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The Winery Dogs and the Power Trio

Ed Sheeran's
Mark Pusey

Big Band Leader
Joe McCarthy

Engineer-Producer
Warren Huart

The Sugarcubes'
Sigtryggur Baldursson

Lessons from
Erskine, Rondinelli, Morello, Lesso, and more...



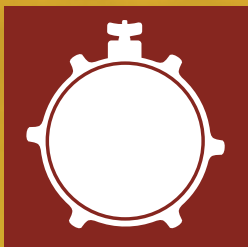
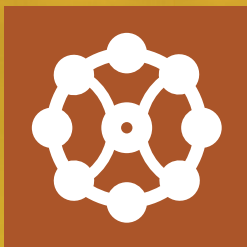
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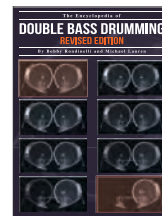


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Going Above and Beyond

In Robert Girouard's excellent interview this month with Ed Sheeran's drummer Mark Pusey, they talk about "having more skills than you need for the job." I was extremely happy to see Mark mention this, as it is something that I espouse to *all* of my students. It was also something that was stressed to me by one of my teachers John Riley. John used to always talk about having extra fuel "in reserve" just in case you need it.



Today, I tell students that if they want to really perfect a song whose tempo is 120 BPM (for example,) practice it at 130 or 140 BPM. Of course, you should first learn it at 120 (or slower,) but after you "have it" at that tempo, push the tempo a little, go that extra mile. That way you aren't playing the song at the top of your tempo range and struggling. You are playing it in your comfort zone and relaxing. You have created some "headspace" for your performance.

If you are practicing a set with your band for a gig, try playing the set twice in a row. This will increase your band's endurance. Therefore, when you are playing (at the gig) and you get to the end of your set, you won't be totally spent or exhausted, because you'll be used to playing the set twice. You'll have extra fuel in the tank, "in reserve," just in case.

If you are working on a new groove or fill, don't stop after you have played it once correctly. *That could be luck.* Think of how many times you'll have to play that groove in a song. Play that groove, 10, 20, or 30 times in a row before you stop. That will be when you are starting to really "get" that groove. And if you are practicing that groove, and you play it incorrectly, don't stop get frustrated and restart the groove, keep playing and fix your mistake the next time through, it's just four beats away (if you are in 4/4.) Create a groove continuum and musical momentum.

I was talking to a great student of mine at a lesson. He had just played a difficult groove very well for a minute or so... I asked him how much he had been working on that specific groove, and his answer amazed me. He replied, "I practiced it until I couldn't play it wrong." He went on, "When I practice something, I don't stop after I have played it right, I practice it until I can't play it wrong."

However you want to say it, having or doing more than is needed or required is never a bad thing. It creates a comfort zone where we all love to perform and live. That is where and when we make it look so easy.

Each one, teach one!

Mark Griffith

Editor-in-Chief & Director of Content

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F.T.	⊗	✱	✱	✱	▲
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Sonor and Paiste Beauty from the UK



For this month's Kit of the Month, *Modern Drummer* brings you London, England's Arnaldo "Arnie" Rogano's drum set that he uses with his band Madre Sun. His drums are Sonor, his cymbals are Paiste Rude's, his heads are Remo, his sticks are Vic Firth, and his kit is very COOL! Thanks Arnie!





   
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The Big Drum-Off

By Peter Erskine

The name Rodger Fox may not ring a bell for some readers outside of New Zealand or Los Angeles, but he is very well known by just about everyone in the Land of the Long White Cloud (“Aotearoa,” the Maori name for NZ) as well as in the jazz community of La La Land. Rodger has been leading his own big band for fifty years. Perseverance pays off, as does the singular dedication to music and music education that Rodger has manifested for all this time. And what better way to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of his big band than to invite three drummers from the USA to drive the band and the following message home. He told me, “A big part of my mission statement is to combine the very best talent with the Rodger Fox Big Band both with live performances and with a strong educational value. We achieved this and the feedback from students and teachers makes it all worthwhile. So onwards we go in celebrating and promoting the music we love.”



I mentioned three drummers, didn't I? How do the names Dennis Chambers, Gregg Bissonette and Peter Erskine grab you? In Rodger's words, “What I always tried to do is present concerts that will engage with the music public of New Zealand and heighten their awareness of jazz and big band music. For my 30th Anniversary concert, I managed to get Michael Brecker to New Zealand — a groundbreaking moment for all who heard and were involved with this event. For the 50th I wanted push the envelope even further. After watching the Buddy Rich Memorial Concert on YouTube the seed was planted. Three drummers with different styles and concepts in concert with the Rodger Fox Big Band. And I am very proud of the combination of artists we presented on stage. It was one helluva concert series — people are still talking about it.”

I mentioned Los Angeles, didn't I? So, Michael Brecker and Dennis Chambers aside, Rodger has pulled the majority of his American guest musicians from the 818, 213 and 310 area codes. Most of my colleagues in town have made the long journey to play with Rodger's band, but this was the first time that my schedule allowed for me to accept his invitation. I am so glad we made the trip. Did I mention that my wife joined me? Planning for the concert tour took place earlier this year in a storied pizza place in the San Fernando Valley, Little Toni's Restaurant. Great place. Rodger likes pizza. My wife doesn't, so she skipped this part of the deal.

Wellington, New Zealand is more than a hop, skip and jump to get to. After a longish flight of 13 hours to reach Auckland, we had to clear immigration, collect our baggage, and then pass customs before boarding our connecting flight. As Auckland had experienced some severe flooding only weeks

before, the airport baggage handling and customs areas were improvised to accommodate the aftermath as well as the crush of passengers arriving there on that early Sunday morning. This gave me an opportunity to chat with the pilots who flew our Boeing 777 across the Pacific Ocean while waiting for our bags. Even THEY knew who Rodger Fox was. Finally clearing the hurdles of customs inspection and flight connection, my

wife and I were on our way to Wellington, where we enjoyed a most enjoyable free day of exploring the sights and sounds of this wonderful city. We heard some terrific jazz that first night, played by pianist Anita Schwabe and her quartet which included the excellent Lance Philip on drums (who now teaches at Victoria University of Wellington and who studied with Peter Donald at the Grove School of Music way back when Lance was in L.A.). Rodger and I went out for a dinner of pizza after listening to the band.

The next day, each drummer rehearsed their parts individually with the band (who had prepared the music ahead of our arrivals), so we didn't really get to hear one another until the soundcheck for the first concert (did I mention that Rodger got us all pizza to eat before that first big band gig? He repeated this magic trick for 2 other shows ... the man likes pizza). Since I first saw and heard Gregg and Dennis do their big band thing with the Buddy Rich alumni band at the famous Buddy Rich Memorial Scholarship Concert in 1989, it was extra special fun to see and hear them up-close as they navigated the big band waters of Buddy as well as non-Buddy charts. These two have chops.

Since Gregg was a repeat guest of the band, it was decided to have him play the first third of the concert to really start things off with a bang. Gregg's personality is as winning as his drumming, and he presented a rollicking set with the big band. Dennis was the obvious choice to close out the evening, so I was given the middle portion of the show as a bit of a palate cleanser as well as the volume-relief drummer. More on THAT in a moment. Dennis brought the swing and the funk for his set. The band played with tremendous spirit and endurance throughout. It must have been all that pizza. Reviewer Simon Sweetman said, “What a band over 50 years, some of the country's greatest players have served time in this group and the current line-up sounds as good as it ever was.”

Most of the concerts began with a 3-way masterclass, each drummer doing 30 minutes. Gregg's facility at the drumset never ceases to amaze me, the guy can play anything he wills himself to play. Meanwhile, Dennis achieves the impossible of drumming with incredible power while never playing too loud. Call this burning while simmering. I did my usual talk and

demonstration about swing and melodic drumming. It's all in the rendering of legato diddles. Stickings count for something. Play what you want to hear. And so on.

I offer the following observation, hopefully perceived not so much as criticism. I've written before about the perils of playing backbeats, accents, or accented backbeats, using both the rim and the head of the snare drum; this



technique produces a loud sound that encompasses more of the frequency spectrum than a drummer might expect. The net results: most of the lighter stuff doesn't make it out to the audience's ears, and much of what the rest of the band is playing gets lost sonically. And it makes everything louder. Think of the combined rim and snare head accent like an exclamation point. Too many of them! In one paragraph! The horrors! The overstatement! The emphasized emphases! The power of the exclamation point! Is lost!

You get the idea. My good friend Gregg likes to play his accents this way, and they are perfectly fine for rock and roll which is his bread and butter. While Gregg was playing one night, I asked Dennis, "Do you play your backbeats using both the rim and the center of the head?" and he replied, "Yeah." Or maybe it was "Yeah!" But I do know that his rim shot combos are not as loud as Gregg's. In any event, it made me all that more conscious of where I hit the drum when playing 2 and 4, both down under and back here at home.

This persnickety observation aside, Gregg and Dennis both played brilliantly, and the audiences loved their sets. And, thanks to their drumming, the obligatory encore felt justified and deserved each

night. But what to do?

I had an idea: pulling a tune that was planned for my portion of the concert, I suggested that we use it for the three of us to jam on WHILE grooving with the band. That meant playing the song slower than Buddy Rich had done on the original recording and playing it softly so that we could build the three-drummer thing into a THING. I'll take credit for the tempo, but the collective

dynamic was group think.

I merely started that ball rolling. The song was "Ruth," composed and arranged by the legendary Bill Holman (appearing originally on the *Buddy and Soul* live album from 1969.) It's a boogaloo, and slowing it down allowed us to groove and have fun with it. And if we were having fun, then the audience was having fun, too. I played the master of drumming ceremonies on this, signaling Gregg and Dennis when to join me during the tune and

when to take their turn to jam. And, let me tell you: once we turned down the tempo and the volume (it's not meant to be a criticism to say that the tunes



and tempos in their sets were all fast and/or loud), I heard Gregg and Dennis play stuff I'd never heard them play before. Guess what? THEY WERE HAVING FUN. There seemed to be a true sense of discovery going on. While big band drumming is not their "thing," per se, they were able to take total ownership of the music they were making as we jammed

because, well, they were making music in that moment.

Accent!

If it reads as though I'm tooting my own horn, then mea culpa (I am). What I'm bragging about is that I opened a door that allowed them to be their true selves. These are both soft-spoken, genuinely lovely gentlemen. We had a



ball. Everyone.

Off the bandstand? We all did our share of shopping. My wife and I were very fortunate to have my former student and teaching assistant Lauren Ellis accompany us on the tour, including a personal sightseeing trip that took us from one end of Wellington to the other. If you're a regular reader of this column, you should remember her as being a wonderful drummer and newest member of the Tamburo drumming family. She was Rodger's drummer before she came to study with me at the University of Southern California. She's now my #1 sub for gigs here in La La Land (Los Angeles.)

Speaking of which, next month I'll travel to Seoul to be a featured soloist in a band playing the music of *La La Land* and *Babylon* films composer Justin Hurwitz at a jazz festival there. If you watched *Babylon*, then you heard my drumming and there are stories about those sessions, just as I'm sure there'll be stories about Korea. Stay tuned! Meanwhile, congratulations to Rodger Fox!

Check out Peter's drummer profile page, and get a copy of his Legends book at moderndrummer.com



NEW *and* NOTABLE

DW Launches the Alex Gonzalez DW ICON™ Snare

Drum Workshop, Inc. is proud to present the Alex Gonzalez DW ICON™ Snare; a tribute to the legendary drummer of Latin pop icons Maná.

Alex Gonzalez and his band, Maná, are one of the biggest pop/rock bands in the world. They have sold more than 40 million records winning four Grammys and nine Latin Grammys. Gonzalez' wide ranging grooves, complex flourishes, and awesome chops have been the driving force of the band from day one.

The DW ICON™ snare drums, created by DW drum designer John Good, pay tribute to some of the most iconic drummers in the history of rock. Each snare is sized and configured to reflect the snare the artist plays and features a dramatic inlaid design made from exotic wood veneers.

The 6.5 x 14" Alex Gonzalez DW ICON™ Snare has been constructed using an 11-ply HVL™ North American Hard Rock Maple shell with a Birdseye Maple outer veneer that is dyed gray. It is fitted with premium black nickel DW hardware featuring a MAG Throw-off™, five-position (5P) butt plate, True-Hoops®, True-Pitch® tuning, DW heads™ by Remo®, and more.

The outer shell is decorated with vivid wood inlays using



dyed Pearwood, Koto, and Tulipwoods. The designs represent the Maná logo, Gonzalez' iconic rose logo and his portrait.

Only 250 of this remarkable limited edition snare will be made by DW. Each will come with a deluxe DW carrying case and a signed certificate of authenticity from John Good. A portion of proceeds from the sale of each snare will be donated to the charity nominated by Gonzalez, <https://narizroja.org/>, who are helping to support cancer patients.

"Creating a drum for Alex Gonzalez has always been high on our list," said DW drum designer John Good. "To be able to celebrate our long-standing valued relationship with Alex in this way is an incredible honor."

"I am very happy and excited that my icon snare drum will be able to help others that are in need, that's why my charity of choice is Nariz Roja A.C. that helps and supports low-income children with Cancer

in Mexico. Thank you DW and thank you to those who have purchased my ICON Snare for your support and help! Big Hug!" commented Alex Gonzalez.

Watch the launch video at [Youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com). To find out more about the Alex Gonzalez DW ICON™ Snare please go to www.dwdrums.com/alex-gonzalez-icon-snare

Your Sonic Universe Awaits with Evans Hybrid and Sensory Percussion

EVANS Drumheads, maker of the most technologically advanced drumheads on Earth, is thrilled to announce a new partnership with Sunhouse Technologies Inc. Building upon Sunhouse's foundational Sensory Percussion technology, the joint venture features completely redesigned versions of both the hardware and software, giving drummers even more power, control, and expressive possibility than ever before.

Originally introduced by Sunhouse in 2015, this patented technology lets drummers turn their acoustic drum kits into powerful controllers for electronic music-making. Using sensors—not triggers—along with



proprietary machine learning, Sensory Percussion dynamically maps each drumhead's surface and tracks each hit. With up to ten programmable zones per head and virtually limitless ways to control and manipulate them, drummers now have a way to naturally express themselves with electronic tools like samples, effects, and MIDI.

The new EVANS Hybrid Sensory Percussion Sound System is an entirely fresh take on the original, redeveloped from the ground up to give the drummer more reliable, usable, and purpose-built hardware, along with a reworked software experience to power an ever-expanding universe of discovery and creativity. With this expansion into

electronics, EVANS is establishing EVANS Hybrid—a new division focused on imagining and building the future of drumming, developing technologies that bridge the gap between acoustic and electronic percussion. Learn more at Daddario.com/spss

What's Included in the System

The all-new Sensory Percussion Software, completely redesigned to be more seamless, intuitive, & musical—eliminating as many barriers to creativity as possible, on stage or in the studio. Three Drum Sensors, built to be sleeker, more durable, and easier to set up and remove. Each sensor tracks speed, velocity, and timbre across ten distinct programmable zones. The new sensors also feature tour-friendly, 3.5 mm cables over heavy XLRs.

The EVANS Portal audio interface, designed to work specifically with the software and proprietary sensors. It

features seven sensor inputs, a built-in microphone, two combo mic/line/Hi-Z inputs, and a variety of headphone, aux, and stereo outputs.

Additional items include a pack of twelve pickup elements, three 12 ft TRS cables, one power adaptor, one USB-C cable, EVANS EMAD Bass Drumhead adapter, & limited-edition ProMark ActiveGrip™ Drumsticks.

Since 2015, we've continued to improve and grow Sensory Percussion. To take it to the next level, we needed a partner with both manufacturing expertise on a big scale and a deep knowledge of the drumming community. The partnership with D'Addario (EVANS) is perfect for two family companies combining our expertise to not only reimagine the world of Sensory but create the future of percussion.

TLACAEEL ESPARZA
Co-Founder of Sunhouse

For more than half a century, EVANS has been innovating and perfecting the acoustic drumhead to push the possibilities and dependability drummers have available to them. Moving into electronics was an inevitable and natural progression of that mission, but it was not until Sensory Percussion that we felt truly inspired to move forward. Given all this, we found Sunhouse to be the perfect partner for breaking into electronic drumming.

JIM D'ADDARIO
Chief Innovation Officer of D'Addario & Co.

Sensory Percussion has been a game changer for me. It's enabled me to realize so many ideas that I never knew how to implement otherwise. I'm finally able to use the drum kit not just as an instrument but also as sort of a mission control center to create any audio-visual world I can think of.

GLENN KOTCHE
Drummer / Percussionist of Wilco

Latin Percussion Launches Tito Puente Signature Timbale and Cowbell Sets

Latin Percussion is proud to launch the limited-edition Tito Puente Signature Timbale and Cowbell sets to mark the centennial of the birth of 'El Rey del Timbal'.

Famed composer, band leader, and percussionist, Tito Puente, had a career that spanned more than five decades. In his lifetime, he played with many leading jazz performers including George Shearing, Dizzy Gillespie, and Woody Herman. Tito was a revered ambassador for Latin jazz and the Latin Percussion brand, playing a huge role in elevating both to the global mainstream with hit songs such as 'Oye Como Va'. In recognition of his pioneering musical styles, he received seven GRAMMYS® and was nominated fourteen times. In addition, Tito was given their Lifetime Achievement Award following his death along with being inducted into the GRAMMYS® Hall of Fame.

The limited-edition Tito Puente Centennial Timbale Set (LP257-100), based on LP's Tito Puente Steel Timbales, have a retro feel with rolled out bottoms and a special Green Badge reminiscent of LP's original timbales. Each set is laser engraved with Tito's signature and numbered. LP will be producing a limited run of 200 units making them a true collector's item. The set includes a 14" and 15" x 6-½" stainless steel shells, a heavy-duty stand, cowbell bracket, timbale

sticks, and tuning wrench.

Also available is the matching limited-edition Tito Puente Signature Cowbell set. The set contains the two preferred cowbell models played by the maestro throughout his career. The 7-½" Prestige (LP322) has strong middle overtones and was Tito's signature bell and sound. The bright pitch of the 5" chrome-plated Deluxe Black Beauty (LP204B), with Tito's signature stamped on the face, is the perfect compliment. Both bells are made in the USA and feature LP's patented self-aligning eye bolt which accommodates 3/8" to ½" mounting rods.

"As the leader of Latin Percussion instruments around the world, we are honored to be a part LP's Centennial Celebration of Tito Puente, and are looking forward to the release of the Tito Puente Centennial Timbale Set and the Tito Puente Signature Cowbell Set. We hope Percussion and Timbale players from across the globe will be inspired and want to get these limited-edition instruments from our friends at Latin Percussion," Tito Puente Jr. commented on behalf of the Puente family.

To find out more about the limited-edition Tito Puente Signature Timbale and Cowbell sets, plus all the other Latin Percussion products, please go to <https://www.lpmusic.com/>, #wearerhythm.



PDP Concept Metal Snare Drums

Brushed Aluminum, Copper, and Brass Shells

By Brian Hill

Pacific Drums and Percussion (PDP) was formed by Drum Workshop (DW) in 1999 to provide a more affordable premium quality brand of drums, pedals, and hardware. PDP features “boutique-inspired, player friendly features, and best-in-class build-quality to more drummers around the globe.” PDP Drums have been embraced by students, educators, universities, music institutions, as well as working and professional players around the world.

The award winning Concept Series has been around for several years and has expanded to include drums made of maple, birch, exotic woods and Limited Series drums that are, quite frankly, top-notch instruments. Recently, PDP has added the Concept Metal series of snare drums that includes aluminum, copper, brass, steel, and black nickel over steel and brass shells. The folks over at PDP sent *Modern Drummer* three different snares in this line to check out and see what we thought of them.

PDP drums are designed by DW and include the quality control we’ve come to expect from them. All three of our drums measured 5” x 14” and feature a rolled dual-beaded 1mm shell that is butt seamed to form a single piece shell. The bearing edges are a rolled-over double angled edge that provides a very clean sound and provides a perfect fit for the head to properly seat.

Hardware includes DW’s MAG throw-off and butt and 20 strand steel wire snares. The snare beds are very shallow and very gradual measuring about 5” wide. Counter hoops are 2.3 mm triple-flanged chrome over steel, along with Remo heads top and bottom. Eight PDP dual-turret tuning lugs feature a rubber gasket insulator that fits between the lug and shell.

The lugs utilize DW’s True-Pitch tension rods, which sport a finer thread count than most tension rods. I often hear a bunch of “muck” from some drummers complaining about fine-threaded tension rods because they say they require “too much work!” I’ve tuned a lot of drums in my day and will tell you straight-up that

more threads give you more control for fine tuning! The better the detail given to the ability to tune a drum like a fine instrument cannot be overstated. This is something that has not been lost on DW or PDP.

Since PDP sent over three different metal shelled snares, I thought I’d start with one of the most familiar sounds to most drummers when it comes to

metal drums: Aluminum! This aluminum snare comes in a very nice Natural Satin Brushed finish with chrome hardware. Aluminum offers a nice difference from a steel shell in that it’s a bit “drier” in sound. Aluminum has a great rounded attack with nice musical overtones, it’s a snare drum sound that’s been recorded a lot over the decades. Aluminum shells offer nice projection with a mid-to-bright



sound that is very musical.

The Brass shell snare drum also has a Natural Satin Brushed finish with chrome hardware for a bit of a vintage look. This brass shell, like most brass shells, has a "heavy" and musical sound. Brass shells offer a clean, fat, dry sound with limited overtones and a "tightness" in sound control. Brass shells create that certain "brass power" attack that just punches through.

The Concept Series Copper Shell was a very interesting drum for me as I don't own any copper drums. As with the preceding shells, we get a very nice Natural Satin Brushed finished shell with chrome hardware. Copper is a snare drum material that most drummers do not own. I believe this is because Copper is, in my

opinion, a more "exotic" metal for snare drums. Most drummers who use metal snare drums seem to have gravitated to more common metals such as steel, aluminum, and brass, because that's what has been more commercially available over the years.

However, I really like the sound (and looks) of this Copper drum. It has a very similar attack and musicality as the above mentioned metal shells, as well as similar musical qualities. Copper has a sound that is controlled, fat, and dry; as with most metal shells. However, Copper is tighter, a bit warmer, and a bit darker in tone than its brass cousin. Copper is a cool sound and should be considered as a great alternative musical voice in ones snare drum arsenal.

DW's vision to provide the market with professional grade instruments at an affordable price has certainly been realized in the PDP line-up. I found that these drums really sing best at a mid-to-higher tuning, but that's really up to the player and their particular ear. These are drums that are built to last and sound great, but also provide some serious value.

The on-line pricing is \$429.99 for each of these models. PDP offers several lines of snare drums, complete drum sets, as well as a full line of hardware and pedals. They are a great choice for anyone from students to professionals, these are definitely worth checking out 'cause there's a lot of bang for the buck here!

Pacificdrums.com



Roland TD-27KV2

Another V-Drum offering

By Jason Mehler

Having already experienced some of Roland's recent upgrades to their V-Drums lineup, I was eager to get ahold of their TD-27KV2 model. The TD-27KV2 is Roland's mid-level kit, which is a step up in features (and price) from their TD-17KVX2. For this month's product close-up, I'll give the TD-27KV2 a test drive.

What's in the Box

The TD-27KV2 is a 5-piece kit that includes the TD-27 sound module, the KD-10 Kick Drum Pad, the 14" PD-140DS Digital Snare Pad, three 10" PDX-100 Tom Pads, one 12" CY-12C-T rubber coated two-zone Crash, one 14" CY-14C-T rubber coated two-zone Crash, One 18" CY-18DR Digital Ride Cymbal, one 14" VH-14D Digital Hi-Hat, and the MDS-STD2 Drum Stand (drum stand may vary in some countries). Also included are drum keys, Velcro cable straps and instruction manuals.

What's NOT in the Box

You will not find a hi-hat stand, snare drum stand, drum throne, or bass drum pedal in the TD-27KV2 package. I'm sure this decision was based on keeping the kit at a certain price point, with the understanding that many drummers will prefer using their own hardware anyway, rather than the default Roland hardware.

Hardware Setup

The TD-27KV2 components come packaged in two large boxes. One box for the MDS-STD2 drum stand, and one box for everything else. The unboxing took me about 40 minutes at a relaxed pace.

After unboxing everything, the hardware setup of the TD-27KV2 took about an hour, with most of the time being spent on building the MDS-STD2 drum stand. While reading the setup manual, I noticed that Roland also included instructions for setting up the kit left-handed! It's nice when us left-handed "weirdos" are included at the design level. Regardless, I chose to stick to a right-handed configuration this time around.

One thing that I must mention: I'm not in love with the plastic connecting clamps and mounts that hold the tubular racks together. This is not just a Roland thing — actually theirs are better than others on the market. But sometimes I find myself having to tighten the plastic clamps beyond a

Playing Experience

While playing the TD-27KV2 the noticeable differences between it and the TD-17KVX2 are the digital components (snare, hi-hat, and ride cymbal). The digital features allow these drums to be much more expressive because they are not limited to two or



"comfortable" tightness. Then, even after a good tightening, I sometimes must readjust and retighten them due to a slight droop or wobble that has formed over time. Having said that, this Roland rack is not the chief offender and feels stronger and more secure than others.

The TD-27 sound module mounts between the hi-hat and first tom. You could position the module elsewhere on the kit, however, keep in mind that the wiring harness cables are cut to a specific length for each drum, so the default module placement is optimal. Most of the drums and cymbals connect via TRS cables, except for the digital snare, digital hi-hat and digital ride cymbal which connect via usb.

three trigger zones. For example, where the VH-10 hi-hat on the TD-17KVX2 only has trigger zones for the bow and edge, the VH-14D digital hi-hat has the following:

- Open/Half-open/Close/Press (high resolution position detection)
- Bow shot (high resolution position detection, wide dynamic range)
- Edge shot (high resolution position detection, wide dynamic range)
- Foot close/splash
- Choke (choke edge, bow touch)

These added sensors make this hi-hat the closest you can get to a real set of hats in terms of expression options. The touch sensitivity feature of the PD-140DS digital snare really shines

because it detects your hand position when you play cross-stick, producing an accurate click sound. This feature works so well that I couldn't even force a mis-trigger. Often when you're playing a soft ballad on a standard e-drum kit you can accidentally strike the rim too hard and trigger your "brain-stabbing rimshot" sample. You don't have to worry about that with the PD-140DS digital snare.

The third digital pad is the CY-18DR ride cymbal. I love that it is a full 18" in diameter, which makes it fun and comfortable to play. It features triggers for the bow, bell edge, and choke. The touch sensors allow cymbal muting just by touching the bow surface. The samples even have a natural sounding decay as opposed to an artificial sounding cymbal choke which has no carryover decay. Again, this is just another expressive option that you don't get with a non-digital cymbal pad.

The remainder of the kit features Roland's non-digital pads and cymbals, which are still very versatile and are a joy to play. The tom pads are slightly over three inches tall, so they overlap the snare drum nicely, allowing a tighter, more comfortable setup.

As I've stated in my previous review of the TD-17KVX2, The KD-10 kick drum pad feels great whether you bury the beater or let it rebound. It's a small batter surface that has just enough room for a strike from both beaters of a double pedal. Let me reiterate however the significance of a quality drum rug. Without a secure rug, this kick pad will travel into an adjacent time zone.

Working with the TD-27 Sound Module

Before I discuss the cool features of the TD-27 module, I must admit that I previously developed a silly, sentimental attachment to the little phone-holder carve-out on the TD-17 module. It was convenient and I wish the TD-27 had it as well, but I can see how that would be harder to incorporate, given the extra outputs and larger LCD display of the TD-27. The TD-27 module in this V-Drums package is pre-loaded with version 2 of the system software which has the following enhancements:

- Additional new kits and samples, expanded layering options, parallel compression, transient shaping enhancements, and Roland Cloud support.

- Choose from 75 ready-to-play preset kits, including 10 all-new kits.
- 39 newly developed samples for layering with internal instruments and enhancing drum tones.
- Expanded layering functionality for greater sound control.
- Updated transient parameters for precision sound shaping, including transient control for user samples.
- New parallel compression function derived from the flagship TD-50X, providing more master compressor options for big and punchy kit sounds.
- Trigger support for the latest thin-profile V-Cymbals, including the CY-12C-T and CY-14R-T.
- Integrated support for Roland Cloud content, including kits and sound packs created by pro drummers.

For a deeper dive into some of these features, check out my previous product close-up of the Roland VAD507 V-Drums which is equipped with the same TD-27 module and version 2 system software. This time around, I wanted to check out the song and recording features of the module. Recording is pretty straight forward. Just press the record button and the record menu pops up with options to record with a song or without. There are a few internal songs to start with, however you can load songs from an SD card as well. There is also an option to record just the drums or all the inputs (drums, song, bluetooth and mix input). In theory, you

could record an entire band while playing to a backing track by sending an audio signal from the band (external mixer) into the "mix in" while also recording the Bluetooth signal and an internal or SD card song source. I'm not sure if anyone would choose to do that, but it's possible.

I chose to have some fun with the internal pre-recorded songs. First, I tried to record to a click, but I did not find a way to do that without the click falling out of sync with the internal song. Maybe it's possible but it wasn't obvious, so I decided to move on. A cool feature about recording to an internal song is that it can be looped, which allows you to flip through different kits and try different sounds. Or if you're like me, you'll play the most ridiculous drum fills until your family has had enough and can no longer deal with you.

In Conclusion

The Roland TD-27KV2 is a great mid-level drum kit for someone who is looking for a more realistic feel provided by the larger pads and cymbals, the superior expression made possible by the advanced digital trigger components, and the versatility of the TD-27 module. Whether performing, recording, practicing or just letting off some steam. The TD-27KV2 is a good fit. The TD-27KV2 currently retails for \$3,499. For more information go to roland.com



WFL III Drums Birdseye Maple Snare

Classic Maple Mahogany Shell with a Modern Twist

By Brian Hill

William F Ludwig III, WFL III Drums chief drum designer, sent *Modern Drummer* one of their new G2 shell series, Birdseye Maple snare drums for us to put through the paces. WFL III Drums have been upping their game considerably since we last spoke with them. New advanced equipment and new designs have been added to make this already notable drum line even more competitive. Pulling this beautiful new drum out of the box made me hurry a bit to get this tub on a stand to hear

interior of the shell is sanded down to a smooth and ultra-finished feel. Between these plies is WFL III's proprietary G2 shell formula of mahogany and maple. This combination forms a thin, strong shell and contributes to a strong classic mid-to-low-end response.

Sib told me that the G2's 6-ply shell's bearing edges are, "A classic 45-degree round-over, 45 degree inside with a 30 degree round-over outside edge. They are hand finished to have an ultra-smooth surface for maximum contact,

the tuning spectrum, the drum opened up very nicely to a "warmer" range where I'm feeling a rock and / or country style of playing.

As I took the drum lower and started experimenting with different tensions, top and bottom, I found that it responded very well as I took it to different tensions. The sound was somewhere in the middle range with a nice low-end thump and presence, although there was a certain brightness that I couldn't deny. The combination of

maple and mahogany brought a full, warm, and earthy sound that was very familiar to me in that classic drum sound I hear on so many recordings.

The sound in the middle of the head has more of a controlled nature, but as I moved to the outer edge of the drum I found more of an openness and higher ring... a bit like a timbale if you will. Rim shots were easy and varied in effect depending on where I struck the head and how. Cross sticks were also very easy and cracked perfectly. I found the drum projected nicely across the board. Back-beats came

across with that classic "bark" that sat perfectly in the mix, giving back what I put into it very nicely.

The WFL III Birdseye Maple is a high quality, versatile snare drum that would fit in nicely in a wide variety of musical styles. Each drum comes with a WFL III Drums internal label that includes the serial number and date of birth, as well as the signature of the man himself: Wm. F. Ludwig III. As with all WFL III drums, this one was made in the USA! The Birdseye Maple Snare Drum is a great "work horse" that will complement most musical styles and any drummer's collection. However, if it was the only snare drum you had, that would be just fine as it'll comfortably take you to many places in your musical journey. Retail: \$865.00 wflIIDrums.com



how it sounded. But before we get into the sound, let's get into the looks and the specs.

The shell measures in at 6.5" x 14" and is constructed of 6 thin plies of maple and mahogany veneers with 6-ply, hand fitted maple reinforcement rings, top and bottom. Sib Weisbender, WFL III's General Manager, weighed in on the specs of the reinforcement rings, adding that they, "Use a scarf joint to install the re-rings. It's cut to a 45-degree angle then cut down to fit the interior of the shell by hand and sanded to be as invisible as possible. The scarf joint is a better, stronger joint than a butt joint where the squared-off ends are just glued together."

Overall, this is a fairly thin shell. The outer ply is a strikingly beautiful Birdseye Maple ply while the inside ply is hard Maple, and both have a clear finish. The

fit, and ease of tuning." The snare beds are also nicely cut and graceful.

Our hardware came chrome plated, with triple-flanged, 2.3mm counter-hoops and 10 WFL III lugs. A Trick Three-Step snare throw off and butt along with 20 strand German wire snares offer multiple preset tension positions for on-the-fly adjustments. The drum came complete with Remo Coated Ambassador batter top, and a clear SA head on the bottom. The maker's badge is designed with the large open "III" covering a fairly large air vent hole that allows a bit more air to move freely in and out of the shell.

This drum came tuned nice and high, so that's where I started. The sound was controlled, and a bit tight. It made me want to play "jazz." That's what the sound reminded me of, a great drum for playing jazz! As I worked my way down



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Mike Portnoy

The Winery Dogs and the Power of III

By Mark Griffith

Mike Portnoy must be the busiest drummer in the business. He is an active touring and recording member of no less than ten different bands, and he does some sideman work. In the 12 years since he left Dream Theater his playing, has matured and developed, and his career has exploded. Musicians and careers evolve, and nowhere is this evolution on better display than with Portnoy's drumming in The Winery Dogs. The Winery Dogs are a power trio based in hooky and catchy songs, three-part harmonies, and deep grooves. Billy Sheehan and Mike Portnoy are developing into quite a team, and Richie Kotzen is singing his butt off and giving Sheehan and Portnoy strong tunes on which to leave their thumbprints. The Winery Dogs are a band that can do it all! Get ready as Mike opens up to *Modern Drummer* up about his drumming, his bands, his career, his influences, and The Winery Dogs.



MD: The last tours you did with John Petrucci and The Winery Dogs were both with power trios. That's a fun musical environment. How are you approaching the power trio differently from the slightly larger bands that you are in like The Neal Morse Band and Flying Colors?

MP: I love the whole vibe, the power trio gives you so much space to play. One of my biggest musical influences is Rush, obviously they are more of a prog power trio, but when you break it down it's just the three of them. But my love for power trios started before that with Cream and the Jimi Hendrix Experience. Even

if you look at The Who and Zeppelin; essentially those were power trios, they just happen to have a fourth person that sang, but the instrumentation was that power trio sound. I just love it because it gives you so much room to stretch.

With The Winery Dogs you have Richie Kotzen on guitar, Billy Sheehan on bass, and me on drums, and all three of us are singing as well. I love the three-part harmony aspect. All three of us are very predominant musical personalities.

John Petrucci's solo tour was a trio too, but that was a very different kind of trio than The Winery Dogs. Winery Dogs is

more old school, three-part vocal, classic rock trio, that is very song driven. John Petrucci, Dave LaRue, and myself are the other side of the power trio which is all instrumental, very progressive, with (almost) jazz fusion aspects and elements to it as well.

MD: How does the additional space that a trio provides influence how and what you play? Do you approach trios differently?

MP: In a trio you have a lot more responsibility because you don't have two guitar players or keyboards, so the drums must cover a lot of ground. However, I think the bass player in the trio really has to cover a lot more space, and obviously with Billy Sheehan is the right guy to fill up space and groove. In The Winery Dogs, Billy and I have a Keith Moon and John Entwistle type of musical relationship from The Who. In The Who, Keith and John were the acrobats, they were the ones going nuts and filling up the space, while Roger and Pete were the anchors and the foundation of the songs, that's similar to The Winery Dogs where Billy and I are just running circles around Richie who's kind of the anchor of the song.

MD: I'm glad you brought up The Who. I know you're a Who and Moon fan, why do you think that always worked? I'm constantly amazed by Keith and John because they each played a lot, but they never stepped on others on each other's feet. That's just unbelievable to me.

MP: That's what made them so great. Obviously, Keith had a reputation for being a little "over the top," and a little "sloppy." To me, that's the charm. That's why I loved him so much. His reckless abandon is what made him so great. He played with so much personality, it just puts a smile on my face. Like you said, it's always teetering on the edge of a train wreck, but the train never really crashes. Because Pete and Roger were the anchors, John and Keith were able to patrol the outer periphery and play like lead instruments.

MD: It always seemed like Pete was the "drummer" and Moon was the "lead guitarist" in The Who.

MP: One of the very first things Billy and I did back in 2006 was a Who tribute band that I put together. I never even considered another bass player for that band. It had to be Billy. He and I were just so tapped into John and Keith's frame of mind, it was so much fun to do that. It's actually very similar to what we



Felipe Laverde

are doing now with The Winery Dogs. *Tommy* was my initiation into The Who, believe it or not I was listening to *Tommy* when it came out and I was only two years old. I remember being drawn to the silly songs like "Tommy's Holiday Camp" and "Fiddle About" as a 2-year-old kid. But then came *Live at Leeds* which is my favorite Who album because it really shows what they were about. You listen to *Live at Leeds* and Keith had that set up with the three crashes, no hi-hat, no rides, no splashes, no chinas, just three of the same size rack toms and simply going for it. He was playing constant sixteenths with all four limbs going at all times, it's just so alive! When I did my Who tribute in 2006, by the end of the hour and a half show I thought I was going to die.

All of those late 60s early rock drummers like Mitch Mitchell and Ginger Baker were the original jazz guys that created the hard rock power trio style of drumming. I think Keith, Ginger, and Mitch were all (kind of) cut from the same mold. They were very busy, like jazz drummers. If you look at the lineage, Keith was much more like Ginger and Mitch Mitchell.

I hear a lot of Keith in Neil Peart, which is surprising because Neil was a totally different kind of drummer. Neil was so controlled and thought out, and everything was so methodically written. That is the polar opposite of Keith, but when I listen to the *Fly By Night* album and listen to "Anthem" and "Best I Can" I hear so much of Keith's style in early Neil, I also hear a lot of Michael Giles (from first King Crimson album) in Neil. Those are the two guys I could hear in early Neil, if there wasn't a Keith you wouldn't have had a Neil, and if there wasn't a Keith and a Neil, you'd have no Mike Portnoy.

MD: Keith was just so completely free within the music and he's just painting with rhythm. I don't know how or why it worked... Moon is one of the most fascinating drummers ever, nobody can really explain it, transcribing it is useless. I'm glad you brought him up.

MP: I never got to see him until *The Kids*

Are Alright came out in 1979. That was literally my first time seeing him and I couldn't take my eyes off him. Here we are talking about his drumming, but his stage persona and personality were a huge inspiration and influence as well. When I saw *The Kids Are Alright* it was my Beatles Ed Sullivan moment. I wanted to be a drummer like that! A drummer that was leading the band, somebody you can't take your eyes off, and somebody that's entertaining. The way Moon would twirl and bounce his sticks, he was just so flamboyant, I wanted to be that type

Moon. If you listen to "Crosstown Traffic" or "Fire" the drumming is insane, and Mitch is all over the kit. Those were the guys I cut my teeth on in my early days, that's how I learned to get it around a drum kit. As I evolved, the more progressive stuff like Neil, Phil Collins, Terry Bozzio, Simon Phillips, and Bill Bruford came later. Once I was a teenager, I wanted to dig a little deeper, and that formed who I really became as a drummer.

MD: Did you hear Ginger Baker differently?



Felipe Laverde

of drummer visually. We talk about the drumming lineage of Keith leading to Neil Peart, but I also see the visual side of Keith's lineage leading to somebody like Lars Ulrich from Metallica. I look at Lars the way I looked at Keith. Maybe he's not the most traditional or technically perfect drummer, but his personality is what is so incredibly important to driving Metallica. The same way that Keith inspired Neil which inspired me musically, Keith also inspired Lars which inspired me visually and personally.

MD: How did Mitch's approach to the power trio influence you?

MP: It was a very similar vibe to Keith

MP: Ginger was the same as Mitch and Keith as far as I'm concerned. It was that mid 60s English lead drumming style. Ian Paice had a little bit of it, Bill Ward had a little bit of it on the first few Sabbath albums. These guys grew up on jazz, they didn't grow up on rock like we did. They invented rock, but they grew up on jazz and then kind of brought jazz into rock.

MD: I was going to ask you about Bill Ward, did you listen to old Sabbath much?

MP: Of course! Sabbath, early Deep Purple, and Zeppelin created the prototype for metal. Bill Ward was one

of the early double bass drummers. If you listen to the first Sabbath album, there's a lot of jazz there! He's playing a lot of jazz time. Listen to "Wicked World" and "Warning" and stuff like that, you could tell that Bill is a jazz drummer being thrown into a hard rock world. I've had the fun of covering all these guys, I performed the entire first Sabbath album and the entire *Master of Reality* album with the band Metal Allegiance. I also did the entire Deep Purple *Made in Japan* album with Dream Theater. I've had these wonderful experiences where I've either covered full albums from these bands or I've done tribute bands of my own. In all these cases, I've gotten to "become them" for a night and really get into their headspace, their persona, and their style. I have even had different replica kits made to really help inspire me to "become" each of those drummers for the night. Those different bands, projects, and tributes really gave me an opportunity to show who my biggest influences were.

MD: When you went into "Bill Ward mode," what were your take-aways? Let's get specific.

MP: Aside from the early jazzy things I mentioned, Bill also had that big sludgy stoner groove which Sabbath kind of invented. When you listen to early Sabbath you can just smell the pot smoke in the room and feel that slow, sludgy, grungy, groove. Bill Ward and Sabbath kind of invented that stoner rock sound. Without him you wouldn't have guys like Dave Grohl or Chad Smith.

MD: I know you've talked a lot about Bonham in the past, but we can't complete this subject without talking about him. What (besides the obvious Bonham-isms) are your big takeaways



Felipe Laverde

sound. Everyone immediately thinks of the big kick drum, but his snare and hi-hat sound was amazing. Listen to the "When the Levee Breaks" groove, that's not just a kick thing, it's kick, snare, and high hat! Those three elements are so

great. Then there was the improvisational element. Listen to the live Zeppelin recordings with them jamming and improvising stuff. There were versions of "Dazed and Confused" that went on for 40 minutes. They were just going off on these different musical tangents and jamming, that's the sign of a great drummer. A great drummer is somebody that can be in the moment, improvise, and use his ears. You could hear those jams being crafted as they go, they created these alternate musical passages on the spot. That is the sign of (not only) a brilliant drummer but a brilliant musician. I like drummers that think like musicians, that's the way I've always crafted my drumming, I'm not looking at myself as just a drummer.

People ask me how I created drum parts for Dream Theater, Transatlantic, or the Neal Morse Band. But I'm not thinking about the drums, I'm thinking about everything. I'm thinking about what everybody else is playing. I'm listening to what the bass, the guitar, and

important. Bonham also had finesse. Listen to "Fool in the Rain" with that shuffle. Bonham had a light touch and finesse, he wasn't always a jackhammer, he could play with a lot of finesse as well. Walking the tightrope between those two styles is what made Bonham so

Bonham had a light touch and finesse, he wasn't always a jackhammer, he could play with a lot of finesse as well. Walking the tightrope between those two styles is what made Bonham so great.

when you put Bonham under your microscope?

MP: The sound that that he and Jimmy Page got both in the studio and live is such a big part of him. But I think a lot of people underestimate the importance of the hi-hat and the snare to Bonham's

the keyboards are doing. I'm listening to the vocal passages, the melodies of the vocals, the harmonies, and the production. That is the type of drummer I am. I'm a musician first, drummer second. Drums just happen to be my instrument. My language is that of music in general. That's why I'm a co-writer of all the music I'm involved with and why I'm a co-producer of all the albums I make. All of that is equally as important to me as the drums themselves.

My musical makeup is made-up of a lot of different things. Even though I spent the first 25 years of my career with Dream Theater playing very technical progressive music, if you look at what I've done in the 12 years since I've left Dream Theater, I've branched out to all these other things which are equally important to me. In this conversation we have talked about my classic rock influences like The Who, The Beatles, Cream and Hendrix. That is my classic rock side. I get to really bring that out with The Winery Dogs. Then there's the whole metal side with what I do playing with Metal Allegiance. That band has me tapping into the roots of metal: Zeppelin, Purple, Sabbath, the next generation like Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, Motörhead, and AC-DC, and the thrash movement with Metallica, Slayer, Anthrax, and Exodus. All of that was a big influence on me as well. I was just as into Lars Ulrich, Dave Lombardo, and Charlie Benante as I was into Terry Bozzio and Simon Phillips. Then you have my poppy side. I'm a huge fan of bands like Jellyfish, Sweet, and Queen. That's the kind of power pop stuff that I do with the band Flying Colors. Even though that band has Steve Morse and David LaRue in the band, we're tapping into a more power pop or alternative side that has elements of Radiohead and U2.

That is the giant musical melting pot of what makes me who I am. You'll notice I'm not mentioning much jazz, or Latin kind of stuff. I can appreciate those elements as a listener but I don't really tap into those as a drummer, that's not really the blueprint of who I am. My musical blueprint is metal, prog, classic rock, and pop. Since I left Dream Theater, I've been able to channel those different styles and elements into all of the different bands and projects I've been a part of.

MD: I'm hearing a lot more of your pop thing in The Winery Dogs because the songs are so strong and the three-part harmonies are ridiculous. But I also

want to ask about what pop drummer drumming you grew up idolizing. It's a shame that musicians get pigeon-holed. You get pigeonholed as the prog guy, Lars gets pigeonholed as the metal guy... But when I talk with you guys, I always find that there's a side that doesn't get talked about.

MP: You're right! I do get pigeonholed for having the 100-piece drum kit, playing in a million different times signatures, and 20-minute songs. Yes that's a big part of what I did with Dream Theater, and still do with my more Prog-oriented bands like Transatlantic and NMB (Neal Morse Band), but if you look at The Winery Dogs everything is scaled down. When The Winery Dogs first came out 10 years ago, I came out of the gates just playing a five-piece Bonham-type kit just to show people that I'm not only about the giant kit. I have a strong appreciation for the pocket and playing for the song. That's the thing I love about The Winery Dogs. It's all about the songs. That is the focus first and foremost. Richie's vocals, our three-part harmonies, having catchy and

I'm not thinking about the drums, I'm thinking about everything. I'm thinking about what everybody else is playing.

hooky choruses, concise songwriting, and it is all done with great musicianship sprinkled in. It's a three-ring circus in terms of the instrumentation. If you listen to the drums, the guitar, or the bass you're going to be entertained. But at the end of the day, it's all about Richie's lead vocals and having hooks and catchy songs that people can remember. I can't overstate the importance of that. It's a huge part of what I love about music.

MD: How do you guys write?



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MP: All my different bands have different formulas but in Winery Dogs the three of us will get together in a very small room in Richie's house and we start bouncing ideas off of each other. A song can start with a guitar riff, a bass riff, or drum groove. They all inspire each other. Then we start piecing things together and arranging. In the case of this new third album *III*, once we had a musical arrangement down, we hit record. In some cases, the drum parts you're hearing were literally laid down on the same day the arrangement was put together. We record when the songs are very fresh, that's how I like to work. I don't like to overthink; I like to be in the moment and capture a musical spirit. In some cases, we would put together one, two, or three songs a day. Then we'll let those basic tracks simmer and Richie will go write the lyrics and the vocal melodies. Once he has that, Billy and I add our vocals and three-part

MD: Have you ever found yourself overthinking drum parts?

MP: With the stuff I've done in the last 12 years since Dream Theater, we don't have forever to work on recordings. You usually have a deadline, or a label wanting to get something out, or you have tour dates that you have to meet. Everything I've done recently is a little bit more regimented and scheduled than it was with Dream Theater. In the early days of Dream Theater, there were periods we didn't have a record deal, so we had two years to write an album. Sometimes we were looking for a record deal. In those cases, we had years and years to work and develop songs. You could tell that some of my drum parts were really developed because we had so much time. We spent an entire summer writing the song "Metropolis" because we had nothing but time. But that doesn't work at this point in my career when I have deadlines, tours, and many

MD: When Winery Dogs are writing, do you have a lot of input melodically and harmonically?

MP: The Winery Dogs, Richie is the lead singer, Billy and I are only doing harmonies. In the band Sons of Apollo I get very involved with the vocals, the melodic, and harmonic arrangements. It's different for every band because there are some bands where I sing more than others. In the Neal Morse Band, Transatlantic, and Flying Colors I sing a lot, sometimes even lead vocal parts. In those cases, I'm very involved with the melodies and the arrangements.

MD: You have mentioned a lot of different bands, how many bands are you balancing?

MP: At the moment, it's actually 10! (Laughs) Some are more active than others, but at the moment there's The Winery Dogs, Sons of Apollo, Transatlantic, Flying Colors, NMB (Neal Morse Band), Liquid Tension Experiment, Metal Allegiance, I just toured with John Petrucci's solo band, I just played a reunion show with Twisted Sister, and just recorded a new album with BPMD as well...so I think that's 10 at the moment! (Laughs)

MD: How do you deal with scheduling?

MP: Everyone always asks me how I remember all the music for the different bands. But sometimes the scheduling is more difficult than remembering the music. There's been times where I've literally jumped between three different bands in one week. I have even had to go from one band to another within a day. In some cases, those bands are playing two (or three) hour shows, so that's a lot of music. But to me that comes naturally, I have it all stored in my head.

MD: And the business and the scheduling...

MP: Scheduling can be difficult. Luckily, I'm in control of my own destiny, I'm my own manager so as soon as something comes in, I put it on the calendar. I'm very responsible with keeping an eye on my calendar. There are cases where you don't have so much control. When I was playing with Twisted Sister or Avenged Sevenfold, I was at the mercy of their schedule. But in most of the bands I just named, I usually have a level of control over my availability, so I must keep an eye on the calendar at all times.

MD: With all of those different bands

I have a strong appreciation for the pocket and playing for the song. That's the thing I love about The Winery Dogs. It's all about the songs.

harmonies. That's kind of "the formula" for The Winery Dogs.

MD: You just mentioned creating a drum track within minutes (or hours) of when you guys write a tune, and that you like to work that way. What happens when you don't work that way and you do get time to sit with a tune for a while?

MP: There is something to be said for laying down demos and letting everything develop. In the cases where I've done that, I have a little more chance to interact with the vocals, or step back and look at the big picture. So maybe a drum part will develop a little bit more because you can interact a little bit more. In the cases where I've written music and then didn't track my drums until weeks or sometimes months later, I've had the benefit of that. Honestly, I don't like overthinking things too much, sometimes you start to second guess things. I like to make a decision, commit to it, and move forward.

commitments. Some of my early drum parts with Dream Theater are the parts that most of my fans absolutely love. You look at somebody like Neil Peart, he is that kind of drummer and composer. He spent that amount of time developing every single nuance in a completely methodical way, so I see both sides.

MD: Did you ever have to pull yourself back and say I'm thinking way too much about this drum part?

MP: Oh yeah, absolutely! There have been moments when I'm trying to do something that's overly syncopated or clever and it's just not appropriate. It's like that great line from *Spinal Tap*, "There's a fine line between clever and stupid." Sometimes you overthink something because you're trying to be overly creative. In the later part of my career (and my older age) I've learned that the groove is the most important thing. You do that first and then you have the foundation to sprinkle the different things on top.

there *has* to be conflicts.

MP: It's not as bad as you would think. I'm very conscious of the scheduling situation. Neal Morse and I are in three different bands together, so that makes it easier. We determine early on, this year is going to be a Flying Colors cycle, or this year is going to be an NMB cycle. We're very conscious of flip-flopping the cycles between the bands.

MD: Is that how you envision it? You take a large block of time (a year or six

American tour in February March and April, then we're going to Brazil at the end of April, we come back for another American leg in May, then we go to Europe in June. It's very regimented.

MD: It's year to year and cycle to cycle. But what if someone wants to do a band cycle this year while you are in a Winery Dog cycle, what happens then?

MP: Then we have to talk about it. For example, Neal Morse understands that in 2023 I'm focused on The Winery Dogs.

ahead.

Also, just because I'm on the road with one band doesn't mean there's not activities happening with the others. For instance, the whole time I was out on this last John Petrucci tour I was overseeing the live Transatlantic package that was recently released, and I was overseeing the Winery Dogs packaging and mixes for this new record.

MD: You're a member of these bands, so it's not like someone else can sub on a Flying Colors gig.

MP: Out of all the bands I've named, the only one that could be subbed out would be Metal Allegiance. Metal Allegiance is very part time, we just do one-offs here and there. Even though I'm the only drummer on the studio albums, when it comes to Metal Allegiance live, Charlie Benante and Dave Lombardo have done shows both with me and without me as well. We kind of kind share the live duties, we can mix it up. But in all of the other bands we all have to work together and be conscious of the scheduling.

MD: Scheduling is everything! You said it perfectly when you said that playing the drum parts is sometimes the easy part, the scheduling is the tough part.

MP: One band we haven't even talked about is Liquid Tension Experiment (LTE.) When we get together in the studio, we're coming in empty handed and writing and recording spontaneously.

That is incredibly progressive and technical music with a lot of odd times and a lot of very deliberate and intricate drum parts. LTE combines the spontaneity with incredibly difficult parts that we have to nail in a very short period of time. That band is one of the more challenging ones that I'm a part of.

MD: When you're writing tunes like that are you charting stuff out are you or are you remembering it?

MP: I have books with all my charts but I don't usually write actual notation. The left side of the page will be the map of the arrangement (verse, pre-chorus, chorus, verse two, pre-chorus two, chorus two, instrumental...) The right side of the page will have a drum notation and what I should be playing for each section. For example, verse one I should be on the hi-hat, pre chorus go to the open hat, chorus go to the ride... I'll write little hints along the way. It's a very general arrangement map. If there's a lot of odd time signatures, I'll map out the patterns as well.



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months) and allot it to a band cycle of rehearse, record, and tour?

MP: Yeah, for instance I'm very focused on this upcoming Winery Dog cycle. I know Winery Dogs will be the focus for myself Billy and Richie for 2023, so we've blocked it out already. We have an

That puts NMB, Transatlantic, and Flying Colors off to the side for the year. But we think ahead and in between Winery Dog legs we might start writing and recording the next Neal Morse album. That record won't hit for nine months or a year, so you constantly have to think

What I play is always spontaneous, my fills from section to section are completely improvised. In the studio, sometimes I'll do maybe three or four takes and then I'll comp them and pick the fills I like. But those fills are never played again, because live my fills are pretty much spontaneous, moment to moment, night to night as well. A lot of the air drummers in the audience that learn my studio fills are usually pretty disappointed when I'm doing completely different fills live. (Laughs)

MD: So you would describe yourself as an improvisational based rock drummer?

MP: Absolutely!!!

MD: I've always wondered how much

how much planning and pre-thought goes into your drumming?

MP: It's all about feel for me. I have this reputation of being very technical because of the progressive music I've played. But to be honest, I am not technical at all, I'm actually the furthest thing from a technical drummer that you'll ever meet. I'm a "just get up there and feel it out" kind of drummer.

There were songs on this latest John Petrucci solo album and tour that were incredibly technical. His latest solo album was done right at the start of the pandemic, so he had drum machine programs for every song. When I'm a hired gun for a session or a tour, I'm

there to provide for the artist that's hiring me. In John's case I had to learn a lot of the programmed drum patterns for his songs. When we played live I had to respect the moments that he wanted very specific drum parts. There was a song on his latest album called the "Temple of Circadia" and there's a moment in the song before the first verse that only could have been written by a guitar player with a drum machine, *you know what I mean?* (Laughs) It is so unlike anything a drummer would have naturally come up with; the accents are in strange and weird places. Nailing it in the studio was a challenge but performing it every night was really



rough. I actually said to him, "Look there's a lot of drummers out there that could play this perfectly and would be able to nail this this pattern precisely."

I probably shouldn't even go there, but Mike Mangini is that type of drummer. I'm sure he would have nailed that part so completely accurately and consistently, but that's just not the type of drummer I am. I am a feel guy. Give me an eight-bar phrase and let me come up with something. What I play will not sound like a drum machine, it's gonna be completely about the feel, that's the type of drummer I am first and foremost. Even in my 25 years of playing incredibly technical and progressive Dream Theater

music, it always had to feel good to me first and foremost.

In the 25 years of Dream Theater, my reputation preceded me. I was seen as the giant drum kit guy. When we came out in the late 80s early 90s, music had gone the other way. We brought back the big over the top progressive songs and the big over the top drum kit. I remember playing drum festivals in the late 90s and I'd be there playing with legends that were heroes of mine like Steve Smith, Terry Bozzio, and Simon Phillips. I was the new kid on the block, they just knew my reputation for the giant drum kit. That reputation preceded me, and I felt very intimidated. I felt like I had to get out there and prove myself, it was scary to have to live up to that reputation.

MD: I know you play in a few bands with Billy Sheehan, and you guys sound fantastic together. Can you talk about playing with Billy and the drum and bass relationship?

MP: Playing with Billy is so much fun I really feel like we are a classic rhythm section together. I'll be honest with you, a lot of my other bands (especially Dream Theater) were kind of drum and guitar rhythm sections. I had that with Petrucci, but a lot of bands that have that: Eddie and Alex Van Halen, Dimebag and Vinnie Paul in Pantera, Lars Ulrich and James Hetfield in Metallica, there's something to be said for that drum and guitar rhythm section. But it wasn't until I started working with Billy that I really felt a strong connection with a bass player to create that traditional drum and bass rhythm section. Now Billy and I really have that. Billy's always been one of my favorite players. Once we started playing together, we really connected. It wasn't until after Dream Theater that he and I started doing a lot of other stuff together. First, we did a instrumental kind of fusion thing with PSMS which was Billy, Derek Sherinian, Tony Macalpine, and myself doing more fusion instrumental stuff. Then we went on to form The Winery Dogs with Richie. We also play together in Sons of Apollo, so Billy and I have multiple projects and bands and we play differently in each of them. Sons of Apollo is a very locked and loaded kind of band, Billy and I need to be very locked and very precise with them. Whereas The Winery Dogs is a lot more loosey-goosey. What Billy and I do with The Winery Dogs (especially live) is flying by the seat of our pants.

We were talking earlier about my fills always being spontaneous, well Billy's exactly the same. He's always right on the edge with me. There are at least a dozen moments at every Winery Dog show where Billy and I spontaneously play a fill together in unison. It's an unspoken thing, we're not working any of it out in advance, we're not discussing them, we literally are just jamming and feeling each other, Billy and I have that relationship more than any bass player that I work with, and I'm blessed to work with some great ones. I mean Pete Trewavas in Transatlantic is so great in the prog sense and he's an anchor. Playing with Dave LaRue in both Flying Colors and in John's Solo Band, working with Tony Levin in in LTE— he's one of the all-time greats. He can be completely locked in (like what he does with you know Peter Gabriel or Paul Simon,) but what he does with King Crimson and LTE is so improvisational. Some of the spontaneous jams I've had with Tony are so great. I'm blessed to really have worked with so many great bass players in my career.

MD: It's interesting that you drew a difference between the guitar and drum rhythm section and the guitar and bass rhythm section. Can you talk about the differences between the two?

MP: To come back to my relationship with John Petrucci specifically for the 25 years in Dream Theater; he and I were kind of the rhythm section, and it was a unique relationship. We were co-writers of all those Dream Theater songs as well as co-producers of all those albums. We had a very locked drum and rhythm guitar relationship. Getting to tour with him again this past year was our first time touring together since I left Dream Theater. Having that chemistry on stage with John again has been so great. The chemistry we had in Dream Theater, in LTE and even with his solo material is very much that great drum and guitar relationship.

MD: Speaking of relationships, we haven't mentioned the relationship with Neal Morse.

MP: Neal and I probably have the deepest music connection of all, and he's neither a guitar player nor a bass player. I think we have made almost 50 albums together. Together we have NMB, Transatlantic, Flying Colors, and we also have Yellow Matter Custard. I also did almost all of his solo albums as a hired gun. He and I have an incredibly deep



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musical relationship. All these bands (and people) are about collaboration. It's all about the musical chemistry with the people.

MD: Do you ever think about the drum and keyboard rhythm section?

MP: Neal and I have to have a different musical relationship in each band. In the Neal Morse Band he's obviously the leader, he's the biggest contributor to the music, and he's front and center. The rest of us are working with him. But he and I are more equal collaborators in Transatlantic, because we're co-leaders of the band. He and I actually share the front of the stage in that band. We share the vocals and co-lead the band. In Flying Colors, he and I are together in the back. It's different because we're supporting players to Casey's lead vocals, and Steve Morse and Dave Larue's instrumentation. The sign of a great relationship is when you can adapt to different roles and different chemistries.

MD: That's also the trait of a great musician.

MP: Then there's my hired gun side where I have toured or played shows with bands like Avenged Sevenfold, Twisted Sister, Stone Sour, Fates Warning, Overkill, and as a hired gun on John Petrucci solo tours. As a hired gun I'm there to literally play drums and provide a service. I enjoy that side as well.

MD: These days we all must wear all sorts of different hats. Not many successful musicians today are "just" wearing one hat.

MP: You're right! I like all of the hats equally.

MD: How about remembering all these bands' music?

MP: I have been blessed with an elephant's memory. That pisses off all the band members I'm in bands with. (Laughs) I don't have a photographic memory, but once I play something live it's in the vault for life. If I've played it live or if I've written and recorded it in the studio, it's in there. The only times I really have to do homework for a gig is if it's a hired gun gig and I didn't play on the studio version. In those cases, I'll really have to do some homework and prep.

Back in Dream Theater I used to write a different set list for every show. A lot of times the other guys would have to spend a tremendous amount of time learning this stuff and preparing it. For our 20th anniversary tour I wanted to put the very first song that we wrote as

teenagers at Berklee into the set. It was a song called "Another Won" and we hadn't played it since we were 18 years old. I literally showed up to the first rehearsal 20 years later and just played it from memory.

MD: Let's talk about some Winery Dogs tunes from the new record *III*, "Xanadu" is the first single, can you give me some background about that?

MP: That was one of the first ones that came together during the writing. With "Xanadu" we put the music together and went off and had dinner. Then Billy and I went back to our hotel and Richie went back to his house. That night, Richie was inspired to lay down some melodies and vocals. The next day he picked us up from the hotel and played us the vocal tracks. In a lot of cases what you're hearing on the album are Richie's vocals from the very first night of tracking. "Xanadu" was almost completed right there and then. It's kind of a shredder and a barn burner, it's got a lot of unison

Prince vibe to him, and Billy is a big fan of that Motown kind of sound and style. "Mad World" falls into that school. I get to lay it down in more of a Chad Smith way. That song is all about the hook and the and the chorus, I'm just laying down the foundation and grooving.

MD: How about "Pharaoh"?

MP: "Pharaoh" is literally the first thing we jammed on during these sessions. The vocals didn't come together until much later. "Pharaoh" starts as a traditional Winery Dog song, but the last half of the back end is completely improvised and jammed. That is something that we do live a lot, we'll have these extended jams that change from night to night. The second half of "Pharaoh" and "The Red Wine" are two examples where we just literally jammed in the studio, and we left it all in. What you're hearing is the three of us in a room together completely and spontaneously creating a song.

MD: What's a "typical" Winery Dogs



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parts between Billy and Richie it's a good first impression after being away for many years.

MD: How about "Mad World"?

MP: "Mad World" is the second single. It comes from more of the funky R&B side that Richie brings to the band. Billy does that very well too. Richie's got a funky

song?

MP: Typical Winery Dogs songs have Richie's vocals as the spotlight, big three-part vocal harmony choruses, and a serious groove for the verses. I think the classic Winery Dog songs are songs like "Desire," "Elevate," "Oblivion," "Captain Love," and from this album "Mad World,"

and “Xanadu.”

MD: Tell me about “Breakthrough”?

MP: “Breakthrough” is going to be the third single. To my ears and from my perspective we are tapping into more of a Foo Fighters thing. I get into a Taylor Hawkins-Dave Grohl vibe, it’s kind of hooky chorus but the verses are kind of four on the floor pocket things. I love Taylor Hawkins and losing him was so tragic, but I also love Dave Grohl as a drummer, I think people forget what a legendary drummer he is.

MD: How about “Rise”?

MP: “Rise” is a bit of a Chili Pepper vibe. As far as the drumming goes, there’s a nuance at the very end. There’s a pattern that’s reoccurs throughout the main riff of the song, but at the end I mess with it and give two extra sets of fives within the pattern of constant threes. It’s at the very end of the song, just when you thought you’ve got the pattern down it’s a little nuance to kind of mess with the drummers.

MD: There’s nothing wrong with that! What about “Stars”?

MP: “Stars” is a really vibey song with a long extended middle guitar solo that really builds and breaks down to just me and Billy in a groove. We take our time to develop into a really long extended solo. “Stars” is one of my favorites on the album because it really builds. I remember playing some cool Pink Floyd *Live at Pompeii* jams for the guys and suggesting that we should try to build something like this. I pulled up a few more musical references as examples of letting everything breathe, build, and develop.

MD: Do you bring in a lot of musical references when you’re recording?

MP: I do that constantly. I think it sometimes bothers some guys when I point out a musical reference, because (in their eyes) it distracts them to the point that the reference is in their head. But I think one of my fortes and strengths is the fact that I’m such a fan and I have this rock encyclopedia in my brain to draw from. You can throw out anything by Zeppelin, The Stones, or anyone else and I can reference it. Almost every song has been written a zillion times over, you can only do so much with 12 notes. I have a constant musical frame of reference. Sometimes it does annoy the other band members, and I have to pull it back and not point stuff out in order to let something grow, develop, and become something of

its own. Different strokes for different folks. When we were doing “Xanadu” on this album I couldn’t believe that Richie didn’t know the Rush song of the same name, but he didn’t, that’s fine.

MD: How about “The Vengeance”?

MP: “The Vengeance” is another one in the Foo Fighters realm. Straight ahead with a really strong hooky chorus.

MD: How about “Gaslight”? I know you’re an old movie nut, did that come from the old film *Gaslight*?

MP: No. “Gaslight” was my choice to

“Gaslight” was my choice to open the record. It’s the most barn burning of all the tracks on the album. It comes out of the gate just swinging with a million notes.

open the record. It’s the most barn burning of all the tracks on the album. It comes out of the gate just swinging with a million notes. It’s a very fast old school Alex Van Halen double bass shuffle kind of thing. Like “Hang ‘em High” or “I’m the One.” It will probably open the live show. It’s just one of those barnburners from the tradition of “Oblivion” from our previous album.

MD: So it didn’t come from the old movie? (Laughs)

MP: No, but movies are my biggest passion besides music. I have my own home theater, and I’m a HUGE movie fan.

MD: The last song I want to ask you about is the ballad “Lorelei”?

MP: That’s a side of The Winery Dogs that I love. The first album had “Damaged” and “Regret” both of which are great ballads. So “Lorelei” is kind of the ballad for this album. I just pull it back and play for the song, it’s all about the groove, pocket, and being as tasty as possible. I’m trying not to crash as much as possible. In fact, now that I’ve listened to the final, this is one of those cases where

if I had a little more time to think it over, I probably would have crashed less. When you’re playing a ballad, sometimes the big challenge is not hitting every downbeat.

I recently discovered that there’s literally two crashes on the Stones song “Honky Tonk Woman.” There’s a crash at the very entrance after the cowbell, and Charlie doesn’t crash again until the very final crash of the song.

MD: That is a great example of restraint by Charlie Watts sometimes restraint can be an incredibly tasty musical tool. Are you still using a small kit in the The Winery Dogs?

MP: The configuration I’m using for this tour is the same configuration that I had on the John Petrucci solo tour. It’s a single kick with two Octobans and a 10” as my rack toms, so it’s really only three small toms up front, and 14 and 16” floor toms. It’s a smaller setup and much smaller drums. I love having the Octos as my first two rack toms, it’s a lot of fun and a very unique sound. My 14” Melody Master snare is my main snare and my 12” Melody Master is on the side.

The touring kit is part of the Acrylic Star Classic kit that Tama made for me back in 2007. I still get a lot of mileage out of it whenever I can. I used the whole kit with Avenged Sevenfold, Twisted Sister, and Adrenaline Mob. I scale it down and use it with The Winery Dogs and John Petrucci. I like mixing and matching kits. I still use a big kit for Sons of Apollo and Twisted Sister. But I like mixing it up from band to band and project to project, it inspires me. Every time I get behind a different kit it’s inspires me to approach things a little differently.

MD: After The Winery Dogs cycle what’s coming up in the future?

MP: The Winery Dogs is the focus for 2023, but there is a live Transatlantic release coming out in 23, and there will be some live Neal Morse band stuff in 23. There is always new stuff in the pipeline, but as far as touring it’s all Winery Dogs for 2023. I have a little hole in the summer where Billy has stuff with Mr. Big. So there’s a situation where I know I’ll have a window at the end of the summer to be free to do some studio stuff or do a tour. That’s how you do it, you put stuff in the calendar, and you fill in the blanks.

Check out Mike’s drummer profile page, at modern drummer.com



Mark Pusey

Ed Sheeran's Rhythmic Conscience

By Bob Girouard

If there was a singular word that could describe Mark Pusey it would be "hungry." His appetite for drums and those who play them is nothing short of immense. Moreover, his ability to articulate the aspects of contemporary drumming in today's world is impressive. His knowledge of the instrument, its power, and subtleties, only further accentuates his excellent drumming.

For the past 11 years Pusey has held the groove behind pop phenom, Ed Sheeran. Their collaboration began innocently enough jamming in a UK pub. They graduated to clubs, theaters, to the present, where they hold-court in stadiums world-wide. Sheeran's appeal can be defined as representing the "every man or woman," while his true magnetism comes from his songwriting and charismatic videos which often convey love in its various forms in the 21st Century. Pusey accompanies Ed Sheeran perfectly. Together they bend styles and genres, and whether a chorus kicks into high gear or they pull a verse back in tempo, Sheeran and Pusey mesh perfectly (a la Elton John and Nigel Olsson).

One of the primary keys to Pusey's popularity is his versatility. And the following is just a brief array of artists he's backed live or in the studio: Ed Sheeran, Tom Jones, Olly Murs, Sarah Brightman, Leona Lewis, Ronan Keating, Dr. John, Hilary Duff, and Nina Nesbitt. Musically, Mark is equally at home in the recording studio as he is in a concert setting. Mark is playing on several movie soundtracks including, *Argyle* with Henry Cavill, *Back to Black* (a biopic on Amy Winehouse), *Wicked* (Jeff Goldblum and Ariana Grande), and last year's *Rocket Man* with Elton John, which won an Oscar for best original song. Remarkably, early successes have not spoiled Mark. In fact, it's quite the opposite. His desire to share his good fortune with others in the musical community he serves, is clearly in evidence. In all, Mark Pusey, has the soul of a veteran, but he retains the youthful passion and enthusiasm of a drummer who is "still a kid at heart." *Modern Drummer* caught up with him in the UK for this interview.





David Phillips music-images.co.uk

MD: Your mention in 2018 in a *Music Radar* interview of “having more skills that you need for the job” is completely on the money. As you work with a variety of artists do you find that still rings true?

MP: Yeah, I think it’s absolutely true. I think it is important to be over-qualified for the job. I think of it as having more headroom to achieve results sought. Say you are in a car, and it goes 65 on the freeway and is at the edge of its capabilities. Conversely, if you’re in a car that can go 200 mph 65 feels like a breeze. Meaning you have additional capability if you need it. If you apply it to a gig, you have energy in reserve to deal with the unknown, so to speak. It makes the easy stuff look easier.

MD: Would you say that versatility is your greatest attribute as a drummer?

MP: I think so. And I think it is the thing that I’m most proud of. I’ve always marveled at my favorite drummers being on so many and so varied records, stylistically. Guys like Carlos Vega playing on a Latin album, with Larry Carlton, on a power ballad by Whitney Houston, or with Dave Grusin and Lee Ritenour playing insane jazz fusion. That is what a complete drummer was to me. Growing up, all I wanted to do was play. On Monday, I’d perform with the town brass band. On Tuesday, I was in a garage band with my friends playing Oasis covers, Beatles, or Stones. The next night, I would be playing in a swing band. That is how I developed my versatility.

MD: Your early influences were Carter Beauford, Carlos Vega, and Jeff Porcaro. They all have/had exceptional chops and a great feel. Not to mention the player’s player, Gregg Bissonette, who mentored you as well?

MP: Initially, Gregg was teaching in Winchester in an artist in residence program. Gregg is the king of versatility and playing in any musical setting. For example, his first gig was playing big band music with Maynard Ferguson, his second gig was with David Lee Roth, and of course for some time now he’s been playing with Ringo Starr and his All-Star Band. I always think of Gregg when it comes to energy and adding human qualities to any situation.

MD: What is it like to continuously play



nothing but stadiums? Currently you are out on a world tour, can you talk about the physicality needed to stay consistent, and the dynamic range of playing such large venues?

MP: I'm playing harder than I ever have on Ed's gigs. There are few dynamics and nuances in stadiums. Ghost notes, for example, are bouncing off 300 speakers in front of 110,000 people with a wall of sound...no articulation, just noise. The physicality involved, comes from what you need to deliver every night. I go to the gym most days, especially every day we're on tour. If the gig requires big energy, it's about the sound, the look, and the consistency at a peak level.

MD: Currently, on this tour are you using electronics or mainly acoustic or a

Mark's Gear: Ed Sheeran Stadium Tour

DW Drums: SCC custom shell build,

maple, gum, mahogany

8 x 10

9 x 12

16 x 16

18 x 22 kick

7 x 13 or 14 Brass snare

7 x 12 Purple Heart Snare

Custom matte black finish with black nickel DW hardware.

All 9000 series parts and pedals

Custom DW rack built and designed alongside Simon Jayes from London Drum Company

Zildjian Cymbals:

18" K Custom Special Dry Crash, w/8"

spiral stacker on top

8" Trashformer Splash

18" K Cluster Crash

14" K Sweet Hats/Fat Hats

21" K Custom Organic Ride

20" K Cluster Crash

18" Prototype K Crash

20" K Custom Special Dry Heavy Crash

Vic Firth Sticks: 5B

Remo Heads: Ebony Emperor on toms, Black Suede Ambassadors on snares, PS3's on kicks.

Roland Electronics, Porter & Davies BC2 Tactile Throne, **Protection Racket** Cases, **Gruv-X** Clicks and Jingles.

combination of both?

MP: Mainly acoustic. DW drums, who I've been with for about 15-years now. I really do believe they are the best drums in the world. Because of the nature of a show in the round, Ed is in the middle, and the band is on satellite stages positioned around him. The band is facing inwards among the audience. I needed drums that would have tons of immediate attack, punch, articulation, clarity, and not loads of boom. DW built a kit tailored to that specific need. I'm also using Roland electronics and triggers on the drumkit to achieve the sounds from the recording. There are no clicks or tracks on this gig. So, it is the ability to play every single sound, while timekeeping remains paramount. The adrenaline that is running through your veins with 110,000 people counting off a song is absolutely insane. You really must have your wits about you!

MD: Tell me about your first kit?

MP: My first kit was three piece Beverly (by Premier) with a Pearl Export snare drum. A few birthdays later, I augmented my snare with a Ludwig Supra-Phonic #400. I'm really sad because the Beverly kits are really sought after in the U.K. I often wonder what happened to my old kit...they were truly special.

MD: Did your parents play a major role in helping you nurture your craft?

MP: That's absolutely right. I owe them everything. For example, my dad practically criss-crossed the country so I could attend a clinic by Ricky Lawson. I was born in London, but raised in the country about 4 hours away. One day he drove four hours to London, watched the clinic which finished at 10:30, then drove the four-hour trip home again. He did the same thing the next day! I still remember the sight of my parents schlepping my drums to gigs in the back of their car before I was old enough to drive!

MD: Now that you have Ed Sheeran's drum chair for 11 years, I would say that your versatility is being held in high regard. For example, I don't know many players that can effortlessly go from Ed Sheeran to Tom Jones? How did the audition with Ed come about?

MP: It wasn't so much an audition. It's weird going from Ed to Tom Jones, although both are in the "pop" vein. I was playing with Olly Murs at the time, and my friend, Chris, who is a guitarist, and I went out to the pub one night and caught up with Ed. After Ed's show,

we went to Chris's flat where we were goofing around, singing, playing, and I was drumming on whatever I could get my hands on. Ed said, "Man this is cool...let's do something." I really didn't think anything more of it at the time, but Ed starting doing stuff. He did a "Live Lounge" and we came in on that. I'm just grateful that every time he needs support... it's just been us for the last 11 years.

I still remember the sight of my parents schlepping my drums to gigs in the back of their car before I was old enough to drive!

MD: I'm curious as to the magnetic force contained in Ed Sheeran that draws millions to his music?

MP: When you figure it out let me know because I want to bottle it, or at least keep some for myself! Ed is an incredible human being, he has a strong foundation, gives a lot to charities, and loves the idea of kids getting into music.

MD: He seems so unassuming, so normal...he doesn't seem like a rock-star.

MP: Not at all. He works very hard. An example would be that for every hit song he's written, there's three or four hundred other songs that nobody will ever hear. His "practice" is writing songs. He's all about life experience in songs like "Thinking out Loud," "Perfect," and "Visiting Hours." He has these benchmarks as he goes through his own life, capturing them so perfectly that people adapt those benchmarks to their

own lives. It's incredible that he's able to capture those moments like he does.

MD: Let us look back a bit. Who or what drew you to the instrument?

MP: The truth is we were on holiday in the park, and the guy who was cool and all the girls fancied him, played drums in the house band. One night over dinner, he announced that there was a kid in the audience (about 9-10 years old) who was going to sit in on the drums. He came and played the Motown classic, "My Girl" on his cherry red Yamaha's and people went crazy. I turned around to my mother and said, "Mom... I want to do that!" Maybe it was the adulation he received from the crowd, and that it looked so effortless for him...but that did it for me!

MD: Are you self-taught or did you receive instruction?

MP: Again, my parents did everything they could to get me good instruction. I had a paper route so I could buy *Modern Drummer* as well as various music books recommended by my teachers at the time. I would go to gigs and just hang-out. I had a serious hunger toward the drums.

MD: The pandemic caused all of us to reassess our positions in life, so to speak. Over the pond, I'm sure things were difficult especially for artists, with all the lockdown going on? Your outside hobbies included deep sea diving and



David Phillips music-images.co.uk

lifeboat rescue squad. An unusual choice for a rock 'n roll drummer?

MP: It really was difficult. I volunteered for the RNLI (Royal National Lifeboat Institution). They are basically a part of the Coast Guard in the UK. I was assigned to work on the Thames River, and during the pandemic that is what I was doing... Pulling people out of the river. With the multitude of psychological issues people were jumping off bridges, and I didn't touch the drums for about six weeks. In England everything was shut down, with gig cancellations running rampant. We watched the music industry collapse right in front of us. Looking back now,

I still have friends who were excellent musicians that gave up on pursuing music (career wise) due to the intensity of it all.

MD: What kind of an approach do you take when working with a new artist vs. an established one?

MP: I think there is a lot to be said about emotional intelligence...how you deal with people. In terms of drums, whether new artist or established, I always go in over prepared, and learn as much of their catalogue as I can. Over preparedness means you give a damn about that artist and the level of homework I do is consistently high. For example, with a singer/songwriter I ask for a lyric sheet. The extra step you take means you care about them and their music.

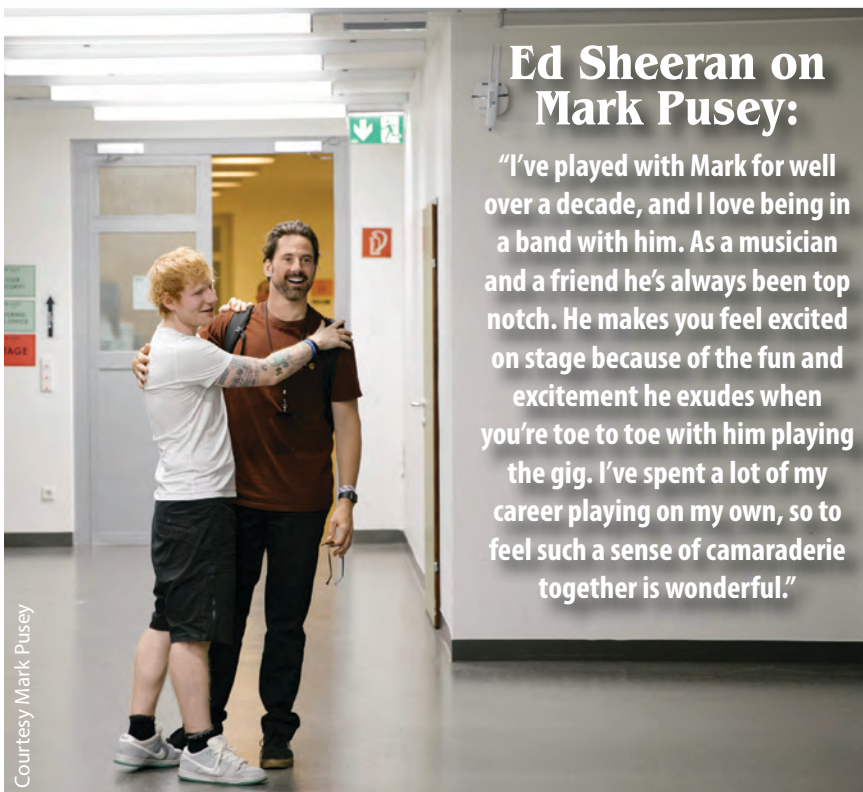
MD: Do you have a warm-up routine before hitting the stage?

MP: A few rudiments, flam taps, just getting the blood moving in the hands because these Ed Sheeran stadium shows are very heavy hitting. I'm hitting the kit really hard. Warm-up wise, I'm making sure that everything is loose. I use technique vs. muscle to get the message across.

MD: Mark, your enthusiasm for all things drums is infectious. You are old-school in your work ethic and new school in your attitude.

MP: Without being too cheesy about it, you want to inspire. My heroes were super cool with me, spending time with me, answering my questions and showing me things. I'm here standing on the backs of those who helped me get to where I am today. Now it's my job to help the next generation to excel.

Check out Mark's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com



Courtesy Mark Pusey

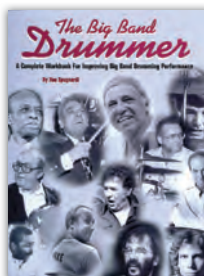
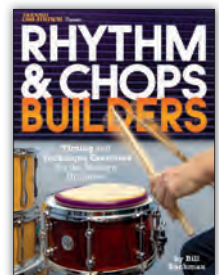
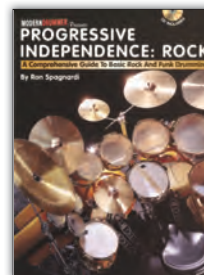
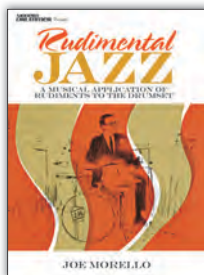
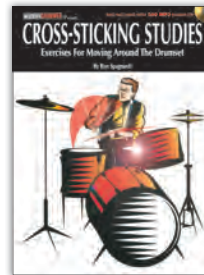
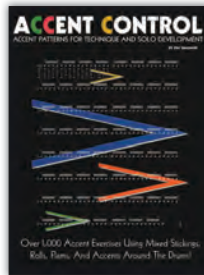
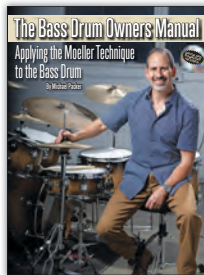
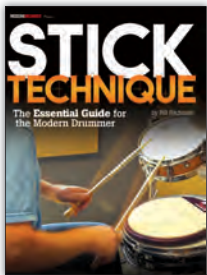
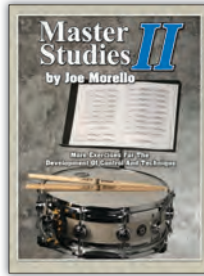
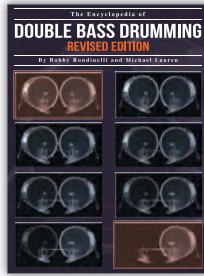
Ed Sheeran on Mark Pusey:

"I've played with Mark for well over a decade, and I love being in a band with him. As a musician and a friend he's always been top notch. He makes you feel excited on stage because of the fun and excitement he exudes when you're toe to toe with him playing the gig. I've spent a lot of my career playing on my own, so to feel such a sense of camaraderie together is wonderful."

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Joe McCarthy

The New York Afro Bop Alliance Big Band

The Pan American Nutcracker Suite

By Bob Girouard



What's a Connecticut Yankee doing residing in Little Havana (Miami, Florida)? Most likely teaching, winning Grammys, and leading an innovative, ground-breaking ensemble called New York Afro Bop Alliance Big Band.

Like many, Joe McCarthy sought refuge from NYC due to the severity of the pandemic. That being said, McCarthy is in no way a trend follower. In fact, he remains ten steps ahead of the musical curve. He is literally immersing himself into the Hispanic and Afro-Cuban cultures and gathering a set of impressive teaching and performance credentials along the way. As the winner of a Latin Jazz Album of the Year at the 9th Annual Latin Grammy® Awards in 2008, The Afro Bop Alliance Big Band has been featured at such halls of higher education as: The University of Texas Arlington, The University of Central Oklahoma, Rowan University, Shenandoah Conservatory, Florida Atlantic University, Georgetown University, George Mason University, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Washington College, and West Chester University. The music of The New York Afro Bop Alliance Big Band is also featured in McCarthy's educational Afro-Cuban big band play-along series published by Alfred Music.

After ten stellar recordings leading his Afro Bop Alliance Big Band separating McCarthy from the rest of the pack is easy. With this most recent recording, he's willing to carve out new territory in an idiom known for its beauty, but also its immobility...classical music. Enter the iconic "Nutcracker Suite," Tchaikovsky's ode to symphonic magnificence and ballet dancers world-wide. In this case, McCarthy and writing partner Vince Norman have conjoined African, Cuban, Caribbean, and Brazilian rhythms and melodies and integrated them into the original Nutcracker score. *The Pan American Nutcracker Suite* not only succeeds, but the entire effort shines. McCarthy has excellent chops, and gauges his playing like his idol, the late Mel Lewis. His rhythms are flawless and fit perfectly while either grooving in the middle of the mix, allowing his horn men maximum solo space, or playing his own brief, but innovative, solos. Given the many styles of music involved, McCarthy is the perfect fit.

The Pan American Nutcracker Suite is a winner on several fronts—newcomers to classical music will be introduced to the world-renowned tradition of The Nutcracker and its infectious melodies, fans of classical music are introduced to the Latin American rhythms that McCarthy and his band intersperse, and everyone will learn about the sheer power of a big band. It is all too good to ignore. Simply put, this deep musical endeavor is a great concept that features a very versatile drummer and a cast of great players. *Modern Drummer* recently sat down with McCarthy to discuss the joys and complexities of this new project, and contemporary big band lore.

MD: What an innovative move it is to fuse Latin jazz and classical music. How did the concept for *The Pan American Nutcracker Suite* evolve?

JMC: It really started right before the pandemic. I came up with the idea when sleeping, (or better yet *not sleeping*.) My writing partner, Vince Norman and I work well together and when I convey an idea to him he can create it quickly. I actually came up with the grooves first, then we wrote two or three movements and they sat dormant for a while. With the virus hitting as hard as it did, we all had time to think. My friend, Tim Ishii, Director of Jazz Studies at the University of Texas (Arlington,) commissioned Vince and myself to complete the suite so he could showcase it with his college band. Then we kicked everything into high gear and wrote six more movements over two months.

MD: You're obviously in this for the long-haul, you have released many recordings of the Afro Bop Alliance Big Band, won a Grammy in 2008 for best Latin Jazz Album, and were nominated for another in 2008. That recording *The Caribbean Jazz Project*— Afro Bop Alliance also featured the late, great, vibraphonist, Dave Samuels. Does Latin music allow you the flexibility that other genres don't?

JMC: I think the one thing about the genre's appeal to me, is that it represents a melting-pot of so many different styles. When you check out African drumming, Bata drumming, and all the stuff that's NOT drum set oriented; you begin to understand that this language is so internal to these musicians. Even though I've been classically trained in percussion, the music and the tradition is much too broad in scope to ignore.

MD: Regarding "The Nutcracker," how did the arranging process (by yourself and writing partner Vince Norman,) work to adapt the original music to the Afro

Caribbean ensemble?

JMC: We've been writing for this band for quite a while. One of the things that's been most consistent is we're constantly changing things. Everybody who's a member of our ensemble is deep into and comfortable with the whole 'clave' thing. As the band has grown in size, we try to bring the musical elements in that will best serve a particular song.

MD: What was it about the piece that made you pick "The Nutcracker"?

JMC: I played the classical version many times when I was younger. The orchestral version and the ballet are both wonderful. Frankly, I felt we could come up with something completely different. I think that's probably the best

way to explain it. Yesterday, I was in NYC, and we put strings on the album. Now we have both an orchestral version and one with modern dance. We've acquired an agent in Los Angeles, and we think we're going to have a very busy touring season next year.

MD: Was the educational and holiday perspective a factor?

JMC: Yes, definitely.

MD: Musically speaking, you have a killer horn section that can go from a whisper to a roar in a matter of seconds. They are all great soloists and you have a super rhythm section. Has time together helped you tighten up the ensemble, or do you do a lot of rehearsing?

JMC: There was no rehearsals for the *Nutcracker* recording. That was possible due to the amazing talents and musicality of the players involved. During this past season we did a short holiday tour. In terms of personnel, yes the rhythm section is outstanding. Our bassist, Boris Kozlov is probably one of the finest musicians I've worked with, and Luis Perdomo is one of the greatest pianists in the world. Samuel Torres is an amazing percussionist as well as composer. The lead trumpet player is Nick Marchione, plus we have guitarist Vinnie Valentino, who has worked with Steve Smith for many years, Vinnie is also a close friend. Playing with these guys is easy because they, and the entire band, have enormous depth.

MD: How difficult is it to merge big band swing and Latin Jazz...and keep them both authentic?

JMC: To me, when I think of swing, I don't think of "jazz." Swing is more of a concept. In other words, you can listen to a Beethoven symphony and it can swing. Heck, Bach can swing. In my opinion, when everyone on the bandstand is interpreting on the same platform. That's when it swings. The feels and nuances are different, and it's up to the individual musician to master them.



Andrew James

Frankly, I felt we could come up with something completely different. I think that's probably the best way to explain it.

MD: Particularly impressive is how you thread the needle on Nutcracker favorites, "March," "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairies," "Trepak" with a nice drum solo intro, and "Waltz of the Flowers." You allow the entire brass section to cut loose and feature soloists before heading back to the head of the song. Is that improvised or all pre-written?

JMC: None of the solos were pre-written. They were all improvised. Actually, when I moved to New York from Washington D.C. I found that sometimes rehearsing with high level players can backfire. It wasn't until the day of the Nutcracker recording session that we decided who was going to play what solo. We wanted to make sure everyone who wanted to, could really "blow" on the recording.

MD: Do you conduct from the drum chair?

JMC: When we tour, we do not use a conductor. However, in the studio on The Nutcracker Suite, Vince (Norman), decided to quasi-conduct. That meant he was cuing people coming in and out of solos, etc. The only thing he did conduct was the beginning of "The Waltz" movement.

MD: Let's talk about Joe McCarthy—How did you come-up as a drummer?

JMC: I came up playing drums and percussion. I grew up in Connecticut, and started lessons with Art Coretta who played with singer/actress, Rosemary Clooney. After High School graduation, I studied at The Hartt School of Music, and also studied with Ed Soph, who had a profound influence on me. I decided to get my Master's degree and continued with Ed, who holds is a Professor in the Jazz Studies and Performance Divisions of the College of Music at the University of North Texas.

MD: You come from a long-held tradition of drummer/ big band leaders: like Chick Webb, Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Mel

I feel like being a band leader is about showcasing the skills of the musicians in the band as opposed to showing off my own chops.

as musicians but instead are trained as "knuckleheads that hit things," it ends up being a problem. Reading charts is a very important skill, and a lot more difficult than people think. You have to *know* the language before you can *interpret* anything.

MD: Nowadays, operating and maintaining a big band is an enormous expense. How do you make it work and deliver the goods?

JMC: One of the reasons my wife and I started our own record label (Angel Face Records) was we wanted more control of the business end. As far as "delivering the goods," I feel like being a band leader is about showcasing the skills of the musicians in the band as opposed to showing off my own chops. I think its much more of a challenge to put emphasis on what you play (or don't play) to make other people play better.

MD: What's your next project?

JMC: I'm working on a record with a pianist in NYC named Hector Martignon. We're in the early stages, and he has a concept that Dvorak used, "Dispatch from the New World." It's another classically influenced piece music drawn upon styles from all over the world. We're working on grooves and melodies at present, the whole thing is just beautiful.

MD: What gear are you using?

JMC: Yamaha drums and hardware, 18" bass drum, 12" rack, 14" floor, and a 6½ wood snare. My sticks are Vic Firth MJC #2 model. I use Remo Coated Ambassador heads.

My cymbals are Zildjian 22" hammered China, 22" Constantinople, 14" hi-hats, and 16" fast crash. My various percussion instruments are all made by Latin Percussion.

Check out Joe's drummer profile page, at moderndrummer.com



Lewis, and Louie Bellson, etc. Do you feel that there's more pressure to deliver on you as a drummer since you are coming from that tradition, musically speaking?

JMC: There is one major musical thing that I learned in college. It's extremely important for musicians to understand how to *interpret* a piece of music. This is especially important for drummers. For example, when drummers aren't trained





Thorvaldur Örn Kristmundsson

Sigtryggur Baldursson

Sugarcube Drumming, Innovative Dialog

By Mark Griffith

Some drummers don't need an introduction, and some *might*. Let me introduce everyone to Sigtryggur Baldursson. In the late 70s, 80s and into the early 90s there was some extremely creative pop music being made. Bands like Jellyfish, XTC, Siouxsie and the Banshees, The Sugarcubes, Japan, The Creatures, Big Country, and Level 42 never became as big as they should have. But many of these bands had great drummers (and musicians) that went on to other gigs and other successes.

The Sugarcubes didn't sound like any other band. Their success introduced us to Bjork, but the drummer in the band was equally as exciting and creative. Sigtryggur Baldursson was that drummer. His playing was quirky, and he didn't sound like any other drummer at the time. However, (in time) I had forgotten about The Sugarcubes and their unique drummer.

In the early 2000s someone told me about a record called *Dialog* by a band called Steintryggur. It was a band of two drummers recorded in Iceland and Holland with all sorts of special guest musicians. The drummers were Steingrímur Guðmundsson playing mostly Tabla, and Sigtryggur Baldursson playing drums, percussion, and programming. I adored and devoured *Dialog* and jumped back into my "Siggi" (as

he is known) obsession. I bought many of the other records he had been playing on and was equally as excited by his drumming as I had been back in the 80s and 90s. His playing was still very special and uniquely quirky.

Eventually I wondered if I could find him for an interview, I had no luck. In a recent conversation with Butch Vig, Siggi's name actually came up in passing. Then when Peter Erskine sent me some pictures of a recent session in Iceland, one of the people in the picture was listed as Sigtryggur Baldursson. I asked Peter if he had any contact info for this person from the session, and within a day or so Siggi and I were in a Zoom conversation.

Sigtryggur Baldursson is much, much more than the old drummer from The Sugarcubes. After they disbanded, he became a respected session drummer, loop creator, producer, soundtrack composer, and a solo artist. Today, he holds a highly respected job as the Managing Director of the Icelandic Music Offices under the direction of the Icelandic Ministry of Culture and Business. If that sounds important, it is!!! Iceland (and the other Nordic countries) do a great deal to support the arts, and Sigtryggur Baldursson is in the middle of it all.

MD: I wondered if we could talk a little bit about your drumming before The Sugarcubes, your drumming in The Sugarcubes, and then talk about everything that you had been doing since. Were you one of the founders of The Sugarcubes?

SB: I played with two of The Sugarcubes members in another band called KUKL before The Sugarcubes. KUKL started in 83, our music was released in England by Crass Records. Crass was sort of a political arm of the punk movement in England. They were real anarchists who lived on a little farm, grew their own food, and released a lot of political jargon. But they also released some interesting music. They liked the members of our Icelandic collective, and they liked what us weird kids from Iceland were doing. Actually, KUKL's singer named Einar Orn became friendly with them, and they became very interested in Einar's connections with the Icelandic music scene. All of the members of KUKL came out of a very interesting Icelandic music scene that started in 1980 and 81. Three of the members of KUKL went on to start The Sugarcubes. The early 80's music scene that lead to KUKL is all documented in a 1982 film called *Rock in Reykjavik* by one of Iceland's most famous film directors named Fridrik Fridriksson.

The members of The Sugarcubes were all in separate bands in the early 80's, and most of the people that ended up in The Sugarcubes are in that film. If you look at the roots of the Icelandic music scene, our generation was very intelligent and active in shaping that sound. But even before The Sugarcubes fame, there was a jazz funk band called Mezzoforte who had an instrumental single called "Garden Party" in 1984.

MD: I remember them, I didn't know they were from Iceland.

SB: Mezzoforte were special, they were jazz players. Me and my bandmates were all a part of the music scene in Iceland that blossomed in the early 80s. It was called "post punk," and suddenly everybody was in a band whether they could play instruments or not. It was an explosive art and music scene. That was a healthy thing that the punk movement did, it was inclusive, people felt empowered to go out and do something. We all did that and we became part of a scene with young poets and literature types and mixed

with musicians and music people. We formed an art collective called Bad Taste in 1986. We wanted to shake up the Icelandic art world a little bit, and we started handing out these Bad Taste awards to people that had positions of power and were the gatekeepers in the art world. KUKL had done some playing in Europe and the UK at the height of the industrial movement in Germany when people were building their own instruments and making a lot of interesting noise in the art world.

MD: I think it's interesting that you speak so much about being a part of a collective scene because that seems to be missing. There are regional scenes in music but I'm not sure how many national scenes there are left. Can you

All of the members of KUKL came out of a very interesting Icelandic music scene that started in 1980 and 81. Three of the members of KUKL went on to start The Sugarcubes.

talk about being the part of a scene?

SB: I'm sure there are scenes today, but maybe not in the way that it was back then. Iceland is a small community; we have 350,000 people in the whole nation. But in those days Reykjavik was a very small town with an explosive music scene.

There was a decision made by the collective that we needed to form a pop band for the collective to make some money. So we created this "supergroup" pop band called The Sugarcubes. We even tried to find the silliest and the sweetest name that we could find, we were just having a lot of fun with the medium. We had a lot of fun creating our unusual music under the guise of pop music.

A lot of the success in the music business is often about being in the right place at the right time, but you also must have something to say and music that speaks to people. The Sugarcubes first single was called "Birthday" and was released in 1987. It was very influential at the time and opened a lot of eyes of the music world. That's when we started getting a lot of attention in the United States. We felt connected with the punk

scene in London. The Sugarcubes met up with John Lydon and toured with him and New Order in the United States in 89, he was one of our heroes.

MD: How long were The Sugarcubes around?

SB: We started in 86, our first single was released in England in August 1987, the record came out in 88, we became a professional touring band, and we were disbanded in 92. Although the band has never formally broken up. At that point it was evident to everyone that there were members of the band (mostly Bjork) that needed different outlets for their ideas. Bjork had wonderful musical ideas that didn't really fit into the format or instrumentation of The Sugarcubes. She needed to branch out on her own,

that was evident to everyone. It was all good and friendly and we're all still good friends. The collective actually morphed into the Bad Taste record label and a record store that is one of five record stores in Reykjavik today.

MD: Within the time of The Sugarcubes how did your drumming evolve or change?

SB: There was a challenge because I came out of KUKL doing lots of experimentation and getting away with very complex tribal stuff. But in The Sugarcubes we were trying to make pop music. Einar, who was the singer and sort of the bandleader of The Sugarcubes, wanted to tone things down a little bit and just make pop music. On the first record, a lot of the rhythms are very sparse and minimal, and I was playing a minimal kit with two toms and two cymbals.

MD: But you still found ways to break up the grooves in really unique ways.

SB: It's not always about the about the size or the scope, it's about the ideas. Sometimes it's good to minimize the tools that you have and put more focus on the concept.

MD: What are some of The Sugarcubes

tunes that you remember as something different drum-wise?

SB: The groove on "Birthday" has got a really loopy and bouncy groove that is based around a tom pattern that is a perverted rockabilly beat. It's almost played backwards; I got away with a lot of experimentation within the pop drumming concept. On the first record then there's a bouncy rockabilly beat in in "Motorcrash," and a funky groove in our song called "Coldsweat." "Coldsweat" has a weird sort of tom groove where I'm playing a looping high tom groove with some interspersed rim shots, hi-hats on all four beats, and hi-hat swooshes with the left hand as accents.

So we created this "supergroup" pop band called The Sugarcubes. We even tried to find the silliest and the sweetest name that we could find, we were just having a lot of fun with the medium.

On our third record called *Stick Around for Joy*, I turned around the samba beat on a song called "Walkabout." Instead of doing a standard samba, I had the bass drum go against the grain. It is kind of loopy and weird, the bass drum is almost

never on the one. A lot of my beats were like that, I'll admit I wasn't very much of a four on the floor guy, it just didn't do it for me. Having said that, there were songs that called for that blue eyed pop feel. On the second record, called *Here Today, Tomorrow, Next Week*, there was some interesting grooves too. We only made three records, and we also released a live video DVD.

MD: I've got them all. As a drummer there were always a few crazy and weird things that popped out as I listened to Sugarcubes songs. Were you also playing with drum programs? It sounds like you also had a drum machine program happening on some songs?

SB: No, not on those recordings. We never recorded anything with any sort of click track. Although it would have made a lot of things easier if we did. On the second half of one of our tours we were using keyboard parts from a sampler and using a light instead of a click track for the tempo. The light was never really very functional.

MD: On those records, I hear a couple different drum parts, did you overdub some percussion stuff on different songs?

SB: Yes. On the last record I played a lot of conga and bongo parts, and Pat Mastelotto played some shakers and bells. For that last Sugarcubes record there were a lot of questions about finding the right producer. The inner workings of the band were sort of coming to an end. But I do think that was an interesting sounding record.

MD: They're all interesting!

SB: The Sugarcubes disbanded after three records, and I continued as a freelance drummer until 2012. I lived outside of Iceland for 10 years, I lived in Madison, Wisconsin for six years. I was doing all sorts of work in the States, and doing a lot of work in Smart Studios in Madison owned by producer Butch Vig (Nirvana *Nevermind*, Smashing Pumpkins, Garbage.)

In the mid 90s when the computer



Thorvaldur Örn Kristmundsson

production tools started kicking in, I started making drum loop records on my own. Those CD's are still available as Sugar Loops. Madison was home to the first company to make loop-based programs, called Sonic Foundry. In the mid 90s, they created Acid which was one of the first loop-based production programs for PC. I was making loops and CD's for them on my own at Laughing Cat and then at Smart.

creative.

SB: After The Sugarcubes I wanted to experiment and learn. I played everything from Balkan music to hippie rock, I had a blast. Through working with the late film composer Johann Johannsson in 1997-1998, I met a young singer called Emiliana Torrini and when she started working in England in 98, she asked me if I'd come over and help her co-write stuff. I started working with her on one hand and

was *Tooka* in 2013. Those records are what you would call "freak folk," it's kind of experimental folk music. The first record is more anchored in the triphop style of London in the late 90s, she later had a huge hit in Germany called "Jungle Drum" which was number one on the charts in Germany for six weeks in 2009.

Back in the day I also did some recordings with Jaz Coleman, who had a band called Killing Joke. Dave Grohl played on a Killing Joke record a few years ago, I was a huge fan of Killing Joke when Jaz asked me to do some recording with him in 1982, which was a lot of fun. Jaz was into my tribal approach which I latched onto from African music from tribal rhythms and recordings. During all of this time I wanted to create something that I could call my own. For me it was about trying to come up with stuff that was mine both patternistically and stylistically.

MD: What was the name of the record you did with Jaz?

SB: It was never released but I recorded three songs. Jaz reformed Killing Joke after that small break. When I moved back to Iceland in 2003, I played with a wonderful artist called Peter Ben who is a songwriter-composer who has been doing a lot of film stuff. I did



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Then in 2000, I moved to Holland and lived South of Amsterdam for to another 3 1/2 years. I moved back to Iceland in 2003 and started doing all sorts of work as a session guy with many different bands, and then I started producing.

MD: What were some of the bands and records you were doing as sessions?

SB: When I was in the States I did some sessions with The Reptile Palace Orchestra, and I recorded with the band Head Pump. They were sort of doing sort of freak funk. There were too many to remember. In 1997, I started working with the composer Johann Johannsson who passed away in 2018. We made an experimental pop record as a band called Dip. The record was called *h-camp lo-fi Explosion Picture Score*.

MD: I have the Dip record, it's wonderful. And the grooves are hypnotic and super

producer Howie P on the other, I did a lot of drumming for him on various projects. I started doing session work all over London, but I was mostly touring with Emiliana from 2000-2002. I had moved with my family to Holland in 2000 so after the touring in 2002 I set up a studio in my in my house and started making the Steintryggur records. Those records had musical guests from everywhere; from Polish jazz singers living in Amsterdam to a young musician from Ghana who was in a refugee camp.

MD: What records of Emiliana's are you on?

SB: I did a lot of work with her from 1999 till 2010. Emiliana put together a touring band to tour on her first record which came out in 2000. I played on her first and last studio records the first one was *Love in the Time of Science*, the last one

a lot of work with an artist by the name of Ben Frost who's a real powerhouse in the noise type sound, but now is more in the soundscape soundtrack world. He writes music for stuff like *Dark* and *1892* that is on Netflix. We collaborated on the second Steintryggur album called *Trappa*, which had the undertitle of "organic grooves and audio terrorism." He does a lot of processing of organic sounds. He's originally a guitar player but a lot of his work is based in soundscape composing. In the first decade of this century, I was moving into making soundtracks for theater and for feature and short films. I scored a film called *Stormland* by director Marteinn Thorsson.

MD: Tell me about the duet records *Dialog* and *Trappa*. They are what reintroduced your drumming to me. Most people would have a preconception of

what it would sound like if two drummers were making a duet record, but the Steintryggur records sound completely different. How did you conceptualize that music?

SB: They are basically me and my friend Steingrímur, he is a legend here in Iceland. He is really the only Icelander that I know of who is a good tabla player. He's the son of a legendary jazz drummer called Papa Jazz, whose real name is Gudmundur Steingrimson and Steingrímur is his son.

The name rules here in Iceland are strange. Everybody is in the phone book by their first name there aren't any family names, and your last name is your father's first name with an added "son" at the end. My father's name was Baldur so my name is Sigtryggur Baldursson.

When I was growing up as a drummer, Steingrímur had moved to Copenhagen to study with a famous jazz drummer named Peter Ostlund. Then Steingrímur moved to the States to study tabla in San Francisco. We have always been good friends. When I moved to Holland, we decided to make a record together. We started doing some recordings of the tabla and drum kit and just built it from there. Those records (*Dialog* and *Trappa*) are all based on rhythms. I produced

most of *Dialog* myself. I played and programmed at my house then I started getting friends to guest on the record. For example, I always had a love affair with the oud, so I asked a wonderful oud player, Soren Venema, to come down and play some oud on that record. All of the songs are very different, there's an (almost) Afrobeat song, there's an Irish reel type song all with unique drumming... There were no rules for *Dialog*, it was basically what sounds good stays.

MD: What a concept, *if it sounds good it stays*. I love that. When did you initially start to play drums?

SB: I borrowed my first drum set at about 12 years old. I had no formal education in music, I went to see shows and was watching bands. There wasn't anybody teaching drum set where I lived, I could have gone to music school and studied percussion but that would have been from a classical perspective. I started studying piano but starting at 13 or 14 I was always playing drums with my friends here in in my hometown.

MD: What bands were you listening to?

SB: There were radio shows here that played a lot of new music. There was also a Navy base here, and the American forces radio played rock'n'roll. I was

listening to a lot of American stuff. The Stevie Wonder trilogy of *Fulfillingness' First Finale*, *Talking Book* and *Innervisions*. We were also listening to Santana, Gentle Giant, Steely Dan, and Spyro Gyra. A little bit later I got more into the jazz of Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones, Miles Davis, and stuff like that.

My father was really interested in drumming and drummers. He was an airline engineer, and he was always flying back and forth to the States. We actually lived in the States from when I was six until I was nine. That's when I first heard stuff like Jethro and Jimi Hendrix which just blew my mind. There's such a wonderful mixture of a jazzy influence, rock'n'roll, and the blues in Hendrix's music.

I joined my first serious band when I was 17 or 18 called Peyr (pronounced Their.) We released a couple of records, and I did my first tours with that band. In 1979 or 80 I almost stopped listening to all American Music except for The Talking Heads and the Dead Kennedys. I was really into the English explosion of post punk that was coming out of England like Comsat Angels, Joy Division, and especially Siouxsie and the Banshees with Budgie's drumming. I was also getting heavily into field recordings from Africa that I was finding in record stores. Those field recording records influenced a lot of what I was trying to do on the drum kit. I was trying to break up the kit more and use the toms and play patterns that were a little bit more complex than the regular sort of hi-hat, bass drum, snare drum stuff that was very prominent in the punk scene.

MD: What type of things were you practicing?

SB: All of the music that I was listening to helped me create a different and individualistic musical and drumming approach. I was hearing certain sounds in my head and that's what I practiced. I was creating my own ideas about what sounds I wanted to get out of the drum kit and what kind of sounds I wanted to create with the drums. I was also experimenting with drum tuning on the recordings I was doing with Peyr. I was taking the drum kit into different unfinished rooms with stone walls and getting shitloads of reverb and getting a real crack out of the snare.

I was never good at practicing *rudiments for the rudiment's sake*. A lot of musicians that I talk to really connect with that. There are people that love



Björg Sveinsdóttir

doing rudiments as a meditation type of thing. I think you must have the right approach to practice. I think you can approach practice like a lovely meditation. I would practice stuff technically when I needed to, but only in order to fulfil an idea that I had.

MD: It's interesting that you said you didn't have that much formal education because a lot of times that's where the new stuff comes from, ignorance is bliss. If you don't know, you don't know. You mentioned Budgie, I wanted to ask you about him because (for some reason) I always group you two together, stylistically. You two guys were really doing something drastically different. Did Budgie influence you?

Fela Kuti, and his legendary drummer Tony Allen. I was lucky enough to play with Tony Allen when he came to Iceland and did a concert here with an Afro beat band that I played in called Samuel Jon Samuelson's Big Band. That band was rooted in world music and different rhythmic traditions and influences. Tony came and did a whole gig with us on June 1st, 2011, it was great fun.

I must also say that I was very influenced by the Brian Eno and David Byrne record *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*. That's a seminal record in my life and something that influenced me profoundly when I was starting to make music. To hear a record that was based around crazy African

mind. It had a profound influence the *Dialog* record.

MD: I adore *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*. It's interesting that you mentioned Tony Allen, because I would have never made an association between you two. But now that you mention it, I can hear a lot of Tony Allen in your playing.

SB: I was so happy when Damon Albarn from Blur and Gorillaz pulled Tony Allen into that The Good The Bad and The Queen band that they did. That was a weird side project that that Albarn did with Paul Simonon of the Clash and Simon Tong of Verve. But it got Tony some well-deserved attention.

MD: I don't know that record.



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SB: Yes, he was a huge influence. I loved how he used the toms, he was tribal, and unique.

MD: Specifically what African music really hit you hard?

SB: There was a couple of UNESCO field recordings which were recorded in Burundi and Ghana. But later there were artists like King Sunny Ade and

rhythms, grooves, combined with all those "vocals" was life changing. They had recordings-samples of someone from a mosque praying, a gospel preacher, and they had a recording of an exorcism. All these wonderful and crazy samples were coming from reel-to-reel tapes. This was in the pre sampler days, that record blew my

SB: They made a couple of records under that moniker. It helped Tony get a lot of new attention and respect from the creative musician community. In Tony's last years he was doing some experiments with rap and more electronics with his own style of beats and fills. Tony Allen was never anything fast or flashy.

MD: Whenever I heard him play, I always feared that his fills weren't going to come out right, but in the end, (*surprise!*) they always lined up.

SB: He fascinated me too. Stevie Wonder's drumming had a huge impact on me too. I love how he plays a groove and sits back on the back beat. He had such a such a wonderful feel. I love Phil Collins' drumming too. I think he did some spectacular playing. I loved Stewart Copeland too, but I was never a huge Ginger Baker fan.

MD: Now that you mention it, I can hear some similarities between you and Phil. Coming from that "unschooled world." Stewart Copeland was influenced by Budgie too. I was never a big Ginger Baker fan either.

MD: I do want to ask you about the Icelandic music scene. I've been told that it is one of the best countries in the world to be an artist, because of how involved the government is with supporting the arts.

SB: I'll agree with that. I work in the Icelandic Music Office, and I do a bit of lobbying on behalf of the music scene. So I'm pretty close with the Ministry of Culture.

MD: What exactly does the Icelandic Music Office do?

SB: That's a very good question. We have a website called **Icelandmusic.is** It's a portal into the Icelandic music scene. We have a business directory so artists can contact the venues, the promoters, and the record labels directly. That is (pretty much) a road map for our music market, it's all in one place. We also have a website which is much more of an information conduit for Icelandic artists that are interested in exporting their music. We tell people about showcase festivals in Europe and around the world, our directories provide all sorts of information about other markets. We also administer an export grant on behalf of the Ministry of Culture and Business. Since Iceland is an island, you need to fly everywhere and that can be quite expensive. That is why artists usually need to apply for a travel grant to fly out of the country and perform. An Icelandic artist can also apply for a marketing grant which helps them create a strategic marketing plan.

MD: How long has the government been so involved in in the arts and in music?

SB: This office was (basically) started in 2007. I was on the board directors for the first five years. However, since I was one

of only a (few) small group of people in Iceland that had actually been working internationally in music, I was asked to take over the managing directorship of the of the office when the managing director left in 2012. I (sort of) fell into this position. All of the Nordic countries have music offices and music export programs. We all work together because we're all small countries, but Iceland is by far the smallest of the five-country collaboration.

MD: What are the five countries that participate?

SB: Iceland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland. The Nordic countries collaborate not only in exporting the arts, but in politics and other things as well.

MD: Your unique drumming and success has resulted in a career longevity, staying valid, and staying involved in the music industry. Now you are involved in every aspect of the Icelandic music industry. How has that affected your career as a drummer?

SB: A lot of that comes from how we started this discussion—community. How do you see yourself as a part of your community? Funny enough, after I started doing the music office in 2012 people stopped asking me to play on their projects, they thought I had changed careers. I still love playing, I've done a lot of work recently with my friend Thomas R Einarsson who is a prolific jazz composer who works a lot in the Latin vein. I also did a record with Cactus Einarsson. He one of the young pop guys here in Iceland who's doing interesting things. When I was living in Madison there were a lot of interesting musicians there. I got really into calypso, and later on I even made a calypso record.

For me being a musician is like being an archaeologist. I love discovering older styles of music and having fun with them. But I'm also quite obsessed

I was trying to break up the kit more and use the toms and play patterns that were a little bit more complex than the regular sort of hi-hat, bass drum, snare drum stuff that was very prominent in the punk scene.

with creating new music. The new recordings I'm about to put out in 2023 is instrumental groove music. I'm doing it with one of my oldest friends. He's the bass player from KUKL. He's a wonderful musician named Birgir Mogensen. We were thinking of calling the project OMG. Not "Oh My God," but "Older

Music Gentlemen." Now we settled on Paddan, which means "Bug."

MD: "Gentleman" sounds too polite.

SB: The thing is, we're both very polite gentlemen.

MD: Iceland seems to be a very polite and congenial culture, but Icelandic music is very not polite.

SB: There is an aggressive element to it, yes.

MD: For the rest of the world, Icelandic music is probably defined by Bjork and Sigur Ros. But what really defines Icelandic music?

SB: That's a hard question. Bands

like Of Monsters and Men and Kaleo are more "normal." But Icelandic music is anchored in an atmosphere and in a certain communal thing because we're a small but fiercely competitive nation. If you want to make a dent in a small place like this, you need to come up with music that doesn't sound like anything else.

MD: That is probably a trend that started way back with The Sugarcubes.

SB: In order to try and make it internationally, you have to come up with something that doesn't really sound like something else. It has to (at least) have some unique aspect and some character to it. And I think that applies to a lot of music coming out of Iceland. We're a really prolific musical community.

Being the director of the Icelandic Music Export Office I get invited to conferences all over the world. I get asked this question a lot—What is the "trick" behind this Icelandic music export thing? Everyone wants to replicate the Icelandic Music Export "miracle" as if it

was a formula. It's a combination of a few different things that all lead back to community. In a small community like this there's a lot of mixing going on, not only between genre types and styles but between people. For example, the guitar player from (the jazz band) ADHD plays on a lot of rock'n'roll and pop recordings. String players from the Symphony Orchestra play on heavy metal recordings. There's just so much mixing going on here because of the smallness of our community. Another strength that comes with the "smallness of community," is the availability of information. Since the drummer of ADHD is playing with a lot of different musicians, he can introduce, help to network, and help develop the business side of things for smaller artists that are releasing their own music.

Another thing that I usually mention is a theory that I have called the "empowerment theory." In a large community you might not know someone who's actually worked internationally in music. But in a small community, you can bet that your cousin, dad, or a close friend will know *someone* who has worked internationally in music. That very small circle empowers people.

MD: The accurate and good information is (almost) instantly accessible, and that is empowering.

SB: Yes, exactly. There's a saying in Icelandic which is, "The idea will get you halfway." But if you *believe* in an idea, then you're much more likely to achieve it. In a society of millions and millions of people you perceive yourself a little bit differently and it's harder to feel empowered and believe in yourself.

When I started this job in 2012, I thought long and hard about how this office could function better. I thought we needed a travel grant so people could bring their music outside of the country. As a well well-known person and musician in Iceland I had very easy access

For me being a musician is like being an archaeologist. I love discovering older styles of music and having fun with them. But I'm also quite obsessed with creating new music.

to parliamentarians. I explained to the politicians that there was so much potential in Icelandic music, but the musicians needed help getting out of the country. Recently we were able to lend some support to a young jazz singer from Iceland named Laufey. She was number one on the Spotify jazz list for the last three or four weeks. Iceland music export was a huge help to her. She was studying in Boston at the time and I explained to her that there is a support system here and she could apply for a travel and a marketing grant to help her go further with her music. We have been able to help a lot of bands, even bands that have been at it for a longer time, like ADHD. They're a beautiful jazz band that creates these crazy atmospheres when they play live gigs. They don't ever stop between songs, the gig just starts and all of a sudden three hours have passed because you have been drawn into it.

They have gotten marketing grants and travel grants.

MD: Who are some young Icelandic drummers that we should look out for?

SB: There's quite a few good ones. Magnus Tryggvason Eliassen is the drummer in the band ADHD. He plays in a lot of interesting experimental bands here, he's also in the band Moses Hightower. He's one of those guys that can groove like crazy, but he also plays very creatively. Gunnlaugur Briem-

Gulli Briem, the drummer from Mezzo Forte has a classic sort of fusion drum style. Hrafnkell Örn Guðjónsson (Agent Fresco), Bergur Dagbjartsson (Vök – Sessions,) Helgi Svavar Helgason (Asgeir-Hjalmar) Jóhann Hjörleifsson

(RVK Bigband), Valgeir Skorri Vernhardsson (Mammut-Celebs) and of course Arnar Rosenkranz Hilmarsson from Monsters and Men is interesting too. I could go on for a very long time about the quality and quantity of good drummers here but advise people to check out our Iceland Music playlists on our website.

MD: Back to The Sugarcubes, what gear were you using with The

Sugarcubes?

SB: I was using a mixture of drums, I started out using a small kit that I put together with 13" and 14" toms and a Noble and Cooley snare. Now I have a wonderful trio of sets. I have an old premier 70s kit and a newer one which is a combination of drums. I also have an old Slingerland kit which has an 18" bass drum and calf skin heads. I'm doing a lot of hand playing on it. I've been having fun playing a kit with some conga techniques and with my hands.

MD: Where did the conga hand drumming come from?

SB: It comes from listening to African music. I just created my own style, it wasn't a Latin or African style, it's not really technically proficient but it does the job for what I want to do.

MD: That doesn't surprise me. I always tell people that music is one of the only things in the world where the end justifies the means. If it sounds good, it's good. If it doesn't sound good, it's not.

SB: That's wonderful!!!! It's like my old saying, "If it's good it stays!"

Check out Sigtryggur's drummer profile page, at modern drummer.com



Thorvaldur Örn Kristmundsson

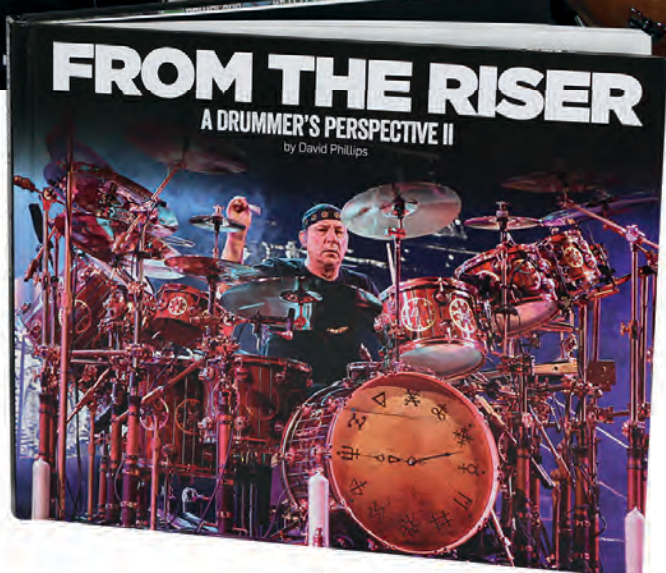


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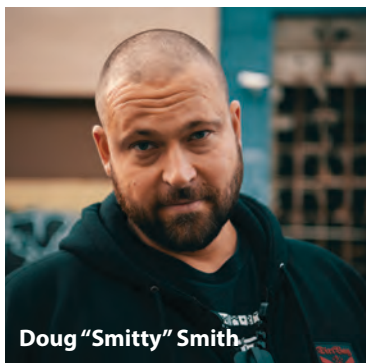
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Inside Scorpion Percussion

Modern Drummer had a chance to sit down and talk about Scorpion Immortal Series sticks with owner Doug “Smitty” Smith and one of Scorpion’s endorsers Pepe Magaña of the LA-based metal band, Kyng. We talked about the stick business and what sets Scorpion’s drumsticks apart from the rest.

DS: I’m glad Pepe popped in today to join us to talk about Scorpion sticks because we are all about the musicians. I thought it would be cool to get his perspective on our sticks so he picked a good day to stop by on his drive home to El Paso.



MD: Can you give me a little background on the company?

DS: The company was started at a kitchen table in 2008 in Chicago, Illinois. It has been through ownership changes and almost every possible configuration a small business could have in order to survive. Now we’re out in San Diego, California in a 700-square-foot business suite where Immortal Series sticks are born every day. I invested in and bought the business in 2018. When I came along we had about 50 customers and now we have around 5000. It’s been quite the journey.

MD: What makes your sticks different from everybody else’s sticks?

DS: Process, design, and service. We have a wood supplier who does the heavy lifting. I then bring them to San Diego where we perform the under the microscope portion of the manufacturing. After the wood goes through the milling process, the sticks come here where we “super QC” them to Immortal Series standards. Each stick that goes out the door is within a few grams of each other; they are rolled for balance here in the shop and sorted for cross grain and consistency.

MD: So what are some of your processes that make them different?

DS: We have a simple business model; we offer the Immortal Series drumsticks and Rehearsal Series drumsticks. For

shop talk we call that A stock and B stock. The Immortal Series is premium grade, and the Rehearsal Series (B stock) is everything else. There are three things that make the Immortal Series better and different than everything else on the market. The dowels are all slightly heavier, with a medium taper and

oversized tips. The Rehearsal Series are all 16 inches, are offered in less options, and obviously aren’t QC’d as carefully.

We have adopted the Apple brand model and approach. We offer a few really good products, and we offer them in ways that benefit our customers and it’s all integrated with our app. People can download the free app, build their own custom stick, place orders, track orders, and practice their chops.

MD: Are all of your sticks hickory?

DS: Immortal Series sticks demand the best hardwood for the job and price point; and that is hickory. Drummers want to play good sticks that don’t break so fast and perform better over the lifespan of the sticks. Hickory allows just that.

MD: What did you notice in the stick world that made you want to jump in and set yourself apart?

DS: I think a lot of companies get to a certain size and become slow and lethargic like a giant tanker ship; I want to be a speed boat. Each approach has pros and cons. But if you pull five random pairs of X company’s sticks off the shelf and you weigh them, there is generally a large swing in weight matching and if you roll

them on a flat table or countertop, some will wobble. I want to solve problems for drummers and provide a better product while keeping things simple. Those companies are producing so many sticks that they can’t look under the microscope as much as we can. It’s not cost efficient. Our entire business model is the opposite. Quality is always over quantity at Scorpion Percussion.

MD: I’m not asking you to give away any secrets but what is Venom Grip?

DS: It’s a water based organic dip grip that is produced by a company called Stick Stuff in Chicago, owned by Mike Anderson. He provides our grip in neon green. I really enjoy how super-bright and ridiculous it is, and it works great for keeping the sticks in place.

MD: What type of feedback are you getting from the drummers and customers, what are you looking to improve on?

DS: Our customers love the product. This company is surrounded by nothing but positive people. They are waiting patiently for the nylon-tipped Immortal Series which we plan on bringing online at some point in the future. They want high quality apparel, stick bags, and functioning gear that is complementary to our brand and brings value to

drummers’ lives. We hear you and look forward to being that solution.

MD: Since we have one of your endorsers here, let me ask Pepe that same question. What do you like about Scorpion sticks?

PM: I’ll tell you what I like right now, consistency. I was playing at a festival in Chicago, and I had gotten a shipment of sticks from

another company shipped to our hotel room. I used the sticks that night at a show and if I remember correctly, I



broke 8 sticks on a 30 minute set. I don't usually have these problems. It was obviously a bad batch, but I remember the dude from Scorpion was there at the show, and I took it as a sign for me to give this company a shot. I've never ever had that issue again. These sticks are the most durable sticks in the game, and I'm not saying that because I'm sitting here in the Scorpion factory with Smitty. I love the company, I love the quality, and I don't have to worry about things.

MD: Pepe what size sticks do you use with Kyng?

PM: 2B

DS: Pepe has been with Scorpion for a long time, and Kyng has put out some great records. You gotta check out *Trampled Sun*, *Burn The Serum*, *Breathe in the Water*, and *Beyond the Dead Woods*. We offer great sticks to any artist. They get to pick a diameter, tip type, finish, and the length; then we also offer the signature printing options. We try to meet the needs of as many customers as possible. I think some companies are trying to make this into rocket science when all you need is to care about what you're doing. We're not reinventing the wheel.

MD: Is Hickory consistent?

DS: Hickory is great. It's good for the price point of raw hardwood prices in America right now. It's the strongest in a sense of bang for your buck. The grain is tight, has that bounce, and it resonates well. It's good for smoking on the BBQ too.

MD: How does the process of drying wood work?

DS: You need to make sure the wood is dried enough before milling. Our supplier grows the trees, they use parts of the tree for Hickory drumsticks and the other parts of the tree they sell for other things. They kiln dry the dowels down to 3/4 of an inch or so. The moisture dries out of the wood slowly in that process and the dowels shrink down. Kiln drying is what helps make the Immortal Series hard. The wood sits in the kiln for two weeks. It's crazy how much size they lose and how small the wood dowels become when it's done. The dowels lose about a quarter inch or so in the kiln.

We run them through a dowling

machine which makes the square dowels round to the preferred diameter and then we put them in a grinder. They're kind of wet at that point where we use one grinder for the butt end and we use another grinder with a cast stone for the tip and taper. That's the macro portion of production. Our design and the durability of the Immortal Series comes from our entire process from the ground to a drummer's hands. The way that we're doing it is the best way to make sure the sticks are perfect. We don't put wobbly dowels through the sander, we check for pitch, and we check for cross grain.

MD: What's that?



DS: Cross grain is something that a lot of drummers are unaware of. It's where the grain goes perpendicularly through the first seven inches of the stick, called the impact zone. The angle of the cross grain creates a weak spot and the sticks will break faster.

MD: What is your finishing process?

DS: We offer three finishes; lacquer, our own natural raw wood finish, and the Venom Grip. A finish for every type of grip. The best part about our natural raw wood finish is we sand the finish off using the sweet spot of the belt; that's the magic. The sweet spot is when the sanding belt has been worn down a bit. That extra little touch matters. Some companies promote a "natural finish," but they are just polished, ours are sanded all natural raw wood.

MD: Your natural finish isn't even a satin finish?

DS: No, it's real raw wood, like fresh lumber.

MD: How's business been?

DS: We're growing. The word is spreading and I feel like we've only just begun. I love working hard for my fellow musicians and drummers and

giving them something to help be better at their craft. We're the only "direct to customer only" stick company. We have a couple of mom-and-pop shop music shops around the country that we've worked with like Let There Be Rock in El Paso, or Valley View Music in Council Bluffs, IA. I have no intentions of ever going to Guitar Center and I'm not really in competition with other stick manufacturers. I'm in competition with distributors, and lucky for us we can make and distribute our own product.

MD: Who is playing your sticks?

DS: Mikey Cox from Coal Chamber, Robb Rivera from Nonpoint, Danny Schreiber from QUOR, Cody Hanson from Hinder, Jake Smith in Royal Bliss, classical percussionist Pete DeSalvo, Kevin Paradis, Sammi Jo Bishop, and some great gospel players like Troy Felder, Brian Ewell and of course Pepe Magaña from Kyng. They are all fantastic people and musicians.

MD: You've got a pretty cool stick design app as well, can you tell me about it?

DS: We wanted to create a stick building app, so I

went to the app store and I searched all the major drumstick manufacturers and (at the time) nobody had an app. I couldn't believe it. We developed an app tailored to our products and how we offer them. The app explains the product and all the different variants to help you design your sticks. The stick builder is a pretty big thing. You can also track your orders with it.

I also created a stick tracker. I was trying to think of other value that we could bring to drummers. I know that some drummers have a problem with remembering to order drumsticks. I get all the last-minute emails as folks are going out on tour. I wanted to make a stick tracker available so every time you break a pair, you just deduct it from the tracker. Eventually in a future version, it would send me a notification that a drummer needs sticks, thus automating the process and experience a bit.

MD: But for a working drummer it makes perfect sense.

DS: I agree

MD: It sounds like Scorpion Percussion is working on some pretty cool stuff.



The 4 Practice Pockets:

#4. Celebrate the Wins

By Chris Lesso

“Each day, and the living of it, has to be a conscious creation in which discipline and order are relieved with some play and pure foolishness.”

-May Sarton

CELEBRATE, THE FUN PRACTICE

To celebrate is to refill your well of enthusiasm, curiosity, and passion for what you do. It is honoring your victories. However small these victories may be, they're still milestones on your path to finding your best self through drumming. Our practice is not always about the hustle and the grind, but sometimes it is a place to simply BE. The spirit of drumming is always magnified when we stay childlike, and this is our time to let it out. Watch how kids approach drumming, and notice their reckless abandon while doing it with a big smile. Bring a bit of this back into your drumming world. Let curiosity and joy be your guides.

The Sanskrit word 'Namaste' is a Hindu greeting used to say goodbye and conclude a yoga practice. It means 'the best within me acknowledges the best within you'. That's the spirit of what we're doing as we leave our practice, or even when you create an entire practice session devoted to this concept. This is your time to uplift the best within you, to honor that mysterious part of you that finds joy with one thing and not another. What was it about drumming that initially drew us in? It may remain a mystery, but now's the time to encourage it. The drums want to 'play us', and we only get there by giving ourselves permission to let go. This is the effortless therapy that fills our cups. The celebration practice lets us rest and rejuvenate through play. We've learned how to use many tools on our journey, but this time we're laying all of them

aside to completely let go. Inviting play back into our practice space reveals unexpected surprises every time. It creates room for discovery. It allows us to tap into the mighty question of WHY we play drums in the first place. While it's true that practice is about digging into the unknown, assimilating raw new information, while stacking up the reps that mastery demands, extremes are unsustainable. Our inner rockstar can't be caged under a stack of books for too long. The celebration practice is what brings back the balance. It's the love, the freedom, the expression, and the playtime. It's you at Madison Square Garden ready to rock! Fun and enthusiasm is your fuel, and now is the time to go back to the well and refill your tank. A clue that you're on the right path is how you feel after you put the sticks down.

Enjoyment means 'to embody joy', so if you've given yourself this gift you'll feel lighter, centered, peaceful, like a better version of yourself. This re-ignition will spark joy and recharge us, elevating our best selves as we leave the practice room and go forth into the world.

So much of the work of practice is laying the bricks down one by one to build our cathedral of mastery. The celebration practice is to enter and experience what you've fashioned so far. How does it make you feel? A good gauge is to imagine you only had a month left to live. This may sound dark, but it will instantly calibrate what's truly essential and what's just noise. More time spent playing, would be on many people's list of things they wish they had done more in this dark scenerio. This is something I struggle with when I feel I must be doing more, pushing, and growing. It turns out when I surrender and use power instead of force, I get further effortlessly. I constantly have to engage my wider view, reminding myself to let go and be in the moment as the

never ending story of my drumming unfolds.

'Make practice an addiction, not an affliction.'

JOYFUL MOVEMENT

If it's fun, you'll always want more! Joyful movement is to tune into your inner world, with love and reverence for the fact that we get to play drums. There's no rules to how we play the ever changing game. Some days we get after it, other days we lay back. Keeping the spirit of play alive in all four practice pockets is

when we feel the joyful movement forward. Play sparks the energy to infuse our practice with the fuel of curiosity and enthusiasm. There's a concept called 'open ended play', which means playing without parameters. Here, you're supposed to color outside of the lines. I will always encourage you,

to have the courage to be vulnerable, speak your voice, and live your truth on the drums. We drum because it's fun! Tapping into our joyful movement brings us back the next day to our practice like a magnet, because it's our safe place to explore and express with no limits. Give yourself the space to let go and have fun! Enthusiasm is the fuel. Pay attention to how you feel after you lay the sticks down. We want to leave our Celebration of Fun Practice feeling energized, centered, while being a better YOU.

Are you ready to rise to your 2.0 in drumming and life? Chris Lesso's LTR Drumming Method is for drummers who want to reach higher. If you're ready to unleash your best self through drumming, book your FREE vision session here at chrislesso.net/ltr-drumming

Check out Chris's Modern Drummer profile page at moderndrummer.com



The Bass Drum Owners Manual: Applying the Moeller Technique to the Bass Drum

By Michael Packer

This month *Modern Drummer* will begin to include excerpts from Michael Packer's essential book on bass drum control and technique *The Bass Drum Owners Manual: Applying the Moeller Technique to the Bass Drum*. As you will see, this is a new way of thinking about bass drum control that is based in an old, popular, and useful hand technique called The Moeller Technique. In this first installment, Michael addresses the essential components of bass drum control. Let Michael's wisdom and the wisdom of the Moeller Technique help you improve the control, sound, and eventually speed, of your feet, regardless of musical style.



Introduction

Hi, welcome to The Bass Drum Owners Manual. In this book and digital downloads I will take you through my method of applying the Moeller technique to the bass drum. This technique is a series of motions designed to achieve power, speed, flow and an open sound. Conceived by Sanford Moeller, this technique has evolved through the years. The ideas presented are a culmination of my study of the Moeller technique and its application to the bass drum. We will learn that these concepts initially designed for the hands apply directly to the feet.

Throne Positioning, Posture and Balance

It's our primary goal as drummers to have the ability to execute our ideas instantaneously. To achieve this we must have complete freedom to use our limbs in any way at all times. Therefore, it is essential our balance and posture be centered and comfortable. Good balance and posture begin with the throne height. Position the throne so your thighs are at a slight angle downward. The thighs should never be higher than parallel to the ground. Doing so will cause you to lean backwards. This will put pressure on your lower back and as a result you will lose your balance. Your back is comfortably straight and the shoulders are relaxed. All of your weight is placed on your butt as you settle into the throne.

Bass Drum and Hi Hat Positioning

It is often thought that the placement of the bass drum and the hi hat are equidistant to the player. However, the positioning of both instruments are not the same. On the bass drum our goal is to generate and control the rebound of the beater. Position yourself so your thigh is placed just behind the footboard. If you sit too close your foot and ankle will be in a stressful position and the rebound of the beater will be limited. If you sit too far back, you won't be able to control the beater. The tip of the foot will rest approximately three quarters of the way up the footboard. This is known as the "sweet spot". It's the best position to

maximize rebound and maintain control of the beater. The tip of the foot never leaves the pedal. For the hi hat, position the thigh just over the footboard. The added weight makes it easier to keep the cymbals closed. This also allows the stand to be placed closer, so you don't have to reach far when playing with your hands.

Technique = Sound Not Volume

It is believed that to play soft you should play with your heel down and to play loud it's best to play with your heel up. I have found that with good control you can achieve a full range of dynamics with any technique on the bass drum or hi hat. The question is, what sound do you desire? To get the most open or legato sound with little attack, play with your heel resting on the pedal. If you're after an open sound

with a bit more attack play with your leg. Let the beater come out of the head. For a staccato sound play with your leg and leave the beater in the head.

Pedal Set-Up

For a 20 inch bass drum set the beater to strike slightly above the center of the head. This placement gives the right amount of weight to the top of the pedal. The spring is set fairly loose making it easy to generate rebound and give the beater a large range of motion. If you can adjust the pedal board separately from the beater, raise it so the top is approximately four inches from the ground. You should feel no pain in your shin when you place your foot on the pedal and your heel rests on the ground.

Next month we will start to learn Michael's "Leg Stroke" technique.

Mike Packer is the Vice President of Education at 1500 Sound Academy in Inglewood, Ca. Mike earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Percussion Performance from the University of Northern Colorado and his Master's in Education, Leadership, and Policy from Boston University. As a drummer, Mike performs regularly both domestically and abroad. Mike's teaching experience consists of 30 years of private and classroom instruction and several clinics in the USA, Europe, and Asia. Mike is the author of *Feet Don't Fail Me Now* (Hal Leonard Publications) and *Bass Drum and Hi-Hat Technique DVD* (Hal Leonard Publications) and has authored articles for *Modern Drummer* and *Drum! Magazine*. Mike invented the *Heel Less* bass drum pedal and licensed it to DW Drums, where it is produced and distributed as the DW5000 ADH and has a series of *Bass Drum technique lessons* on *Drumchannel.com*.

Check out Mike's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *The Bass Drum Owners Manual* at moderndrummer.com



Snare Drum Duets

Duet 1

By Ron Spagnardi

As an ongoing tribute to Ron Spagnardi who founded Modern Drummer Publications in 1977 and was an excellent drum teacher and author in his own right, *Modern Drummer* has been including some of the articles, exercises, and pieces that Ron included in his many fine books. This month we will include another snare drum duet ("Duet 1") from Ron's book *Snare Drum Duets: 25 Duets for Two Snare Drummers*. This is a nice intermediate duet that could be played by a teacher and an intermediate student, or just two drummers getting together for some rhythmic interplay. Enjoy!



♩ = 88

SD 1

mp

SD 2

f

mp

f

ff

The musical score for "Duet 1" is written for two snare drums, SD 1 and SD 2, in 2/4 time. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 88. The piece consists of five systems of two staves each. The first system is marked *mp* and features a steady eighth-note pattern for SD 1 and a similar pattern for SD 2, with triplet accents in the final two measures. The second system is marked *f* and continues the patterns, with SD 1 playing a more complex eighth-note figure and SD 2 playing a simpler pattern. The third system is marked *mp* and *f*, showing a change in dynamics and rhythmic patterns. The fourth system is marked *ff* and features a more intense rhythmic interplay. The fifth system concludes the piece with a final rhythmic flourish.

mp

3

3

3

3

mf

3

3

3

3

f

3

3

3

3

mp

3

3

3

3

ff

6

6

6

6

Check out Ron's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *Snare Drum Duets* at moderndrummer.com



Flam Studies

By, Joe Morello

In all of our learning, we (hopefully) concentrate of the creative use (and sound) of flams. However, in our desire to play the "perfect" open and fat flam sound, we often ignore the (also unique) sound of "flat flams." These are two different sounds, and can be used differently. Playing two limbs in true unison is a *deceptively* hard thing to accomplish, but a very worthwhile exercise and sound on the drumset.

This month we will share Joe Morello's exercise on playing flat flams from his ground breaking book *Master Studies*. After working on Joe's approach with eighth notes and triplets, you could even expand on his approach by creating your own flat flam exercise with sixteenth notes in one hand.



Flat Flams

The term "flat flam" is used here to describe both sticks hitting exactly together. These exercises are most effective when played on two different surfaces. They could be played on two different drums, a drum and a cymbal, a drum and a cowbell, or whatever. One hand is maintaining a steady pulse (first eighth notes, then eighth note triplets) while the other hand plays various rhythms. After learning to do these with the hands they could also be done with the feet or with the combinations of hands and feet. Use your imagination.

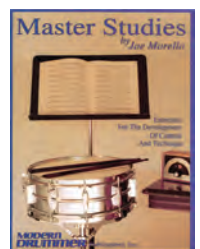
This musical score consists of ten staves of music in bass clef. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns and techniques:

- Staff 1:** Four measures. Measure 1: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents. Measure 2: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth. Measure 3: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents. Measure 4: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents.
- Staff 2:** Four measures. Measure 1: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents. Measure 2: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents. Measure 3: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents. Measure 4: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth.
- Staff 3:** Four measures. Measure 1: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents. Measure 2: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents. Measure 3: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents. Measure 4: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents.
- Staff 4:** Four measures. Measure 1: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents. Measure 2: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents. Measure 3: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents. Measure 4: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents.
- Staff 5:** Four measures. Measure 1: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth. Measure 2: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth. Measure 3: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents. Measure 4: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth.
- Staff 6:** Four measures. Measure 1: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents. Measure 2: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth. Measure 3: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents. Measure 4: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents.
- Staff 7:** Four measures. Measure 1: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents. Measure 2: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth. Measure 3: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents. Measure 4: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with accents.
- Staff 8:** Four measures. Measure 1: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth. Measure 2: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth. Measure 3: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth. Measure 4: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth.
- Staff 9:** Four measures. Measure 1: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth. Measure 2: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth. Measure 3: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth. Measure 4: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth.
- Staff 10:** Four measures. Measure 1: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth. Measure 2: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth. Measure 3: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth. Measure 4: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3 with a triplet bracket over the first three notes and an accent on the fourth.

4/4

The image displays ten staves of musical notation in bass clef, 4/4 time. Each staff contains a sequence of rhythmic exercises. The exercises are primarily based on eighth notes and quarter notes, often grouped into triplets (indicated by a '3' below the notes) and accented (indicated by a '>' above the notes). Some exercises include slurs over groups of notes and dynamic markings like 'y' (pizzicato) or 'z' (staccato). The exercises progress from simple triplet patterns to more complex combinations of triplets and pairs of notes.

Check out Joe's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *Master Studies* at moderndrummer.com



Exercises in African-American Funk

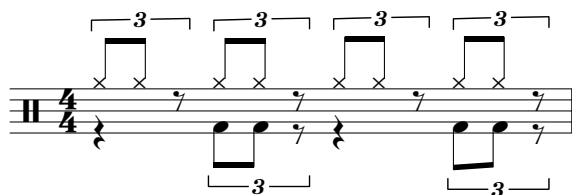
“Mangambe”

By Jonathan Joseph

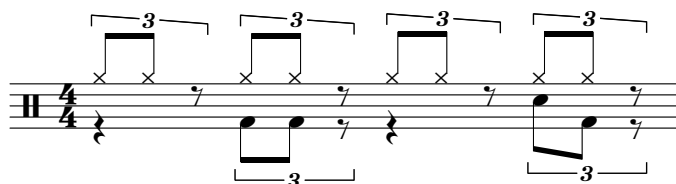
In our ongoing introduction to Jonathan Joseph’s book *Exercises in African American Funk: Mangambe, Bikutsi, and the Shuffle* published by *Modern Drummer* we will include Jonathan’s explanation of a unique African groove, Mangambe.

Today we introduce our first African element: Mangambe or Mangambeu, as it’s written in French. Mangambe is a popular musical style of the Bangante people of Cameroon.

Here’s a simple version of the Mangambe rhythm.



Here’s a variation with the snare on beat 4. Notice the similarity between this rhythm and the American shuffle.

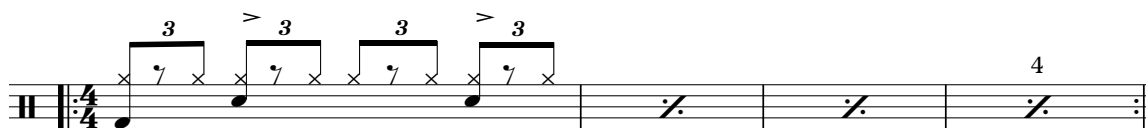


It’s important to note that the notation above isn’t a completely accurate representation of the sound and feel of the mangambe rhythm. First of all, the second partial of the triplet is emphasized. This accent is difficult for many Western drummers to hear, because Western music usually accents the first or third partial of the triplet, and rarely is the second partial emphasized.

In addition, the second partial is often delayed a bit, which causes it to exist in a space between the second partial and a straight 8th note. This interpretation can also be difficult for Westerners to hear, because it doesn’t sit on a perfect triplet grid.

In the examples that follow, we combine the African mangambe with the American shuffle and the funk shuffle. How much you “Africanize” the rhythm and play outside the triplet grid should always be dictated by the musical situation. The music must always come first.

First, let’s combine the mangambe hi-hat pattern with the American shuffle. As in the previous exercises, it’s helpful to switch between four measures of a simple shuffle pattern, like the following, and the mangambe shuffles.



Here are the mangambe shuffle exercises.



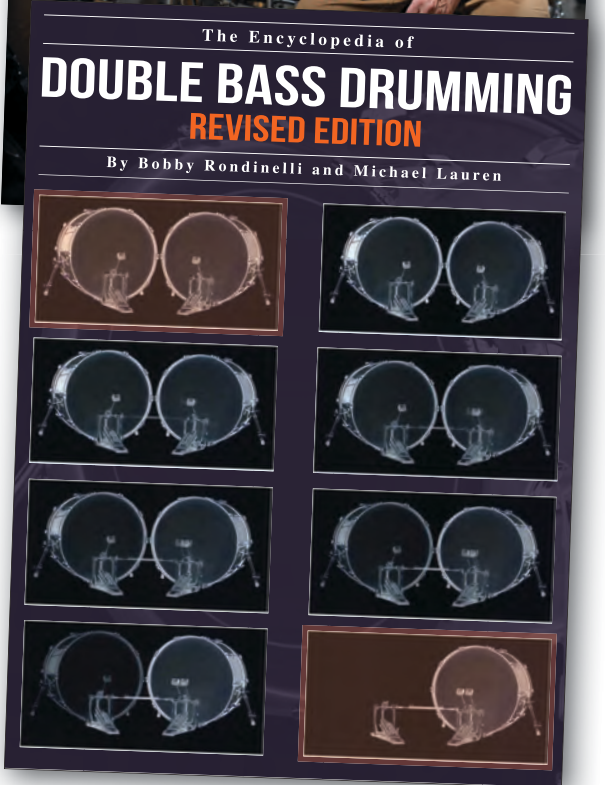
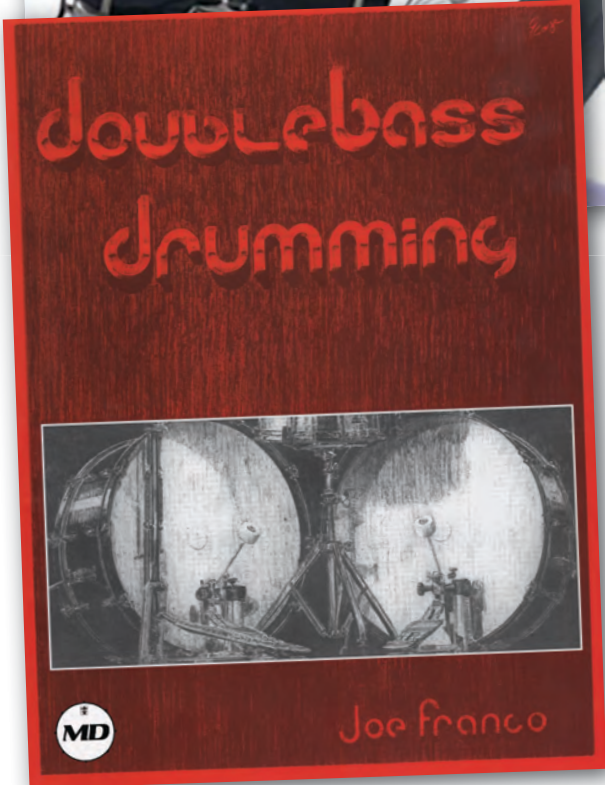
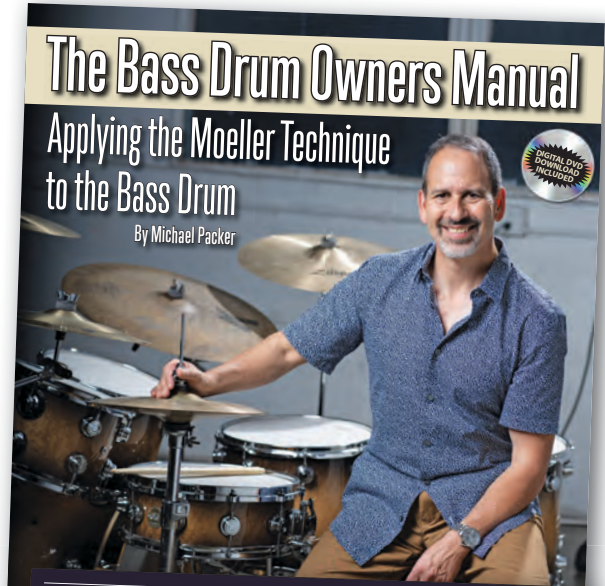
Next, combine the mangambe hi-hat pattern with the shuffle-funk groove.

Here are the same exercises with ghost notes added.

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The Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming

Double Strokes

By Bobby Rondinelli and Michael Lauren

In the new and revised edition of the *Encyclopedia Of Double Bass Drumming*, Bobby includes nine new double bass drumming chapters. The new and expanded edition covers contemporary techniques such as bass drum double strokes, feet-only exercises, binary and ternary rhythms, “skiplets”, beat turnarounds, the “ladder”, and playing doubles with the hands while playing singles with the feet.

These concepts will challenge your playing while expanding your double bass vocabulary. If practiced with intention and diligence, this material will help to prepare you for the demands of today’s music.

This material is advanced, but completely attainable for anyone who has completed the previous chapters in this book. Always strive for great quality of sound and groove, and remember to start slowly at first. Have fun!

Double Strokes

Playing double strokes with your feet is challenging, but well worth the time. Like everything else, it’s difficult until it becomes easy.

If you are already playing double strokes with your feet, this section will show you some of the different combinations

and footings. If you’re not comfortable with playing doubles yet, stay on the first few exercises for a while.

When you get them going, you can move on to the feet only section which we will see next month.

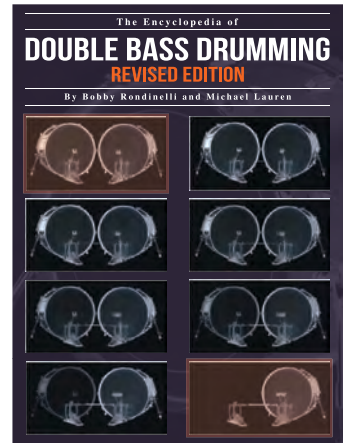
-Starters will get your feet going without worrying about your hands.

-This chapter will be most helpful for beginning double bass drummers when played at slow tempos.

-You can use the heel/toe method, toe/toe, or heel-down technique. Try them all to see what works best for you.

-Start slow. Practicing on a double bass practice pad can be very helpful—tapping your feet on the floor is practicing!

-Work with a metronome.



1

1 R R L L R R L L
2 L L R R L L R R

2

1 R L L R R L L R
2 L R R L L R R L

3

1 R L R L R R L L R R L L
2 L R L R L L R R L L R R

4

1 R R L L R R L L R L R L
2 L L R R L L R R L R L R

5

1 R L R R L L R L R R L L
2 L R L L R R L R L L R R

6

1 R R L L R L R R L L R L
2 L L R R L R L L R R L R

7

1 R L L R R L R L L R R L
2 L R R L L R L R R L L R

8

1 R R L R L L R R L R L L
2 L L R L R R L L R L R R

9

1 R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L
2 L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R

10

1 R R L L R R L L R R L L
2 L L R R L L R R L L R R

11

1 L R R L R R L R R L R R
2 R L L R L L R L L R L L

12

1 R R L R R L R R L R R L
2 L L R L L R L L R L L R

13

1 R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L
2 L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R



Check out Bobby and Michael's *Modern Drummer* profile pages and get your copy of *The Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming* at moderndrummer.com



A DIFFERENT VIEW



Alex Kluff



Warren Huart

Home Studio Recording, The Complete Guide

By Mark Griffith

Drummers are musicians, and today more musicians are also engineers and producers. But that isn't always a natural progression. Learning about music production and engineering can be very confusing. There are many different ways to record and mix music, and many people think that their way is the best (and only) way. Warren Huart and Jerry Hammack's new book *Home Studio Recording, The Complete Guide* is just what today's music world needs. Today, there are many people who are trying to do everything themselves. In this consolidation, some things are starting to get lost, and there's only so much stuff on YouTube that you can learn. However, if online learning is your thing, Huart's award winning *Produce Like a Pro* online academy is a great resource as well. Both online, and in the new book, Warren has a logical and practical way of approaching and explaining things, he is not trying to dazzle you with his knowledge, he is an artist, and a teacher, and a very good one at that. He has gathered many different approaches and has morphed them into one inclusive wide path of learning. This interview only merely scratches the surface. But for any musician today it is a good introduction into the modern music business of recording, mixing, and producing music.

MD: Your YouTube academy really spells out the process of production, engineering, and mixing. The new book is doing the same thing. What was your main instrument before you got into engineering and producing?

WH: Guitar, but honestly it all came hand in hand at the same time. When I first started, I had my dad's 70s stereo and a Phillips compact cassette recorder. I would record on the tape deck and play the tape on the 70s stereo and have a second cassette ready to record and overdub. There was a lot of tape noise, but as a kid I was recording and overdubbing.

an assistant in a studio, I was always a musician that recorded his own stuff and recorded other bands. I was a home recordist right from the get go. Some friends of mine had an MSR 24 which is a one inch 24 track tape machine, and I did some work with them. I would fill in when their band was on tour. I did a few sessions over there and did some tape cutting. Today, I own a Studer A 80 two-inch tape machine.

MD: Were you in any bands that we would have heard of?

WH: I had a band called Star 69 that had a minor hit in England. Then I came to America, a few of the bands I developed

who want to engineer or produce but really don't have much of a musical background. But to me, that seems a little backwards, for me it has to be music first. I think the best engineers and producers were musicians first. I think that's getting a little lost sometimes especially with a lot of the home recording stuff.

WH: Actually, to be honest with you, I feel like it's actually a little bit of the reverse. When I came up most of the assistants, the engineers, and sometimes even the producers, didn't play instruments. I did pre-production on the Chili Peppers *Californication* for about



I always had a home studio and some kind of way of demoing songs for the bands that I was in. I went from a four-track cassette to Adat's, after that I discovered ProTools and DAW's, that was the evolution.

We currently have a studio in in Laurel Canyon, and we just bought another one down the hill from where we live in Encino. Over the years I've owned many studios big and small.

MD: Did you learn how to cut tape?

WH: I did, although I didn't come up through the studio system. I never went to recording school, I never worked as

got record deals, there was a band called Future Leaders of the World. I did all the demos, and we got a record deal with Epic. They ended up using most of my demos on the record and adding to them, the only credit I got was an engineer, but I had produced the recordings, but that's the way it is, *a rite of passage*. I always loved the ability to find and help develop an artist and a song because it fulfills everything that I love. I would get to play guitar, bass, keys and help write the songs. That has always been a huge thing for me.

MD: I run into a lot of younger guys

six months, and as Rick Rubin himself admits he wouldn't necessarily know an A major chord from a b minor. He has no formal musical training whatsoever, but he uses musical references, he talks about songs and inspires.

MD: I think he's definitely the exception to the rule, and he's a GREAT exception to the rule.

WH: As an engineer I've done a lot of work with many different producers, so I could give you lots of different perspectives. Production is a personality, there's a certain personality that inspires, keeps something in line, and organizes

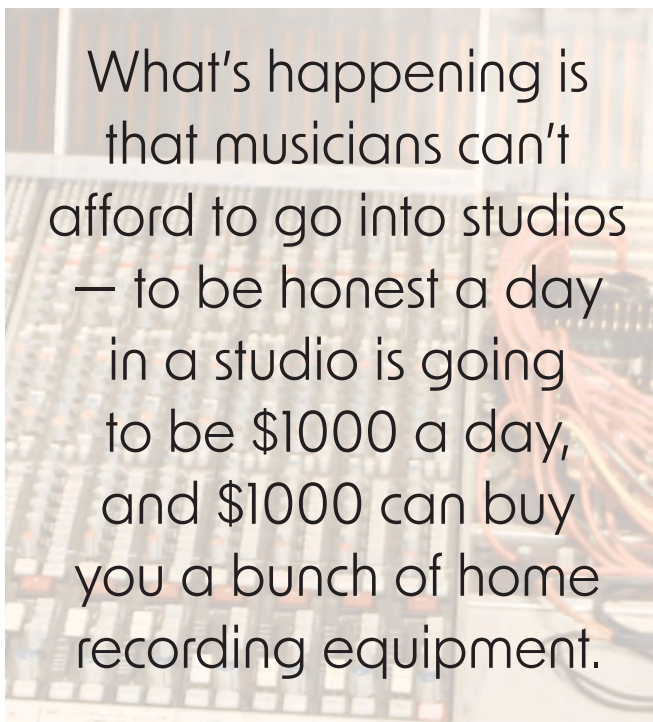
things. I think Rick has more of that than the musical stuff. I made a great album with Don Smith, and he didn't play a single instrument but he's a great engineer. I think there is a lot of those kinds of engineers now. What's happening is that musicians can't afford to go into studios — to be honest a day in a studio is going to be \$1000 a day, and \$1000 can buy you a bunch of home recording equipment. For a thousand bucks you can get a \$300 mic, a \$300 interface, and some software and you're off making a record. That's why I think there's more musicians than ever before who want to learn how to record.

When I started my YouTube channel that's who I was speaking to. My journey coming up is everybody's journey now. Early on, when I would go into recording studios as a producer and engineer, I was the only person that had come up as a musician and everybody else in the room was somebody who assisted in a studio on some big records, got a bunch of credits as an assistant, became an engineer and then became a producer. Quite often they were people who

wanted to be "in music," they weren't necessarily musicians. I wrote this book for the vast majority of musicians who want to learn how to record their music today. I wanted to be able to speak to people that were like me because when I grew up there was not really many opportunities to learn about this stuff. When I first started doing YouTube over eight years ago, there was a lot of people doing very peripheral stuff. Some of it was very detailed but it tended to be very contradictory. One person would show something and then another person would show something that completely contradicted that. It wasn't really a concise and educational thing. Now it's a lot more focused and it's probably less about the content and more about how good you are on camera, but that's a whole other discussion. I wrote this book because I wanted to tie all of this information together in one place.

MD: What are some of your favorite sounding old and new records?

WH: The first album I remember absolutely loving was Queen's *A Night at the Opera*. My father bought it for me when I was a little kid, I was probably far too young to be listening to it. In 1980 I bought my mom John and Yoko's *Double Fantasy* for Christmas, after John was killed, I unwrapped the record and listened to it, and replaced the gift by



buying my mom some perfume instead. At that time, *Double Fantasy* seemed like alien music, it was an incredibly modern sounding record for the time. It didn't have that dirty kind of Beatles sound that we were used by that time. It was very clean, very New York, and very modern sounding. That record was produced by Jack Douglas. Flash forward to 14 years ago, I'm in my studio in LA and he's renting one of the other rooms working on a Michael Monroe (from Hanoi Rocks) record, and we struck up a friendship. It was a very full circle moment for me, from being in love with *Double Fantasy* as a kid. Jack actually wrote the Introduction for the new book.

MD: Did he go on to mentor you at all?

WH: Yeah, we did the last Aerosmith record together in 2012. I think (like a lot of mentorships I've had in my life,) his mentorship is not "direct," it's never "here is how you do this and here's how you do that," it's just being around somebody

that has a certain energy. The thing that I learned from Jack is that he makes everybody in the room feel important. Many producers that I've worked with as an engineer would single out who they thought was the key person to flatter, and Jack doesn't do that. Jack talks to the bass player, the rhythm guitarist, the drummer— He makes everybody in a band feel like they have a voice. He is very collaborative and that creates a safe place to be a musician, which is unusual.

MD: What other mentors have there been along the way?

WH: Dave Jerden is a big one for me. When I first moved here Don Smith was the first American producer I worked with. Andy Jackson (Pink Floyd) was the first real producer I worked with when I was engineering and assisting. That was pretty huge because Andy was a nice guy, and he was very complimentary. That gave me a great deal of confidence.

MD: I would imagine working with both Dave, who had worked with The Talking Heads, The Rolling Stones, and tons of others; And Andy who had worked with Pink Floyd for years, could give you a lot of confidence.

WH: I was only 19 years old, and that was a big deal because I was working with somebody who's got real credits. When someone like that is good to

you it helps, fulfills, and pushes you. Although they don't *have* to be good to you, it's good to be around them and experience how they work. Working with Dave Jerden and Andy was huge! I stole some techniques from Andy, I saw the way he was miking things and how he was recording drums. He just used a pair of Neumann 87's, a D112 on the kick, and a 57 on the snare. That gave me the confidence not to worry about the fact that I didn't have a ton of gear, all he needed was four mics on the kit. When I worked with Dave Jerden, I learned that he was definitely all about the performance. I learned that sometimes as a producer you have to rewrite, rearrange, and change the key on a song. And at other times you just have to get out of the way of the band and help them make a great record. It was a big deal to learn a whole bunch of techniques, but it was even a bigger deal to learn when to use them. As opposed

to learning a whole bunch of techniques and applying them to every session and on every recording, which is what typically happens.

MD: I think that's what typically happens with musicians too.

WH: Exactly. When you hear albums that everybody says are overproduced, I think it's entirely because the producer is taking his or her bag of tricks and applying it to everything, every single time. I just don't think that's very smart.

MD: Or very musical... Now you are passing along these lessons from the greats through your YouTube channel, and the book.

WH: Having the YouTube channel has been insane because I've interviewed hundreds of the biggest producers, engineers, and mixers in the world. Sometimes you pick up something absolutely amazing in an interview, and other times you're reminded of something you don't like. You learn just as much from positive experiences in life as you do from the negative ones. Honestly, I think one of the overriding things I've learned is just being a good person, being responsive, and helping people. That's the reason I do all the educational stuff, it's just really to give back.

MD: Sometimes teaching just seems like the right thing to do. After eight years of your YouTube channel, you're a

YouTube veteran. There's tons of stuff on your channel and in your Academy, but what would you point to as a good place to start? What are some of your best and most insightful interviews?

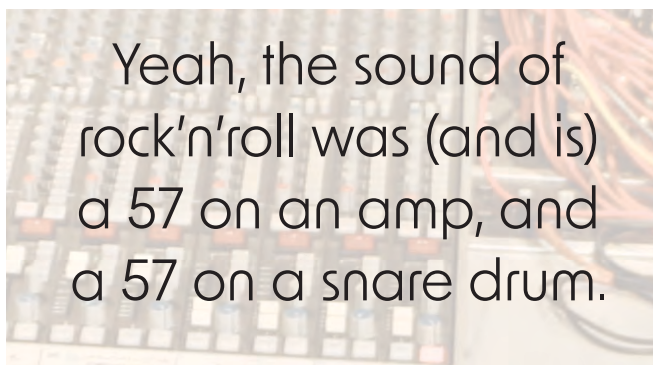
WH: We've got a lot of lessons on basic techniques and stuff like that. If somebody wants to learn about drum recording there's tons of different drum recording lessons that start with one mic, then two mics, all the way up to 20. Depending on the room and the kit we have it all covered. We cover everything, anything that you want to record and everything you would want to mix, we have individual lessons on everything.

I do like doing the studio tours because we get to talk about the gear we use and what we love about it. If I've got a knowledge of someone's discography and their gear, we can have a really great in-depth conversation.

A lot of people I've talked to over the years have said that they make a lot of gear decisions and purchases based on watching those studio talks. It's quite important when a producer says that they like a specific piece of equipment, that's pretty powerful. I feel like that helps people; I would suggest looking at those videos especially if you're building your own studio. Now, the book brings all of those same things into play as well.

MD: Along those along the same lines, what if I asked you that same question about an essential (or favorite) piece of gear that you own?

WH: Everybody says a Shure 57, I think ultimately the answer to that question is just a good quality dynamic microphone. That will do 90% of what you're doing. When I've interviewed Hugh Padgham and Ed Cherney and all the British guys, their answer that question is a Shure 57 and a Neumann 87. I have a pair of 87's and always love them, so I suppose that



could be another answer. Ultimately, if I only had a handful of gear, it would probably be a 57, an 87, a Neve 1073, a DBX 160, and a Neve 1176. That is 90 Percent of my signal chain. But the 57 or the 87 could be swapped out for any comparable dynamic mics. One of my favorite condenser microphones is the Lewitt LCT 640 TS. That's the one that has the two capsules together so you can have pure stereo. You can change the polar patterns, and I think it's only 6 or 700 bucks. Everything doesn't have to be incredibly expensive. Any good quality pair of condensers now can come pretty close to U87's. I don't want to reinforce all the stereotypes. Any affordable decent interface these days like the Audient is really good. The mic pre's that they use in their consoles, are also in their interfaces. They always test the quietest, they almost never clip, and they have more headroom

than the other cheaper interfaces in that price range. When we're demoing really expensive equipment we just go into the Audient. We've found that it helps people out and gives them some perspective that affordability can really rise to do the job.

MD: Why are 57's so great?

WH: What happens is we become chained to them because they have a presence in the 3K or 5K area, those high-mids are where our ears are most sensitive, so you put a 57 on electric guitar and it just seems to come a bit more forward. You put it on a snare drum, and it makes the snare drum come a bit more forward. It does the work for you, sometimes people are being sold on the idea of things being truly flat. I don't know if people always want things to be flat, I think that having something that has a certain characteristic can be really pleasing. That's the reason why people like 57's.

MD: Is the fact that they're a known quantity, you've worked with them a lot, and you know what they're going to be, a factor too?

WH: Yeah, the sound of rock'n'roll was (and is) a 57 on an amp, and a 57 on a snare drum. When I hear a snare drum sound I like at a live show, I'll go to the sound man and ask what it is... Invariably the answer is often a lovely Supraphonic with a 57.

MD: What are some of your favorite bass drum mics?

WH: It all depends on the situation, a D112 is a good stock sounding kick drum mic. If I want something a bit more metal and more aggressive then I'll go with an all Audix D6, if I want something a bit softer, I'll use an old school D12. They are a little softer and don't have that high and low-end boost or the scoop of a D112. Like I said, it really depends on the situation. Obviously, large diaphragm condensers on the outside of the kick can give you a fairly accurate representation, something like a Coles 4038 pulled back a few feet from the kick drum will give you a really good natural thumbprint, and a good overview of the actual sound of the kick drum.

MD: You use the phrase, "It all depends on what you are going for," a lot. I think that's a very important statement regarding engineering.

WH: It is! Everything really depends on what sound you're aiming for. The book goes into the hundreds of different ways that you can record something. But it all depends on what you want the finished result to be.

MD: What do you feel is the importance of placing a band in the right room for the music they're creating?

WH: The right environment is really important, (but again) it's comes down to what the genre is. Ultimately my favorite records, and most people's

That's where the book is very pragmatic. I read a lot of the other recording books, and they're all absolutely wonderful, but they aren't really talking about what we are doing in this day and age. I think that's super important. It's important to let people know that they can recreate these kinds of circumstances, and they can make great music without massive budgets. That's the reason why I call it the *Home Studio Recording Guide*.

MD: Speak to the newer tradition of sending tracks and importing tracks,

got a tiny little reverberant drum room, that's going to be very difficult to do. It's about being realistic, this is where having different tools, and knowing your tools and environment is necessary. If you've got a small dead room, rather than pretending that you're going to get a massive reverberant John Bonham drum sound out of it, why not just go for a really tight 70s sound. If you want to change it up, you've got reverbs, plugins, and other tricks for that. So much comes down to understanding your own



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favorite records, were created by artists in a room working off each other. However, that is not that easily available to people anymore. The thing about the book that I really want to get across is (kind of) a pragmatic approach to: We know how to create amazing records if you've got a huge studio, a great live room, and loads of booths where you can separate everybody. But what about if you're not in that situation — How can you best create that on your own?

especially drum tracks.

WH: I think overcomplicating things in not very good environments can be a negative factor in those circumstances. If you've got a small drum room, rather than using a ton of microphones that will cause phase issues, maybe just simplify things to kick, snare, and overheads. Again, what is your ultimate desired result? What are you what are you trying to achieve? If you're trying to do a big death metal track and you've

environment. We talk a lot about that in the book, how to get the best out of your own environment.

MD: As musicians we call that "playing the room." I know that's a "musician phrase," but it really seems to apply to recording and mixing as well.

WH: There's so much BS that gets talked about. I get people telling me how John Bonham only used three mics on the kit. Sure, that happened a handful of times when Glynn Johns was making the first

couple of records. When Andy took over, he went to multiple mics. People talk about the first two or three Zeppelin records, and what they forget is that Led Zeppelin had one guitar playing at a time, sometimes there was a double, and you had a really natural sound in the room. If you had Metallica guitars in there with three mics on a drum kit, it wouldn't cut it. In those cases, you need individual miking. But you can't talk science with everyone, not to mention the uniqueness and importance of the drummer.

If a drummer has a really cool dead small room, I think he should embrace it and go full 70s drum sound. For example, it would be amazing if you

producing the instruments around the drums that will allow that to happen. It's all part and parcel, it shouldn't be a battle of one thing over another. Make everything work in harmony and get the best out of all of those elements.

MD: You need to leave the space within the mix for a huge drum sound. What good is a huge drum sound if there's no space in the mix? It's just gonna get squashed. What are some of the other drum sounds that that you get asked about that people want to reproduce?

WH: To me there's three very distinctive drum sounds, and they morph in different directions. On one side, you have a very dry 70s drum sound, on the other side you have a huge Bonham

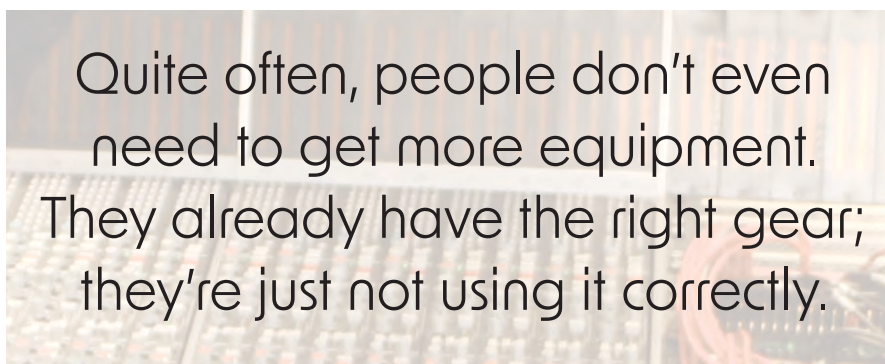
Fray record, I went in and got an incredible drum sound out of the room. I came back three years later to do something, and all the mics were set up in exactly the same position and still patched in through the same mic pres. Once you can find that magic in a room you shouldn't mess with it. You can have close mics and ambient mics and you just go in and record. When you mix you can mute things and actually use mikes to add color. I think that kick, snare, and overheads is great drum sound, often I'll record with a lot of mics but when it comes time to mix, I just use four of them. Sometimes I just use a mono room mic, sometimes it's kick, snare, overheads, and the stereo mics. Sometimes it's all the mics together. It's that combination of understanding the room, and never forgetting that the drummer himself or herself is the most important part, we can't ever forget that!

I have set up the most amazing drum sounds for a session player, and a different drummer comes in the next day, and I wonder what happened. It comes down to inexperience. It's not necessarily an age thing, because you get some older drummers and they're used to practicing at home and overplaying their cymbals. In those situations, the best solution is understanding. One of my tricks is to tape a small amount of kitchen towel under the cymbals just to reduce the sustain. Taking a little bit of the edge off the high end can make a massive difference. Sometimes they don't even know I've done it. You can ask a drummer to play a little softer on the cymbals without making a big deal out of it. As a producer you have to be careful not to make anyone feel really inexperienced. You don't want to appear to be superior, and you don't want to break a drummer's spirit his first time in the studio. I've seen producers humiliate artists and ruin performances. It's the job of the producer and engineer to encourage. One of the biggest things I always talk about is to find what you love about something and emphasize that, rather than finding what you hate and keep pointing that out.

MD: That's simple psychology, that's communication. Give something before you take away something. The emotional aspect of this is vital.

WH: That's how you're going to get a great drum track.

MD: What would you tell a typical



Quite often, people don't even need to get more equipment. They already have the right gear; they're just not using it correctly.

created a really super tight drum sound in a garage that you could baffle around the sides and the back and focus the energy out. That way you could keep the cymbals dead with the close mics and mic the garage and get some really interesting sounds.

MD: Again, play to the strengths of the room. What are some of the other recording and mixing fallacies?

WH: As a producer we must understand that when it comes to the production surrounding the drums, you really have to produce with something in mind. If you want the John Bonham drum sound, the best thing is to make sure that you've got Led Zeppelin production around it. That means acoustic guitar, bass, and maybe one electric guitar. As we both know, most of the Zeppelin stuff wasn't heavy at all. Lots of times, it was acoustic guitars. When it was live it was just one guitar, bass, and drums. The drum sound must work with the rest of the production. If you're a drummer and you're producing your own stuff and you want the sound of the drums to be as natural and as open sounding as possible, then make sure you're

drum sound. They all (sort of) live together. Obviously the early and late 60s and early 70s drum sound was the sound of the drums in the room. The disco influence of the mid 70s created a super dry kind of drum sound. Then we got into a sort of halfway sound. To be honest, I like the sound of drums in a room, that is the combination of the ambience of the room with close mics. That's my favorite way of recording because I feel like if I have my close mics and I've got the drums dead enough, I've got the sound of the room and I've got the best of everything. To me, that seems like the ultimate way of doing things.

When people are requesting information, I think it's always on a case-by-case basis, and the environment of what space do you have to record drums becomes important. Then we can talk about how to get the best drum sound from that room, what equipment you already have, and what you might need. Quite often, people don't even need to get more equipment. They already have the right gear; they're just not using it correctly.

I remember when I did the second

drummer that hasn't recorded much who is going in to record for the first time? What can they do to get themselves "recording ready?"

WH: That's a great question! I would tell them to put a recorder in their practice room, play, and listen back to yourself. If you put a recorder a few feet in front of the drum kit you should get a generic and even sound from the drum kit. Don't place the recorder too high, and not on the ground, just put it medium high in front of the drum kit. That is how a normal person would hear the drum kit. Then play and practice and go and listen to the recording. If you're not hearing a good cohesive consistent

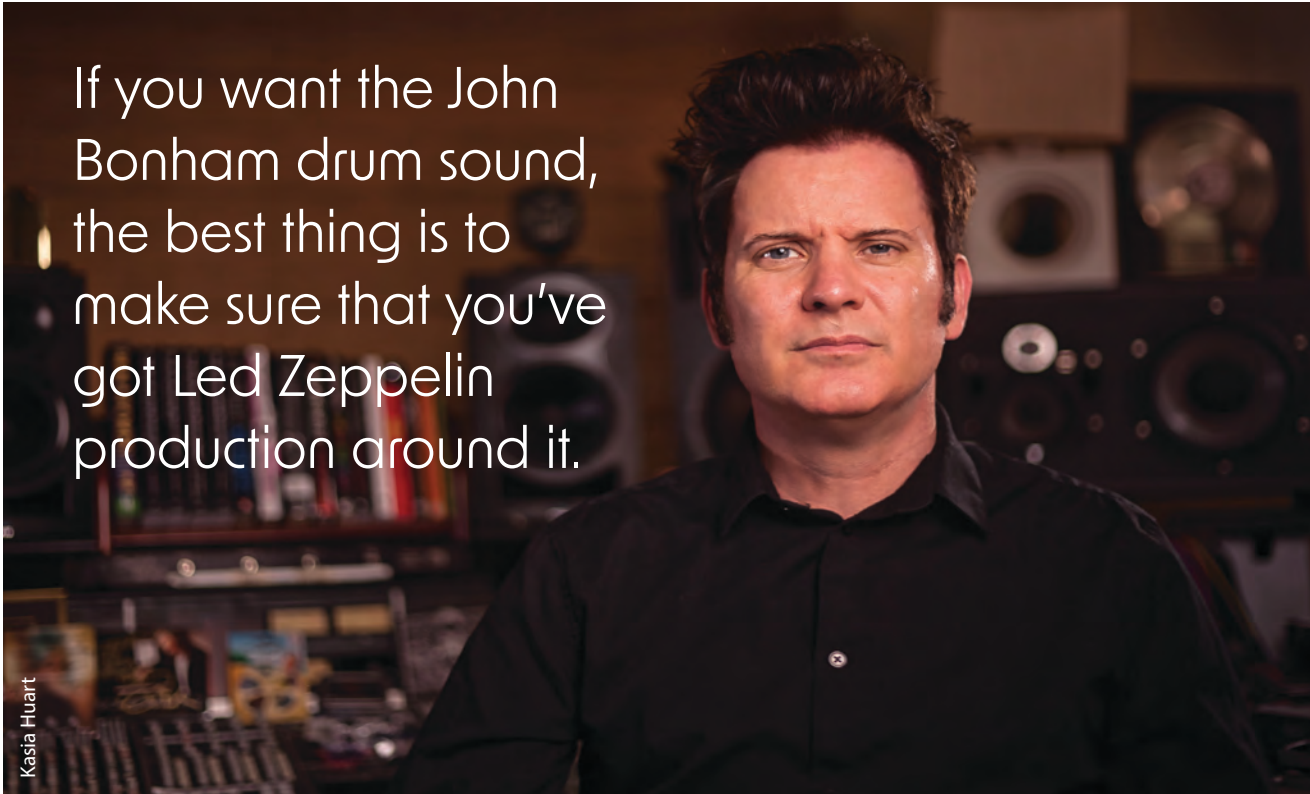
each other. The reason is they've done a million sessions and the engineer has asked them to raise the hi-hat because they're getting a lot of bleed between the hi-hat and snare.

When I say that, people always tell me that Simon Phillips' hi-hats and snare are super close. But Simon Phillips has a touch on his hi-hat that is second to none. He's really percussive on his hi-hat and his balance is unbelievable. Let also not forget that Simon records all his own drums and he's an obsessive and amazing drum engineer. But when Steve Ferrone shows up and there's a big distance between the hi-hat and snare there's a reason why. Vinnie's cymbals

Yakus, Jay Messina, all of these guys who did tons of work to get records to sound the way they do. They didn't have digital tricks, they had to do it with analog, and get the kick and the snare to cut through and sound how they wanted. It's not that everybody in the 70s was so much better than they are now, which is what's always implied. But they didn't just casually throw some mics up and hit record.

MD: What can someone do with their drum set to get it recording ready?

WH: Recording ready is a big question. I think that having fresh heads is never a bad thing. But only if that's the sound of your band. Session players do not always



If you want the John Bonham drum sound, the best thing is to make sure that you've got Led Zeppelin production around it.

Kasia Huart

kick, snare, and toms and a balance from the cymbals, then you should start working on balancing that out. It's very easy for drummers to get really carried away emotionally and in the zone. That is wonderful, but when they are there, they're losing a little bit of perspective.

The thing that I've noticed with great session players, especially ones that have done a lot of recording is that you'll find that there is a good distance between the hi-hat and snare. Yes, there are drummers that play their hi-hats super close to their snares— But generally speaking, the great session players will have their hi-hat and snares away from

are super high comparatively speaking for the same reason. Great drummers that have recorded with great engineers and great producers have learned all of these things.

I have a big dislike of the finger wagging mentality which is 99% of YouTube. I grew up on jazz and classical music, so I like the finest musicians in the world. I just I recorded Steve Ferrone a couple of weeks ago. I've recorded Steve, Vinnie, Matt Chamberlain, Victor Indrizzo. But I hate the idea that only those guys are amazing, that is the idea that the big successful YouTube channels reinforce. If you ask Jack Douglas, Shelly

bring in drums with brand new heads. Brand new heads have a sound, but not everybody wants that. Especially, if you're doing a singer-songwriter session. Let's be blunt, if you're hiring a real drummer, it's probably because you want a little bit of dirt that you can't get out of Addictive Drums. You can get those perfectly programmed drum sounds out of anything, what you can't get from Addictive Drums is that pizzazz, that dangerous and greasy drum sound, that little slippery-slidy groove thing. If you are playing a modern, clearly articulated, rock thing, brand new heads is exactly what you want. But if you're

doing something that has to be a little dirtier and grimmer than using brand new heads might not be the smartest thing to do. Prepping your drums for a session is about understanding the music that you'll be recording.

MD: Could I hit you with a couple names and just give me some strong points about working with them? Keltner?

WH: Jim has done many sessions that I've mixed, so we can talk about him from a mixing point of view. He's probably one of top five most balanced drummers in the history of balanced drummers. When I worked with Andy Jackson, we were talking about that four-mic setup. He said that he got that from Keltner. Andy said that through working with Keltner he realized that he didn't need a lot of mics because if the drummer was balanced it sounded so much better and was more in phase, if you used less mics and just captured the performance.

MD: But again, it comes down to an incredibly balanced drummer.

WH: When you watch guys of his caliber play it's always super balanced. When I asked Lenise Bent about recording Steely Dan *Aja*, I had assumed that they used a ton of microphones because it's so pristine and hi-fi sounding. She asked me how many mics I thought she used on Bernard Purdie? She replied, "Four mics." I was amazed. I asked her how they placed the overheads, and she said that Bernard moved them where he wanted them to be.

That's a pretty powerful statement. What happened was he would play, and if he wasn't hearing enough of something he'd pull the mic down a little closer. The producers, the engineers, and the assistants, allowed Bernard to move the overheads so everything was balanced in his headphones mix.

MD: WOW!!!

WH: I think that's very consistent with working with anyone like Vinnie Colaiuta, Victor Indrizzo, Blair Sinta, or Bernard Purdie. They're all super balanced sounding wonderful musicians that just understand. Quite often when I'm pulling up room mics on drummers, they're useful in the verses and dreadful

in the choruses because the drummer has gone to the cymbals and is playing them so heavily that the kick and snare get almost completely lost. But in the verses, room mics can be quite nice. However, if you're working with a great drummer, you can hear how really balanced they are as you pull up the room mics. It's absolutely superb and everything is articulated.

MD: Vinnie?

WH: Obviously Vinnie is a machine. We did a song for The Wounded Warriors project, and it was a huge classical piece

point we had it, but we did two or three more for the bass player to play catch up and get to the same level as Vinnie, but we could have easily used Vinnie's first or second take

MD: He's a fast worker.

WH: I always joke when you hear (Pink Floyd's) "Money" in 7/4, it's kick, snare, kick, snare, kick kick, snare... I love Nick Mason, but he's doing like the simplest 7/4 you could ever play.

MD: And that's what makes it absolutely great.

WH: Indeed. But Vinnie would have put some extra stuff in and just made it feel like it was second nature on the first take!

MD: How about how about John Robinson?

WH: He's one of the guys I've never recorded. We have come close many times. From what I've seen, personality-wise, JR is really good at doing film and TV sessions meaning that he must be one of the easiest and most professional guys to work with. There's a lot of money being spent when you're recording film and TV, JR just slides himself in and plays at that level. He must be the most recorded session drummer of all time, he's got to be.

MD: I have no idea, that phrase is thrown around a lot. How about Victor Indrizzo? He doesn't get a lot of talk but he's always killing it.

WH: He was doing great in LA, then he went to Nashville to do a session and he just exploded. Now he's completely slammed

in Nashville. He is one of the best drummers ever, his groove is insane. He's also sweetheart. It's very easy to hear why he's so busy, it's because he's a wonderful drummer, but he's also a lovely and sweet guy to be around in a session. He's very complimentary to singers. I did an album with him with a singer whose mother had adopted seven or eight kids and then died of cancer. She was just a superwoman, and the singer had written a song about her, and Victor was visibly crying while we were doing the track and listening to the lyrics. When you're working with musicians that connect with the music that's a huge thing. He's a genuinely



that was seven or eight minutes long. It had tons of tempo changes and tons of time signature changes. There were bars of 5/8 and 6/4 all over the place. The composer gave Vinnie the charts and we played it down once as Vinnie was sight-reading the charts. After playing it down once, Vinnie asked to come into the booth and asked to hear a section. He pointed out to the composer that four bars were written wrong. The thing about Vinnie is he can sight-read the most complex music and make you believe that he's played it 100 times. Once they corrected the chart, Vinnie's first take was amazing, and the second take was even more amazing. At that

really good person and people respond to his energy. I will also say that his grace notes are the most pronounced and easy to mix.

MD: You have mentioned Blair Sinta a couple of times?

WH: I love Blair he's one of the most groove-oriented drummers and he's just a really great energy to have in the studio. I recorded him twice last week.

MD: Have you recorded Brian MacLeod?

WH: Oh yeah, many times. Brian and I are old friends. Brian (and Denny Fongheiser) played drums on my first album with Don Smith. Brian is one of the most exciting drummers I've ever recorded. He brings excitement, he always brings his "A" game, he brings fire and technique, he's one of one of my favorite drummers! Denny's is technically one of the most gifted drummers in the world as well.

MD: Steve Jordan?

WH: Steve Jordan is a whole different thing. When I worked with Don Smith, he had done all the all of the Keith Richards records (with Jordan) in the mid 90s, and we would just listen to *Main Offender* all of the time. Jordan exemplifies how to "pronounce" a beat on the drums. When you hear him play kick, snare, kick kick, snare, it's as close to listening to a drum sample as you can get. He knows how to make drums articulate; you get perfect tone from the instrument when he plays. He also knows how to articulate with groove. I don't know if there's really a better drummer for just getting a song across, he could be the ultimate guy for that. I was at one of Don's sessions with Jordan years and years and years ago, I was just a fly on the wall. Steve requested to have the click playing. Steve literally just played kick and snare on the first take, on the second take he added cymbals to articulate the changes, and on the third take he added fills. He is all about getting a groove right. So he got the groove right, then added something, then added something else, and by the third or fourth take it was just the perfect take because the groove was superb, he added the articulation for different sections by announcing the sections with cymbals, and then the added fills, and he was done.

Don also told me that they were working on a track for a Keith Richards solo record and Jordan asked that the click just be playing the whole time when they weren't tracking between

takes. Jordan would just sit there and keep tapping lightly. When the song started, he was already locked in, so he could count it off and go straight into it.

MD: I've seen Gadd do that.

WH: The great drummers make it about the groove first. Getting the groove to feel good, then building on it and adding some articulation, some fills, and some other icing on the cake. But it's all about the groove.

MD: Kenny Aronoff?

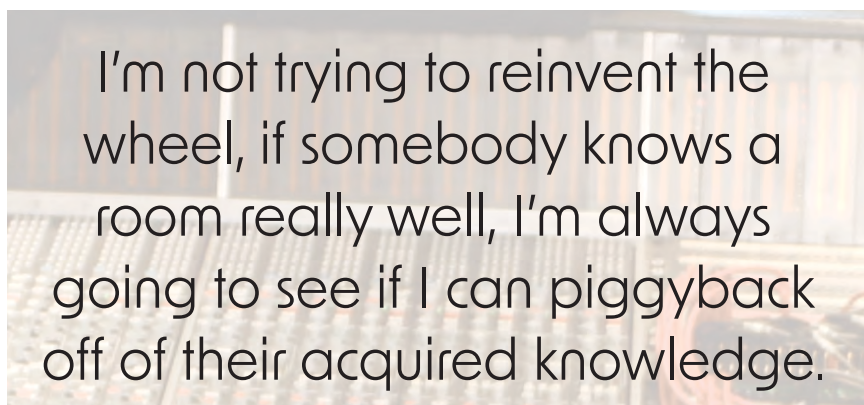
WH: I've recorded Kenny's bunch of times. Kenny is the ultimate at getting tone out of his instrument. I don't know if I've heard a louder snare, but Kenny and Joey Kramer are probably the loudest snares ever. Joey's snare is literally like a cannon going off.

MD: How about the fine art of moving

In a new room, it's super important to be aware that there's people in there that have acquired knowledge of that room, and you should be tapping into that. I've been in studios where Joe Chiccarelli records all the time— Joe Chiccarelli is one of the best engineers in the world. I'd ask, where does Joe record drums, and they'd say he puts them over here. I'm not trying to reinvent the wheel, if somebody knows a room really well, I'm always going to see if I can piggyback off of their acquired knowledge.

MD: How about the fine art of a drummer being editable, do you think about that much?

WH: Anything is fixable. The toughest groove for any drummer to play properly, and you can argue with me as much as you like, is the four on the



the drums around a room to get the best sound?

WH: Absolutely, it depends on what I want, but typically speaking I like to be able to get a stereo image of the kit. I think the best way to get a stereo image of the kit varies from room to room. If I want a super dead thing, I might actually put them into a corner and then deaden all the way around. In larger rooms if I just want a more dead drum sound, I'm putting them anywhere else except in a corner. I used to have a drum room that was amazing, and people would come in who didn't know the room and they would try and put drums in places they thought were best. But it never sounded as good as where I had them. I spent years figuring out the best way to get drums in there. Why not take that experience and apply it. When I go into a room I don't know, I take the assistant engineer aside and ask where he would put the drums? They will show me what they usually do, and I'll do that.

floor groove. I've recorded hundreds of drummers playing four on the floor, and if you don't get that kick and snare relationship quite right, it flams in a really ugly way that can be pretty horrible. If I have to edit then I always edit in group, but the worst-case scenario is I need to edit the kick drum separately from the rest of the kit. If the drummer is that far out, it does make room mics a little flummy so you roll out the low end from the room mics and just trigger reverb off the kick and snare. None of these things are things I like to do but I have had to do it. It's really difficult to edit four on the floor, but (like I said) everything can be, and has been, fixed.

MD: I'm still trying to figure out if that is *fortunate* or *unfortunate*.

WH: Agreed, nothing beats a great performance.



1930-39 Leedy Butterfly Girl Trap Kit with Rolling Console

By Tim Northup



The year is 1930, the place is Bridgeport, Conn. Composer and drummer Oscar F. Knablin plays this set of drums at the Fox-Poli Theater. How do we know this? Oscar was kind enough to write this information on the inside of his prized new Leedy bass drum.

In 1910, Oscar F. Knablin (1880-1962) published a march entitled "Our Teddy" to honor Theodore Roosevelt and the Rough Riders. In 1919, Knablin wrote a march called "Our Heroes Return" to honor the returning soldiers of Bridgeport Musician's Club after WWI. Knablin was also a big band drummer who played at various

theatres throughout Connecticut. One can imagine a grand theater featuring popular big bands and Vaudeville shows and this trap set being rolled on and off the stage for the performances. Can you imagine the excitement of seeing this drum kit on stage in the 1930s?

The Northup Drums Museum specializes in rare trap kits from the 1920-40's with impeccable provenance. This set fits the criteria on many levels. Let's take a closer look and talk about the history of this time capsule drum kit.

This set is an impeccable example of a 1930-39 trap kit that shows the changes and innovations that were quickly

Painted Scenes and Silhouettes

The painting of *Butterfly Girl* is a very different problem than any other form that confronts the artist. If the paint is brushed on light enough for light to come thru, brush marks will show. If put on heavy enough to eliminate the brush marks, the light will not show thru. Therefore, Leedy employs an artist who is highly skilled in the etching process, which is a method similar to that used on stained glass window art. These paintings and silhouettes speak for themselves as the highest grade work of its kind. Prices are for the painting only—hardware not included. Special scenes and hand lettering to order. Prices on application.



The BUTTERFLY GIRL
The vivid colors employed in this new design offer against the black background, a most striking effect that shows up well at a great distance.
No. S-14 \$15.00



INDIAN SCENE
This scene is executed in the conventional four flat colors, poster style, which gives decided contrast that are most attractive.
No. S-11 \$15.00

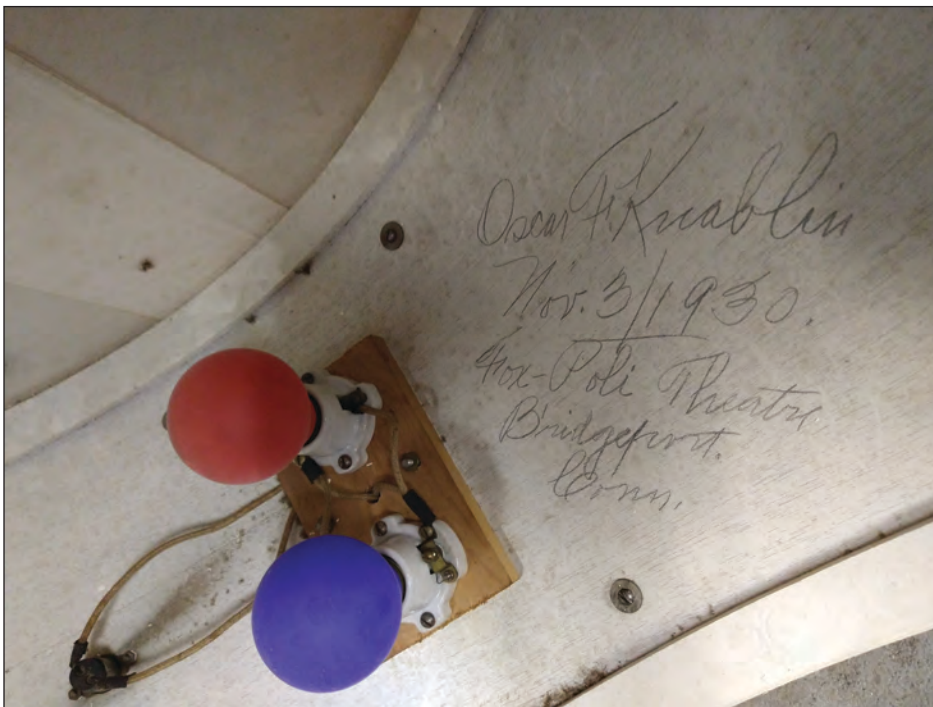


The SPIDER WEB GIRL
A black and gray effect that in its simplicity is alluring, considerable shading being employed. It is artistically painted and is one of our best sellers.
No. S-7 \$10.00



The DUTCH WINDMILL
A wonderful painting that cannot be reproduced as an exact value for a smaller size. The color blending and detail make this indeed a work of art.
No. S-5 \$15.00

{ Page 11 }



occurring to the drum set. Things were evolving quickly. Throughout the 1930s, Oscar upgraded or added different percussion instruments to his kit. But it all started with his prized 1930 Leedy, 14"x28", White Marine Pearl, separate tension bass drum. This drum was originally ordered with a hand painted head called "Butterfly Girl" for an added cost of 15.00. The blue and red blinking lights inside of this drum gives the appearance and illusion of the butterfly girl's wings fluttering. The blinking light kit was an additional 7.50. Oscar's kit is equipped with the original Leedy professional pedal with cymbal striker, and it all sits below a very rare 1927-36 "Rollaway Trap Console."

Mounted on the console you will find a complete set of Chinese temple blocks, Chinese cymbal, and period correct splash cymbals. Also mounted on the console is a 11" Leedy White Marine Pearl tom-tom with a tunable top head and tacked bottom head. The 14" floor tom has the same head configuration with T-handle tunable top head and tacked bottom head. The 8x14 snare drum is a 1939 Broadway Standard "Swingster" model in White Marine Pearl, and all the heads are original Leedy calfskin. You'll also find a Leedy wood block, two cowbells, various sound effects, and whistles lying on the trap table. Probably the rarest item in this set up is the 1939 Walberg and Auge "Twinsok" double hi-hat stand. These are very rare and only a few are known to exist. The Zildjian company once owned one of these and used it at the factory to demo and compare hi-hat cymbals.

This set is full of life and sounds absolutely incredible. It is a lot of fun to play with all the bells and whistles and added percussion instruments. To learn more about this set, experience it in person, or see a video of the blinking bass drum head, visit

www.northupdrums.com



OUT NOW!

Modern Drummer is spotlighting certain new recordings that have the drums at the center of their sound. These recordings might be drummer-led, or just include a high-quality, special, or unique drumming and musical performance from the drummer and/or musicians in the band. This column will not be restricted to only recordings, we will also be spotlighting new books and DVD's that are being released. We encourage our readers to listen to the recordings that inspire them and keep looking for new musical avenues to explore. You'll never know what new music you might find inspiring! Listen and learn.

Wayne Escoffery

Like Minds

Smoke Sessions

Mark Whitfield Jr. drums

After the death of Ralph Peterson Jr., Wayne Escoffery needed a drummer for his band. There are many great young jazz drummers in NYC, but Escoffery called Peterson's student Mark Whitfield Jr. and it was a very good call. Like Peterson (who this record is dedicated to and includes one of his compositions,) Whitfield can swing hard, play a greasy backbeat, and mix it up with any world class soloist. And there are lots of world class soloists on this record: David Kikoski, Tom Harrell, Mike Moreno, and of course the leader saxophonist Wayne Escoffery. This is a swingin' record that deserves a lot of play and attention. Watch out for Mark Whitfield Jr.



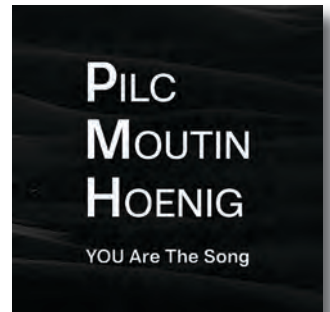
Pilc Moutin Hoenig

YOU Are The Song

Justin Time Records

Ari Hoenig drums

The piano trio of Jean-Michel Pilc, Francois Moutin, and Ari Hoenig is one of the most exciting piano trios of recent history. They have a sympatico that is uncanny. The beat and the harmony can go literally anywhere. This flexibility comes from a lot of work together as a trio. For their first recording together in 12 years they decided to take some chances while creating new takes on popular standards. This record was recorded live without any rehearsal or preparation; as only a band with a lot of collective history and 30 years together can do. Hoenig's relentless swing pushes the band, and his melodic inventions inspire a playful intensity. We should all be glad they are back, and hope that they don't wait another 12 years to record again.



Vince Ector Organatomy Trio +

Live @ The Side Door

Cabo Verde Records

Vince Ector drums

Philadelphia native and hardworking veteran drummer has played with all of the organ greats from Charles Earland to Joey DeFrancesco. His new trio with organist Pat Bianchi and guitarist Paul Bollenback deserves to be mentioned with the best organ groups around. Ector has been a stalwart on the New York jazz scene and is now really stepping out as a leader. The infectious feel of "South Philly Groove" starts the proceedings off to a romping good time, and the musical fun continues throughout the live set. Ector's drumming bubbles with excitement, sets up figures with aplomb, and inspires his band to create some memorable music.



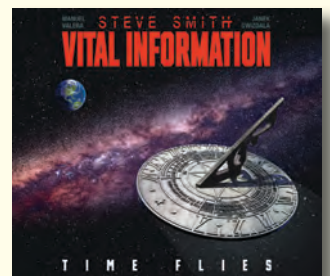
Steve Smith and Vital Information

Time Flies

Wounded Bird Records

Steve Smith drums

After 40 years, Steve Smith is still leading Vital Information, and he has a lot more to say. *Time Flies* is an entirely new kind of Vital Information record, it's a piano trio. But this isn't just any piano trio. Smith describes the trio, "I envisioned a trio with a big sound and a wide conceptual range, from high energy jazz-rock, 'stadium' ballads, burning odd times, to straight ahead swing." Well Steve... Mission accomplished! Smith has put together an exceptional trio of pianist Manuel Valera and bassist Janek Gwizdala. They all thrive in this unconventional piano trio to create one of the best Vital Info recordings in some time. However, the fun doesn't stop there. There is a bonus CD entitled *A Prayer for the Generations*. For that recording, the trio is augmented with Smith's old friend, saxophonist George Garzone. This quartet plays a spontaneous eight-part suite that features Smith like you've never heard him. This is an amazing two CD set of fantastic music.



L.S. Dunes

Past Lives
Fantasy Records
Tucker Rule drums

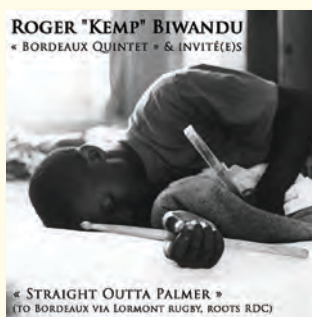
The words “punk” and “supergroup” aren’t usually combined... until now. L.S. Dunes is drummer Tucker Rule’s new punk supergroup consisting of members of the bands My Chemical Romance, Coheed and Cambria, Circa Survive, and Thursday. Rule and his friends have created some real magic on this huge sounding recording called *Past Lives*. If you are a fan of any of the aforementioned band’s you need to check out L.S. Dunes! Great songs, tight arrangements, creative grooves, what more can you ask for? “Past Lives,” “Permanent Rebellion,” “Bombsquad” and “Sleep Cult” are standout tracks.



Roger “Kemp” Biwandu

Straight Outta Palmer
Jazz Family
Roger “Kemp” Biwandu drums

Roger Biwandu is one of the younger generation’s modern masters. With his fourth CD release, *Rodge* is finally getting some recognition. Throughout his career he has been a first call skinsman in France. Sure, this CD features guests like Will Lee, John Beasley, Mike Landau, and Bireli Lagrene, but it’s not about the guests. And while Biwandu has chops galore, it’s not about chops either. Roger’s all-encompassing musical spirit is the star of his drumming and his music. Biwandu’s new record (and in fact all of them) expertly walk the line between fusion, straight-ahead jazz, and funk. Check out the “in the cracks” groove of “Everytime You Go Away” and the pocket of “I Don’t Need No Doctor” and “Footprints.” Merci indeed!



London Brew

s/t
Downtown/Concord
Dan See, Tom Skinner drums

Who would have the bravery and fearlessness to put together a recording session to pay honor to, and in tribute to Miles Davis’ legendary *Bitches Brew*? The answer, producer Bruce H. Lampcov and 12 English musicians who call themselves *London Brew*. The fact that they did this during the pandemic, and while Lampcov, Miles Davis’ son Erin, and nephew Vince Wilburn were watching from 5,000 miles away during the lockdown is even more amazing. But the most

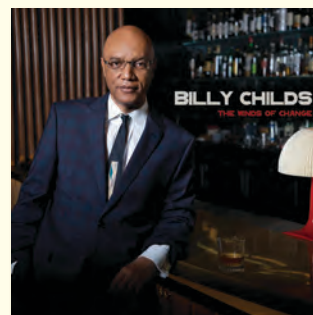


amazing aspect of this record is how it draws on Miles and Teo Macero’s classic production processes without trying to recreate *Bitches Brew*. That would be pointless. *Bitches Brew* inspired lots of different modern musical approaches from electronics to sampling to tape editing, and *London Brew* has incorporated it all to create a new brew. As with the original, hearing is believing!

Billy Childs

The Winds of Change
Mack Avenue
Brian Blade drums

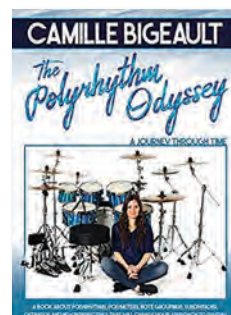
Billy Childs is creating some of the most beautiful music around. His previous records *Rebirth*, *Acceptance*, *Autumn*, and *Lyric* have set a very high bar. Childs’ music is often complicated and intense, but Childs’ genius is in masking complexities with splendor. There is no jazz drummer today that masks complexities with splendor better than Brian Blade, therefore Blade’s participation on this record is nearly essential. And he delivers. Brian Blade’s frames the music on *The Winds of Change* perfectly. Not to ignore the contributions of bassist Scott Colley or trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire; but (together) Childs and Blade are creating an canon of work equal to the piano and drum teams of Ahmad and Vernell, Tommy and Elvin, Evans and Motian, or Chick and Roy. Yes, the piano and drum interplay on *The Winds of Change* is that good!



Camille Bigeault

The Polyrhythm Odyssey: A Journey Through Time
Hudson Music

We are living in a polyrhythmic drumming world that is post Gary Chaffee and Pete Magadini, post Vinnie Colaiuta and Terry Bozzio, and even post Gavin Harrison, Virgil Donati, and Ari Hoenig. Today there is an entire younger generation of drummers that has been brought up on the drumming concepts of these great drummers and teachers, and now they are starting to make it their own. This brings us to Camille Bigeault’s new book. In the foreword to the book Gavin Harrison says, “Enriching the mind is always a positive experience. Camille has developed creative solutions for the creative thinker.” In her book, Camille clearly explains polyrhythms, polymeters, note groupings, subdivisions, and ostinatos. While these ideas are nothing “new,” anyone who has gone down this rhythmic path will benefit from Camille’s fresh views and explanations of these concepts. She brings some new perspectives and processes in learning and connecting these ideas to music. Bigeault walks you through a creative endeavor that will help you develop a new rhythmic point of view.



Art Blakey's Gretsch 1960s Custom Moon Glow Flame kit



Art Blakey was an individualist in every way, including the look of his drum kit. The Gretsch kit shown here features a 14x20 bass drum, 8x12 and 9x13 rack toms, a 16x16 floor tom, and a 5x14 metal snare. The tom sizes and metal snare were uncharacteristic of bop kits of the day, which tended toward smaller toms and wood snares. But they were very much in keeping with Art's penchant for power and volume.

In the 50s and 60s, Gretsch drums were the brand of choice for virtually every important jazz drummer, and Art was no exception. However, where most of his

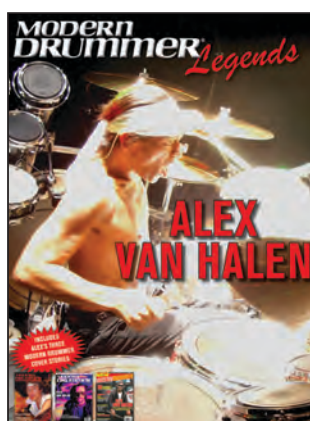
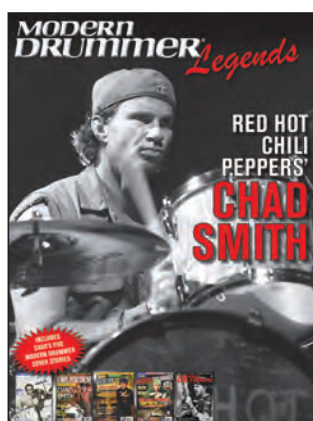
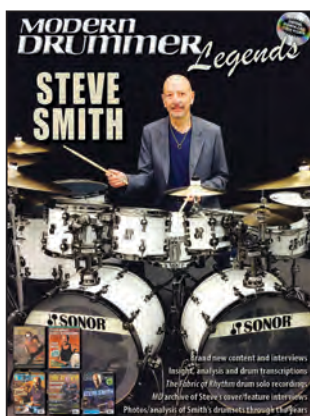
contemporaries favored traditional pearl or the slightly flashier sparkle finishes, Art sought to set himself apart. Therefore, when Gretsch introduced its pseudo-psychedelic flame finish in the 60s, Art opted for the hipper look of the Moon Glow Flame color. Its iridescent finish would appear to move with changes in lighting.

This comes from the book *Crash: The World's Greatest Drum Kits*, available at modern drummer.com



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