift the paradiddle to the "e," add an extra left-hand stroke to the fourth paradiddle in the sequence. To shift the paradiddle to the "&," add an extra left-hand note to the eighth paradiddle in the sequence. Repeat that process in the fourth measure to shift the paradiddle to the "ah." Continue to keep a quarter-note pulse with your hi-hat foot throughout.

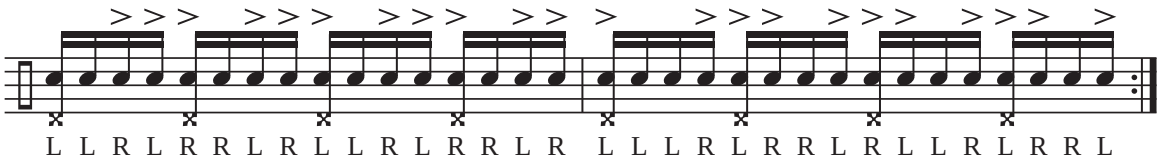


Now repeat the same exercise, but accent the first two notes of each paradiddle.

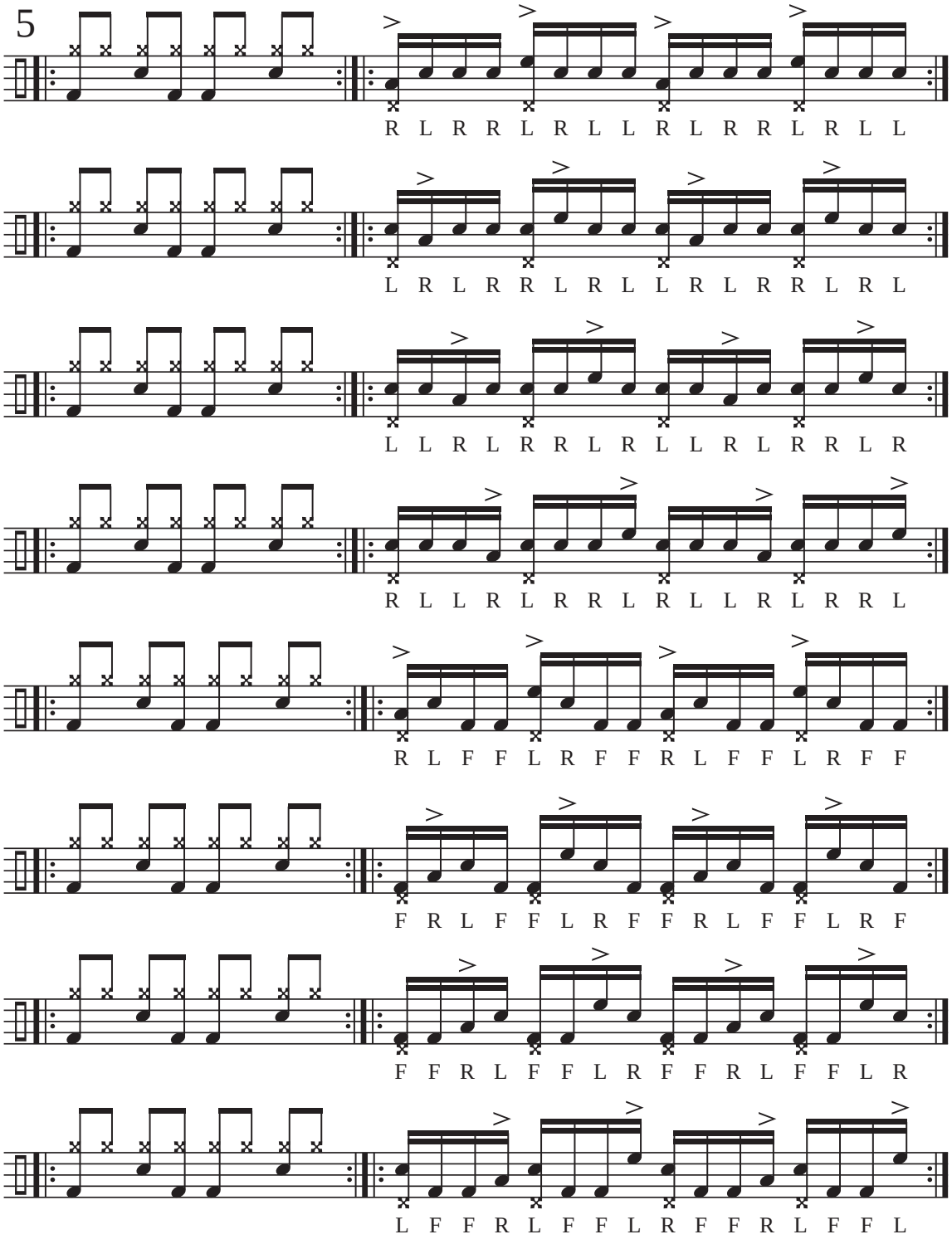


This time accent the first three notes of each paradiddle.





To put these displaced paradiddles into context, play an 8th-note funk/rock groove for two measures, and then two measures of displaced paradiddles. The exercises below show a few ways that the displaced paradiddles can be voiced around the drumset. Use these to fuel your own creativity. Experiment, and come up with your own fills that implement the various exercises in this lesson.



Nick Costa is a master lecturer at the University of the Arts and a percussion teacher for the Philadelphia school district. He is an educational artist for Ludwig, Zildjian, Roland, Vic Firth, and Remo. For more information, visit nickcostamusic.com.

Stick Technique Revisited

Part 1: Matched Grip

by Bill Bachman

Matched grip simply means that the hands hold the sticks in a mirror image of one another. There are important variations within matched grip, however, both in terms of the hand angles and fulcrums (pivot points) that are used. The main grip variations are German, French, and American.

German grip involves holding the hands flat and favors wrist use over finger use. French grip involves holding the hands more vertically, with the thumb on top, and favors finger use over wrist use. American grip falls in the middle of German and French.

The common fulcrums for matched grip are between the thumb and the first finger or between the thumb and second finger. The first-finger fulcrum is generally better for speed and finesse at lower stick heights (finger micromanagement), while the second-finger fulcrum is generally better for bigger strokes and more power (wrist/forearm-driven). Quite often the fulcrum will be located somewhere between the two and will adjust automatically according to the demand put on the hands. Each hand position and fulcrum point within the matched grip variations have advantages and disadvantages, so it's good to master each of them in order to be prepared to use the most appropriate technique for a particular situation.

German Grip

German grip is the position where the hands are held flat. Grasp a drumstick between your thumb and first finger. Lightly wrap your other fingers around the stick, and set your hand down on a table. That's it! You'll notice that if you keep the wrist relaxed in a natural position, the angle of the stick will be somewhat turned in, and the butt end of the stick will jut out a bit to the side of the hand. The sticks will generally form a V at about a 90-degree angle.

German grip came about because snare drums were originally held on slings and resting against the player's body. To get the bead of the stick to strike the center of the drum, the hand had to be held flat and with an inward angle relative to the forearm. (This angle is also why there's some inward rotation in German grip strokes.)


German Grip

Now that snares are placed on stands or held in carriers that position the drum farther away from the body, there's no need for German grip. In fact, German grip has several disadvantages, when compared to American grip (which we'll cover in a subsequent section). These include:

1. The thumb and fingers have to squeeze the stick laterally—from either side—even though vertical force is needed to play down to the drum.
2. The fingers have a smaller range of motion, since they compress into the hand.
3. There's a loss of leverage for downward pressure due to the angle between the arm and the stick.
4. When the downward pressure comes from the index finger placed on top of the stick, the end of the index finger (which is ideal for low/light/fast/finesse) is unavailable.
5. Less distance is covered from the elbow to the bead, due to the angle between the forearm and the stick, limiting reach when you're moving between multiple drums.
6. You can only add lateral motion to strokes when moving away from the body, since the wrist already has an inward turn.

German grip is still commonly taught because it's been handed down from the founding fathers of drumming, who mainly played snare drums on slings. However, because of all of the disadvantages of German grip, which are dictated by anatomy and physics, I strongly recommend focusing on the other two forms of matched grip: American and French.

French Grip

French grip is the position where the hands are held vertically, with the thumb on top and in line with the sticks. To get into French grip, hold out your hand as though you're going to shake hands with someone, and then add the stick between your thumb and first finger, making sure that the end of the first finger curls upward somewhat so the stick can't roll out. Lightly curl the rest of the fingers underneath. That's it!

With the wrist relaxed in its natural position, the angle of the stick will be somewhat turned out relative to the forearm, and the butt end of the stick will be located at the inside of the wrist. The sticks will generally form a very narrow V at about a 20-degree angle or close to parallel. This angle will usually be a bit narrower when playing with mostly wrists and a bit wider when playing with mostly fingers.

French grip favors finger use over wrist use, since the fingers have a wider range of motion. In French grip, the wrist has a narrower range of motion and relies partially on an outward rotation. French grip is good for free strokes because the "brakes" (palms of the hands) are now unavailable to stop the stick on the rebound. The stick breathes and resonates well when held in this position, which is why French grip is so commonly used when playing timpani or the ride cymbal. It's a great grip to use when you want a loose, wide-open sound from a freely rebounding stick or mallet.

One thing to watch out for when using French grip is an open, claw-looking hand, where the stick turns out excessively relative to the thumb. In this improper position, there's very little control moving around the kit since the stick isn't stabilized within the fulcrum.


French Grip

American Grip

American grip is where the hand angle is in between German (flat) and French (vertical). The hands and thumbs are at about a 45-degree angle. With American grip, the first knuckle of the first finger is the highest point of the hand, and the stick is in line

with the forearm. The sticks will generally form a V at about a 50-degree angle.

American grip is great for almost everything, since the wrists can turn up and down with a wide range of motion, the "brakes" (i.e., the palm of the hand over the butt end of the stick) are readily available for downstrokes, and the fingers have a relatively wide range of motion.

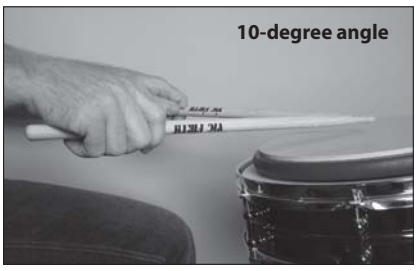

American Grip

Choosing a Grip

If you had to choose only one grip to use exclusively, the American grip would be the choice, since you can use the brakes like in German grip and the thumb is available to operate on the topside of the stick for applying downward pressure and facilitating finger control. However, if you limit yourself to American grip, you will miss out on the advantages of French grip for maximum finger control, especially when playing the ride cymbal. The ability to play each of the grips—and the areas between them—will allow you to use different parts of your body for different drumming tasks.

Stick Angles Relative to the Drum

Both sticks should point down toward the drum at about a 10-degree angle. Matching this stick angle in both hands is important so that both sticks get the same sound and rebound out of the drum. The flatter the angle of the sticks are relative to the drum, the more rebound. The steeper the angle, the less rebound. While it might seem that the more rebound the better, it's good to have some leverage over the stick for when you want to play down into the drum or to set yourself up for downstrokes that stop lower to the drum. The 10-degree angle gives you this leverage while still maintaining great rebound.


10-degree angle

Fulcrums

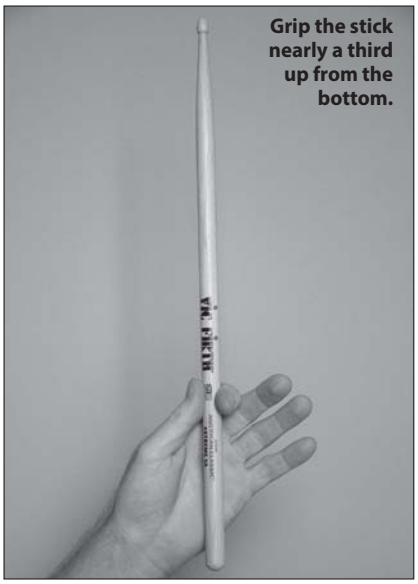
The most important part of any grip is the fulcrum, or pivot point. We use three fulcrums when drumming: the elbow, the wrist, and the axis between the thumb and first or second finger. Here's a good algorithm for fulcrums: If the wrist can execute a musical idea easily, let it do so. If the wrist struggles, then the fingers should come into play to relieve some of the stress. (The back fingers take priority—don't micromanage the motion with the index if the ring and middle fingers can get the job done.) If the whole hand struggles, then the arm comes in to relieve it, either through a big general motion, by pumping along with the wrist, or through a Moeller-style whip, where the wrist motion is replaced by a forearm motion.

For our purposes, the fulcrum will always refer to the rotational axis in the front of the hand. The type or location of the fulcrum used is dictated by the amount of finger control needed. Without a good fulcrum, the finesse that comes from finger control will never be possible.

While it's commonly taught that the fulcrum is a horizontal axis created by the thumb and index finger squeezing on either side of the stick, I believe that the fulcrum should be thought of as a ceiling over the stick, under which it pivots. The ceiling can be the first finger when little finger control is needed, half thumb and half finger if more finger control is needed, or just the thumb when you need maximum finger access. As more fingers are needed, the thumb becomes the dominant ceiling over the stick. Regardless of which fingers are acting as the ceiling, it's key for the thumb to be located directly across from the first or second finger so they can act as guideposts as the stick pivots.


proper first-finger fulcrum position

The fulcrum should be located a little less than a third of the way up from the back of the stick. This puts the pivot point at a sweet spot where the stick rebounds as much as possible on its own.


Grip the stick nearly a third up from the bottom.

There are two main fulcrum locations. First-finger fulcrum refers to the index finger and thumb. Second-finger fulcrum refers to the thumb and middle finger. I also teach a third fulcrum position that's somewhere in between the two. (Sometimes there's no fulcrum at all, just a light overall grip when no finger control is needed.) A first-finger fulcrum should be employed when playing any combination of low/light/fast patterns where a lot of finger control is needed, since it allows the trigger joint of the first finger to be used for finesse. When using a first-finger fulcrum in American grip, the thumb will be the ceiling so that the end of the index finger can wrap under to play the stick.


first-finger fulcrum position


second-finger fulcrum position

The second-finger fulcrum should be used when playing bigger, slower strokes where the wrist or arm is the primary driver and there's little need for finger control. (In this situation, keeping the first-finger fulcrum engaged would add tension, thus inhibiting flow.) If you're using a second-finger fulcrum, then the index finger can hang towards the

floor and act as a guidepost along the side of the stick for stability. (Just be careful to not release the whole finger off to the side, where you lose stability, or point it in line with the stick, which reduces flow.) In a proper position, the end of the index finger hangs down next to the stick in a position where it can engage as soon as it's needed.

I always start by teaching the first-finger fulcrum because it's easier to shift to the second-finger fulcrum when finger finesse isn't required. If, however, you start by learning the second-finger fulcrum, you'll have a more difficult time getting the first finger to function when needed.

There is a lot of discussion about whether or not to maintain a gap between the thumb and hand. But it's not about a gap or no gap—it's about the placement and function of the thumb. When there's a gap, the thumb is functioning from the side of the stick. When there's no gap, the thumb is functioning from the top of the stick. Both positions are vital for developing completely capable and relaxed hands.

It's been said that if there's no gap between the thumb and index finger, then that means your technique is too tight. While tight players usually have no gaps anywhere in their hands, I've also had students come to me with tendinitis because they were squeezing hard in the fulcrum in order to maintain an open gap while playing things requiring downward force or finger control. Having no gap while the thumb is engaged on the topside of the stick definitely allows you to play many things more relaxed. In short, there's a time to have no gap when using both first- and second-finger fulcrums.

In American grip, the thumb can relax and hang down a bit on the side of the stick when it's not needed for downward pressure or for facilitating finger control. When the thumb is needed, it can move up to the topside of the stick.

When the thumb is acting as a partial fulcrum, it should be positioned a bit on the topside of the stick so that it's in a position to hold the stick farther down in the hand and give the fingers greater access. When the thumb is fully engaged in this manner, it should be centered in line with the stick—never crooked.

A good exercise for getting your fulcrum together is what I call the "first-finger fulcrum isolator." Hold the stick near the front end and play the back of the stick on the bottom of your forearm, using just the first-finger fulcrum. The top of your hand should remain still. (Don't cheat by using the wrist!) If your first-finger fulcrum is out of position or not working correctly, this exercise is nearly impossible to execute, so it forces you to develop good technique. The exercise will make your forearm burn pretty quickly. Later you'll add the other fingers to help move the stick, which makes the first finger's job much easier.

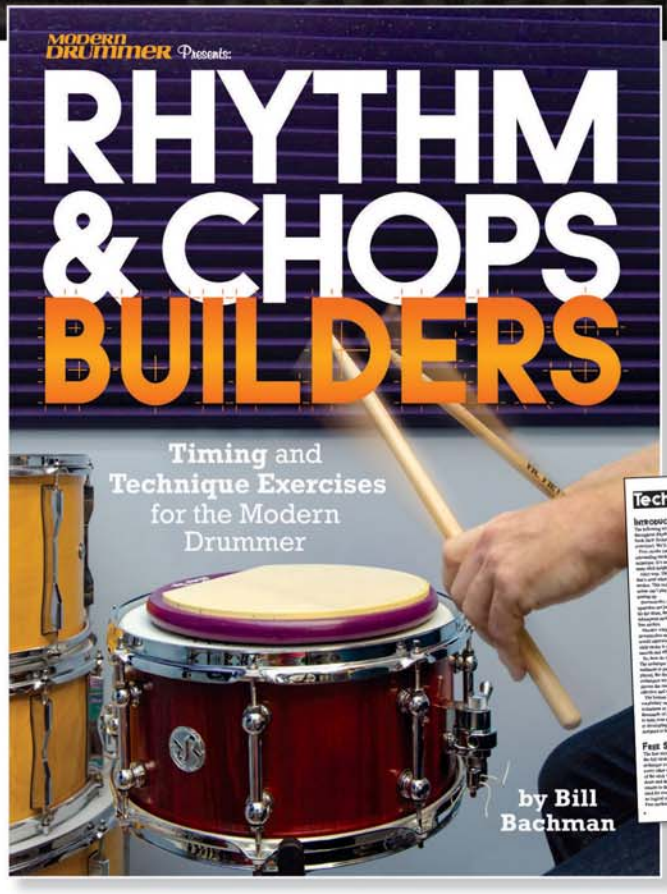
Grip/Fulcrum Conclusion

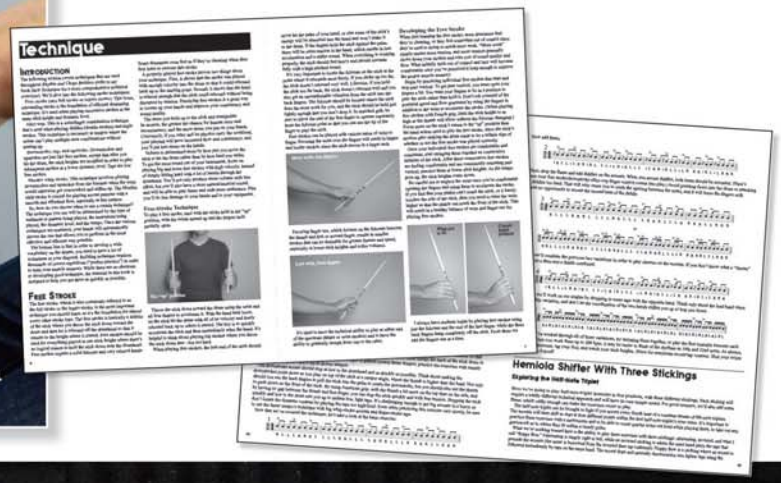
It's good to have every grip and fulcrum option at your disposal, since each has its advantages. I tend to use the first- and second-finger fulcrums about equally, and I employ every hand position between the extremes of American and French grips. It always comes back to manipulating the stick no more than is necessary to achieve the most natural flow and musical sound.

I also break my own rules from time to time. For instance, when I play rimshots on the snare, I tend to hold the stick lightly between my second and third fingers. And when I crash a cymbal with no need to play anything immediately afterward, I sometimes hold the stick loosely, like a bicycle handlebar. If I'm not going to use my fingers to play the stick, then I have no need for a proper fulcrum. Of course, it's important to learn the rules before you can break them. So get on it!

Bill Bachman is the founder of the educational website 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.

BUILD *your* Chops!





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

Take your chops to the next level, and order your copy today!

www.moderndrummer.com

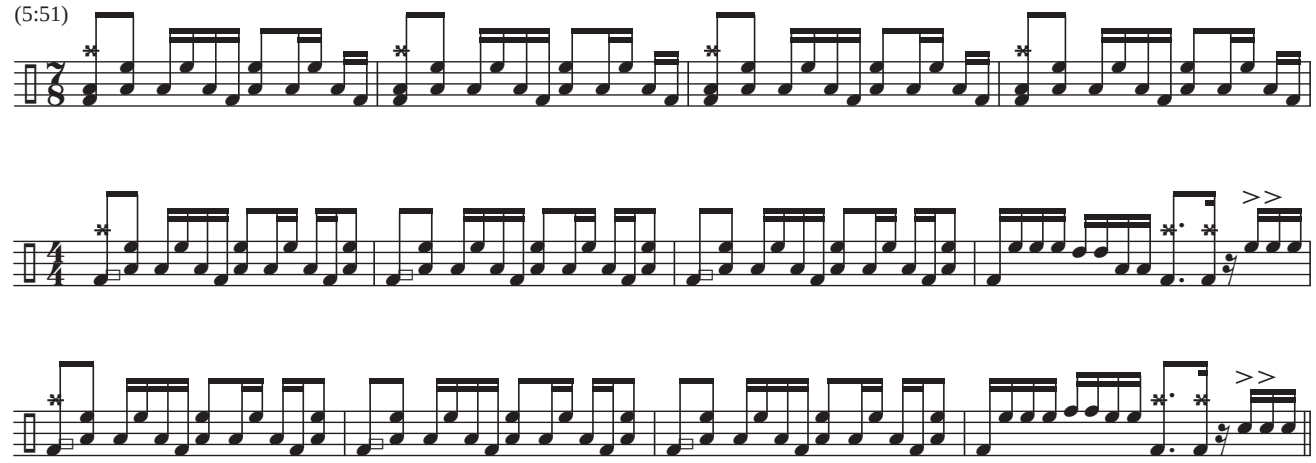
Neil Peart

"La Villa Strangiato" from *Hemispheres*

by Aaron Edgar

We transcribed a ton of classic Neil Peart parts in our May 2020 tribute issue to Rush's legendary drummer. One song we left out, however, was the instrumental tour de force "La Villa Strangiato" from the 1978 album *Hemispheres*.

The final section of this song (5:51) is where things really get crazy. Opening with a driving tom beat in 7/8, Neil expands the same idea to 4/4 when the bass enters and powers through some syncopated shots. Then all of a sudden we're confronted with a swing section that explodes into some incredibly unexpected shots, beats, and blistering fills. Pay special attention to the swing hi-hat pattern, where Neil plays solid 8ths with his right hand and fills in additional notes with his left.




Paul Natkin

swing

straight

both hands on hi-hat

straight

both hands on hi-hat

straight

etc.

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

Papa Jo Jones

The Father of Modern Jazz Drumming

by Steve Maxwell

Papa Jo Jones was the epitome of swing, from his very early days with the Count Basie band in the '30s until he passed away in 1985. His style, grace, and incredibly musical approach to drumming inspired other legends, including Buddy Rich, Louie Bellson, Max Roach, and Kenny Clarke. Jones' technical skills were substantial, but he never let that get in the way of the music. With his featherlight touch, he could drive the out-chorus with just a pair of brushes. Papa Jo truly played for the tune, and *man* did he swing! He's affectionately known as the father of the hi-hat, and all you have to do to understand why is listen to his vast discography.

When I was eighteen years old, I had the pleasure of having private sessions with Papa Jo at Frank Ippolito's shop in New York City. I would take the four-hour bus ride from Providence, Rhode Island, to Frank's. At that time in my life, I was a huge fan of Buddy Rich and Louie Bellson, so I focused all of my practice in a more technical direction. Papa Jo asked me to play for him, and I basically played every Buddy lick I knew. After I finished, he took a huge breath, and then he just looked at me with a quirky, devilish smile. Being a dumb kid, I had no clue what he meant. Then he said, "Breathe." He was right—I was tensing up and not letting the energy flow freely.

Papa Jo then went on to explain how I should view the entire drumset as one large instrument. Each cymbal has many different sounds—the bell, the edge, the middle, etc. And every drum has multiple sounds. He would often play on the snare at the edge, in the center, on the rim, and even with his fingers. He also told me to think of the drumset as a dance partner. He would say, "Don't beat up your partner—*dance* with her."

Papa Jo also taught me how to pick cymbals. He would just touch the edge of the cymbal between his thumb and fingers. What he was doing was feeling the thickness. He always wanted lighter cymbals because he felt they have more tonal colors. He said he tweaked the edges "so I can see all the little devils dancing on the edge." He wanted to see and feel the wobble.

I could go on and on about Papa Jo Jones, but the best thing for you to do is to listen to some of his best work. Find some early Count Basie recordings, including "One O'Clock Jump" (1937), "Jumping at the Woodside" (1938), and "Cherokee" (1939). Also check some of his work with the great jazz organist Milt Buckner from the early '70s, especially the legendary solo he took on the tune "Caravan," which was fortunately captured on film. It's on Youtube under the title "Jo Jones, A Magician on Drums, in Caravan."

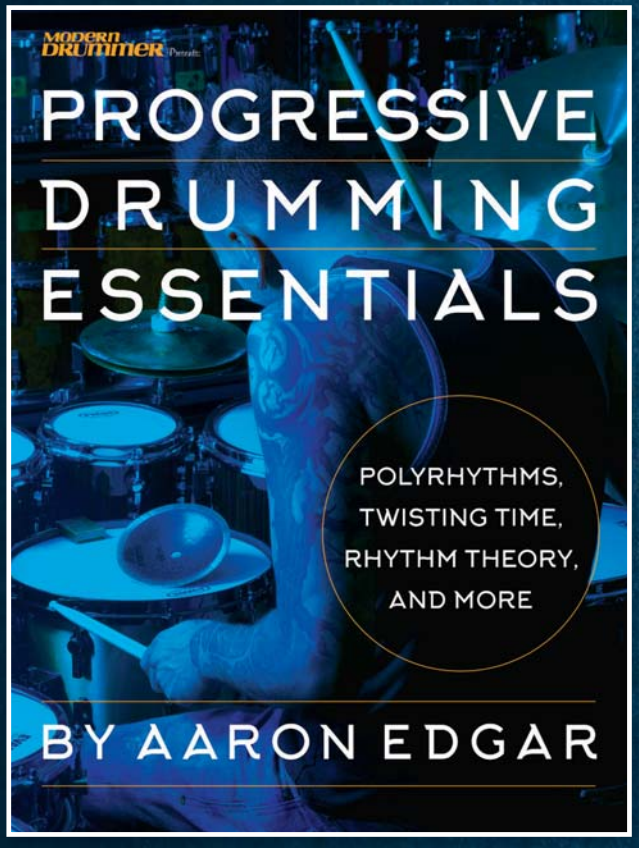
You should also check out some of Papa Jo's solo albums. And for brush work, go to Youtube and search "The Legendary Papa Jo Jones Drum Solo."

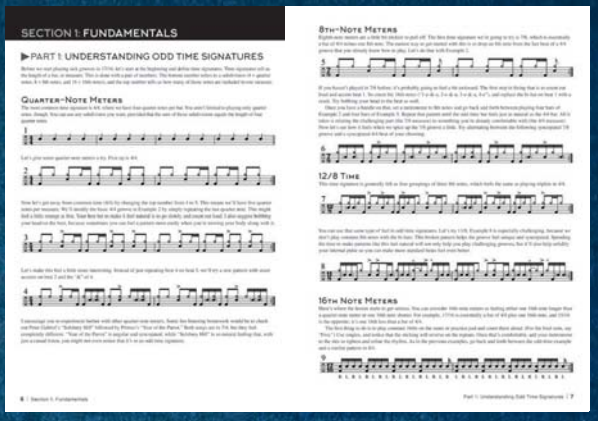
A five-minute solo by Papa Jo is also featured on the Hudson Music compilation *Classic Drum Solos, Volume 2*. He looks like he was born sitting in that drum chair. I've never seen anyone so "at home" behind the drumkit. Another great Youtube video is the one posted by Music Circle and titled "Jo Jones Drum Solo" [1964].

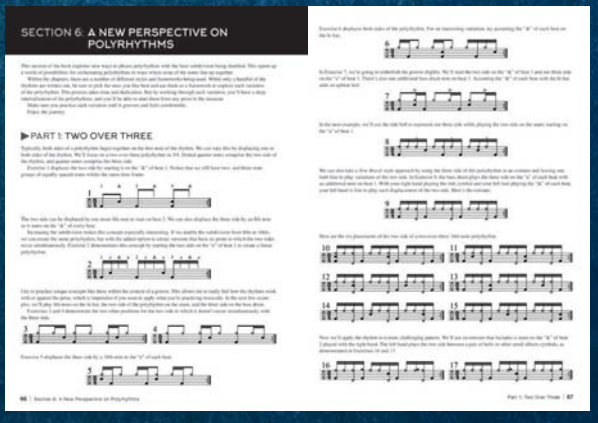
I treasure the time I was able to spend with Papa Jo. He truly opened my eyes to an entirely different way of playing, which was so instrumental in rounding out my playing skills. If you haven't yet, check out some of Papa Jo Jones' work, and then make sure that you do what Papa always told me to do: "Pass it on." It's our collective responsibility to not let this legendary artist ever be forgotten.

Steve Maxwell is the owner of Maxwell Drums and Fork's Drum Closet and president of Craviotto Drum Company.

Play More PROG







Progressive Drumming Essentials is an expanded collection of articles originally written for *Modern Drummer* magazine. The book progresses from the fundamentals of odd time signatures all the way up to super-advanced concepts like implied metric modulation and displaced polyrhythms. For the most adventurous modern drummers out there, this is a must-have!

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trxcymbals.com

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S.L.P. Sonic Stainless Steel and Bold Spotted Gum Snares

The S.L.P. Sonic Stainless Steel snare features a 6.5x14 1.2 mm shell and is said to deliver brightness, projection, and a cutting tone. The drum is outfitted with Tama's new 3 mm Ultimate Steel Mighty Hoops, which aim to offer solid tuning and a focused attack.

The S.L.P. Bold Spotted Gum snare is said to be warm and balanced, with clarity and a complex but versatile tone. The 6.5x14 drum has a 6 mm 9-ply shell and 2.3 mm steel Mighty Hoops, which provide a robust attack to the wooliness of the spotted gum. Each snare lists for $749.98.

tama.com

A Tempo
SE1, SE2, and Tocador Cajons

A Tempo's solid-wood snare cajons are designed to produce a traditional Peruvian sound with deep, defined bass. The SE1 model has a multi-ply walnut playing surface and a resonant side made from purpleheart. The SE2 model features a rainbow stripe on all sides. Both cajons are fitted with flamenco-style snare wires and are finished with dovetail joints and furniture-grade gloss.

The Tocador flamenco cajon is made in Peru. The body panels are constructed from select pieces of solid mohena and purpleheart, which are fashioned by hand and joined using a dovetail technique. The front is made from multi-ply Spanish cedar and lupuna. Tocador cajons offer the deep, solid bass of a Peruvian cajon and the snap and sizzle of a flamenco cajon.

atempopercusion.com

ddrum
Dominion Ash Six-Piece Shell Pack

These affordable, ready-to-play shell packs include 8x10 and 9x12 toms, 14x14 and 14x16 floor toms, a 20x22 bass drum, and a matching 7x13 snare. Remo drumheads are included, with Pinstripes on the toms, a Controlled Sound Reverse Dot Coated on the snare, and Powerstroke P3s on the bass drum. The integrated three-point tom suspension system offers resonant tone and secure positioning, and classic Dominion-style box lugs provide tuning stability. Shell packs are available in Red Burst, Green Burst, Gloss Natural, and Trans Black. List price is $1,049.

ddrum.com

Vic Firth
Re•Mix Brushes

Designed with percussionist Pete Lockett, Vic Firth Re•Mix brushes are designed to pair together to create unique sounds with customizable amounts of volume and attack. They are available in Broomcorn, African Grass, Birch, and Birch/Rattan Hybrid, and each pair lists for $60. The Combo Pack, which includes African Grass and Birch pairs, lists for $110.
vicfirth.com

ASBA
Revelation Series Drums

The Revelation series offers a 3-ply shell combination of mahogany/poplar/mahogany with reinforcement rings and rounded bearing edges. Additional features include chrome lugs, die-cast rims, and bass drum hoops with matching inlays. Six finishes are available.
asbadrums.com

Porter & Davies
Color Throne Top Options

The BC2, BC2rm, Gigster, and TT6 tactile thrones are now available in Black Velvet, British Racing Green Velvet, Battleship Grey Velvet, Helmet Purple Velvet, and Black Vinyl. These new colored fabrics are said to be hardy enough to withstand the rigors of touring yet comfortable to sit on for extended lengths of time. All of the throne tops are finished with a green P&D logo embroidered in the middle of the seat.
porteranddavies.co.uk

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RETAILER PROFILE

Chuck Levin's Washington Music Center
Wheaton, Maryland

Chuck Levin's Washington Music Center has been in business longer than drum department manager Darren Zentek has been alive—this year marks the store's sixty-second. Levin's was initially located in the District proper, before moving just north of the nation's capitol to suburban Wheaton, Maryland, in 1968. For Zentek, who has played with artists involved with D.C.'s storied Dischord Records scene over the years, 2020 is his twenty-sixth year at the store. It's a full-service operation, with guitars, keyboards, DJ and studio gear, school band rentals, and much more. But drums and percussion have always been a big driver among the pros, semi-pros, hobbyists, and beginners who frequent the shop. Zentek filled us in on his own journey to Chuck Levin's, and gave some insight as to what makes his drum department tick.

I worked at George's House of Music up in State College, Pennsylvania, back in the early '90s. I joined a D.C. band and kind of stumbled upon Chuck's. I think within two months of moving down here, I started working here. It's the only job I've ever had since moving to the D.C. area. I came in to buy a few things, came in a few days later to fill out an application, and got hired a few days after that. It was pretty crazy. I started working in stock, started selling in 1998, and I've been managing since 2014.

What's big around this area is the go-go music scene. It's kind of stayed in the D.C. area; it's never really branched off that much, which is kind of surprising. So we definitely carry a lot of different things most music stores won't have. Like Junior Congas from LP, all the replacement parts and the conga heads, timbales.... Years ago we used to sell a good amount of Rototoms—that's kind of not really the thing in that scene anymore like it once was. But we try to cater to that clientele that needs supplies. Most music stores don't even carry it because they don't have enough people coming in and asking for it. It's kind of like our niche. We have all the stuff for their rigs. We even have a conga rig that we rent. We call it our Conga Go-Go Rig. We get customers calling from the Atlanta area for the stuff. I think they're guys who used to live in the D.C. area.

The online business is getting better. I wouldn't say it's our bread and butter as far as the drum department goes, but it's improving every month. I'd say fifteen percent of our sales are online at this point. There are some guys I talk with, and it's like [online sales] are fifty percent of what they do. Out of all the music stores in the country, I think we still have some of the best walk-in business. We always have. We're in the market sixty-two years now. That definitely helps.

Levin's staff, from left: Darren Zentek, Sam Bertness, Jonas Farah-Bumstead, James McBride, Thomas Kargbo, Paul DeCastro, Tom Garrington

While not equipped to do large-scale repairs like cutting bearing edges or rewrapping shells, drummers can get smaller repairs done at Chuck Levin's while they wait. "We do minor things on the spot," Zentek says. "When somebody brings in a snare drum that needs a little work, we try to do it on the spot rather than have them drop it off and come back later. And in the past three or four years, we've been doing more drilling for bass drum spurs, things like that."

Levin's drum department manager Darren Zentek says the store has doubled its footprint since he was hired in the mid '90s, currently featuring two showroom buildings, four warehouses, and a dedicated space for clinics. Even with that expansion, there's still only room to display a fraction of the drum inventory. "What we have on the floor is just a taste of what we have," he says. "We probably have twenty-five or thirty kits on the floor, but we have over a hundred in our warehouse. We probably have 2,500 cymbals in our basement."

Shopper's Tip

Everything has a description: "This is dark, this is trashy…," whatever. You should play it. And you should make up your own mind. You're the person playing that particular thing. Someone saying a cymbal sounds "dark"—what does that really mean? Your description of something could be completely opposite of what the next person thinks it sounds like. Listen with your ears. Don't be influenced by something you read.

A lot of people come in because of our inventory. It's deep. We have all the name drum companies: Yamaha, Tama, Ludwig, DW. We really don't do too much of the boutique drum stuff. That's something that may change in the next couple years. For cymbals we have the big ones: Zildjian, Paiste, and Sabian. Meinl's been growing. Instanbul Agop has been growing for us, too. Dream cymbals as well. They've gone up a little bit in price, but I'll say the quality has gotten way more consistent since they first came out. Dream has been a pretty good thing for us throughout the years. We don't get too deep in with a lot of the Turkish companies. It gets redundant after a while. I feel like we have everything covered. We stick with what works for our clientele.

Our theory has always been that we carry everything. We have everything from Sabian SBRs all the way up to Artisans. Same thing with drumkits. We have kits starting at $299 and ones that go up to as much as you want to spend. [laughs] I want to help that kid who's ten years old get a kit. We want to have customers for a lifetime, and that's what we've had. We have guys that come in to this day and tell us, "Hey, I used to shop at the store when you guys were down on 8th Street in D.C., back in the early '60s." How cool is that?

Interview by Patrick Berkery

Donn Bennett's Drum Vault

Carmine Appice's 1976 *Realistic Rock* Drumset

Mark Weiss

Welcome to the first installment of "Donn Bennett's Drum Vault." As a dealer and collector of rare and vintage drums, I've had the good fortune to work with many of the greatest drummers of our time. In this column, I'll write about the legendary drums and drummers that I've encountered in my thirty-plus years in the vintage drum business.

It's impossible to overstate Carmine Appice's influence on the drum world in the 1970s. Between his distinctive in-your-face playing style, high-profile gigs, enormously popular instructional books, and exhaustive clinic schedule, it was virtually impossible for a drummer not to feel his presence.

Appice was the featured drummer with Rod Stewart, the Jeff Beck Group, and Beck, Bogert & Appice, which were some of the most popular rock acts of the decade. You couldn't miss him behind his massive drumset, with his name emblazoned across his bass drums. His extended drum solo was a highlight of every show. If you didn't know who Carmine Appice was when you arrived at a show, you definitely knew who he was by the time you left.

Appice's *Realistic Rock* book is one of the top-selling drum instructional texts of all time. *Realistic Rock* created a pathway to professional drumming for countless drummers, imparting skills needed to start playing in a rock band. What set *Realistic Rock* apart


Mark Weiss

from other drum books at the time was the fact that it was so inspiring. Carmine was a true star, and fittingly he was pictured on the cover behind his massive set of blonde maple Ludwig drums. The book even included a foldout poster of that same drumkit. That poster hung on my bedroom wall for years. Along with millions of other aspiring drummers, I dreamed of playing a set like that someday.

I first met Carmine in 1980, at the height of his popularity with Rod Stewart. I was put in charge of organizing one of his clinics at the music store where I'd just been hired as drum manager. I was twenty years old and thrilled to get to work so closely with my favorite drummer, the same drummer that just months before I'd watched from the front row at the Seattle Center Coliseum. I'd organized clinics before, which generally involved printing a few flyers and setting up some folding chairs in the back of the store.

Carmine was never afraid to push boundaries, and his clinic was more like a full-blown rock concert, requiring a theater with a P.A., lights, fog machines, and a full band. His drumset was delivered the day before the show. I'll never forget opening the boxes to discover the same maple Ludwig set that was on the cover of *Realistic Rock*. I felt like an archeologist opening King Tut's tomb!

That drum clinic was the first of many Carmine and I worked on together over the next thirty-five years. Sometime around 1998, Carmine asked me to help him sell the *Realistic Rock* set. I had just opened my own shop, and my funds were spread extremely thin, but I managed to round up enough cash to buy the set myself. I displayed the set prominently in the shop for about twenty years. I can't tell you how many times a new customer would walk in and immediately recognize the set from the cover of Carmine's book. It made me extremely proud to be able to keep inspiring drummers with these drums over forty years after they were made.

The *Realistic Rock* kit was an evolution of the twelve-piece Octa-Plus concert tom set that Appice popularized in the early 1970s. He used the kit through most of his tenure with Rod Stewart, from 1977 through 1981. These drums can be heard on dozens of Stewart tracks, including "Do Ya Think I'm Sexy," "Young Turks," and "Hot Legs."

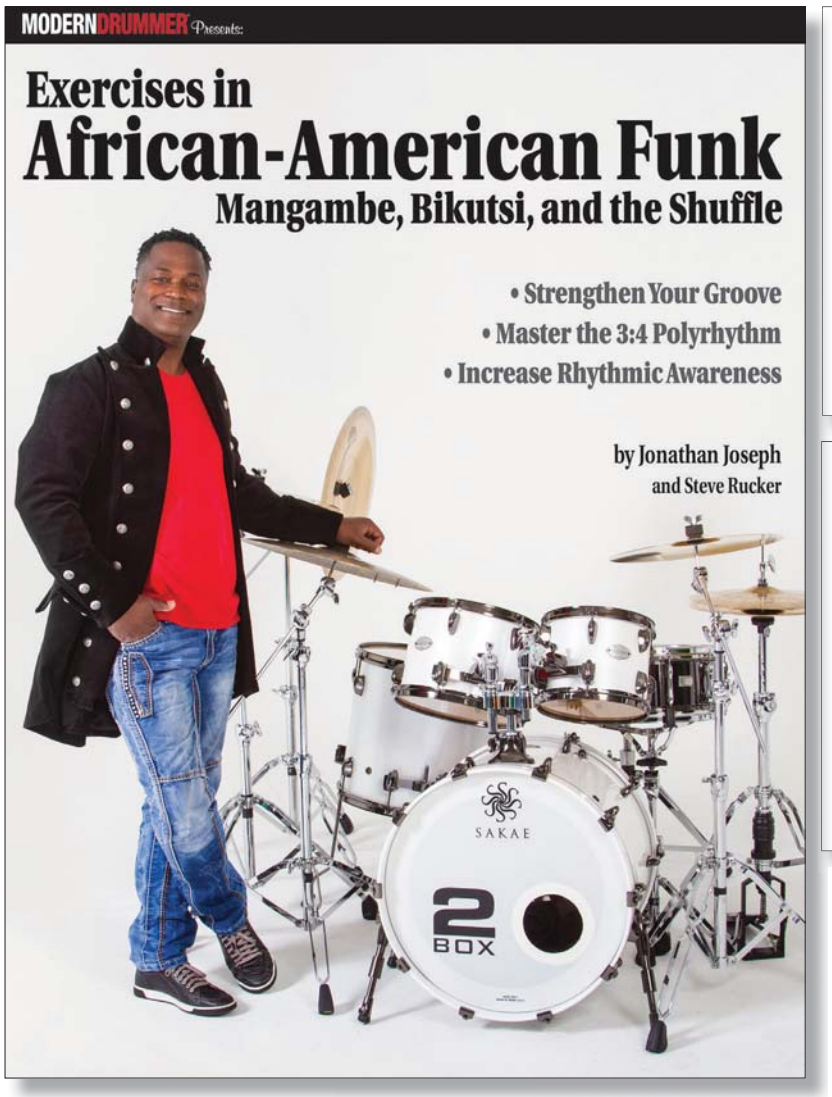
In addition to being visually stunning, this massive eleven-piece 1976 Ludwig outfit in Natural Maple Thermogloss finish introduced drummers to several innovations that had previously not been available on modern drumsets. For instance, this was one of the first Ludwig sets to feature the company's new 6-ply shell. The thicker shells were designed to be louder and to project better than the 3-ply shell they had been using since the 1940s. The thicker shells suited Carmine's powerful playing style perfectly. The 6x10, 8x12, 9x13, 10x14, 12x15, and 14x16 double-headed toms are mounted on floor stands with Sturdi-Lok mounts that were first introduced on the Octa-Plus.

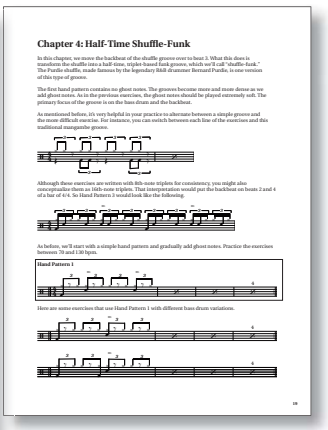
Deep-shelled bass drums are very common today, but virtually all bass drums were 14" deep in the '70s. This set features two extra-deep 15x24 bass drums that were custom-made to Appice's specs. There are also a pair of Joe Pollard Syndrum electronic drums installed inside the shells of the 6" and 8" concert toms. Joe Pollard's Syndrums were the first commercially available electronic drums. They were introduced the same year as this set and were considered extremely cutting-edge at the time. (We'll talk more about Joe Pollard and his Syndrums in another issue.)

The set also featured two inverted China cymbals mounted on boom stands. Chinas had been used on drumsets for decades, but their prominent placement on Carmine's set helped make the China cymbal a standard piece on most modern setups.

For all of its flash and innovation, the snare on the *Realistic Rock* set is an aluminum 5x14 Supraphonic, the most popular snare ever manufactured.

Donn Bennett is a world-renowned dealer and collector of rare and vintage drums. He specializes in drums owned and used by the world's greatest drummers. His collection can be seen at DonnBennett.com.





Chapter 4: Half-Time Shuffle-Funk

In this chapter, we move the backbeat of the shuffle groove over to beat 3. What this does is transform the shuffle into a half-time, triplet-based funk groove, which we'll call "shuffle-funk." The Purdie shuffle, made famous by the legendary R&B drummer Bernard Purdie, is one version of this type of groove.

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

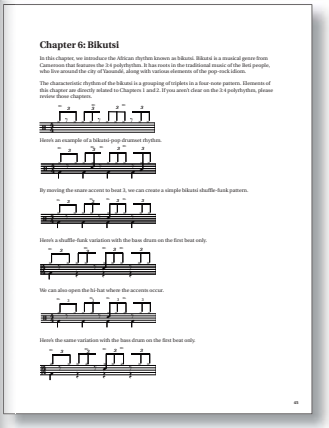
As mentioned before, it's very helpful in your practice to alternate between a simple groove and the more difficult exercise. For instance, you can switch between each line of the exercises and this traditional mangambe groove.

Although these exercises are written with 8th-note triplets for consistency, you might also conceptualize them as 16th-note triplets. That interpretation would put the backbeat on beats 2 and 4 of a bar of 4/4. So Hand Pattern 1 would look like the following.

Hand Pattern 1

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

18



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 Beti 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.

45

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.

Order your copy today at moderndrummer.com.

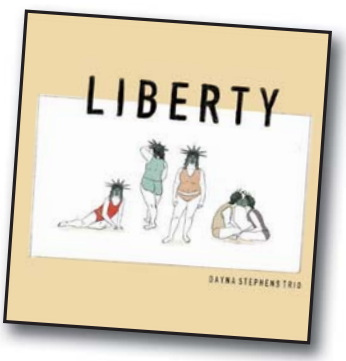
CRITIQUE

RECORDINGS


Rahav Segev

Dayna Stephens Trio *Liberty*

The leader/tenor saxophonist, bassist Ben Street, and MVP jazz drummer ERIC HARLAND succeed brilliantly in a challenging chord-less format.



Eric Harland is frequently praised for his inventive orchestrations and interplay, among other myriad talents; this beautifully recorded minimal setting of sax, bass, and drums offers an exposed clarity that brings those virtues to the foreground. Approaching the kit as a balanced single instrument, Harland exhibits a pulse that's firm but subtle, while also avoiding ride cymbal dependency. On "Kwooked Stweet," his canvas of fluid, swirling swing conveys the sweep of a larger ensemble. In contrast, "The Lost and Found" is colored by his slow, slinky, hip-hop-ish backbeat, threaded with 16ths that alternate between snare ghosting, varied hi-hat attacks, and rim taps, all buttered with rolling dynamics. Harland is utterly without cliché, using the music's wide spaces for promoting collaborative ideas rather than filler. It's jazz drumming in the truest sense: artfully embracing liberty. (Contagious Music) **Jeff Potter**

Rudresh Mahanthappa *Hero Trio*

With his vast expressive palette, jazz drummer RUDY ROYSTON responds unpredictably to whatever comes his way. If you prefer the full-throttle side of his drumming, this is the disc for you.

On *Hero Trio*, alto sax star Rudresh Mahanthappa admirably tackles the challenging sax/bass/drums format and—in a first—focuses on cover tunes in a tribute to his musical heroes. Some of those influences are obvious, including Charlie Parker and Coltrane. Others are not, notably his childhood introduction to Stevie Wonder and Johnny Cash via *Sesame Street*. The fierce saxophonist fascinates with his improvisatory jags, rapid cascading runs, and edgy pressure cooker sound. Joined by bassist François Moutin, drummer Rudy Royston responds in kind with his own fearless, across-the-kit propulsive flurries. There are gentler moments, as in "Sadness," when the drummer tempers the mood with time-stretching textural comment. But such catch-your-breath moments are brief within this potent scorcher. (Whirlwind Recordings) **Jeff Potter**

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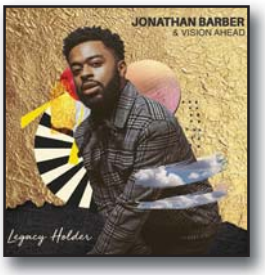
Legacy Holder



Thirty-year-old drummer/composer Jonathan Barber's previous album, *Vision Ahead*, was noticeable for its solid compositions and mature drumming. *Legacy Holder* strides further, with Barber's fusion-leaning compositions and arrangements equaling his kinetic drumming.

Multiple listens are required to grasp *Legacy Holder's* scope. Throughout, Barber's drumming pops and scalds, swings and stings, in a personal style with a nod to Tony Williams. Though his touch on the drums and cymbals is light and dance-like, Barber consistently burns at low simmer.

Barber's full-set soloing concept and well-developed technique fills "Major"; he propels through-composed "29" with low-level, machine gun-like sticking (including a blistering, meter-twisting solo); apes heavy metal with the 4/4 swagger of "Son of Hartford"; and reveals compositional gifts with the Brazil-tinted "The Call." An album of subtlety and fire—more cerebral than stoner, more an inner world journey than an outward performance display—*Legacy Holder* retains its hypnotic spell for repeated plays. (Vision Ahead Music) **Ken Micallef**

Brian Andres Trio Latino *Mayan Suite*

A high-energy set of progressive Afro-Caribbean rhythms, jazz, and shades of funk.

Brian Andres has led the Afro-Cuban Jazz Cartel since 2007, a fiery unit featuring some of the San Francisco Bay Area's finest Latin-jazz instrumentalists. Here the drummer enlists the Cartel's core, bassist Aaron Germain and pianist Christian Tumalan, for a trio setting offering greater stretching room. The trio finds influence from Chick Corea, as acknowledged by two cover selections including an arrangement of "Got a Match?" that's slyly peppered with quotes from the pianist's classics. Andres excels when things get aggressive, attacking the oft-complex tunes with staccato accuracy while integrating his vigorous kit grooves with cowbell and woodblock. He also wields his impressive technique with a lighter, breathing touch when needed, as on "Higashi Nakano," and shows minimal restraint in the brushwork of "Si Tu Vez." A bronco ride of dazzling chops, uplifting melodies, and zestful groove. (Bacalao Records) **Jeff Potter**

Sunny Jain *Wild Wild East*

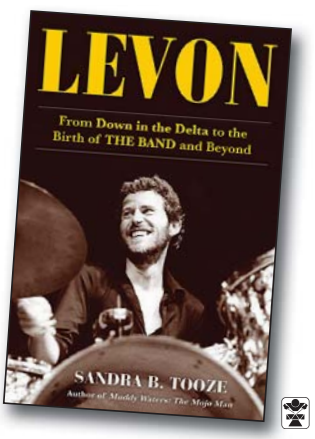
The son of Punjabi parents who emigrated to the U.S. in 1970, drummer-composer Sunny Jain is himself a global traveler, his forward-looking music grafted from many musical strains, with rhythm at its heart. Whether signaling Bollywood beats, hip-hop raps, or the soundtracks of Sergio Leone spaghetti westerns, Jain makes everything fire and flow, roll and combust. His drumming is never static or simply "in the pocket"; it's in constant go mode: rolls rattling, beats careening, grooves always pressing, pushing for ecstatic release. The swelling movements and near tidal shifts of Indian classical permeate *Wild Wild East*, even when psychedelic electric guitar ("Bhaagi"), 3/4 jazz waltz ("Hai Apna Dil to Aawara"), or funky floor tom beats ("Brooklyn Dhamal") imply a specific direction. It can all get a bit campy and dayglow colored, but Jain's overarching view to create a true pan-global music supported by native Indian music and colored with cowboy allusions is unique. (Smithsonian Folkways) **Ken Micallef**

Other Drummer-Leds to Check Out

Jay Rosen and Brian Willson The Mystery Brothers /// **Jason Tiemann** T-Man /// **Giuseppe Paradiso Meridian 71** Metropolitan Sketches /// **Rob Silverman** Drumology /// **Paul Shaw Quintet** Moment of Clarity /// **Greg Essig** Numb /// **Sammy Miller and the Congregation** Leaving Egypt /// **Mark Segger Sextet** Lift Off /// **Jacek Kochan & musiConspiracy** Occupational Hazard

BOOKS

Levon: From Down in the Delta to the Birth of the Band and Beyond by Sandra B. Tooze



A measured, satisfying portrait of a musician with a complex relationship with his own legacy.

Refreshingly, *Levon: From Down in the Delta to the Birth of the Band and Beyond* does not take sides in the battle royal between the competing narratives surrounding the dissolution of the Band. Unlike Levon Helm's gripping 1993 memoir, *This Wheel's on Fire*, author Sandra B. Tooze succeeds in reinforcing all the threads that make up the tapestry of the late drummer's creative life, even adding some previously unknown and forgotten periods to the record. One in particular is a fascinating reconstruction of Helm's late-'90s career low ebb, when he toured widely with a Poughkeepsie bar band. At the same time, his triumphs are rendered with a sensitivity and detail rare in rock biographies. Levon receives the attention here that his profound contribution to American-roots music deserves. Tooze pays particular attention to the technical side of Helm's playing, and her insights into Levon's approaches to tuning and muffling can be carried away from the book into your own studio. This is an essential read for fans of the Band and beyond. ($28.79, Diversion Books) **John Colpitts**

Bill Lordan's *From the Basement to the Coliseum*

Those of us drummers who were raised during the '60s, '70s, and '80s and who came up locally playing in multiple bands at a time were dubbed "journeymen." We'd play with rock, funk, and blues bands, country singers, jazz players—and we had to have chops relative to each of those genres; otherwise we wouldn't work. Because of its diverse programming, both AM and FM radio at the time played a major role in developing a broad spectrum of music. It was a time when the DJs, not faceless consultants, had control over content.

Bill Lordan is one such journeyman who came up during this era but never abandoned his respect for his local roots. With a positive attitude fueled by his Midwestern grit, the native Minnesotan learned early the various complexities of the music biz and those who comprise it. He's blessed with great chops, but at the same time remains humble about his accomplishments.

When Lordan got the call to play in Sly & the Family Stone's last configuration in 1973 and 1974, he was, thanks to his roots in marching band, more than prepared—and poised to flourish for the next thirteen years with guitar god Robin Trower. During that time, he not only traveled the world several times over but also got to record with Cream bassist Jack Bruce. Stylistically fearless, Lordan was equally at home in funk, blues, or the power-rock format for which he is best known. His new e-memoir, *From the Basement to the Coliseum*, paints an entertaining picture of a musician aspiring to fame, immersed in it, caught in a slow fade from it, and rebuilding his life on the other side of it.

Lordan onstage with Robin Trower

MD: Your career has been at times rewarding and difficult. Throughout *From the Basement to the Coliseum*, you remain a pillar of strength and positivity. What do you attribute that to?

Bill: I attribute it to my Irish work ethic and my strong spiritual faith.

MD: You share Minnesota roots with Bob Seger, Ted Nugent, Chicago drummer Danny Seraphine, and Prince, all of whom have exhibited a certain stick-to-itiveness in their careers. Is it the terrain, the weather, or something else that lures you in for the long haul?

Bill: It was my love of music and my drive to be successful that kept me going.

MD: A great rhythm section is the key to any successful band. Was the legendary Larry Graham still on bass when you were with Sly? And Robin Trower bassist James Dewar was not only adept on bass, but also seemed to be your closest confidant during your Trower years, true?

Bill: Larry Graham had left Sly & the Family Stone when I joined

the band. Rustee Allen was the bass player who played the live shows, but Sly played all the bass parts on the recordings. Robin Trower bassist and vocalist James Dewar was a very close friend of mine. He was the best man at my wedding, and when I was in England I stayed with Jimmy and his family at his house in Croydon.

MD: Illustrated in your book is the fact that you saved every ticket stub, poster, flyer, and photograph from every gig you ever played.

Bill: I kept a scrapbook through my entire career, with memorabilia from all my travels and concerts. Over the years fans also sent me many photos and ticket stubs that I kept in files.

MD: Looking back now, do you have any unresolved feelings about how in 1987, after thirteen great years of superlative music and traveling the world, Robin Trower dismissed you?

Bill: I have no unresolved feelings about leaving the band after thirteen years. It gave me the opportunity to do my solo Bill Lordan Experiment CDs and to play with other great musicians.

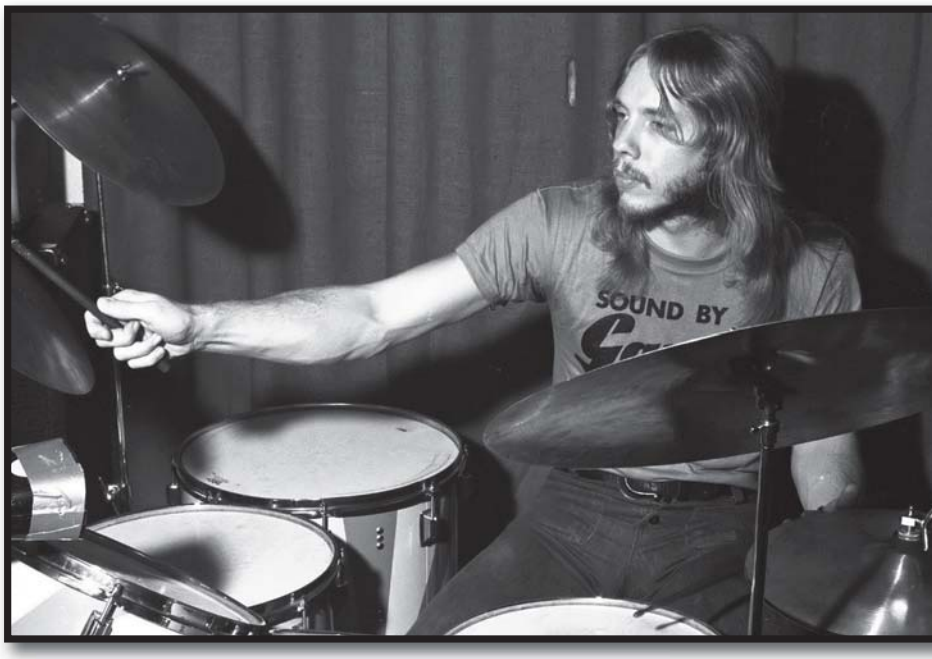
MD: Your hands were like lightning. In your famous "Alethea" solo with Trower, one can hear your marching band influences in the way you utilize single and double strokes. You can also hear a little Buddy Rich—were you influenced by any notable jazz drummers during that period?

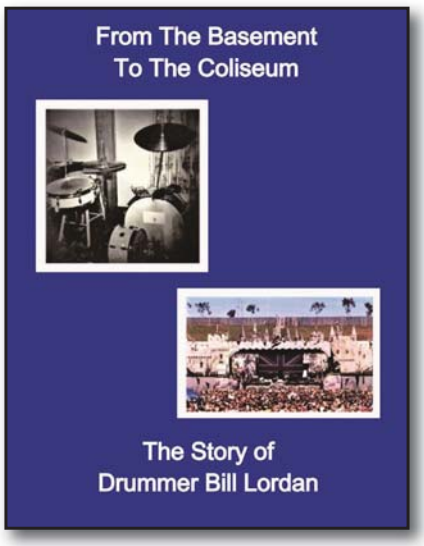
Bill: The marching band influence that you hear in "Alethea" comes from my early days in Minneapolis marching in an all African-American drum and bugle corps, the Elks from Ames Lodge. The jazz drummer that I was most influenced by was Art Blakey. And what drummer *wasn't* influenced by the great Buddy Rich?

MD: Your book leaves one with the impression that your journey, from local bands to the big leagues, hasn't been as much about the money as it has been about the music.

Bill: It was never about the money with me relating to music. It was always about the music itself and feeling the love coming from the crowd. During our stadium tour with Jethro Tull, at Tampa Stadium in Florida during one of Robin Trower's most popular songs, "Daydream," the crowd swayed back and forth, holding lit matches. It felt like the mothership had landed, and the crowd hung on every note Robin played.

MD: From Robin Trower's band to BLT [Bruce, Lordan, and Trower] to the Bill Lordan Experiment, the power-rock trio format seems to be your forte.





Bill: The power-rock trio allows the drummer to fill in the empty spaces. I used my Zildjian pang and China cymbals for this. When I was in the Robin Trower band, that was when I played with the most power. The combination of Robin's guitar playing and James Dewar's singing was unique and dynamic, and we played at large auditoriums and stadiums. Although my career covered many different types of music, that was my favorite era.

MD: You did a number of world tours. What was traveling like back in the '70s, and do you ever miss the road?

Bill: In the '70s we traveled in cars, then in buses, planes, and limousines. Some bands still travel in cars and buses. I don't miss being on the road after forty-five years of traveling the world. I definitely had a go, and I have [nothing but] fond memories of playing music.

MD: Who or what sparked the idea of penning your memoirs?

Bill: I met my partner, Diana Olson, who was an entertainment writer, in 2005, and we started to write down my memories. We moved to Arizona in 2013, and in 2019 I was awakened one morning by a vision of the book cover, the title, and the person who could help us put it together. We bought Word for our computer, and when we opened our email, there were all the old Word files of the stories we started to write in 2005. With a newfound enthusiasm to get it done, we dove in and worked for several months. We had someone help proofread and edit it, we selected over a hundred photos, and we self-published it.

MD: Who would you say was the most influential person in your career?

Bill: My mother, because she was the one who encouraged my music from the start and continued to encourage me throughout my career.

MD: What are your current projects?

Bill: My current projects are selling my rare recordings from my personal collection of CDs and DVDs on my Facebook page. I'm also promoting and selling my book.

Bob Girouard

Tools of the Time

Drums: Rogers
- 4.5x14 Powertone snare
- 9x13 tom
- 10x14 tom
- 16x16 floor tom
- 18x18 floor tom
- 14x24 bass drum

Heads: Remo

Sticks: Regal Tip 2B wood- and nylon-tip

Cymbals: Zildjian
- 14" Quick Beat hi-hats
- 18" medium crash
- 20" crash-ride
- 22" ping ride
- 18" medium thin crash
- 18" medium crash
- 20" pang (2)
- 22" Mel Lewis swish without rivets (2)

Kikagaku Moyo's Go Kurosawa

The drummer and vocalist for the Japanese psychedelic band (rough translation: "geometric patterns") is a modest person with an attitude towards music making that runs counter to the Japanese obsession with technique and "correct" playing. No matter—he's getting the job done and then some.

Aside from Kikagaku Moyo's virtuosic sitar player, Ryu Kurosawa (drummer Go Kurosawa's younger brother), the musicians in the band are all fairly new to their instruments and had almost no experience playing in bands before this project. Pushing against what Go describes as overly restrictive ideas in Japan about proper playing technique, Kikagaku Moyo have leaned into concepts like minimalism and tend to philosophically align themselves with the DIY attitude of the first wave of punk rock.

Speaking to Go just after he and the band came off a wildly successful world tour in support of their self-released album *Masana Temples*, we found the drummer disarmingly humble about his style and approach to the instrument. Despite his insistence of his technical limitations, his playing on record is strong, clear, and funky. We spoke to him by phone from his current home in Amsterdam. Curious listeners should start with the songs "Fluffy Kosmisch" and "Nana" from their latest album.

MD: Tell us about your introduction to drumming.
Go: I used to play bass and guitar, but I started drums when I started this band. When you don't have any experience in Japan, people don't want to play with you, so I had to start my own band. In Japan most drummers play in a certain style, and the function of the drummer is really limited.
MD: What do you mean?
Go: Everyone is so good technically—everyone plays double strokes and plays really lightly. No one beats the shit out of the drums. They are more like rhythm keepers, precise. And for me that's not so interesting. I wanted to play with people who were not that good but trying really hard.
MD: The Boredoms [Japanese experimental band] used to tell me that there weren't many drummers in Japan who hit the drums hard. I was surprised.
Go: Yeah. Drummers in Japan tend to keep up with technical concerns. They watch all the YouTube videos and focus on that side. I'm not sure why. I just thought, I can really only hit the drum. I thought maybe without having different pedals like a guitarist or a bassist, I can already be myself on the drums, and there's a direct physical connection. I never practice drums. I just play with people and watch people playing. I cannot really use my hands. I use my arms. [laughs]
MD: YoshimiO from Boredoms told me she never practices unless she's with a band.
Go: I love her. The techie side is good for the Japanese market, but the more open playing is good for other markets.

Paul La Raia


Paul La Raia

MD: Do you have a sense as to why that is?
Go: For Japanese people, our first encounter with music is through school. We read sheet music, we learn to play, and it's kind of like classical training. People teach you how to hold the drumstick properly, hit the right sweet spot, and if you miss it, it's no good. But I've seen plenty of bands who don't play properly but are still good.
MD: In the U.S. underground music community, we have a big fascination with Japan and Japanese bands.
Go: Our kind of music doesn't really exist in Japan. Folky, sloppy, psychedelic, hippie-style like the legends Acid Mothers Temple. The bands Boris, Acid Mothers, and Mono paved the way for us. If they hadn't toured, leaving Japan would not have crossed our mind.
MD: When you started playing drums, you wanted to form a band.
Go: Yes, a free, anyone-can-join kind of commune band. Like bands in the '70s—Amon Düül, Scandinavian bands. That kind of psychedelic music sounded like, We can do it! One chord, minimal—it just seemed not that hard but cool.
MD: Maybe it's deceptive, though. It's hard to play that style well, but you do. Can you talk a little bit more about your drumming style and your philosophy of playing?
Go: I don't try to impress people. I don't like a drummer who does that: "Look at me!" I try to forget myself.
MD: What kind of qualities does that philosophy contribute to the band?
Go: I think that other band members are not afraid to make mistakes. Because it's not really a mistake if you play a "wrong" note. You can develop a lot from the sound and develop the song from those notes. With drumming you can make rhythm by playing anything. You can make any kind of sound, and that's not wrong.
MD: I understand you're still recording songs in one or two takes in the studio. Can you describe what a great live performance would be for you?
Go: I think if the audience can feel that the musicians are going to different dimensions or different states of mind, that's one thing. Another thing is keeping things simple and also primitive; showing a human, primitive, wild side. I like that. That's a good drummer.
John Colpitts

Tools of the Trade

Kurosawa plays a Gretsch Broadkaster kit with a 13" tom, 14" and 16" floor toms, and a 20" bass drum. His snare is a Sonor 6.5x14 Vintage Natural model.

His cymbals include 14" Pearl Wild 600 hi-hats, a 16" vintage A Zildjian crash, a 16" Dream Bliss crash, and a 22" vintage A Zildjian ride. He uses Vic Firth AJ5 and 7AN sticks and Pearl hardware.

Alex Solca

I like the idea of being influenced by one thing while you're playing something totally unrelated.

Maybe on your drive to a session with a singer-songwriter, an N.W.A. song comes up on the radio and influences you to try some nasty groove over the top of a mellow song with acoustic guitar. Or maybe you were listening to Elvin Jones, so you wanted to try playing with that wide-open, loose feel. Would that be an interesting juxtaposition? Those are ways to break out of just playing the same old stuff.

You can always just show up and do "the drummer thing." That always works, and a lot of times that's what people want. But if you do this every day for a living, or if you *want* to do this for a living, you have to at least try some other stuff. You might surprise some people, and you might discover something. Otherwise, why even be a session musician or offer your services as a drummer for hire if you're not going to bring something to the table?

Matt Chamberlain
Modern Drummer, January 2012

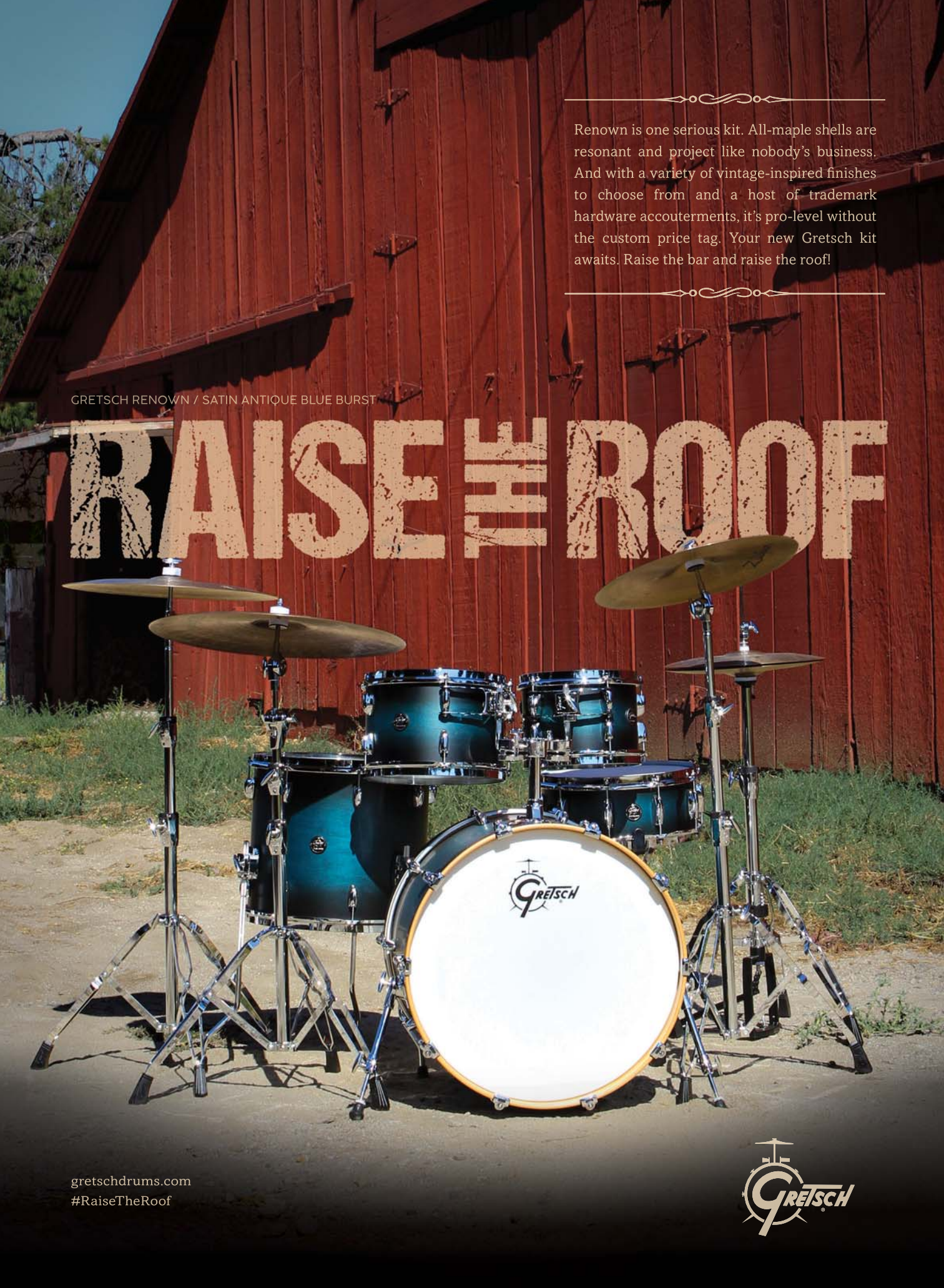
modernDrummer.com/archive

COMING UP IN *MD*

THOMAS LANG

KASSA OVERALL • THE BLACK KEYS' PATRICK CARNEY

AND MUCH MORE!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