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# MODERN DRUMMER®

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JUNE 2023

## Sarah Jones

Drumming Around The World  
With Harry Styles

The Many Sides  
of Blondie's  
Clem Burke

L.S. Dunes  
and Thursday's  
Tucker Rule

A Different View with  
Christian McBride

Learn from:  
Erskine, Rondinelli, Morello,  
Spagnardi, Packer, Joseph, and Lesso



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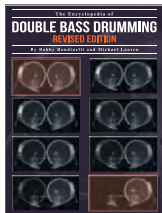
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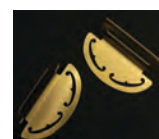
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# Behind the Curtain

After Sarah Jones' interview this month, we started talking about the Beatles movie *Get Back*. Sarah asked me, "Did you see the Beatles movie *Get Back*? I thought Ringo was amazing in that movie. He was so calm when things were going crazy around him." I agreed. While there were people quitting, camera crews, concert plans being made, guests dropping by, changing studios... There Ringo was, calm as could be. Sarah continued, "As a drummer I could see him with that expression, "I'm over here at the kit, I'm ready whenever anyone wants to play." It occurred to me that I hadn't talked about *Get Back* in the pages of *Modern Drummer*. While I was watching the film, I noticed that Ringo never played unless they were working on a song. He never played unless he needed to. Personally, I think that is really important, because no one can think (or write, or create) while the drummer is back there "practicing." My school band director's mantra was, "Practice at home," I have never forgotten that. As drummers we are often in the back, we are watching and observing people create, it's a different perspective. Ringo struck me as the ultimate team player. Sometimes we aren't a part of the "musical decisions" of writing a tune. But it helps to know how a song has gotten to the final version. That will make it easier to contribute and create a drum part. It takes a certain personality to have that patience. Letting things happen is important.



Along those same lines I noticed that when they were creating the song "Get Back" throughout the film, Ringo was always "just" playing a basic groove while they were writing. He was their "working metronome." Throughout the writing of that song, the groove only changed slightly. However, the groove on the final version of the song was drastically different from what he had been playing in the evolution of the song. It seems that Ringo didn't create that "final drum part" until the song was (essentially) completely written. Then we hear (another) iconic Ringo groove that we all love.

You can also hear this creative process on the Miles Davis release from Sony in 2016 called *Freedom Jazz Dance, The Bootleg Series Vol. 5*. On this three CD set, we (the listeners) are flies on the wall as we listen to the unedited session reels of the Miles Davis Quintet (with Tony Williams) recording the classic *Miles Smiles* and the entire reel from the song "Nefertiti." This set (like *Get Back*) is an invaluable, in-depth, and inside look at the creative process of writing, arranging, and recording music.

For typical listeners, these two recordings (*Get Back* and *Freedom Jazz Dance*) might be hard to enjoy. But for musicians, they are precious, and more than outtakes. They allow us to look behind the curtain, and address the important question of "Why?" As opposed to the (often lesser important) question of "How?" We get to see and hear how these geniuses worked and thought. Then we see and hear those thoughts manifest themselves into musical performances, songs, and recordings. Let's hope there are more of these types of releases coming!

**Mark Griffith**

Editor-in-Chief & Director of Content



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**MODERN DRUMMER** magazine (ISSN 0194-4533) is published digitally monthly and print bi-monthly by **MODERN DRUMMER** Publications, Inc., 1279 W. Palmetto Park Rd PO Box 276064 Boca Raton, FL 33427. PERIODICALS MAIL POSTAGE paid at Boca Raton, FL 33427 and at additional mailing offices. Copyright 2023 by MODERN DRUMMER Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction without the permission of the publisher is prohibited.

**SUBSCRIPTION CORRESPONDENCE:** Modern Drummer, 1279 W. Palmetto Park Rd, PO Box 276064, Boca Raton, FL 33427. Change of address: Allow at least six weeks for a change. Please provide both old and new address and send to [info@moderndrummer.com](mailto:info@moderndrummer.com)

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Modern Drummer, 1279 W. Palmetto Park Rd PO Box 276064 Boca Raton, FL 33427.

Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 41480017 Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: PO Box 875, Stn A, Windsor ON N9A 6P2

**EDITORIAL/ADVERTISING/ ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES:** MODERN DRUMMER Publications, 1279 W. Palmetto Park Rd PO Box 276064 Boca Raton, FL 33427. Email: [info@moderndrummer.com](mailto:info@moderndrummer.com).

**MEMBER:** National Association of Music Merchants, Percussive Arts Society

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open	○	✱	✱	✱	▲
H.H.	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗
T.T.	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗
S.D.	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗
F.T.	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗
B.D.	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗
H.H. w/foot	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗
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## Taurus Lovely's "Crown of Thorns" kit



**T**aurus Lovely is the touring drummer for the Tina Turner Broadway show entitled *Tina*. For *Modern Drummer's* Kit of the Month, Taurus has brought us his TreeHouse custom "Crown of Thorns" drum kit. It is an all-Maple shell kit with a 18 x 20 kick drum, two 6 1/2 x 14 snare drums (one with wood hoops one with brass hoops,) a 6 1/2 x 10 rack tom, a 13 x 13 floor tom, a 14 x 14 floor tom, and a 16 x 16 floor tom. All the toms have wood hoops, and the floor toms have brass legs. The idea for this drum kit was to represent the crown of thorns that Jesus wore before he was crucified. All the artwork and every detail is hand-painted. Thanks to Derek Sharpe and his team at TreeHouse drums for bringing these drums to life.



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# Knowing When to Say Goodbye

By Peter Erskine

A life-long commitment to any job or ideal is noble. But sometimes it's just time to pack up your things, say "thanks, bye," and hit the road. While folding the cards and getting up from the table might seem like an easy way out, it takes courage and commitment to acknowledge that it's time to move on. I'm speaking more about gigs rather than dispensing romantic advice. In any event, this will be an essay about following your heart.

The first time I left a steady gig, it felt like I was leaving an essential part of my identity as well as a job. After being on the road and being KNOWN as Stan Kenton's drummer (starting at the tender age of 18) for almost three years, I decided that I'd



Kenton band

had enough and that I needed to... what? Go... where? Be... who? I had no idea. The combination of my parents' marriage hitting the rocks at the same time my request for a raise was refused indicated that the universe was trying to tell me something. So, I followed my heart. This necessitated a change from "Hi, my name is Peter and I play the drums for Stan Kenton" to, "Hi, my name is Peter and I used to play drums for Stan Kenton ... I was somebody ... honest." This self-own of social awkwardness meeting insecurity levels bordering on ego crisis made itself apparent to me soon enough. I had to learn to be simply "Peter" and let people find out more about me as time and circumstance might warrant. Otherwise known as simply being human and growing up.

The next part of the story is that I decided to go back to college and study once again under my professor, George Gaber. What I learned from him that year! However, being back in school after having left a gig, while all my classmates were itching to leave school in order to get a gig, took its toll on my practice mojo. To what end was I doing this for? Gaber recognized my dilemma and wisely gave me the time and space necessary to figure things out. Sure enough, by second semester's end, I was fully committed to finishing my university training and learning, imagining the diploma that would rest one day on the wall of my log cabin home (well, either that or a geodesic dome home!), and ... Maynard Ferguson's manager called offering me the gig. Since I didn't recognize Maynard's manager to be speaking to me on behalf of the universe, I turned down the invitation three times. But this guy was persistent and tempted me to come out on the road for just the

summer, promising that I could return to my scholarly studies just before the autumn semester would commence.

The universe got its chance to grab my attention during my first night playing with the band. That was it. I was a player, and playing the drums was my destiny. Maynard was an incredible boss, and life seemed good. Two years later, however, Jaco Pastorius called, inviting me to fly out to Los Angeles from the road and record for a day with Weather Report. Whoa! What?

I turned it down. Why? I didn't feel ready, plus I had committed to this tour with Maynard and a recording foray like this would mess up Maynard's tour. Luckily enough, Jaco was persistent, and it only took one more call to convince me to say goodbye to the best boss I'd ever had and enter the unreal unknown that was Weather Report. Boom. Life changed real fast after that.

You get the idea. Soon enough (well, four years or so later), it would be time for me to say goodbye to Weather Report and Los Angeles. Why? To realize my dream and desire to be a New York City jazz musician, and to play with the band Steps (which later became known as Steps Ahead), musical heroes Mike Mainieri, Michael Brecker, Eddie Gomez, and my new best friend at the time Don Grolnick. Brecker told me that I was (these were his words) "nuts to leave Weather Report." I wasn't nuts. It was simply time.

And I would leave Steps Ahead, just as I left New York City. It took falling in love with the woman who became my wife and having a family of two children to finally teach me the importance and vitality of NOT saying goodbye. There's a yin and yang to all of this. I can cherish permanence by knowing the impermanent fleeting world of change. And I can cherish change by being solidly grounded at home. The strength and power that comes from love and trust can't be beat in my experience.

The other experiential aspect is that I have learned to trust my instincts more and more. The tricky part of that is recognizing when one is being too impulsive. Jazz drumming requires instinctive choices based on experience, choices that must be made instantly else their timing will be off. Drumming is a game of milliseconds ... I can instantly



tell when a drummer has gotten out of the game of playing improvised music. It's easy to see them thinking in their arms.

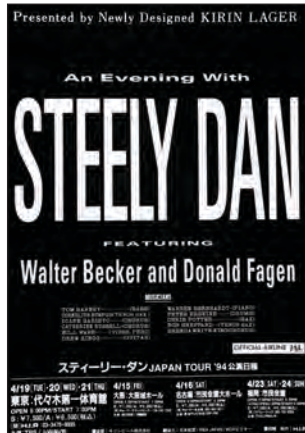
The thing about saying goodbye is that we don't always



Weather Report



Steely Dan



Steps

control the narrative or the timeline. Meaning that others decide what direction our fate may be headed, also known as being fired. I've been let go from some pretty great bands including a post-Weather Report project with Joe Zawinul and Steely Dan (well, they had a reputation to live up to, they were famous for going through drummers, weren't they? Or, wait, was that Weather Report?). In any event, trusting destiny takes much of the sting out of not being invited back to a party. All of this creates a demand for the drummer to motivate himself or herself to find or create opportunity. We won't always know what that opportunity might be.

So, after 20 years of dedicated service to the Thornton School of Music at the University of Southern California, I decided to retire. To leave. To say goodbye. "Plum gig." Am I "nuts" to walk away from everything I have spent time and knowledge and effort to build? No, I'm not crazy. I'm 69 years old. It's time for me to pass the torch to a younger teacher. And it's time for me, by saying goodbye, to say hello to those parts of me that have been waiting to climb out of the shade and bask in the sun, including photography, composing, practicing (!), being with my grandson, and taking our dog Minnie for as many walks as possible. I'll still travel and play. In fact, I feel as though my playing has never been better.



My office gets cleared out next week. Lots of boxes. I need to figure out what to do with all of those *Modern Drummer* awards that adorned one of the walls of my teaching studio! I'm beginning to shed some of the drums I have collected over the years. There's a freedom in moving on, sharing what was once yours, surrendering long-held prejudices or beliefs, and being open to what life has been trying to tell us all along. But that's a secret you'll all need to find out on your own.

The worst goodbye is when we lose a colleague, friend, or loved one to death. Children, parents, philosophers, followers have long cried, "Why?" when tragedy asserts itself. There's no answer to "why" but there is an obvious (if hidden) message thanks to the ephemeral nature of life itself. Like a flower that has blossomed, its fragrance and appearance are all the more sweet for the brief time we are allowed to be in such company. Which is another way of saying: hug your loved ones, be the best person you can be, and have fun playing the drums.

Now it's time for me to say goodbye. Until next month ... oh yes, I almost forgot. I will not be known as a former professor at USC, but rather, please say hello to Peter Erskine Professor Emeritus of Practice of Jazz Studies. I've been called worse things.



Check out Peter's drummer profile page, and get a copy of his Legends book at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com)

# NEW *and* NOTABLE

## Gretsch Drums Launch Limited Edition 140th Anniversary Kit

When Friedrich Gretsch opened a small music shop in Brooklyn, N.Y. in 1883, no one expected his drums would become one of the most respected, iconic brands in music history. To celebrate, Gretsch is proud to present the Limited Edition Gretsch 140th Anniversary Drum Kit.

Each one of these kits is painstakingly constructed to honor the company's amazing legacy and offers drummers a highly collectible piece of Gretsch history which will be admired for years to come. This beautiful, one-of-a-kind kit is handcrafted in the Ridgeland factory using 6-ply hybrid maple, gum, and poplar shells, finished in a stunning Ebony Stardust gloss lacquer. The 140th Anniversary drum kits also features 30-degree bearing edges, all nickel-plated hardware, and Gretsch Permatone commemorative 140th logo drumheads. Each kit is shipped with a set of custom designed drum bags and a certificate of authenticity signed by Fred Gretsch and the artisans who built them. Only 70 of each set up will ever be created, ensuring this limited edition is truly special.

Two kit configurations are available:

**GH-J484**-140th 8 x 12" mounted tom, 14 x 14" floor toms, 14 x 18" kick drum and a 5 x 14" snare.

**GH-E6256**-140th 7 x 10" and 8 x 12" mounted toms, 14 x 16" floor tom, 16 x 22" bass drum, and a 6.5 x 14" snare



*"The 140th Anniversary drum sets are a group effort of over two years of hard work and the results are breathtaking. Many of the features on these sets, from their unique finish, hybrid shell, to the nickel-plated hardware make each kit a Gretsch collector's piece,"* commented Andrew Shreve Gretsch Brand Manager.

For more information about the Limited Edition 140th Anniversary drum kit please visit [gretschdrums.com/](https://gretschdrums.com/) #GretschDrums140

## beyerdynamic Reimagines its Classic M Series Microphones

beyerdynamic - the preferred audio brand for live music and studio professionals globally - is unveiling a redesign of its storied M Series mics at NAMM 2023. The iconic M Series, which has recorded Jimi Hendrix's explosive guitar riffs and accompanied Dua Lipa's global 'Future Nostalgia' tour, is getting a design refresh to merge tradition with future. The new design keeps to the mics' core principles and retains



the sound quality loved by generations of artists, but gains a new future aesthetic, in line with other beyerdynamic gear and perfect for today's emerging pro audio talent. Together with esteemed studio artists Steve Albini and Eddie Kramer, and exciting performances from several live musicians, beyerdynamic will celebrate this milestone with a booth at NAMM that pays homage to the history of its microphones and headphones, and looks forward to the future of audio creation.

"For more than 60 years, beyerdynamic's created masterpieces like the M 160 in Germany, while musicians, producers, and sound engineers have been doing the same with our products around the world," said beyerdynamic's Director of Production, Thorsten Bender. "Now, our tradition of excellence in sound and build quality will continue to power the next 60 years of pro-audio creation."

#### **Music's History: Composed in Germany**

For decades, M Series mics have married excellent sound quality with precise manufacturing at the highest level. Their audio quality continues to set the

standard globally for professionals who consistently use the mics for their natural sound with little discoloration, excellent technical properties such as high impulse fidelity, and application-specific product designs. From the earliest stages of development through testing, M Series' quality has traditionally been achieved through detailed production in Germany, accentuated by precision filigree work - handcrafted by a select group of brilliant craftspeople.

"Our two ribbon microphones - the M 160 and M 130 - are particularly difficult to produce," continued Bender. "We carefully select specialists who've undergone up to a year of training and have outstanding dexterity - which is why only a few employees are currently able to manufacture mics such as the M 160."

#### **Music's Future: Composed in Germany**

That tradition will carry on with the newly designed series but add the benefit of a more streamlined production and build process to enhance everything from logistics to servicing. Without changing the beloved sound of the various M Series

mics, this new design direction will make changes around the product to enhance the overall M Series experience. "When a product line is so beloved that it lasts 60 years on the market, it's critical to balance making nuanced changes with maintaining what makes the products beloved in the first place," said Bender.

The newly refreshed mics will follow a uniform design language and product name strategy across the series - creating a simplified and visual expression of beyerdynamic's microphone DNA. Optimizing the way the mics have been produced for decades will also create inventory stability and better serviceability. Starting later this year, all beyerdynamic online stores, dealers, and retailers will begin to exclusively sell the newly updated M Series mics. Servicing and support will continue for existing M Series models as the Pro-Audio world transitions with us into this next chapter of the beyerdynamic M Series mics. To learn more about beyerdynamic visit. [north-america.beyerdynamic.com/](http://north-america.beyerdynamic.com/).

## **Latin Percussion Launch Panderos De Plena Folkloric Puerto Rican Drums**

Latin Percussion is pleased to present its new Panderos De Plena, a collection of handheld drums to honor the rhythmic heritage and culture Puerto Rico. This further expands the brands extensive range of professional world and ethnic percussion instruments.

Plena is one of the most popular music genres of Puerto Rico with its roots in African music and dance. The lyrics of plena are said to be the 'sung newspaper' dealing with current events allowing the people to express themselves in a serious or light-

hearted way. The panderos are an essential instrument in this form of music. These handheld drums are available in three sizes, the Requinto for solos and leads, the Seguidor for bass, and the Punteador for rhythm.

The new LP Panderos De Plena have been crafted from segmented Durian wood, fitted with traditional rims, chrome-plated hardware, natural rawhide heads and 5/16" diameter J-hook tension rods. These instruments are available in the Requinto 10" (LP5010), Punteador 12" (LP5012) and Seguidor 14" (LP5014) sizes. The drums are sold individually, and all come with a carry bag.

Camilo Molina and Marcos Lopez, who worked with LP's R&D team on the development of these panderos, commented "This collaboration and development was very refreshing. It was important to honor the way our ancestors built these instruments and facilitate this knowledge to a team we trust. As Puerto Ricans and practitioners of the bomba and plena genres, we are very excited that LP recognizes the importance and impact of our music and want to share it with the world."

To find out more go to [lpmusic.com/#wearerhythm](http://lpmusic.com/#wearerhythm)



# Evans Hybrid Sensory Percussion Sound System

An Open Canvas for Sonic Expression

By Jason Mehler

As a product that began as a successful Kickstarter campaign by Sunhouse Technologies, Sensory Percussion™ has matured and evolved thanks to a partnership with the EVANS drumheads. The joint venture has created the new EVANS Hybrid Sensory Percussion Sound System. This system builds upon Sunhouse's foundational Sensory Percussion technology, and features completely redesigned versions of both the hardware and software. For this month's product close-up, we will take a fresh look at the impressive EVANS Hybrid Sensory Percussion Sound System.

## What is Sensory Percussion?

Sensory Percussion™ is a patented system for drummers that transforms an acoustic instrument into a powerful controller for digital music making. By using custom drum sensors that seem more like guitar pick-ups than drum triggers, Sensory Percussion leverages AI-technology and dynamically maps every drumhead's surface. The system tracks where and how you strike the drumhead and unlike a standard drum trigger system, provides up to ten programmable zones per drumhead!

## What's in the Box

The EHSP-1-BUNDLE comes in a well-designed box that you'll probably want to keep alongside the old iPhone boxes in your closet (just admit it). The package includes the EVANS portal module, three drum sensors, three 12-foot TRS cables, twelve disposable adhesive pickup elements, one adapter for an EMAD



bass drum head, one USB-C cable, one USB-C to USB adapter, a power supply with adapters for multiple countries, and a slick pair of black and Silver ProMark ActiveGrip drumsticks. Also affixed to the inside of the package is a software QR code for registration and download of the Sensory Percussion 2 software.

## Evans Portal Audio Interface

The EVANS Portal Audio interface is a small 5" X 10" box with the following available ports:

- Seven sensor inputs
- Two XLR mic/line Inputs w/ optional +48v phantom power
- Two ¼" line inputs
- Two ¼" line outputs
- Four ¼" aux outputs
- One optical ADAT output
- One 1/8" headphone jack
- One ¼" headphone jack

One MIDI out

One USB-C

The control knobs on the interface surface are used to control the gain of the mic and line inputs, main volume and headphone volume. The LEDs on the module indicate power and connectivity of the sensors and computer.

## Hardware Setup

Installing the sensors is fairly simple. First you press the metal adhesive dot on the drumhead where the sensor will be located. This only needs to be done once unless you change the drumhead or change the positioning of the drum. I nearly made the mistake of placing a dot too close to a lug. Doing so would've blocked the sensor from being able to clamp onto the rim at the dot's location. Just something to keep in mind.

The sensors are designed to fit most

standard metal drum rims and even work well on wooden bass drum hoops. I have a 20" Yamaha bass drum with a 2" wooden hoop and had no trouble mounting the sensor securely. Having an EMAD drumhead, I utilized the EMAD adapter which helps to compensate for the external muffling ring that is adhered to the EMAD head. Note: The current design of the EVANS sensor will not fit drums that have thick wooden hoops such as the Yamaha Vintage Hoops found on many of their earlier snares.

The TRS cables connect the sensors to the module and are each 12 feet in length. This seems long enough for most scenarios. However, the cable that I wish was longer is the 3-foot USB-C cable that connects the module to a computer. I would like to be able to move my laptop freely without having to touch the EVANS module. Not a big deal though. Once the sensors are plugged in to the module, you only need to connect power, USB-C to the computer and speakers or headphones.

### Software Setup

EVANS and Sunhouse did a great job of making the software registration and installation process very easy. The card affixed to the inside of the box simply says "Start Here" and has the QR code and URL printed on it. When you visit the URL you only need to confirm your email and create a login. The software downloads immediately and is easy to install.

Once installed, the software guides you through setting up your inputs and training the system to recognize your unique playing style. This is where you can configure what playing zones you want to enable for each drumhead sensor attached. You can also adjust the threshold and sensitivity of each input to



prevent false triggering caused by noise or other drums while preserving enough response to capture softer playing.

After the guided setup is complete, you are dropped off in a demo session where there are seven preconfigured drum kits to play with. The interface is clean and attractive, with pleasing colors and shapes, though it can appear a bit daunting at first glance. There are three main views to choose from:

The "Play" view has a section

called Virtual Inputs containing a graphic representation of each drumhead divided up into zones that can be auditioned by clicking on each zone. No need to hit the actual drum just yet. On this initial screen you can set the volume and panning of each layer, adjust macro controls, configure

inputs and outputs, and explore the sound library.

The "Edit" view is where all of the configurable parameters are housed. It is where you will spend most of your time tweaking, poking, and prodding to create your own custom sounds. To say there are a lot of creative possibilities is a gross understatement. It's more like a fractal universe of possible sound and effects combinations, and they are all configurable in the Edit view.

In the "Mix" view, there are two panels: Layers Mix and Set Effects. The Layers Mix panel has faders for each sound layer

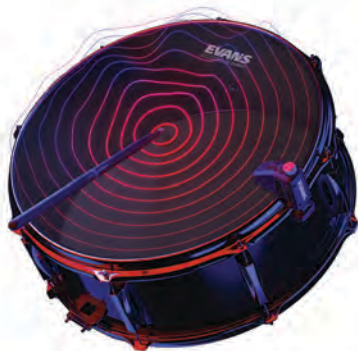
with controls for mute and panning. The Set Effects panel has multiple controls for adjusting the overall effects.

### My Playing Experience

Once all zones were trained to recognize my playing style, the EVANS Hybrid Sensory Percussion System became quite enjoyable to play. The sensors worked amazingly well, even when I played at low volumes. The sounds blended nicely into each other as I moved from center to edge. I also found myself relentlessly striking rims and hoops and switching between drum kits in the software. Having these additional sounds added to the drum kit feels like having augmented reality glasses for the drums. Suddenly, a virtual layer of instruments are sitting within my acoustic drums. I tried not to get lost down a rabbit hole of endless customization, which is very easy to do if you venture outside of the preloaded demo session and drum kits. There are so many creative possibilities.

### In Conclusion

The EVANS Hybrid Sensory Percussion System gives us a glimpse into the future of drumming. I could see this technology evolving further to incorporate the cymbals and stands, or even the drummer themselves. If nothing else, this system is just fun to play. The EVANS Hybrid Sensory Percussion System retails for \$1499. For more info go to [daddario.com/evans-hybrid-sensory-percussion/](http://daddario.com/evans-hybrid-sensory-percussion/)



# Outlaw Drums Sound Control Technology Snare

## A Clean Sounding, Extremely Stable, Stave Constructed Snare Drum

By Brian Hill

Outlaw Drums are known as high quality stave construction drums that are built from centuries-old wood. They ooze with history. For anyone who owns one of these drums, they know how great they sound. Yet, in some circumstances and environments, wooden stave drums can become compromised and somewhat unstable by extreme changes in humidity.

As with most challenges faced by drummers, it's usually only a matter of time until some clever fellow finally

inside of the shell is perfectly sanded and sealed with a special "Outlaw" sealer coating for optimum sound control.

The shell is 6.5" x 14" with black nickel-plated 2.3mm counter hoops and 10 minimum contact tube lugs. A black Trick three-step snare strainer and butt provided preset snare tensions from a set of 25 strand wire snares. Evans G1 coated batter and Snare Side 300 bottom heads were the chosen heads. The very recognizable bronze colored Outlaw Drum badge stands out nicely.

overtones. My soundman loves this drum as he needs no EQ to fix those kinds of problems. The sound is not only very clean, but it's very fast. This is a good drum for drummers who play technically with a lot of notes on snare and toms. Michael Outlaw added that it has a "great sharp attack, a medium sustain, and a fast release. All of which keeps the drum controlled with a focused articulation." I would have to agree with that statement! As with all stave constructed drums, this shell offers a great, low-end "thump" and deep presence with a mid-to-bright projection that won't get lost. This would also be a good drum for single drum playing such as rudimental solos, orchestras, or concert band settings. But over-all, these drums are great for general drum set use in live or recording situations. The snare responded nicely to a variety of tunings, maintaining its over-all great sound and character. This is a straight up road-worthy workhorse drum!

Drum shells have been made from a variety of materials (other than traditional wood) with terrific results. It was only a matter of time before this mode of thinking found its way to stave construction. I really appreciate the fact that this fascinating design stabilized the integrity of the shell and provides a clean, fast sound.

This drum will compliment a wide range of players and situations while being a fairly affordable instrument. The Outlaw Drum Sound Control Technology is a game changer in the world of boutique and custom-built drums, and specifically stave construction drums. They are clean, fast, musical, powerful, consistent sounding drums, which are stable in design and construction. If you haven't already checked out Outlaw Drums, it would be a crime not to take a look at the website and see what the possibilities are for your next custom set of drums... some of which may just be oozing with history. MSRP: \$599.00-\$699.00, depending on details. [outlawdrums.com](http://outlawdrums.com)



solves the problem. In the matter of wood staves moving with the changes in humidity, this "clever fellow" happens to be Michael Outlaw, the man behind Outlaw Drums.

Familiar with the challenges that humidity can bring, Michael found a solid resin composite material that met the Outlaw "code of quality," the Outlaw Sound Control Drum was born. *Modern Drummer* received a beautiful all-black snare drum and the drum is remarkable!

This drum is gorgeous! It looked like an old, hand hammered brass or bronze drum of the highest quality. What I saw was the hand-crafted finish produced in the Outlaw shop. The shell is carefully scalloped, finished in black, and then hand sanded. The result is beautiful. The

The shell's staves are constructed of a proprietary solid composite material, without the need for reinforcement rings. The composite material creates a built-in stability that will no longer be directly influenced by moisture, or the lack there of. What we have is an extremely stable stave shell without the possibility of the staves swelling and receding, thus separating, with changes in humidity. The sound of this drum is as clean as the solid composite material is consistent. Unlike natural wood, composite is consistent all the way through the stave.

This solid resin material is said to have sound-cancelling properties, so I'm not finding very much in the way of inconsistencies or annoying



# Tone Wings

## Add Some Focus to Your Drum Tone

By Jason Mehler

I wasn't quite sure what to expect when I first saw Tone Wings by Liquid Sound technologies. It's not your every-day drum product. At first glance, you might think they fell off a piece of expensive furniture. However, garnering my science education from countless seasons of *MythBusters*, I couldn't wait to experiment with a few sets of Tone Wings.

### What are Tone Wings?

Tone Wings™ are solid pieces of precision engineered bell brass alloy that mount on the inside of a drum, and are used to refine and improve the sound characteristics of a drum. They are another way to chase a more pleasing drum sound by slightly modifying a drum that just won't tune properly. Add a few Tone Wings and there's a good chance you'll breathe some life into a drum.

### The Science

Each brass wing is precisely tuned to the same pitch as the others. When mounted inside of a drum, the wings vibrate together at the same frequency while also slightly dampening any rogue vibrations that cause unpleasant overtones.

### Installation

Tone Wings suffer from the same downside as any other internally mounted piece of hardware on a drum set. You will need to remove a drumhead, and in some cases the tension casing screws for the Tone Wing to attach. If removing tension



casings is a bridge too far, Tone Wings offers a variation using powerful rare earth magnets instead of screws. I was provided with both options for testing. The screw-on version of Tone Wings fits most drum brands, however the thickness of Tone Wings means that some tension casing screws are not quite long enough to reach through both the wing and the drum shell. In that case, it's time to head to the

hardware store.

The magnetic version of Tone Wings use a very strong internal and external magnet for mounting purposes.

### My Experiment

I wanted to set up a controlled experiment to see how the Tone Wings affect the sound of the drum after installation. I chose the 12" tom from my Yamaha Beech Custom drum set as my first experiment. This drum doesn't tune as nicely as other drums and the sustain is

littered with ugly overtones. To set up the test, I mounted the tom on a stand and removed the bottom drumhead. I wanted to leave the top head in place so the drum would stay tuned to the same note throughout testing. I placed a microphone under the drum. For the test, I wasn't trying to get the perfect drum sound, I only wanted to detect if there was a change to the internal sound after installing Tone Wings. I first recorded the drum without Tone Wings installed, striking one of the drum lugs with a drumstick. Again, just trying to get more of the internal sound of the drum, not the drumhead. I then added a Tone Wing (magnetic version) between two top head lugs and recorded that. I repeated this process, recording with up to four Tone Wings. Then I slid the four magnetic tone wings to the center of the drum and then to the bottom, recording both of those positions. Next, I removed the magnetic Tone Wings and installed one screw-mounted Tone Wing on a top head lug. I recorded that and continued the process until all four wings were attached. I repeated the same process on a 14" tom, except the microphone was outside this time and I was striking the head instead of a lug.

### The Results

Listening to the recordings, the most noticeable difference was on the 12" tom with four Tone Wings mounted to the lugs. After the bottom head was reinstalled and tuned, it sounded much better than it did before the Tone Wings. Tuning the drum was easier and the tone had a balanced decay that didn't create ugly overtones. This has become my favorite tom on the kit. The 14" tom showed similar results, the Tone Wings made the drum a little more solid.

### In Conclusion

I chose a dead drum to test out the Tone Wings because I was skeptical. However, after they revived that drum, I wouldn't hesitate to try them on anything. They won't hurt the drum and can be removed if the result is not satisfactory.

[tonewings.com](http://tonewings.com)





Lloyd Wakefield



# The Groove of Sarah Jones

By Mark Griffith

For Sarah Jones, playing drums and grooving is a lifelong commitment. Her most recent gig has her rubbing shoulders with music royalty — whether it's working out vocal parts with Stevie Nicks for a special version of "The Chain," grooving behind special guest Shania Twain, looking over her shoulder to see Dave Grohl enjoying the music at a recent show at The Forum, or Madonna stopping you backstage at the Garden to tell you, "Girl, you're a badass!" But Sarah Jones is doing a fantastic job creating the groove for Harry Styles and his music on her vintage Slingerland drums. However, Sarah is no newcomer. She has been paying her dues and playing in several successful bands for a while. Now she is balancing Styles' extensive touring schedule, her groove, being a new mom, and her career with great success.

**MD:** How did you find the drums? Did they find you, or did you find them? What was the beginning of your drumming journey?

**SJ:** I started off playing piano and while I was asked to stand next to the piano and clap along while my sister played, I quickly realized piano wasn't for me.

**MD:** How old were you?

**SJ:** Probably about 10, I loved music, but I was more rhythmically minded. A teacher caught me pretending to read music and doing everything by ear, so it was quite a natural thing to go into drumming because you can start off and get somewhere quite quickly on this instrument. If you can find a way to play your first beat, you can figure it out for yourself. I think that suited me.

**MD:** You clearly had a passion for music, where did you grow up and were there any musicians in your family?

**SJ:** I grew up in the countryside in England on the border of Wales, my dad played guitar in local bands. He has always played music and he was always playing guitar. He was always having friends over to jam in his old rehearsal space, which was basically a chicken shed. Over the years he soundproofed it and turned into a mini studio with a drum booth, a guitar booth, and vocal booth. His drummer let a drum kit at our house over the summer, so I'd go out there and just sort of bash about and play with my dad. He'd have friends and musicians over and they'd show me stuff. I'd just sit, listen, and watch them play. He took me to local jam sessions in pubs and I was quite fascinated by the people

just getting up to play, but I was kind of crippled with shyness, I was a really shy kid. But when we got home, I'd get on the drums and just try to do what they were doing. Eventually I got up and played at a jam session, and it was the most terrifying thing of my life. But after I got off the drums I had this rush,

with my dad.

Dad and I would play Deep Purple, The Kinks, Bad Company, Small Faces, and Black Sabbath songs, and I would try to keep up. Occasionally, there'd be local musicians that would come around and jam, so I'd do that. A lot of them had cover bands and if their drummer couldn't make a gig, I'd get thrown in the deep end. When you're young you just find your way and learn things. I'd hear something and just go for it. These days, I like hanging out without

chatting, I either like to go out and dance and not chat much, or I am playing a gig and I invite all my friends.

**MD:** You are used to performing.

**SJ:** Yes, it's not just like going out to have some drinks. You're going out to play and are surrounded by people that are playing, and you have some drinks and hang out, but the main thing is the music. I kind of realized that that's sort of the way I like to do things. Even now it's the same, everything is sort of based around the gigs that I'm doing. It's been wonderful so far, that kind of journey through friendship and music.

**MD:** You are very purpose driven and focused, everything revolves around *your* purpose and *the* purpose.

**SJ:** Yeah, I suppose. Around 13 I really got into music. I would be the one saying hey dad let's go through a few songs, so we would play with just guitar and drums. Then my younger brother started playing bass, and we'd play with him. We were into different music like Tool, Pantera, and Slipknot. We were just trying out different things— someone introduced me to Dream Theater and Squarepusher, I tried to play everything, and give everything a go. I still have the



Alex Kluff

it was really addictive. I went to the jam session again and I sat there petrified until I went up to play. Lots of musicians would come back to my parent's house and play. Sometimes they'd show me bits and I'd just watch them and try to do what the older musicians were doing

recording of my music exam where I am playing a song from Dream Theater's *Scenes from a Memory*.

**MD:** That's very eclectic, from Dream Theater to the Kinks, it's pretty awesome to experience all those different styles that early. As you went through your teens what happened with balancing school and drums?

**SJ:** When I was at school, about age 15, I spent most of my time playing with local people in bands. I got asked to join this metal band where everyone was about ten years older than me. I'd been playing double pedal a little bit and was just trying to get that down and it really worked out. I think they were kind of surprised, and I was surprised too. We did the local gigging circuit, my dad had to drive me to the gigs. It was fun to be in that space where everyone was a bit surprised that it wasn't him doing the gigs, it was me. I was giving it a good go sure enough. Faith No More was my band and Deftones were massive influence on me. Abe Cunningham is a great drummer. It's the way he tunes his kit that was sort of an eye opener. I always wondered how he got that sound? Then realizing there's loads of different sounds in the drum kit in front of me. That wasn't really something that I had my hands on.

Then I started playing in a covers band when another drummer couldn't make it, they were a Police tribute act and then they would also do various music like Elvis and The Beatles. I liked trying to learn songs quickly and playing in all different styles. Eventually a local musician got Pro Tools and would record local bands, he would call me to have a play, so I got really used to playing with a click.

**MD:** Did you practice with a click a lot when you were younger?

**SJ:** Yeah, I was really aware of doing that, but I also found it to be a fun way to play and experiment. I think I learned the importance of being comfortable with a click. That way, when you don't have the click, it stays with you. Bad time changes a band. Even if the band is amazing, it's just so important to be locking the time down.

At this point, I was about 17 and a

drummer friend got a gig in an indie band, and he needed someone to take his place in his band. All my friends were going to university, and I was going to do music production, when he asked to play in a blues-rock band called the Aynsley Lister band. Aynsley was 28 at the time, I thought he was so old because I was 17 or 18. I was really scared and thought OK yeah, I'm gonna do this. I'm not gonna go to university I'm gonna go and play with this band. That was a three-piece band, and I was singing harmonies and being a professional for the first time. I had to be on top of everything. Loading in and out of the van, being on the road, learning about being tired and traveling, being in different places and in front of different audiences, I was learning about being in a band. I did that for about two years. We toured a lot around Europe.

When I was at school, about age 15,  
I spent most of my time playing with  
local people in bands. I got asked to join this  
metal band where everyone was about  
ten years older than me.

Now that I look back, it was the best way to learn about proper gigging. I learned how to play in front of people. It's very different from practicing alone.

The Blues scene is really big in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, and England. I was playing some really nice Blues festivals, but I definitely felt like an impostor. There were all these well-known Blues bands playing with much older guys. I just watched them do these shuffles thinking oh my God they've got that down. Watching them and meeting people that were really on my side was really helpful. From the beginning I (kind of) said I don't really know Blues music but I'm trying my best. It was nice to see people in bands (especially drummers) coming together. You see friendly faces on the scene, and it was cool and really fun to experience

the pro drummer world.

**MD:** That's a real crossroads to have at that point in your life. Do I go to university, or do I pursue being a professional musician? Were your parents supportive of your choice?

**SJ:** Yeah, I'm quite lucky that my parents were very accommodating. There would be times where I'd stay up late because a local band would need a drummer or something and I'd stay up and do that instead of doing my college work. It didn't seem that scary to me to just take a chance, I knew some musicians that were doing it and making money from it and were able to live. I think it's a lot to do with the way I was brought up in a bit of a nontraditional way. You know, just find your way, and go for it.

**MD:** It sounds like they were a big inspiration, and they were behind you following your passion.

**SJ:** My dad was really helpful driving me to lots of gigs before I could drive. When

I look back now, I used to drive so much as a 17-year-old, and I'd sleep in service stations and stuff because I'd be too tired to drive. My dad would always say just do what you gotta do. Now, being a mother, that's kind of crazy, but it's what you have to do if you really want to do it. There's always someone else that will be willing to do those things. I remember a drummer said to me, "The most important thing you can do is have a car at the beginning, no one wants you if you don't have a car for your drums."

**MD:** Were you taking lessons at any point during this journey or were you basically self-taught and learning by ear?

**SJ:** Somebody came around once and I had maybe half an hour lesson.

Then, I must say, I knew lessons just were not for me. I realized that I feel so under pressure if somebody is trying to show me something that it's not very helpful. I think that instead of focusing on what they're trying to teach me, I'm just worrying about taking in the information. I'm way better off saying 'OK just leave me on my own in the room with the idea; I'll figure it out in my own way.' It's not going to happen if someone shows me how, I don't know why, I just don't work like that.

**MD:** We all have different processes; your process is to hear it and work through it.

**SJ:** I think that's also from being quite a shy person. Being left alone to do something is maybe the long way around, but if you just learn to be intuitive that's gonna be faster. If someone asks me to come up with something, it's more natural to me.

**MD:** What music and drummers really struck you and made a big impression?

**SJ:** I love Deep Purple; Ian Paice is amazing. I just listened to his solos and his snare fills and was amazed at this energy. You just have to listen to "Speed King" to hear that. From that song I must have learned that there's this thing called a "paradiddle." I also am a fan of Stewart Copeland's playing. I love the way he can go off timing wise, speed up and just go with it. It's incredible that he's choosing to do that, I love that, I really like the way he plays the hi-hats particularly.

The drummer for The Coors name is Caroline Corr. She was as big an influence on me as anybody. When I saw Caroline play, she was "just" playing the drums and always making the song better for it. For me, she never overplays but no doubt she absolutely could if she wanted to take it there. To me she serves a song as good or better than a lot of people. I remember seeing her play when I was 14, and she was really nailing it. I thought that was really cool. That was very inspirational to me. During lockdown, I spent a lot of time listening to, and watching The Coors, and Caroline is a great drummer!

**MD:** Then you got the gig with New Young Pony Club, how long were you with them?

**SJ:** I was a member of that band for about 8 years. There was some excitement around our band, and we toured loads of places. We toured the dance club scene, so gigs were people dancing, it was a

very different thing to the blues-rock band. There was lots of partying, I was young, I wanted to party, but I had all the backing tracks to take care of, I had the samples to trigger, and I was the youngest one in the band. I took it quite seriously. I would never drink before a gig because I was responsible for these other show elements that had to get done and that takes a lot of time. The travel was crazy with them, we went to Australia five times in a year. With New Young Pony Club, I'd have some time to take on other gigs when the records were being made. I'd record with them but there were two main writers so there would be some months where I could take on other gigs. Katy Perry invited New Young Pony Club to support her on her Teenage Dream tour and that's when I met some of the guys from Puscifer. They asked me to play on the *Conditions of My Parole* record. I had

listened to Tool, and obviously Maynard is in Tool, Puscifer is another project of his. I recorded again with them on *Existential Reckoning*.

I started playing with Bat For Lashes from England and we played some great gigs. We did a great show at Glastonbury that I remember. I was adding things to the kit like timpani and a lot more electronics. I was meeting different artists and realizing what they want from you as a drummer. I was with Bat For Lashes for about three years. I was also filling in for the drummer with Bloc Party for a little bit.

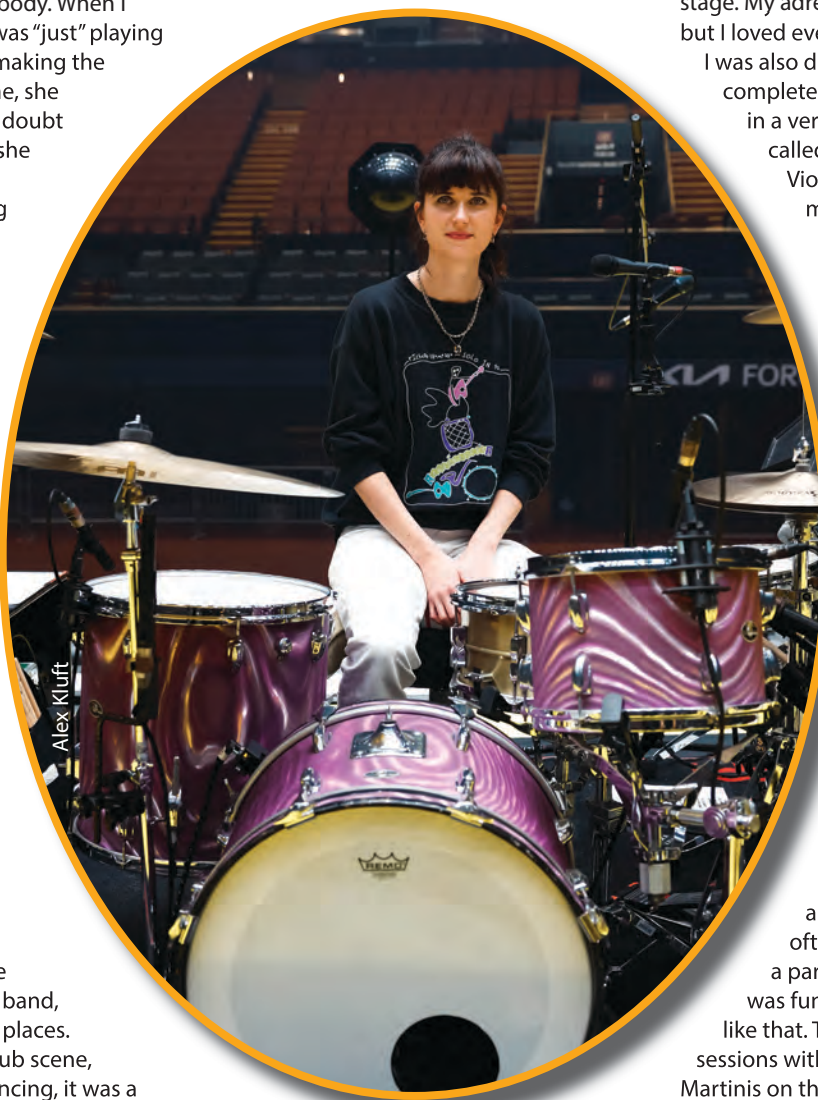
**MD:** What was the experience of playing The Glastonbury Festival like?

**SJ:** We were on after the Yeah Yeah Yeah's. I remember going to check my kit and standing at the side watching them thinking, "I'm going to go and do this in a minute." I had been going to Glastonbury since I was like 16. But that was the first time playing on the big stage. My adrenaline was off the chain, but I loved everything.

I was also doing lots of lots of completely different things. I played in a very experimental band called Geese, which was Violin, Viola, and drums. That was mostly improvised and kind of in the art-classical scene I suppose. I'd be like doing that whilst doing Bat For Lashes and doing my own thing. Then I was in Hot Chip.

**MD:** Did you record with Hot Chip?

**SJ:** Yes, we recorded many times. One of my favorite times was when we went to Angelic Studios in the English countryside which was owned by a member of Jamiroquai. This was for the album, *Why Make Sense?* The title song was a bit of a nod to John Bonham but with a synth orchestra. We would often only do three takes on a part to keep it feeling fresh. It was fun to work with restrictions like that. These were fun late-night sessions with a few too many Espresso Martinis on the go. I toured with Hot



Chip for about four years. It was a seven-piece band with people mainly playing synths. The Tempest drum machine was used a lot and I'd play to that instead of focusing on the click. We would often play festivals with no soundcheck, and our time slots would range between 11pm and 5am, so it was a much different atmosphere to what I'm doing now. Playing so late was a whole thing to get used to. We would often segue most of the set, so I had to make sure I had a lot of energy. It helped that they kept the stage really, really loud! It was a super fun band to be a part of and I learned a lot being with them.

At one point I was playing the UK festival scene in the summer and headlining with Bloc Party on Friday, headlining with Hot Chip, and on Saturday I was playing two other gigs. I feel so lucky that I haven't had to push myself onto people like hey I'm looking for a gig or anything, they just kind of come to me, and it hasn't stopped.

The Harry Styles gig was the same. I had this little gap and then the phone rings, an artist that played on the same scene as Hot Chip recommended me, saying Harry Styles is looking for a drummer you should have a listen. It's all kind of connected, they knew some of the New Young Pony Club people. It's really all the same people from around London.

I went into rehearsals with Harry, and I was afraid it was going to be a real "session band" and I'm not really that type of drummer. I've always been in bands where people have naturally come together through friends of friends or something. I was a bit skeptical, and I went into the rehearsals thinking it would have that kind of music school feel about it. But it was absolutely not that at all. It gelled immediately and I really enjoyed it. I thought OK this is really something to look into, and that was the start of it. I listened to the first record, and it was not what I had in mind. I had One Direction in mind, and it wasn't that at all. I thought this is something I can do, I like this style of music, I feel like I can do this. I met everyone and they were brilliant. Harry is a really great singer. I said to him, "I knew you were going to be good, but I didn't

know you were going to be *this good*."

**MD:** How long have you been in Harry Styles' band, and isn't your husband in the band too?

**SJ:** It's been six years. My husband (Mitch Rowland) plays guitar with Harry and is a songwriter unto himself, he and Harry write together. Mitch also plays drums on Harry's records. He and Harry met just as One Direction was going on hiatus, Mitch and I met in rehearsals and both of us have been here since day one.

**MD:** How has Harry's gig evolved in the six years you have been in the band?

**SJ:** At the beginning we were a rockier band. There were times we'd play off the click and we had raw type of energy playing Harry's first record as a new band. We would often do covers in the live shows like Fleetwood Mac's "The Chain." The first record had some Rolling Stones moments like "Only Angel."

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brilliant. Harry is a really great singer.

The second record was more inward, it had more layered harmonies, and that record had a very different style of drumming. For example, the song "Fine Line" was very orchestral, and it had some time signature changes. The third record is much more pop, we are using more electronics and I am playing more four on the floor disco-based grooves. The scale of the gigs is way bigger than what I was used to. I've played arenas before, but you know not throughout the entire year. From day one, from the first album and tour, it's always been on a large scale. It never went below that level. His career keeps getting bigger and bigger and the crowds keep getting bigger. At the beginning of the gig, it was big, but it was never theaters and smaller places. Although we did do a theater tour because Harry wanted to.

But it was not like doing your typical theater tour. It was absolutely wild, secret gigs, and the fans turn up on the day... it was just another level of wild excitement and pure energy!

**MD:** You are on a break from touring, but Harry is still touring. Are you still doing the gig?

**SJ:** YES! This is the first time that I have ever taken a break from touring. It feels crazy and very strange to me, but now Mitch and I have a little two-year-old son. We've been so lucky to be able to bring our son on the road and Harry has made that very possible which is a rare thing in music. His touring schedule has been full on with most of the year on the road. I have gotten to play some absolutely incredible places and be part of residencies that have broken records. However, sometimes it isn't the easiest thing trying to juggle the amount of traveling we do. I felt I needed to have some time at home with my son. It

wasn't so easy for me to come to that conclusion because I feel very much part of a team.

For years as a freelance musician, you get used to never saying no to a gig, but when you become a parent, your child comes first and your outlook changes. Harry was very accommodating and couldn't have made the decision easier. But I'll be back in May for the European tour.

**MD:** Wow! In this business that's unbelievable. That says a whole lot about you as a mom, a lot about your skills as a musician, and it says a whole lot about Harry as a band leader.

**SJ:** It was so reassuring to realize that. There are so many great drummers out there that would die to be in this position. I see all the drummers on Instagram, and I know I must stay on top of my game. But it's nice to know that in Harry's band, people matter.

**MD:** I had the privilege of seeing you live with Harry on the Love On Tour, and you played phenomenally. It was just a great experience. The energy of the show was amazing, and the band was really tight. I'm curious, are you using electronics on your tour rig?

**SJ:** When I started playing with Harry, I asked him what he wanted me to be doing with electronics and integrating samples into the set, just assuming that

it would be part of it. He wanted me to just play live drums and focus on that, which was quite freeing. I didn't start off doing with electronics, but with Harry's House there's more electronics so I've got two Simmons pads, a kick trigger, and a Roland kick pedal. The electronics are minimal, but they are there. I love the Simmons kit and I really enjoy playing those pads even though there's no rebound. But when you're hitting a clap sound instead of a snare, I'd much rather use something like a Simmons pad. I don't really enjoy all the rebound out of mesh heads and things like that. I actually have a whole set of Simmons (with real hi-hats) that I have used on various projects in London. It's fun to play those because they have *been around*. It's sort of the same feeling I get from vintage drums. It creates a different feel in the music.

**MD:** Are all the sounds you're triggering from the album?

**SJ:** Yeah, they're all from the record. In previous bands I had sounds that I wanted to put in there that were sampled from Tempest or other things. But for this tour the sounds are purely from the record.

**MD:** Have you recorded with Harry yet?

**SJ:** Mitch (my husband) is a songwriter, and he plays guitar and drums in the studio, so when Harry records, Mitch plays drums on the records. So I'm mostly playing his parts when we are playing live, which is interesting.

**MD:** When it came time to learn and interpret those parts did Harry and Mitch make suggestions or did you have the freedom to interpret them in your own way?

**SJ:** They definitely gave me room to interpret the drum parts. The band

is always coming up with different intros and such. But my approach was this. I didn't know much about One Direction, but I knew they were a pop band, and this is a pop band. I put myself in the shoes of the people in the audience that are listening to us. I know if I was them, and the band weren't playing some of the main hooks in the instrumentation then it would frustrate me. So, I try to do those important bits note for note. I think that's what people want to hear from his music.

When I was playing in Hot Chip, we were often playing in clubs with a full dance floor. When I am playing to a dance floor, I am providing the groove for people to dance... I'm not playing the drums for myself; I've got other times to do that.

When

people are dancing and having fun, I play what people want to hear in that setting and moment.

When I listen to the Yeah Yeah Yeah's, their drummer Brian Chase makes me want to dance, and he does it in sort of a punk way. Pat Mahoney of LCD Soundsystem is the same way. I love his hi-hat playing.

**MD:** How did you go about learning Harry's music? It must have helped that Mitch played drums on the record.

**SJ:** It was handy to have Mitch there, but he really was treating the drums like they were on fire — he didn't want to come near them, it was my gig, and he didn't want to interfere.

My approach is to listen, listen, listen, to the song to figure out what I'm going to play. It takes a while for music to "sit." You can listen to or hear a famous song and you think you know it, and then you go to play it and find out you don't know it at all... to learn a song, you listen in a completely different way. I kind of listen to the music as a whole and then I listen to what the drums and the percussion are doing.

I sing a lot of backing vocals in the band and a big part of learning the music is about how to play and sing together well. I find it easier to just start by learning it all together rather than separate it. It seems to click fairly quickly. Then it's actually harder to not sing while playing. Backing vocals are a big part of everything. I always have loved singing and I've done a lot in and all the different bands I've played in. I don't want to fixate on singing something if the drumming is going to suffer, but I try and do both well.

**MD:** You do. With singing and drumming there's a lot of breathing. You've got to get your breathing down, it's a very different physical experience to play a show full on at that level, singing and drumming together. It's very difficult

**SJ:** Yes, it has got to build up, but by the end of the tour I'm like *bring it on!*



Alex Kluff

I've played arenas before,  
but you know not throughout the  
entire year. From day one, from the  
first album and tour, it's always  
been on a large scale.

**MD:** Who are some of your favorite drummers?

**SJ:** James Gadson! He (and Pino Palladino) actually played on two songs on Harry's record *Fine Line*. When we got into rehearsals, the bassist and I just looked at each other in disbelief... I play along to Bill Withers records a lot. I have recently started trying to play traditional grip from watching James on YouTube. Gadson's drumming will be a lifelong study. Sometimes I'll be recording something, and I'll think, "Yes!" I've gotten that James Gadson groove, then I'll listen back and think... "NO! I don't." Then it's back to work. His incredible drumming is just so subtle.

**MD:** What was it about Gadson's drumming that initially drew you in?

**SJ:** When he plays, it's just so effortless. Yet when you try to play the same thing, it's so hard. He's so subtle, but such a genius. Sometimes I feel pressure to play more than I actually do. When we are playing at Wembley Stadium, I feel like I should be doing more, but that's not me. I take comfort in watching drummers like Gadson play, he just does his thing, and he's still doing his thing, and that's what he does.

**MD:** And nobody can do "his thing" better!

**SJ:** That's what I am striving to do. James Gadson, Stewart Copeland, and Mick Fleetwood are my favorite drummers.

**MD:** In looking at your setup, it seems that you are a fan of vintage drums, can you tell me about your drums?

**SJ:** Right before COVID I saw that set of 12, 16, 22 Slingerland Purple Satin Flame drums in New York at Steve Maxwell's shop. Mitch and I had walked in there on a day off, and I saw them sitting up high on a shelf. I had played a lot of vintage kits, but I had never actually tried a Slingerland kit. I loved the way the Purple Satin Flame looked. I thought

they would be perfect for Harry's show. I asked someone to bring them down off the shelf, and they sounded even better than they looked. Mitch and I both loved them. My Tech, Kodi Bramble and J. Colangelo

have done a great job getting them in really good shape for touring. They are really getting looked after. I even have a yellow flame version of that same kit that I keep in Europe.

I started off with a Tama endorsement, and I have a wonderful set of Starclassics. Tama makes amazing drums, but I just found myself leaning towards playing vintage kits. I started buying vintage Tama such as Granstar's and Artstar's and choosing those kits to take on gigs.

**MD:** It's interesting that vintage Tama drums were your gateway into the vintage drum world.

**SJ:** Yes exactly. While in studios, I got the opportunity to play many vintage Ludwig kits which I loved the sound of, so I found myself a great sounding kit from the 60's. I also have a vintage Hayman kit. I took those out on my first gigs with Harry. They fit the gig perfectly except for the snare, I could never get the Hayman snare dialed in. I was using a Black Beauty with that kit. I really enjoy learning about the different old sets and being able to get my sound out of the various kits. When I hear some new drums, they almost sound *too perfect*. When I hear these Slingerland's through a PA, it almost seems that these drums were made for this music.

I tried using the Slingerland snare with the kits, but it just wasn't cutting it. I have always been so impressed by Q Drums, so I asked them if they could make me some. I actually met Jeremy, (one of the founders of Q Drums) on the Katy Perry tour and he knew exactly the sound I was after.

Jeremy's knowledge was completely exceptional, and he was a complete master at his trade. First, he made me a snare which I use to the side of my main. It is a 4 x 12 brass drum that serves as a little poppy snare for those moments. After hearing how good that sounded, I called him again to make me a main snare! He made me a beautiful 6.5 x 14 brass drum. That snare arrived during our residency at the LA Forum, and I fell in love with it. The Q snare has so much character, and it fits perfectly with the sound of the Slingerland's. I was a little nervous about being able to top the Black Beauty, but for this gig I always use his snare.

**MD:** Have there been any problems about taking vintage gear on the road and durability?

**SJ:** I was worried about that, but so far, we haven't had any issues with the Slingerland drums or the Simmons pads. Along with the vintage drums I am using Meinl Cymbals. They are such a cool company, and it's been wonderful to see them grow. I started playing them with New Young Pony Club, and ever since then they've had my back. When I heard the Foundry Reserve cymbals it was a real game changer for me. They really upped their game with those cymbals. I am using a Foundry Reserve 20" Crash, and a 20" Byzance Thin Crash. I use 14" Byzance hi-hats live because I need a little "extra." I have played around finding the right choice of ride cymbal for this gig. I find myself crashing my ride more than I use it as a ride. I have been using the Big Apple Ride and the Dry Ride. I love the Jazz Ride, but it doesn't work for Harry's gig at the moment. Now I have come back to the 22" Foundry Reserve Ride.

**MD:** What sticks are you using for these big venue gigs?

**SJ:** Vater 7A. I used to use 5A's, but when I started to learn traditional grip, I went to

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the 7A because they felt right. Vater and I are actually working on my signature sticks that will be based on a 7A, those should be done very soon.

**MD:** A lot of the gigs with Harry are done in the round, what's that like?

**SJ:** Playing in the round is interesting. When you are set up in the round, the microphones pick up everything so that changes how you play. It's unusual to have people watching from behind you and that takes a little bit of getting used to, but it's also very fun being in the middle of it all. You can really feel the crowd and that really adds a special feeling.

**MD:** What are some of Harry's songs that you enjoy playing the most?

**SJ:** There is a song from the first record called "Woman" that is a pretty basic groove, but it's fun to concentrate on sitting back into it and getting the feel just right. "Fine Line" has that orchestral ending that is really different, I love playing that tune. We also play a three-song disco medley that is really fun. Everyone starts dancing, and as the drummer it's nice to (sort of) be "in charge" of that tune. At the end of the set, we play "Kiwi" and it's a straight up basher, I love that one. From the last record I love to play "Sushi" and "Cinema," but I really enjoy it all.

**MD:** What's coming up for you in the future besides the Harry Styles gig? I know you have an electronic side project with Anthony Silvester called Technology and Teamwork, which brings me to your project called Pillow Person. You've always had this electronic element to your music. I've heard some of the songs and it's very electronic based. Did that begin with New Young Pony Club and Bat For Lashes? Or have you always liked electronic music?

**SJ:** In a way. People would go and

## I play along to Bill Withers records a lot... Gadson's drumming will be a lifelong study.

dance at a club and I kind of wouldn't get it. I'd be going to see Phantoms or whatever in my spare time. I didn't know what was going on. It's just seemed like someone behind the decks, I didn't get it at all. It took a long time for me to really understand it, then I really got into it because I enjoyed dancing. Then I tried to take those beats and put the intensity that you can get from electronics into live drums, then I tried to do that in a band. I didn't just want to have Ableton running in the background,

I wanted to be doing it live myself.

Then I explored it more and got into drum programming a bit myself. Then I started playing with drum machines and kind of layering things when I was recording with Anthony. He'd always ask me to put some live drums over the top, and through that I got into playing synths quite percussively, you know finding sounds, and using them as percussion. I quite like using hardware, I don't really enjoy software so much, so that limits things a bit.

Outside of that, I feel like the best things come when someone recommends you for a gig because you are the right person for the gig. I've never really gone out to find gigs, I've been so lucky. Everything that I have done has lasted a long time. I did the last Kurt Vile record in LA, he just let me do what I wanted to do on that record, it was a lot of fun. After being on the road for all this time with Harry, and having a child, I can't wait to start playing every day for no reason. I think for Harry to have lots of women in his band that just solidifies that anybody can do it. If you just put your energy into something it can work out. Just go for it.

**MD:** You know what, Madonna was right, you ARE a badass!

**SJ:** Thanks. I can't tell you how much fun this was.

**MD:** No, thank you.



Alex Kluff

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Alex Kluff



# Clem Burke

Drummer, Band Member,  
Session Man,  
Medical Researcher

By Mark Griffith

Finding a drummer that has led several cool bands and recorded several high-quality rock records with those bands might not be that hard. Finding a drummer that has done dozens of sessions with people like Pete Townsend, Iggy Pop, Nancy Sinatra, and Bob Dylan might be a little tougher. But try to find a drummer who has been a member of three Rock and Roll Hall of Fame bands (Blondie, Eurythmics, and The Ramones.) Finally, find a drummer who is working with medical experts from Oxford and Cambridge to improve the lives of others through studying how the brain and body functions while playing the drums. All of those drummers are the one and only Clem Burke!

**MD:** Where did the Clem Burke Drumming Project originate, what is it, and who did the idea come from?

**CB:** Well originally it was started by a man named Dr. Marcus Smith at Chichester University. He was a Blondie fan and he sent me a letter that outlined his intent and made an analogy between playing sports and drumming. Dr. Smith was also a coach on the Olympic boxing team. When you think about boxing and drumming there is real similarity because it has to do with your heart rate going up and down. When a boxer is in the ring it's very physical and then he takes a break between rounds. It's similar to how we play a song and then take a break between songs. I don't know how long a round is; but you figure the intensity of boxing and the break between rounds it causes a boxer's heart rate to be very high and dropping between rounds. You can make that comparison to playing drums in an intense rock song like a Ramones punk rock song that is really fast for three minutes and then stopping. Obviously, your heart's pumping away and then it's going to slow down. That is the physical aspect of being fit to do what we (drummers) do to play drums. That was essentially the initial idea, but as it has expanded tremendously since then. We have now done seminars with autistic kids. Recently we went to schools to talk about getting the brain and the body better involved in a kid's daily routine. Obviously, your brain and your body have to be in sync to play an instrument, it's integral. The doctors began to study more of the brain functions while playing a musical instrument. There are loads of other people involved now, Roland has been a sponsor and gave us some drum kits to use in the workshops when we do stuff with kids. Roland wanted to participate more, and they've been nice enough to endorse me and endorse the drumming project to the highest degree. But that's how it all began, it was supposed to be a one-off thing, but thankfully the study keeps feeding upon itself and growing.

**MD:** It's cool to see how your drumming with Blondie is inspiring change.

**CB:** Since the 70s I've been saying, 'I'll give Blondie another 18 months.' It's been over 40 years now. It was fun when we got back together in the late 90s, and that coincided with getting the letter from Dr. Smith. He came and explained everything to me, and I let him wire

me up while I played. They monitored my heart rate and oxygen rates during a Blondie show and took all the data and processed it. He came up with a thesis which is how I began to get these honorary doctorates from Chichester University and Gloucestershire University.

a form of physical and mental exercise as well. Working the brain on the simplest drumming exercise like a double stroke roll or paradiddle or any simple rudiments is really what it's all about. I'm just the "namesake" of it, but now there are lots of other people involved.

**MD:** So it started out as a study of the



Now there's a documentary series that Sky Arts did called *My View*. They focus on a member of a band who isn't the lead singer or front person. They did the first one about me, and in the course of that, they talked about the Clem Burke Drumming Project, and the whole project keeps going. We're getting ready to do a big science fair in conjunction with Oxford and Cambridge on the 4th of July and I've been invited to kick it off. I'm delighted to be able to be a part of this, it's a positive spin on being a musician. It's about essential needs in life and helping kids that aren't physically motivated for many reasons. We are showing them that drumming is

drumming effects on the body, and now it has expanded into how drumming affects the brain.

**CB:** Yes, that's right. There are a whole contingent of scientists involved now.

**MD:** I can't express how much this fascinates me. Using the drums to make the world a better place and using drumming to help people with special needs is something that I have been involved in for a long time. I've seen it work up-close with special needs kids. Those are experiences that will stay with me forever. I don't want to ask you to speak for the doctors, but what kinds of things are they learning?

**CB:** They have found that my level of

fitness, as far as oxygen level, blood pressure, and heart health, was on parallel with an athlete. They were using the comparison of the English footballer Ronaldo, and my test results were coming up the same as his. They found that drumming helps younger people to be more motivated and it also works



for enabling people with autism. There's a whole thesis and I can't really speak for the doctors; it has taken on a life of its own. I got involved when it was first launched, which was well over 10 years ago, then a couple of papers in the UK picked up on it. They ran a story with a picture of Bonham, Moon, and me. They talked about the tragedy of Bonham and Moon— but my standard quote is, 'There's more to it than having a beer and walking on stage.' My role models are Bruce Springsteen and his drummer Max Weinberg. The shows that they put on are amazing! But the aging process is about being as fit as possible. That fitness means being as compassionate

and cognitive as possible. That way you can continue doing what you enjoy in life as opposed to sitting on the sofa and watching TV all the time.

**MD:** They're studying stuff that you and me and the rest of the drummers of the world have known for a long time. Playing drums is hard and performing is harder, but it is also really good for you, both physically and mentally.

**CB:** They have also studied playing drums in intense heat like we do on festivals. They've monitored me playing festivals with Blondie in the middle of the day when it's 90 degrees outside and you're dressed to be on stage. All those things go into the equation of the fitness level and what it takes to do play and perform at a high level.

**MD:** I think a lot of drummers immediately associate you with Blondie, and rightfully so. But you have done so much more than that. You have been a member of three Rock and Roll Hall of Fame bands, Blondie, The Ramones, and Eurythmics. I don't know if any other drummer can say that? You have also done a huge number of sessions throughout your career with Bob Dylan, Iggy Pop, and numerous others. There have been numerous talented drummers in great bands, but you have gone beyond playing with Blondie.

**CB:** It all starts with Blondie. With Iggy for instance, when Blondie did our first national tour back in the 70s, it was with Iggy Pop. David Bowie was his keyboard player at the time. They were promoting an album called *The Idiot*, and we were selected by David and Iggy to be the opening act. We were coming out of the trendy New York underground rock scene at CBGB and Max's Kansas City Club. Obviously, Bowie and Iggy were both aware of us, that is what began my association and friendship with Bowie and Iggy. Over the years we crossed paths and we were always friendly.

In 1981, I was doing Jimmy Destri's record called *Heart on a Wall*, he was the keyboard player from Blondie. Guitarist Carlos Alomar who was (more or less,) David Bowie's Musical Director and I were both doing Jimmy's record then we did a tour with Iggy Pop opening for Santana and The Stones. In 1982 I made a record with Iggy Pop called *Zombie Birdhouse*; we also did the title song for the *Repo Man* soundtrack. We are uncredited, but that's a band that I had at the time called Chequered Past with Iggy singing, Steve Jones from the Sex

Pistols, and Nigel Harrison from Blondie.

**MD:** That's one of my favorite movies ever, a real cult classic, I've heard that song a million times!

**CB:** Bringing everything full circle, Blondie is playing with Iggy at the Crystal Palace in London on July 1 of this year, it's Debby Harry's birthday.

**MD:** How did you wind up playing with Bob Dylan?

**CB:** That came about through my association with the band Eurythmics with Dave Stewart and Annie Lennox. At the height of Blondie, and around the time that we were making Jimmy's solo album, the band took a hiatus. During that time, I basically moved to London. I met Dave and joined the band Eurythmics. We made the record *In the Garden*, and Dave was also working with Bob Dylan, so he invited me to be a part of that. We spent a couple weeks in the studio and recorded a shitload of stuff but only two things ever came out.

Most of the time for all of us in Blondie, that was kind of the steppingstone, we had made our mark. I know I certainly had a gunslinger mentality, I wanted to make a name for myself. Of course, Ringo and Keith Moon were my role models, but I love session drummers like Hal Blaine and Earl Palmer.

Because of Blondie I would usually

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just get a call, the same thing happened when I was working with Pete Townsend on *White City*. It was actually producer Chris Thomas's idea to have me on the record with Pete. I'm on the track "Brilliant Blues" and something else on *White City*. There's also a couple of YouTube videos of Pete and I working in the studio. Pete had just come back around to picking up the guitar again, so it was interesting spending time with him at his studio in Twickenham.

I just did a track with actress Ann Margaret, she has a duet album coming out, actually Townsend is on that too. I'm on the track that Ann and Mickey

Gilley did together. Mickey Gilley just passed away, I think that track was actually the last thing that he ever did. I also just did a Cramps tribute track with Linda Gale Lewis who is Jerry Lee Lewis's sister. It's amazing, things always just kind of pop up, and it's easier to say yes than no. You can always decide if something's not happening a little later, you can reassess a project, but I am usually more likely to say yes to things and kind of figure it out from there. It's never really about the money, of course the money is great if you get paid and all that, but that wasn't the main reason why all of us started to play music. I

always try to keep that in mind.

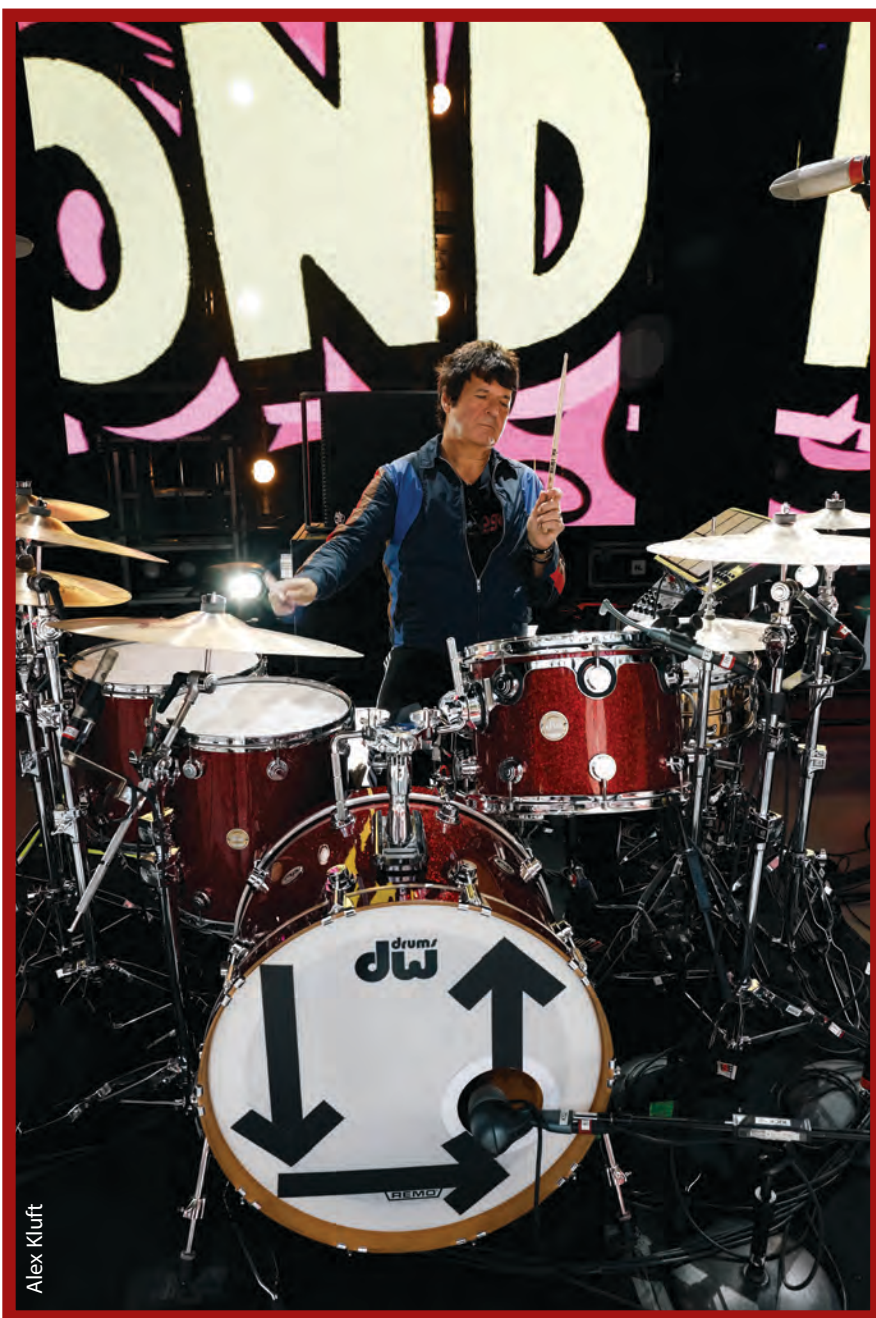
The music is the legacy of Blondie. At the end of the day there was the image, there was the synergy that was happening around the New York club scene. CBGB was kind of like a workshop. You didn't have to be perfect; you could go in there and play and make mistakes. There's some great footage on YouTube of the Ramones playing there and they're arguing on stage, you wouldn't get that now in the age of TikTok. Everything has to be perfect. Between GarageBand and ProTools it's a different world. For us it was going into the club, playing our original material, and getting feedback on it. The opportunity to do that was what really helped us become what we became. Without the owner of CBGB (Hilly Kristal) you would never have bands like The Ramones, Blondie, The Talking Heads, and Patti Smith. He gave us all a platform and we used it like a workshop.

**MD:** It's interesting that you say the word "workshop," because the word workshop implies making mistakes, developing, and things not being perfect. Can you talk about the process of making mistakes in the process of making music?

**CB:** I'm a big fan of going to people's soundchecks, I've seen some great soundchecks over the years.

**MD:** At soundchecks you can often see bands workshop new ideas.

**CB:** Most people who perform would (probably) say that mistakes are the best things that happen. Mistakes lead to something else and open new musical doors. You have to shrug your mistakes off. As long as you start at the beginning and end together, whatever happens in the middle is OK. I know that's more of a jazz concept, but I look at live performances like that. I don't necessarily play the same drum fills every time. Obviously, I'm playing in the meter of the song and there's certain arrangements, but I'm happy to play something across the bar with a fill that I've never played before. You become inspired by one thing and play something in the moment. That's the great thing about live performance, you're in the moment and you're getting feedback from an audience, it's really a free form and magical kind of existence for that hour and a half or two hours on stage (or if you're Springsteen 3 ½ or 4 hours.) A while back, I was at of Springsteen show and they wheeled



Alex Kluff

Clarence Clemmons on a wheelchair and put him on the elevator up to the stage. I've heard Clarence refer to the stage as the "healing floor," and it's true. Everything drops away for that couple of hours on stage.

We all love things like John Coltrane or Miles Davis and the improvisational factor of jazz, and that is incorporated into rock. Great rock musicians can improvise. Debby Harry and Iggy Pop can both improvise. Think about The Who *Live at Leeds*, that's very improvisational. Today everyone is playing with tracks, which is fine. Blondie has a good balance, maybe 30 or 40% of our set is playing with synthesizer programs, and 60% is just completely live and anything goes, so it's a good balance.

**MD:** Are you using in-ears on stage for that 40%?

**CB:** I've tried every way of monitoring the tracks and playing to a click track. I tried the in-ears, but I've gone to headphones now. I just use the real closed headphones and I'm fine with that. I put them on when I need to and then I take them off. I think the whole in-ear thing was really developed more for singers. Then all of a sudden everyone came on board with it. I have a monitor system behind me, I've tried everything. I had the electronic drums, I had real drums that were made into electronic drums. I do use a Roland Octapad that I really like, and I love the Roland drum kit that I have at home, it's perfect.

**MD:** Through the 40 years of Blondie, how has the band and the music evolved?

**CB:** The role models and the influences within Blondie are basically The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, and Bowie. You never knew what to expect from any of them. Chris Stein, Debbie Harry, and



Alex Kluff

myself essentially started Blondie. When our bass player Fritz Smith went on to join the band Television, I brought in my high school buddy Gary Valentine. Chris has always been very influenced by R&B music, soundtrack music by Nino Rota, and things like that. We were all

influenced by film. On the other hand, I really like bubble gum pop music like 1910 Fruitgum Company, Ohio Express, and things like that. Those bands were very influential on me and bands like the Ramones. There was a culmination and a melting pot of influences that became the sound of Blondie. That's how we got to "Rapture" early on, my friends were already doing that music in the South Bronx. On our last album we did a song with a team of Hispanic rappers called System Soleil, they just joined us on stage in Bogota for two shows. We have always had a wide musical palette.

The Ramones were great, but they essentially only did one thing. They tried to expand, and they were diverse in their own way, but they were really the sound of classic punk rock. Another interesting thing about the bands at CBGB was that we were all different from one another. You had Patti Smith,

Most of the time for all of us in Blondie, that was kind of the steppingstone, we had made our mark. I know I certainly had a gunslinger mentality, I wanted to make a name for myself.

Television, The Ramones, The Talking Heads, Blondie, Mink Deville, but we were all very different. There were common denominators, everyone was influenced by the Velvet Underground, the New York Dolls, and Bowie. But everything expanded from that, and no one sounded alike.

**MD:** Speaking of The Ramones, how did you become a Ramone?

**CB:** CBGB was literally like rock 'n roll high school, you saw the same people every day, I'd be there five to six days a week. Our rehearsal space was a block south of CBGB, we'd go there every night, I must have seen the Ramones over 100 times. People would cross paths and there was a huge cross polarization of influences. The Ramones asked me to join three or four times, in 1977 when we were on tour in the UK with the band Television, the Ramones were on tour with the Talking Heads at the same time. On a day off I went and saw the Ramones and was talking with the drummer Tommy Ramone. He told me that he was going to leave the band because he couldn't take being on the road. He was (essentially) their manager and producer and he only became the drummer by default. He actually went on to have a bluegrass band called Uncle Monk where he played mandolin. But the Ramones couldn't find a drummer to play the way that they envisioned the drums. Which was (very obviously) straightforward with no drum fills and things like that. That was the first time they asked me to join the band. They asked me one or two other times.

When I was in Eurythmics our US management also managed the Ramones and Talking Heads, and they asked again.

The problem was that the Ramones wouldn't rehearse with me, Johnny Ramone in particular wouldn't rehearse. They just wanted me to show up and play. Although, as I said, mistakes are fine, but I'm a big believer in being prepared and rehearsing. I think the best thing that happened was Mark Ramone was out of the band because he had a few problems, but he was able to resolve his problems and come back into the band.

Mark's a good friend of mine and it all worked out fine, but that's how I became a Ramone. It was short lived but I'm proud of my name "Elvis Ramone." I came up with that. I didn't really want to be "Clemmy Ramone." They were all big Elvis fans and when I was playing with Eurythmics I had a big pompadour, so I said how about Elvis Ramone? That name kind of endured. It's amazing how many people ask me to sign stuff Elvis Ramone, I'm proud of my time as a Ramone. They're a massively influential band, I think the Ramones are the second most influential rock and roll band of all time

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after The Beatles.

**MD:** What's been happening recently in your freelance career?

**CB:** I just did a record with bassist Glen Matlock, and I just did a record at Village Recorders with a band called The Tearaways. It's called *And Now for Our Next Trick*, Ed Stasium produced that record. I also just played with a bunch of great musicians in celebration of Iggy Pop's *Lust for Life* record at the Cavern Club.

**MD:** Why do people call Clem Burke for a gig or a record?

**CB:** I think I bring a certain aspect of

## Clem's Drums

### Drums: Drum Workshop

18 x 24 bass

10 x 14 rack tom

16 x 16 floor tom

16 x 18 floor tom

5 1/2 x 14 Black Beauty Snare or

5 1/2 x 14 Bronze Snare

### Cymbals: Zildjian

14" A Zildjian New Beat Hi-Hats

20" A Zildjian Ride

18" A Zildjian Medium Thin Crash

18" A Zildjian Thin Crash

18" A Custom Dark China

16" A Zildjian Medium Thin Crash

**Electronics:** Roland Octapad



versatility because of the wide range of music that I have recorded with Blondie. People know what to expect when they get me. They're not asking for Steve Gadd, of course Steve Gadd is brilliant, but they're asking for me. I definitely bring a certain energy to a session or a gig. Blondie has (unbelievably) had four #1 records in the United States and far more than that in the UK. For an American band our reach is really far, we are a very international band.

When I toured and recorded with Nancy Sinatra it was because she came to a Blondie show and saw me play. The next thing I knew, her Musical Director Don Randi called me up and said that Nancy saw me play and asked if I would be interested in doing a session with Nancy. One thing led to another, and I did a couple of really great tours with her.

**MD:** I never knew you were in Eurythmics.

**CB:** I'm on the first album called *In the Garden* which wasn't a success but it kind of opened the door. I was playing drums the first time they were on TV in the UK. Much later we did the album called *Revenge* which won the Grammy for "Missionary Man." I'm on that entire album, and I did several tours after they regrouped. After they made the album *Sweet Dreams* with just the drum machine and synthesizer, I did the tour. A lot of people thought that we were using programs and sequences, but everything was played live. When we did the tour for the *Revenge* album a keyboard player played all the arpeggiated stuff, there was no click tracks, no programs, no nothing. It was the band playing live. We had a really fantastic band. There's a double live album that we did.

**MD:** You have also led or co-led several bands, what can you tell me about your band Empty Hearts?

**CB:** We thought Empty Hearts was going to really have some success. It was a band that could go on the road and people would appreciate the musicality of a true rock and roll band. I said "yes," but some people in that band said "no." Our second album came out during lockdown on Steven Van Zant's Wicked Cool record label. Ringo Starr plays drums on one track and the album's really great. We had a lot of plans but (the guitar player from The Cars) Elliot Easton was very disappointing to all of us. His behavior and his whole outlook on trying to make this thing work was really sad. We had high hopes for it, we all put a lot of time and effort into it, and then for some

reason Elliott did not want to proceed. We had two people from the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in that band, Elliot and me. Wally Palmar from The Romantics and bassist Andy Babiuk who kind of put the whole thing together. Ed Stasium produced the first record. I also had a band called the International Swingers, and we did a song called "Gun Control." It's an anti-gun song from several years ago, I just put it up on my Twitter again because of the tragedies that keep happening with shootings and guns.

**MD:** What are some of your favorite records that you have done?

The Greek Theater in LA, we are playing before Elton John at Glastonbury, and we're opening for Sting at a few shows in Ireland.

When Blondie first got together there was nothing going on other than the music. We had some original tunes, there was no big piles of money, it was just about the creativity. Sometimes I feel like I discovered Debbie Harry, I've said this so many times— as a drummer I was always looking for my Mick Jagger, my David Bowie, or my Jim Morrison. Debby's image kind of overshadowed everyone else's, and that's fine, she's the



**CB:** That first Eurythmics record is pretty cool. The Chequered Past record is good, there's a live Iggy Pop full length video that I always point people to. It's Iggy in San Francisco in 1981 playing live. He told us to, "Play as loud and as fast as possible," that entire show is up on YouTube. I did a record with Steve Hogarth (the lead singer from Marillion) called *Ice Cream Genius*. That was kind of an "outside" record. I did a record with Mark Owen (from the band Take That) at Abbey Road.

**MD:** And after all these years, Blondie is still creating some fearless new music, what is coming up for Blondie?

**CB:** We have a new record that will be out in the Fall. We are playing Coachella, Isle of Wight Festival, last year we played the Cruel World Festival, we are doing

singer. The lead singer (obviously) is what really makes a band sound great. Deep down I feel as though I found my mixture of all those singers in Debbie. Her image has always (kind of) overshadowed her tremendous creativity, her songwriting, and her creative vision. I compare her a lot to Bowie. Like Bowie, Debby has a lot of ideas and is good at delegating people to make those ideas happen. We love being on stage together. Like I have been saying for the last 40 years, I'll give it another 18 months (ha!)

For more information on The Clem Burke Drumming Project check out [clemburkedrummingproject.org](http://clemburkedrummingproject.org)

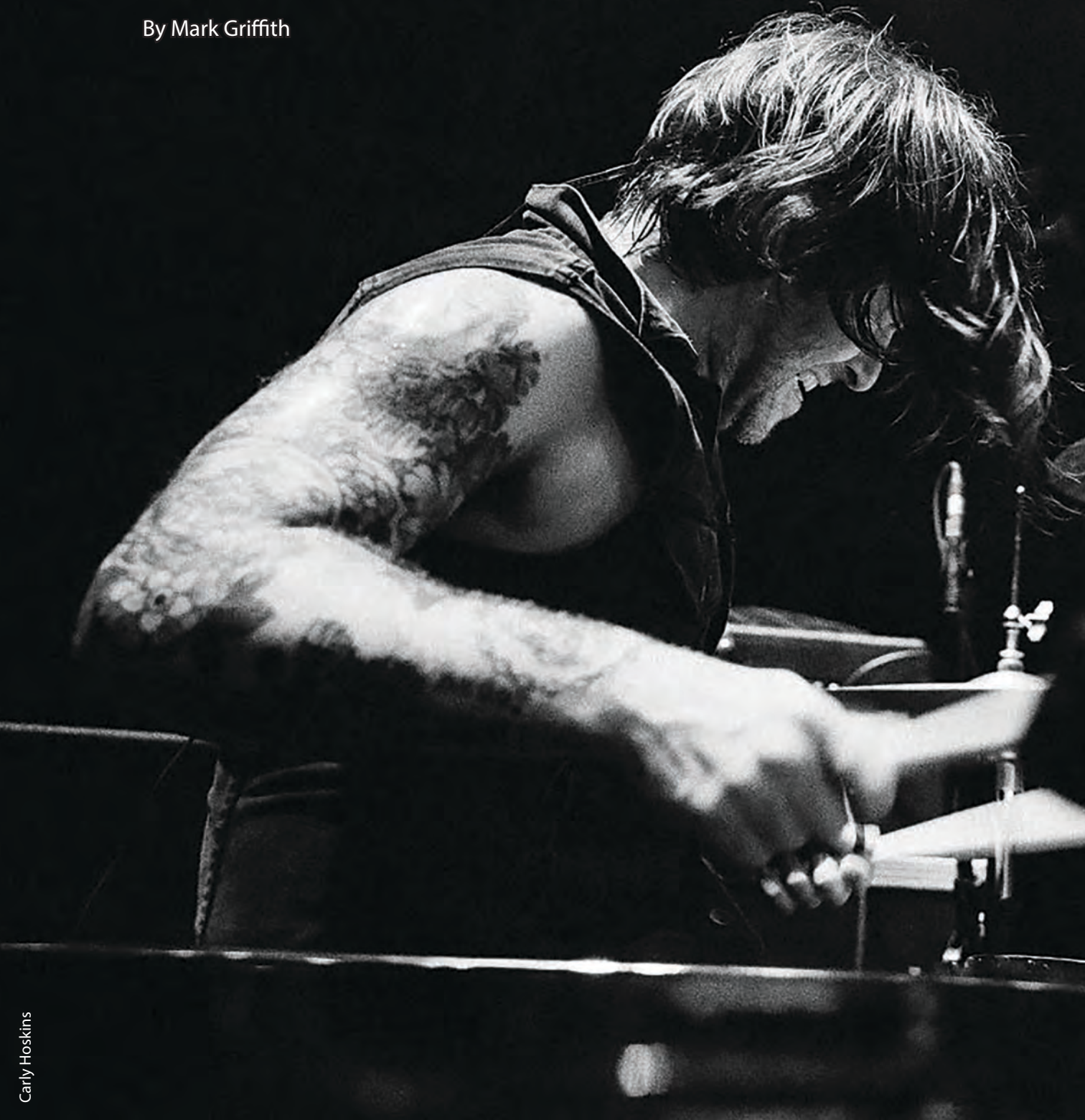
Check out Clem's drummer profile page, at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com)

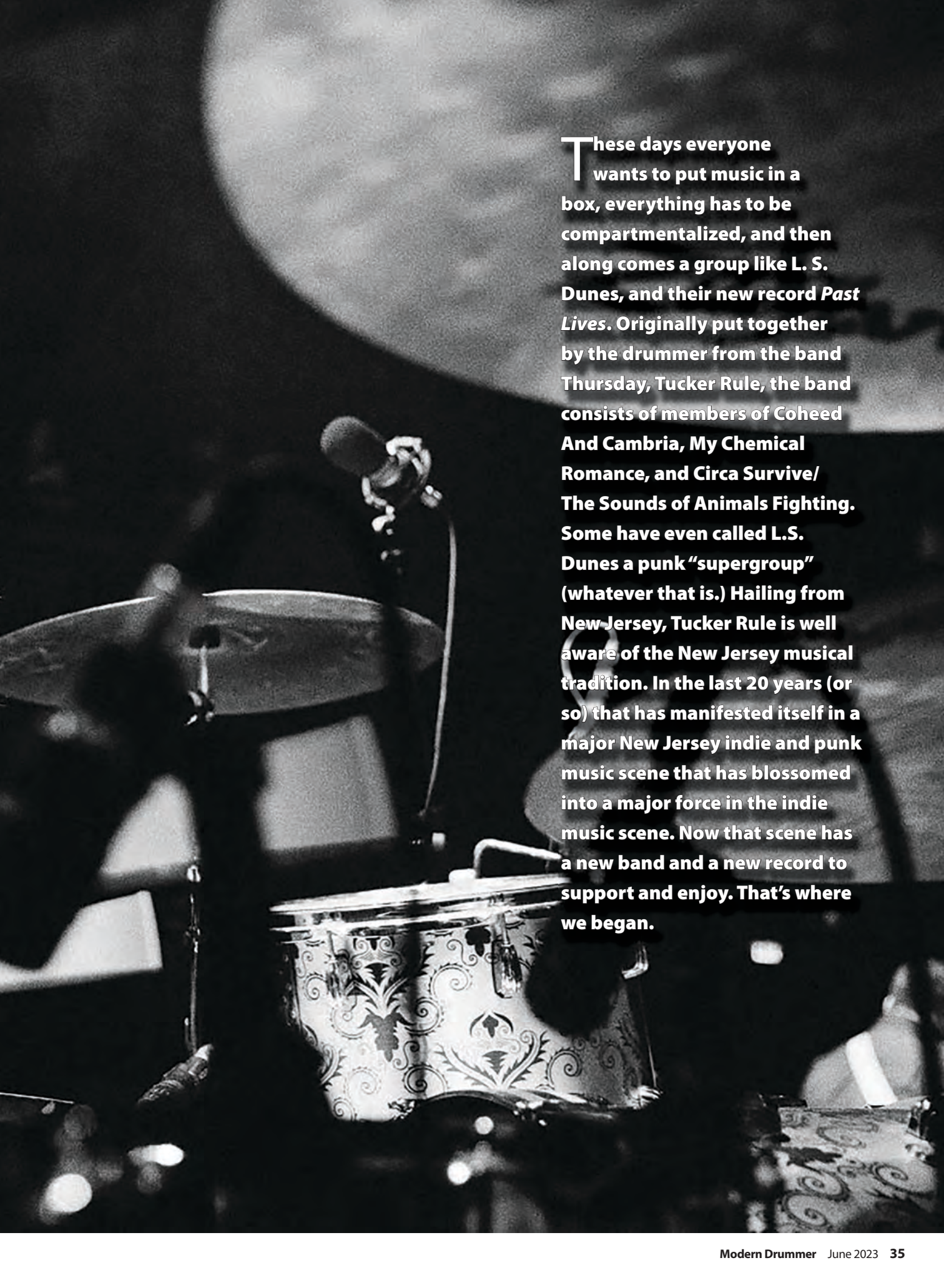


# TUCKER RULE

Bringing the songs of L.S. Dunes to Life

By Mark Griffith





**T**hese days everyone wants to put music in a box, everything has to be compartmentalized, and then along comes a group like L. S. Dunes, and their new record *Past Lives*. Originally put together by the drummer from the band Thursday, Tucker Rule, the band consists of members of Coheed And Cambria, My Chemical Romance, and Circa Survive/*The Sounds of Animals Fighting*. Some have even called L.S. Dunes a punk “supergroup” (whatever that is.) Hailing from New Jersey, Tucker Rule is well aware of the New Jersey musical tradition. In the last 20 years (or so) that has manifested itself in a major New Jersey indie and punk music scene that has blossomed into a major force in the indie music scene. Now that scene has a new band and a new record to support and enjoy. That’s where we began.

**TR:** I was really lucky to grow up in New Jersey, I grew up in a time when the punk-indie scene was really booming in New Jersey. Basement shows were thriving so you could actually find these underground bands and actually go see them play in someone's basement. You could feel the music, watch the drummer, and see exactly what he was playing. Then I would go home and play and try to learn that part just from seeing it with my own eyes. There were no barricades, there was nothing between you and the musicians. They were literally playing in someone's house.

**MD:** What bands were you seeing in that scene?

**TR:** I remember seeing At the Drive-In in a tiny basement, I saw Saves the Day at a basement show, Hot Water Music, Earth Crisis, you name it. Any hardcore band that played a basement show in New Jersey, me and my high school friends would drive to see it. I remember skipping school one day and driving to DC to see Sick of It All. I just I lived it, I love the scene, and I just love the music. I love being really close to it. I started playing drums when I was 18. I literally learned by watching drummers, not by

listening, but by watching them play. I would go home and think I got to figure out how to separate my limbs.

**MD:** You just made a pretty big distinction about learning by watching drummers play not by listening. How did you figure out the drums by watching people play? What kind of music were you playing along with?

**TR:** I was playing along to Mötley Crüe and Soundgarden. I love Matt Cameron! Not that Soundgarden is simple drumming by any means, but I could hear that everything had space and I could play along to some of their simpler tunes, although a lot of their stuff is really complicated. Then there was AC/DC, Phil Rudd is so hard to emulate, but it's easily digestible for the brain.

**MD:** What made you stop playing along to records and make the turn to start creating your own beats?

**TR:** My best friend was a guitar player, and we were pretty much at the same level. He was playing Nirvana "Come as You Are" and I was playing it with my own beats. He would come over and play a riff that he had, and suddenly I knew what it meant to make up beats to go with somebody else's music. I would come up with a beat for a specific thing,

but then I started to just play drums by myself. I knew that if I wanted to write songs, I would have to have some stuff (beats) prepared. I wanted to be prepared. I didn't want to be teaching myself a beat that I didn't know while the other guys were waiting for me.

**MD:** Were you creating beats based on what you had heard from Motley Crue, Soundgarden and AC/DC?

**TR:** I was definitely pulling from all of my favorite music, and I always do. Even to this day I use music as a tool for inspiration. I don't necessarily always listen to music I love, I listen to music that I find challenging and inspiring. I listen to music that I can borrow from. I really want to do whoever is writing a song a service by playing my own thing. I don't want to just recreate the same thing over and over again on the drums. I do work on the less is more kind of thing, but I also enjoy going a little left of center every once in a while. I want to have fun, playing for the song is fun, but so is steering the ship in a different direction. You can bend the mind a little bit in a good way.

**MD:** What type of music inspires you to bend your mind a little bit?

**TR:** My favorite band in the entire



Carly Hoskins



Carly Hoskins

world is a New York City band called Quicksand. They were the first band that I heard in what was called post-hardcore. I went from listening to very fast punk music to hearing Quicksand which had space and was slower. They had breakdowns and everything was heavy. It was like listening to one constant breakdown for an entire song, their drummer is Alan Cage and he's amazing. They have a record that came

going all over the place, and I just really loved their frantic energy. On a first listen, you're on the edge of your seat because it's about to go off the rails, but everything is precise. Then I got into the Deftones record called *White Pony*. Abe Cunningham is just the master. He's not only a great human being, but he's a fantastic drummer. What Abe does in space is amazing. Everything he writes is so cool they are instant licks. I love

stuff from Stewart, I love that 16th tight hi-hat stuff, his playing helped me realize the power of the closed hi-hat.

**MD:** There's a lot of power in the closed hi-hat, unfortunately a lot of people don't realize that and just instantly open it up. When you are trying to take your drum grooves in a different direction, what is your thought process?

**TR:** Like I told you, my best friend was a guitar player, when we started out writing there was no bass, so I was writing drum parts to guitar riffs. I started playing drums by trying to follow and accent the guitar riffs, and I've used that for my entire career. When I hear a guitar part I want to go in that direction, not just go down the center and play something that is easily digestible. I like following angular riffs, that's kind of where my mind goes when I'm at the drums. If I hear something that sticks out, I want to put a snare and crash there.

**MD:** I love that you mention that you came out of a "scene." Can you talk about the importance of "the scene" in your musical background?

**TR:** When my band Thursday started (20 something years ago) we actually started the band to play in my singer's

## Basement shows were thriving so you could actually find these underground bands and actually go see them play in someone's basement.

out two years ago, but I first heard their song "Phaser" off their record called *Slip*. I heard them 1994 or 1995 on MTV 120 minutes and it blew my mind. That's where I kind of got the idea of space and realized that slow drums are fun. At the Drive-In was huge in my life because (speaking of the left of center thing,) a lot of that stuff was

John Bonham, obviously Led Zeppelin was a huge thing. I rediscovered Led Zeppelin 20 years ago and I realized that they shaped everything. I love Stewart Copeland and I love The Police. He was the punk drummer that played reggae. He was always coming up with new stuff to play within the genre, he redefined punk drumming. I got a lot of my hi-hat

basement. He had a basement in New Brunswick, New Jersey. All the bands like Hot Water Music and At the Drive-In were doing shows in his basement. Before all of these bands exploded, they all would come through and play basement shows. We literally started Thursday to do the same thing. Then people started liking our band. But all the bands became friends. When Thursday was blowing up on MTV, other bands in our genre were doing the same thing. And I knew all of the guys from every one of the bands from coming up together. That way it wasn't as scary as if we were the only band from I (for example) Toledo, OH. We were a part of a group of people that were all coming up together and we all knew and supported one another. We toured together, we would see each other at festivals, today I've had these friends for 20 something years. The guys in L.S. Dunes are those same guys. Thursday took Coheed And Cambria on their first tour, our singer Jeff produced My Chemical My Chemical Romance's first record. We all came up together, the strength in numbers thing is amazing because it really made life a lot less intimidating.

**MD:** As a drum teacher, I am always hearing from students that it's hard to meet other musicians in the hopes of starting a band, and when they do, they have no place to play. How did you address these issues when you were coming up?

**TR:** It was tough at first. Where I grew up there was no shows within a 20-mile radius. Me and my four or five friends would get into a car and travel to these shows that were in adjacent counties in NJ. We would drive 30 minutes to a show and suddenly everyone (at the show) would know each other, but we didn't. Me and my four friends would go to these shows and see these people every weekend, but we didn't really talk to them, because they had their friends. We kind of stayed in our little bubble, but we were a part of it. We would go and sing along and crowd surf. Then slowly when everybody went off to college we started branching out and meeting other people and we started the band Thursday. That's when people started gravitating towards us as well. But it was the same people that I saw at the shows when I was younger—they were now coming to my shows. If somebody were to ask me how do you meet people and musicians... start a band!



When Thursday was blowing up on MTV, other bands in our genre were doing the same thing. And I knew all of the guys from every one of the bands from coming up together.

**MD:** When you first started playing were you writing your own songs or learning other people's songs?

**TR:** Both. Learning other people's songs helps you write your own songs. Learning other people's songs teaches you how to play and it teaches you how to put on a different musical hat. We both know that as a drummer these days, you have to be a chameleon. Because you're not just playing in one band, there's no "one band" that's going to make you millions of dollars. These days you have to be in multiple bands. You'll have a cover band, and you'll be playing with songwriters, or you're doing remote drumming. I feel like when you're learning other people's songs

you're stepping into that drummer's head. For instance, if I'm going to play a Blondie song, I want to play (or at least know) exactly what Clem Burke played. I want to occupy that same "space." I don't want to change what he's played, because what he's playing is perfect for that song. That process teaches what you need to play to be perfect for your songs. The impact that Clem's drum part had is because he played what is meant for that song.

**MD:** When your band Thursday was coming up, what bands were you guys emulating and modeling yourselves after?

**TR:** We were coming out of a lot of the post hardcore stuff. Like Quicksand, At the Drive In, Deftones. We were into everything that had the energy of a punk band but the space of Deftones. We just love that kind of feel where you can bob your head, while left the center stuff makes you feel crazy.

**MD:** How did this new band L.S. Dunes come about?

**TR:** The band was born out of the pandemic. I play in Frank Iero's (My Chemical Romance) solo band called Frank Iero and the Future Violents. We get along really well both as humans and as musicians. We speak the same songwriting language. The bass player for Thursday, Tim Payne also plays in L.S. Dunes. He's one of the best bass players that I've ever met. I think a good bass player makes a drummer better. A good bassist will kind of fix the mistakes and round out the wobbliness. I knew I wanted to play with him. Travis (from Coheed and Cambria) and I came up

together. I just love the way he plays. Our singer Anthony Green (Circa Survive, Saosin, The Sound of Animals Fighting) has got this amazing stage presence that is manic and off the rails. That's what I love, that's where I came from. During the pandemic everyone was saying music is not going to come back, music is dead, get a job... whatever. I'm not above getting a job, I'm fine with that, but I'm stubborn. I was hungry to write more music, I wanted that challenge, L.S. Dunes and the record *Past Lives* fed the hunger and met the challenge.

I bought a bunch of recording gear when I found out that things weren't coming back for a while, and I taught myself how to record. I went down the YouTube rabbit hole, learned about microphones and mic placement.

**MD:** What recording equipment did you buy?

**TR:** I bought a 57 for the snare, I bought some AKG overheads, and I got some cool stuff from Warm Audio. I got an Apollo X8P interface. That is just an amazing piece of gear that is way above my pay grade, and I record with ProTools on a Mac. I had a few friends that are engineers come over and teach me about mic placement, and I fell in love

with recording. I built a little studio in my garage, it's a room within a room, and I started to write music. I wanted to be able to have people send me tracks and be able to play on them and send them back.

That's all I wanted to do, and that's where L.S. Dunes came from. The band is a bunch of friends who grew up together, played music together and in separate bands, and who are still hungry to write and create music. I could have sat on my ass for the whole pandemic and done nothing. But I wanted to make something out of it, I wanted to create something, I wanted to feed my musical hunger. I knew if I didn't do that, I would have regretted it. The pandemic was a horrible time in everyone's lives, but for me it was a tool and the gift of time.

One of the most valuable things that I've taught myself or that I that I have learned in my adult life, was to buy some microphones, put them on my drums, and learn how to record. It's has legitimately changed my life. My friend Jim Ward has a solo project called Jim Ward *Daggers*, I did that record from my garage. I played on Sparta's new record from my garage. I did *Late Night with Seth Meyers* from my garage. And

I made the demos for L.S. Dunes from my garage. It's crazy how much just putting microphones on your drums and listening to yourself play can change and improve your playing. I can't stress it enough. To anyone who hasn't done it, just do yourself a favor and go down the rabbit hole and teach yourself how to put microphones on your drums and listen back to your playing.

**MD:** What did you hear the first time you mic'd yourself up and recorded your drumming?

**TR:** At first, just hearing yourself back and not having it be messed up was crazy. It was like, "Oh wow I did it!" But you hear where you're skipping ahead, where you're falling behind. You play a fill that you think is so cool, but then you hear the recording and you're overplaying, and all the notes are not even. You know that's not going to work in a song. You hear all of your flaws, which is which is great, but it can be disheartening if you're not prepared for it. You can use that as fuel and tell yourself I'm not gonna try that fill until I work on it more, or it's not working and maybe it's not worth it to work on it all.

**MD:** I tell people all the time that the microphone is the best drum teacher



ever! You said that you think a good bass player makes a drummer better, and that a good bassist will kind of fix the mistakes and round out the wobbliness. How did you discover that?

**TR:** I don't know. We've all had the experience of recording a part and you're sitting with the engineer and you can hear that you're a little ahead of the beat, or you missed this one thing, and it bothers the hell out of you. The first time that it didn't bother me was when I heard bassist Tim do something. I don't even know what he did, maybe it was a slide or something, but it totally covered what I was freaked out about. We're always our worst critics and when you record things, they live with you FOREVER!!!

Not to go off on a tangent, but something that bothers me about being a drummer and recording is that you're always the first one to record, but we're never the best at playing the songs when we record them. People are changing things last minute, you're changing fills, and then you're expected to lay it down and live with it forever. You have to play everything with certainty even if you're



Carly Hoskins

not certain.

You can only rehearse so much. Then you go in the studio and the producer says let's try this here and that there. Suddenly you have to re-track or rearrange the whole song. I'm not a person that likes to punch in, I like to get a whole take. So now I've learned this piece of music and all of a sudden the parts are switched around. Then you lay your down drum track.

**MD:** Yeah, that is backwards. How do you write music?

**TR:** For *Past Lives* in particular, there were a few songs that actually came "beat first." Like we talked about earlier, I like play along to records and stop and start writing my own beats, and I still do that today. I try to come up with something new. Then I'll throw on a click and I just play variations of it. For this record, I'd play what I think is an intro and a verse and a chorus, have them all together and send them to one of the "string fellas." If they find inspiration on it that's cool, if not then I go back to the drawing board. I am trying to come up with something to jump start the process. A lot of these songs were also started on the bass, Tim would come up with a nasty bass lick and I couldn't wait to get outside and put what I had in my head down on tape.

**MD:** What are some of L.S. Dunes tunes that were beat composed?

**TR:** The intro beat to "Grey Veins" was definitely something that was inspired from the drums, and the bassline came after that. For "Past Lives," I had a verse beat and I sent it to them, and it came back with stuff over top of it. Off the top of my head those are the songs that

were born on the drums.

**MD:** Do you remember what music inspired the grooves on those two songs?

**TR:** As a drummer you always have your "go to" beats. They are the ones you play at soundcheck and when you can't think of anything else to play. I was taking one of those beats of mine and putting the right hand on the snare and the left hand on the hi-hat and switching back and forth.

**MD:** Switching between open-handed and crossed within the same groove?

**TR:** Yes. "2022" is the groove where I'm switching hands. Part of the beat is on the floor tom with my right hand, and part is on the hi-hat with my left hand. Sometimes all it takes is flipping your brain a little bit and taking something that you work on constantly and just flipping it on its ear. During the pandemic there was a lot of time, I wanted to get better technically at drums, but I also wanted to get more creative at drums. So I would sometimes start reimagining something I already knew to make it absolutely brand new.

**MD:** We have talked about how you tried to get better creatively, but what did you do to get better technically?

**TR:** I worked on rudiments and things that are not really applicable to writing a song. I started late in life, I was 18 and I'm self-taught. I've had one lesson in my entire life, and that was maybe six years ago with Dave Elitch. Dave is not only a ripping drummer, but as a teacher he also works on your body mechanics as well. I still struggle with the body mechanics part of drumming. Being self-taught you learn a lot of mistakes and a lot of bad

## TUCKER'S GEAR

**Gretsch Drums:** 14x26, 10x14, 16x16, 16x18, but I might go down to more manageable sizes of 14x22, 9x13, 16x16, 16x18.

**Snares:** Keplinger, Sugar Percussion in Cedar and Aluminium, Ayotte in Maple, Q Drums, Ayotte-Keplinger, Oracle Bell Brass with Bell Brass hoops, GMS Brass, Supraphonic, Acrolite, a 90s Black Beauty, Blackrolite, Craviotto-DW Hybrid Maple. I have a shelf of about 35 snares, but I'm not a vintage guy.

**Zildjian Cymbals:** 24" K Light Ride, 22" K Light Ride, 22" Avedis with Rivets, 16 K Sweet Hats.

### Vater Sticks

**Remo Heads:** CS Black dots on toms, Coated Black Dot on the Snare, Black Dot Powerstroke 3 on the kick.

**Misc:** JH In-Ears, Low Boy Wood Beaters.

habits. So I am trying to correct some of those bad habits. I don't want to change my playing, I like the way I play, and it's "worked," but I want to be better and be more efficient. I'm getting older now, my band Thursday has been around for over 20 years. People still want to hear those songs from 20 years ago, so I have to be able to play them as if I'm 20 years old. So learning efficiency is very important.

**MD:** What specifically drove you to Dave Elitch?

**TR:** I just really like the way he plays, and I really like what he is saying. He's into art, and I just felt like he is much more than "just a drummer who's trying to drill you on the drums." The body mechanics stuff, working smart and not hard, all of that stuff spoke to me. As a drummer you're doing a really physical thing with your body. You're separating your limbs while you're running a marathon, and you're barely breathing while you do it. There is all this stuff that you forget to do when you're sitting behind a kit. You have to breathe, you have to be relaxed, and I feel like you can't learn that from "just a drum teacher." You can learn technique and you can learn how to be loose, but you can't learn the breathing part and all the posture stuff. Dave teaches both. I was in LA, and I hit him up and said I would love to take a lesson with you. I wanted my first lesson to be with him for no other reason than he just spoke to me.

**MD:** What rudiments were you working on during the pandemic?

**TR:** Just the simple ones, paradiddles and double stroke rolls. I wanted to get separation between my doubles. Instead of dragging my ghost notes, actually playing them. For lack of a better term, "stupid stuff." The really basic stuff that that makes a difference in your mind even if you can't hear it in your playing. I want to know I have these tools in my in my tool bag if I need to use them.

**MD:** Let's talk about a few more tunes from *Past Lives*, where did "2022" come from?

**TR:** Anthony is also a singer-songwriter and this was a solo song that he was working on. He sent us the music of an almost finished acoustic version of this, and he couldn't finish it because he found it too depressing. So he asked us to make it heavy. He sent it over, I listened to it one time, and I got it. I came up with the heavy intro beat to go along with the crazy off time guitar part and it was pretty much done. I learned it from front to back and I put what I thought

would be heavy and chaotic while fitting the content of the song, and everybody layered their parts on top of that and that was pretty much the final version.

**MD:** How about "Antibodies?"

**TR:** That is actually the first song L.S. Dunes ever worked on. We had talked about what we wanted to do, but we didn't know what we were going to sound like. Travis had this riff that he'd been kicking around for a long time. He sent it out and I loved it. For me, Thursday is always busy with all the left of center stuff. I kind of wanted something that I could play more down the middle and this song was very down the middle. I

During the pandemic everyone was saying music is not going to come back, music is dead, get a job. . . I was hungry to write more music, I wanted that challenge, L.S. Dunes and the record *Past Lives* fed the hunger and met the challenge.

worked on playing a really robotic hi-hat part with no accents. I wanted this to be straight and like really tight. I wanted that Stewart Copeland heavy closed hi-hat to really accent the guitars, so that's where that song came from.

**MD:** What can you tell me about "Like Forever?"

**TR:** The guitars in "Like Forever" sounded (to me) like Iron Maiden. That song is just fast, balls to the wall, and I was accenting the guitars as best I could. That was a tune where the bass came later, so I was playing (pretty much) to guitar parts

**MD:** What about "Blender?"

**TR:** Frank wrote "Blender." It was this very drony kind of riff. I immediately thought that I could make this down the center on the drums by playing a (kind of) tribal tom thing and the guitars could swirl around it. I really tried to anchor that song, but in my way, not in the AC/DC way. It's chaotic but it's straight.

**MD:** Tell me about "It Takes Time."

**TR:** I remember working on this snare drum ghost note idea, and I figured out how to put it between this little kick pattern. Suddenly I had this beat, then I sent it to Tim, and he came back with this monster bassline. So that's another one that was kind of drums first.

**MD:** Most drummers are very quick to say that they don't write music from the drums. So it's refreshing to hear you say that so many of these songs came from drum ideas initially. I remember talking with David Garibaldi once, and he told me that many of the Tower of Power songs came directly from drumbeats that he had created, but for some reason it has become "in fashion" for drummers to not write songs from the drums.

**TR:** I never did this before. But going by the mantra of "creating something out of nothing" that started with this this damn pandemic, that was my way of trying to give to the band what I could. I don't really play guitar, I don't necessarily think that I can write songs, but I can help write songs. I can be proactive and send somebody a beat that sparks an idea. And now that I've taught myself the basics of recording, I can set up a click track play along in time with the click track and then they can noodle around and figure something out. That has really helped my version of songwriting and contributing.

**MD:** When you sit down and create stuff, are you working with the click most of the time?

**TR:** No, I'm coming up with things in "free time." I'll be doing my typical warm up stuff, then I'll do something wrong. That's usually when something cool comes in. I'll realize I just messed something up and I go back and figure out what I did. Many times, it will be something kind of cool and then I build it up from there. If I hear it back and think it sounds not too busy and not crazy, I'll build on it some more. But if I listen back and it sounds disjointed then I scrap it and I go on to something else.

**MD:** When you record with Thursday are you doing most stuff with the click?

**TR:** A lot of the Thursday stuff has so

many parts that are squished together that it doesn't necessarily lend itself to a click, and I'm not well versed enough to tempo map anything, so a lot of the Thursday stuff is all free time. But we make it work.

Even with L.S. Dunes if something doesn't feel right to the click, we scrap the click. The song has to feel right. People can play around the click, and it does sound good, but there are some spots where you want to ramp up into the chorus and then land in the breakdown. We know when we're sitting behind the kit what feels right and what doesn't, that's our job!

**MD:** What's the story behind "Bombsquad?"

**TR:** Frank wrote this infectious riff and I wanted to come up with a really simple and huge groove that had a little bit of a wrinkle in it. I had this beat kicking around just waiting to come out, we laid it down, and that turned into the anchor for the song.

**MD:** "Grifter."

**TR:** That was one of the busier drum parts. Travis wrote it and I followed the riff completely. I literally just followed

the riff to a tee. In the main riff the guitar part trails down, so I followed that on the toms.

**MD:** Sometimes a riff is too good not to follow. What about "Permanent Rebellion?"

**TR:** That was one of the only songs we wrote together in the studio. Frank had this riff at the very end of a writing session, but sometimes those last-minute songs are the ones that are the bangers. We were all tired, but we worked on it, and it turned out to be the song that we showed everyone first. People love that song, it's probably the song that people go the craziest for. It's the most different song on the record because there's a lot of screaming and it's very heavy, fast, and chaotic.

**MD:** "Sleep Cult." That tune took me by complete surprise, you guys are filled with surprises.

**TR:** That was another riff that Frank had, he played this riff, and I immediately had a beat. The engineer hit record and Frank was literally cueing me to the next part in my headphones. Then we had a body of music that was nowhere near finished. Then Anthony came up with this crazy

doo-wop vocal part.

One of the great things with this band is because no one had ever heard it, it had no ceiling. This band doesn't have to "be" anything. We wanted a body of songs that all went together, that's something that people don't think about anymore. People listen to singles. When we knew we were making a record we knew we could have a song like "Permanent Rebellion" which is heavy and screamy, and then go all the way to "Sleep Cult." Hopefully from now on we can write any song we want right and have it make sense because we've already laid the groundwork of curveballs.

I feel like very lucky with this band because the songs really presented themselves kind of quickly. Anthony came up with vocals pretty quickly, everybody's parts were concise, in the early demos everything was so easily digestible for people to work on that everything came together and presented itself very nicely.

**MD:** Maybe that's what comes from putting together a group of "professionals." Everybody is good at what they do, that's something we all strive



Carly Hoskins



for, we all want to be good at what we do. Nobody ever thinks of themselves as a “super group,” and I’m sure in the punk world calling yourself a bunch of “professionals” might be frowned upon too.

**TR:** L.S. Dunes is a bunch of friends that are really good at what they do, getting together, people love calling this a super group because it’s made-up of people from other bands. But at the same time, these are my peers, these are the people that I came up with. I didn’t pluck people from different genres, I literally picked the people that I’ve known and trusted my entire career.

**MD:** I should have asked this first, but did you put this together? You keep saying this is “your band.”

**TR:** I wouldn’t say L.S. Dunes is my band, I would say it’s all of our band. But (this sounds so weird to say) it was my idea. My former manager had a lot of ideas as well, so I can’t take full credit for it. We all know what our parts are in this band, and there’s no there’s no pressure in this band to do anything, when we put this band together it was out of friendship, these are the people I talk to everyday anyway, isn’t that what a band supposed to be? The “L.S.” in L.S. Dunes stands for low stress.

**MD:** And now you guys are going to go

L.S. Dunes is a bunch of friends that are really good at what they do, getting together, people love calling this a super group because it’s made-up of people from other bands.

out and tour throughout the summer into next year supporting *Past Lives*. But after this record and tour will L.S. Dunes continue?

**TR:** Absolutely. All of our families and other bands are supportive of this, so between records and tours with all of our main bands, this will definitely continue. All of our original bands laid the groundwork for this, and those bands will always be home base.

**MD:** At this point in your career, you have been touring and making music for over 20 years. Longevity is the ultimate compliment in this business. Any advice about achieving longevity in this crazy music business?

**TR:** I think being a successful musician is not about how much money you make. Success is how busy you are, and how in demand you are. Being in demand comes from being a good player but it also comes from being a decent person; Someone who tours well, is considerate of other people’s space, is in a good mood, and is nice to everybody. This is a small industry, your crew this week could be Miley Cyrus’ crew next week, and being cool to everyone really is most of the battle.

Advice for other drummers? Take care of your body, in order to have longevity you need to use proper technique. Follow people like David Elitch who can show you how to actually give your body a long career. Ultimately for me, success is bringing a song to life.

Go to [Isdunes.com](http://Isdunes.com) for more information.

**Check out Clem’s drummer profile page, at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com)**



# Stop Skipping Steps!

By Chris Lesso

Many people never realize their life through rhythm by unknowingly skipping steps. I get it, this is how I started too! I was eager to get right to bashing out the joyful roar I was hearing from my drumming heroes. From day one I wanted to jump right to the beats I loved and start banging away. But I got frustrated fast, suffering blisters and wrist cramps because I didn't know what I was doing. It's easy to quit at this point thinking, 'I wasn't born with drumming DNA', or, 'I don't have the coordination.' Worse yet, following the traditional lesson path we can get buried in books with the old school approach, growing more frustrated. This is the information dump approach to learning, trying to take it all in at once. Becoming a 'content zombie' is NOT learning. Hoarding facts is worthless without the spark of action. If it was as easy as getting access to information, everybody would be a genius. It's not who knows the most, but those that step into the 'excellence trinity' of training, accountability, and community. Without the support of all three, anything we build collapses under its own weight.

## ETHOS, FLOW, PRACTICE, RHYTHM.

Trying to drum without these four steps is to play on shaky ground. A house divided cannot stand. To step into our potential in record time, we need a trusted system to live the vision. When all four elements work in harmony, you'll learn 10 times faster. Every area compliments another, bringing our focus, confidence, and self-expression in drumming and life, to new heights.

In the **LTR DRUMMING METHOD**, we call this starting point

your **ethos**. It's what sets you apart from the masses when your special voice is finally expressed. What's the mighty WHY that fuels you, what is that fire in your belly driving you forward? Connect with that sacred spark that drew you to drum in the first place. Your dream may be to jam in your basement, or rock out on stages around the world. Can you see YOUR journey clearly? Once you see it, you'll play with a rockstar aura attitude that everyone will feel. If you don't believe in you, then who will?

**Flow** sets you up to play for the next century and beyond. Removing restricting tension from our mind and body, drumming becomes fun again, like it should be. We don't hit the drums, we dance on the drums to create an infectious groove. Floating around the kit with effortless mastery, you can express any idea with ease. We breathe deeply to drum from an unbreakable stillness inside the motion. The tide of your body's natural energy flows into your drums with relaxed intensity. Flow is also to enter the zone, that revered space when our minds slow down to speed up and our inner critic finally goes offline. If you've ever played when an hour passed in a minute, you've been in flow!

We dial into our daily **practice** to create the routines and rituals that grow our best selves through drumming. Discipline, energy management, and high performance habits get you to your drumming dreams faster. The art of learning is stacking daily 1% wins that compound over time. It's doing the work to eliminate old roles and rewire new habits that rev your drumming engine. True practice cuts through the business of life, where we learn to use the obstacles we face as the way forward.

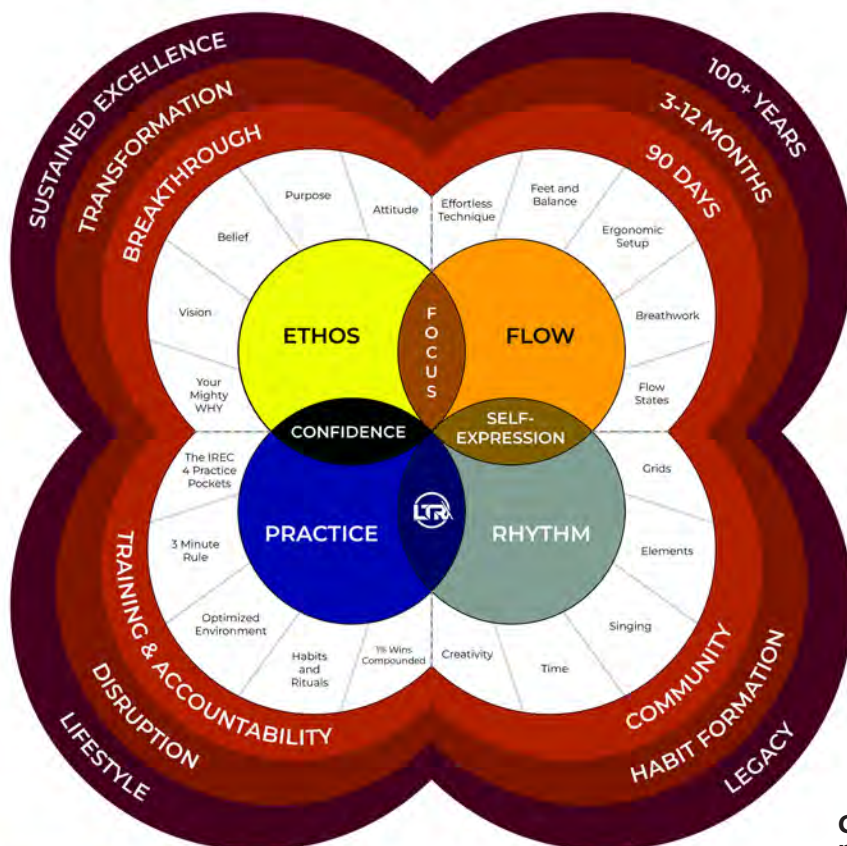
We all have the same 1440 minutes in the day, but it's how we use them that counts.

**Rhythm** is the ancient meeting the future. It's the heart beating in your chest, and the changing of the seasons. Your inner rhythm is just waiting to be uncaged, drawing from the world beat to express any idea you dream. With a rich world centric view to draw from, we sing and feel the grooves first, not getting stuck in old school counting from books. Traditional lessons can give you blinders, hijacking your creativity by burying your pure voice. This is a new take on the essence of rhythm, where we 'say it to play it', utilizing the 5th limb of the voice. When rhythm is clear in our mind and heart, it comes out loud and proud on the drums for all to hear. In my world travels as a seeker performing on stages and studying with greats around the world, I've uncovered ancient lessons we can use to unshackle our creativity. Rhythm is the universal language that brings us to life.

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.

Book your FREE vision session at [chrislesso.net/LTRDRUMMING](http://chrislesso.net/LTRDRUMMING)

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# The Bass Drum Owners Manual: The Leg Stroke

By Michael Packer

This month *Modern Drummer* will continue 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. 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.



Lift the leg from the thigh and release the tension from your ankle. The tip of your foot will be pointing downward as you lift into playing position. There should be no weight on the foot during this motion. The bass drum beater falls back as the heel lifts approximately one to two inches off the ground. The preparation motion will occur on the 8th-note beat prior to the first played note when playing on up beats or down beats. See example 1a.

Ex. 1a

For 8th note triplet figures the preparation motion occurs on the downbeat before the note to be played. Ex. 2a The only exception to this is when the tempo is slow. Prepare on the 8th note triplet value before the note.

Ex. 2a

Ex. 2b

For all 16th-note figures, the Preparation occurs on the 16th note value before the first played note. See example 3a and 3b.

Ex. 3a

Ex. 3b

## Introduction

Welcome to The Bass Drum Owners Manual. 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 it's application to the bass drum. We will learn that these concepts initially designed for the hands apply directly to the feet. Last month we started with some positioning and setup advice so this month we will jump into the Leg Stroke.

## The Leg Stroke

Bass Drum Notation

The Moeller technique requires four motions: Leg, Ankle, Preparation and Down. The following notation will be used for the bass drum motions throughout this book:

- P = Preparation Motion
- L = Leg Stroke
- A = Ankle Stroke
- D = Down Motion

Note : When you come across two motions notated for the same note the motion on the top is for the first time through the exercise. The motion in brackets is used when repeating the exercise.

## The Preparation Motion

The preparation motion occurs just before you play a note.

## The Leg Stroke

The leg stroke is used when playing single notes. This motion is the same as Moeller's "Whip" stroke, which is used to play accents. Let's look at the whip stroke for the hand. After the prep the hand is in this position. Now to continue with the stroke, bring the hand up and let the wrist roll into the up position. The fingers open halfway and the butt end of the stick is pointing to the ground. Drop the hand and snap the wrist just before you

strike the head. Make sure to feel the weight of the stick through this motion.

Now for the leg: After the preparation the leg drops down, playing the stroke as the heel falls to the ground. Redistribute almost all of the weight to the heel so the beater rebounds out of the head. This is the difference between playing the beater into the head and out of the head. If you do a leg stroke and leave all the weight on the toes the beaters motion is stopped and remains in the head. Transfer the weight to the heel and the beater easily rebounds out. You can do all of the same motions and either leave the beater in the head or let it come out. It's your choice depending on the sound you want. If you let the beater out there should be just enough weight on the tip of the foot to control the beater. Successive single strokes are played in this manner. The tip of the foot never leaves the pedal. Speaking of controlling the beater try this exercise:

Place your foot on the pedal board with no weight on the foot. The beater will remain in its farthest position away from the head. Gradually apply weight to the pedal so the beater moves towards the head. Stop when the beater reaches approximately three inches from the head. This is a comfortable distance and should present no danger of playing extra notes. Now, play one Leg Stroke and stop the beater in this position. While continuing this exercise you teach yourself how it feels to control the beater in this fashion.

### Leg Stroke Exercises

The following are a series of exercises designed to help become comfortable with the preparation and the leg stroke. Begin practicing at mm = 76 and gradually work up to mm = 120. Don't go any faster than this. Remember that there should be no weight on the foot when doing the preparation motion.

Musical notation for Leg Stroke Exercises in 2/4 time. The exercise consists of four measures, each with a repeat sign. Above the staff, the first two notes of each measure are marked with '1 +' and '2 +' above them. Below the staff, the notes are labeled 'L' (Left) and 'P' (Pedal). The sequence of notes is: Measure 1: L, P; Measure 2: P, L; Measure 3: P, L; Measure 4: P, L.

When playing two or more Leg Strokes in succession the heel hits the ground after each note. If the tempo of the notes is fast there will not be time for the heel to rest on the ground between the two notes. The preparation for the next stroke happens right away. Make sure to get the full rebound between each note. This will give a bigger sound and help place the notes in time since the rebound fills the space between the notes evenly.

Musical notation for Leg Stroke Exercises in 2/4 time, showing triplets. The first staff has a triplet of three notes marked with '3' above them. The second staff has a triplet of three notes marked with '3' above them. The notes are marked with 'x' for the foot and 'o' for the pedal.

Check out Mike's *Modern Drummer* profile page  
and get your copy of *The Bass Drum Owners Manual*  
at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com)



# The Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming

## Feet Only

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 turn-arounds, 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.

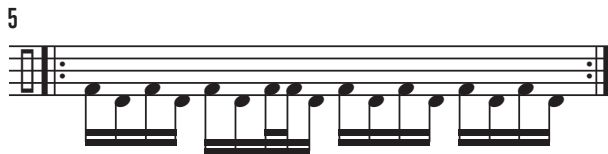
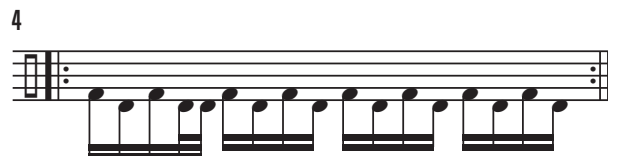
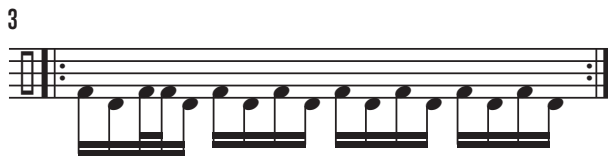
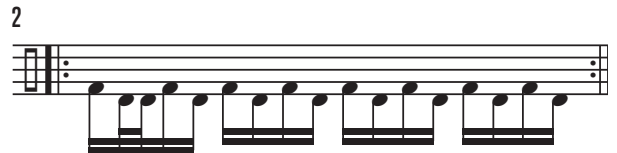
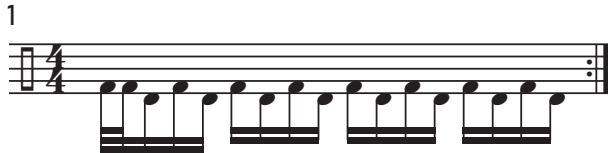
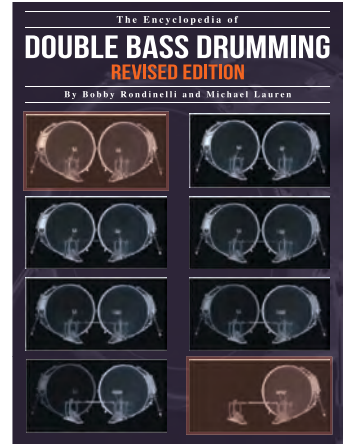
This month Bobby explains dropping in thirty-second notes with doubles on the feet only during sixteenth note double bass drum grooves. Always strive for great quality of sound and groove and remember to start slowly at first. Have fun!

### Feet Only

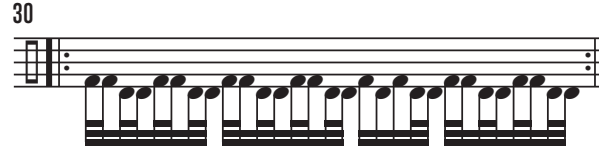
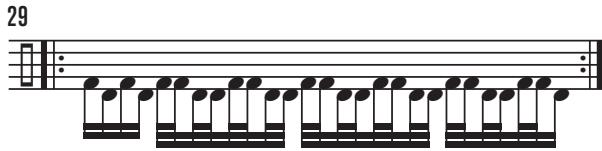
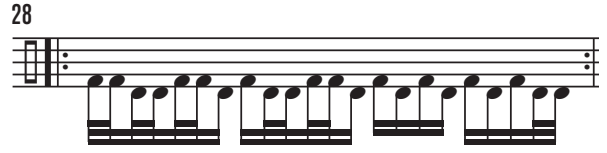
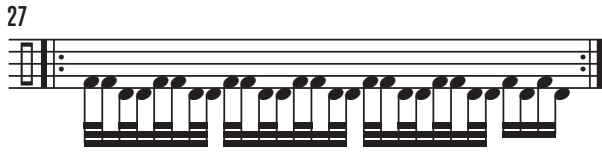
These feet only exercises are designed to help you drop in 32nd note doubles within a 16th note single bass drum groove. Double

strokes are usually lower in volume than single strokes, so be sure to play them with power. Don’t worry about speed, I always say, “Worrying about speed will slow you down!”

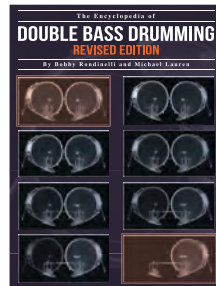
- Start slowly.
- Remember that the rhythm is more important than the written footing— my right foot might be your left.
- The exercises get more difficult as the chapter goes on. Stay relaxed and focused.
- Work with a metronome.



11



Courtesy Bobby Rondinelli



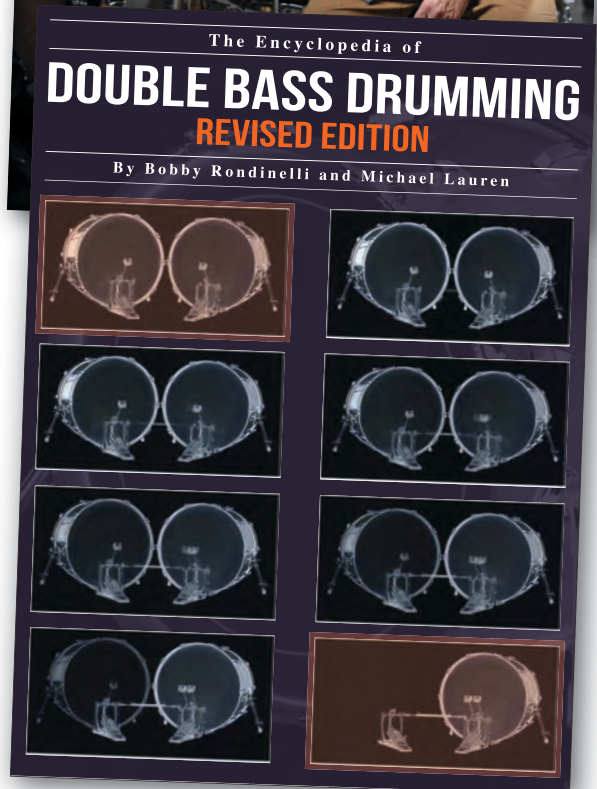
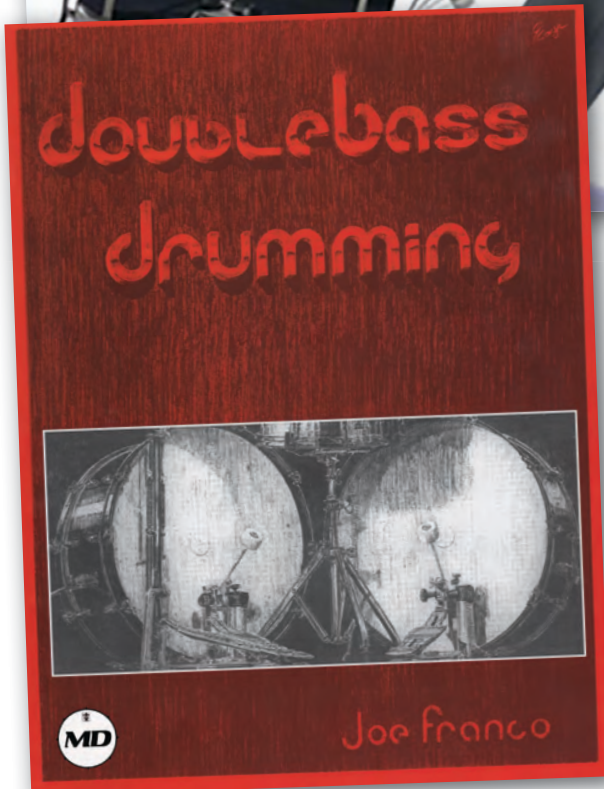
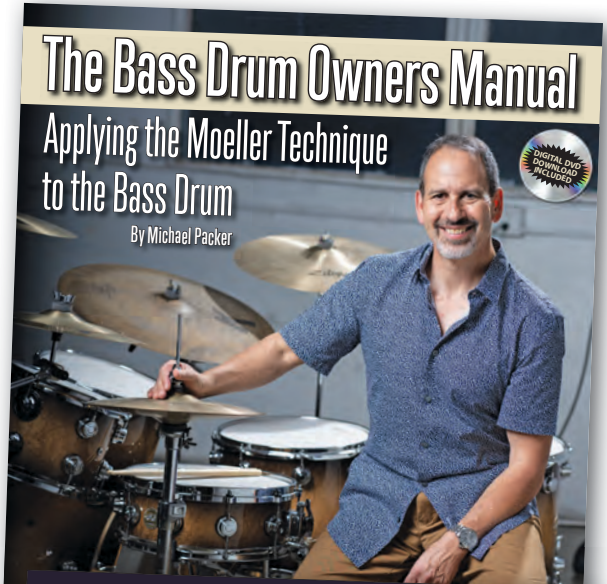
Check out Bobby's Modern Drummer profile pages and get your copy of *The Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming* at [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com)



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First staff of music. It begins with a double bar line and repeat dots. The first measure contains a triplet of eighth notes marked with 'x' and a triplet of eighth notes marked with '7'. The second measure contains a triplet of eighth notes marked with 'x' and a triplet of eighth notes marked with '7'. The third measure contains a triplet of eighth notes marked with 'x' and a triplet of eighth notes marked with '7', with an accent (>) over the first note. The fourth measure contains a triplet of eighth notes marked with 'x' and a triplet of eighth notes marked with '7'. The fifth measure contains a quarter note marked with '4'. The sixth, seventh, and eighth measures contain a slash with a colon (/:) indicating a cymbal pattern. The staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Second staff of music, identical to the first staff.

Third staff of music, identical to the first staff.

Fourth staff of music, identical to the first staff.

Fifth staff of music, identical to the first staff.

Sixth staff of music, identical to the first staff.

Now move the hi-hat pattern to the ride cymbal and play quarters on the hi-hat with the foot.

Seventh staff of music. It begins with a double bar line and repeat dots. The first measure contains a triplet of eighth notes marked with 'x' and a triplet of eighth notes marked with '7'. The second measure contains a triplet of eighth notes marked with 'x' and a triplet of eighth notes marked with '7'. The third measure contains a triplet of eighth notes marked with 'x' and a triplet of eighth notes marked with '7', with an accent (>) over the first note. The fourth measure contains a triplet of eighth notes marked with 'x' and a triplet of eighth notes marked with '7'. The fifth measure contains a quarter note marked with '4'. The sixth, seventh, and eighth measures contain a slash with a colon (/:) indicating a cymbal pattern. The staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Eighth staff of music, identical to the seventh staff.

Ninth staff of music, identical to the seventh staff.

Tenth staff of music, identical to the seventh staff.

Eleventh staff of music, identical to the seventh staff.

A series of eight musical staves for a drum set, each showing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The first four notes of each staff are grouped as triplets (marked with '3' and a bracket) and have 'x' marks above them, indicating ghost notes. The fifth note is an accented eighth note (marked with '>' and '7'). The final note of each staff is a quarter note (marked with '4'). The staves are separated by double bar lines with repeat dots at both ends.

Next, move through the ghost-note patterns, gradually adding notes to make the groove denser.

### Ghost Note Pattern 1

Two musical staves for a drum set, identical to the previous ones but with solid black dots placed below the first four notes of each staff, representing the ghost notes. The rest of the notation (triplet markings, accents, and quarter notes) remains the same.

Drum notation staff 1: Fourteenth-note triplet patterns on the snare and bass drum. The first triplet is on the snare, the second on the bass drum, the third on the snare, and the fourth on the bass drum. A dynamic accent (>) is placed over the first note of the third triplet. The staff concludes with a measure containing a quarter note followed by a slash, and a final measure with a quarter note followed by a slash. A '4' is written at the end of the staff.

Drum notation staff 2: Identical to staff 1, featuring fourteenth-note triplet patterns on the snare and bass drum with a dynamic accent (>) over the first note of the third triplet. The staff concludes with a measure containing a quarter note followed by a slash, and a final measure with a quarter note followed by a slash. A '4' is written at the end of the staff.

Drum notation staff 3: Identical to staff 1, featuring fourteenth-note triplet patterns on the snare and bass drum with a dynamic accent (>) over the first note of the third triplet. The staff concludes with a measure containing a quarter note followed by a slash, and a final measure with a quarter note followed by a slash. A '4' is written at the end of the staff.

Drum notation staff 4: Identical to staff 1, featuring fourteenth-note triplet patterns on the snare and bass drum with a dynamic accent (>) over the first note of the third triplet. The staff concludes with a measure containing a quarter note followed by a slash, and a final measure with a quarter note followed by a slash. A '4' is written at the end of the staff.

Drum notation staff 5: Identical to staff 1, featuring fourteenth-note triplet patterns on the snare and bass drum with a dynamic accent (>) over the first note of the third triplet. The staff concludes with a measure containing a quarter note followed by a slash, and a final measure with a quarter note followed by a slash. A '4' is written at the end of the staff.

Drum notation staff 6: Identical to staff 1, featuring fourteenth-note triplet patterns on the snare and bass drum with a dynamic accent (>) over the first note of the third triplet. The staff concludes with a measure containing a quarter note followed by a slash, and a final measure with a quarter note followed by a slash. A '4' is written at the end of the staff.

Drum notation staff 7: Identical to staff 1, featuring fourteenth-note triplet patterns on the snare and bass drum with a dynamic accent (>) over the first note of the third triplet. The staff concludes with a measure containing a quarter note followed by a slash, and a final measure with a quarter note followed by a slash. A '4' is written at the end of the staff.

Drum notation staff 8: Identical to staff 1, featuring fourteenth-note triplet patterns on the snare and bass drum with a dynamic accent (>) over the first note of the third triplet. The staff concludes with a measure containing a quarter note followed by a slash, and a final measure with a quarter note followed by a slash. A '4' is written at the end of the staff.

Drum notation staff 9: Identical to staff 1, featuring fourteenth-note triplet patterns on the snare and bass drum with a dynamic accent (>) over the first note of the third triplet. The staff concludes with a measure containing a quarter note followed by a slash, and a final measure with a quarter note followed by a slash. A '4' is written at the end of the staff.

Check out Jonathan's drummer profile page and get your copy of *Exercises in African-American Funk* at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com)



# Master Studies

## Eighth Notes with Flams

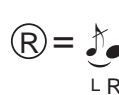
By, Joe Morello

Last month we learned about an often-ignored sound of drumming called Flat Flams. This month we will continue with a study of playing (the more common) Flams. Both sounds are useful on both the snare drum and drumset and are useful in both fills and grooves. Joe Morello really breaks everything about down about playing and using flams in his legendary book *Master Studies*, that is where this month's lesson originates.

### Eighth Notes with Flams

These exercises should first be played as written, on a snare drum or practice pad, without accenting the flams. After playing

these at a medium dynamic, practice them at various dynamic levels, from very soft to very loud. You should also practice different ways of playing the flams, from very closed—almost “flat”—to somewhat open. As with any exercise, adapt it to your own particular needs, and to the type of music that you will be playing. A rudimental drummer will probably use a lot of arm motion in playing the flams; a concert drummer might want to work on these using finger and wrist control; a drum set player might want to play the flams between different drums. Use your imagination. These examples are only to give you ideas.



1

2

3

4

5

6

7  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\textcircled{L}$  L L L  $\textcircled{R}$  R R  $\textcircled{L}$  L L  $\textcircled{R}$  R  $\textcircled{L}$  L L L

8  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\textcircled{R}$  L R  $\textcircled{L}$   $\textcircled{R}$  L R  $\textcircled{L}$  R L R  $\textcircled{L}$   $\textcircled{R}$  L R  $\textcircled{L}$

9  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\textcircled{R}$  L R  $\textcircled{L}$  R  $\textcircled{L}$   $\textcircled{R}$  L R  $\textcircled{L}$  R  $\textcircled{L}$  R  $\textcircled{L}$   $\textcircled{R}$  R R R

10  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\textcircled{R}$  L L  $\textcircled{R}$  L  $\textcircled{R}$  L L R  $\textcircled{L}$  R  $\textcircled{L}$  R  $\textcircled{L}$  R  $\textcircled{L}$  R  $\textcircled{L}$

11  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\textcircled{R}$  L L  $\textcircled{R}$  L  $\textcircled{R}$   $\textcircled{L}$  R  $\textcircled{L}$  R R  $\textcircled{L}$  R  $\textcircled{L}$   $\textcircled{R}$  L

12  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\textcircled{R}$   $\textcircled{R}$   $\textcircled{R}$   $\textcircled{R}$  R  $\textcircled{L}$   $\textcircled{R}$  L R  $\textcircled{L}$  R  $\textcircled{L}$   $\textcircled{R}$  L L L

13  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\textcircled{R}$  L  $\textcircled{R}$   $\textcircled{L}$  R  $\textcircled{L}$   $\textcircled{R}$  L R  $\textcircled{L}$  R  $\textcircled{L}$   $\textcircled{R}$  R R R

14  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\textcircled{L}$  R  $\textcircled{L}$   $\textcircled{R}$  L  $\textcircled{R}$   $\textcircled{L}$  R L  $\textcircled{R}$  L  $\textcircled{R}$   $\textcircled{L}$  L L L

15  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\textcircled{R}$   $\textcircled{L}$  L L L L L L  $\textcircled{R}$   $\textcircled{R}$   $\textcircled{L}$  L L L L L

16  $\frac{4}{4}$   $\textcircled{R}$  R  $\textcircled{R}$  R  $\textcircled{R}$  R  $\textcircled{R}$  R L  $\textcircled{L}$  L  $\textcircled{L}$  L  $\textcircled{L}$  L L  $\textcircled{L}$

17  $\frac{4}{4}$    
 (R) (L) (R) (L) L L L L (R) (L) (R) (L) L L L L

18  $\frac{4}{4}$    
 (R) L (R) (L) (R) L (R) (L) (R) L (R) (L) (R) L (R) (L)

19  $\frac{4}{4}$    
 (R) R L R L R (L) L R L R L (R) R (L) L

20  $\frac{4}{4}$    
 (R) R R R (L) L L L (R) (R) (R) (R) (L) (L) (L) (L)

21  $\frac{4}{4}$    
 (R) (L) (R) (L) (R) (R) (R) (R) (L) (R) (L) (R) (L) (L) (L) (L)

22  $\frac{4}{4}$    
 (R) (R) (R) L (R) (R) (R) (L) R (L) R (L) (R) (R) (R) L

23  $\frac{4}{4}$    
 (R) L L L (R) R (L) L L L (R) (L) (L) (L) L L L L

24  $\frac{4}{4}$    
 (R) L L L (R) (L) R R (L) R R R (L) (R) L L

25  $\frac{4}{4}$    
 (R) (L) (R) (L) (R) R R R (L) (R) (L) (R) (L) L L L L

26  $\frac{4}{4}$    
 (R) (L) R (L) R (L) R R (L) (R) L (R) L (R) L L

27   
 (R) L (R) (L) R (L) (R) L | (R) L (R) (L) R (L) (R) L

28   
 (R) L L L (R) (L) (R) (L) | (R) L L L (R) (L) (R) (L)

29   
 (R) (L) (R) (L) (R) (L) (R) (L) | (R) (L) (R) (L) (R) (L) (R) (L)

30   
 R L (R) (R) R L (R) (R) | R L (R) (R) R L (R) (R)

31   
 L R (L) (L) L R (L) (L) | L R (L) (L) L R (L) (L)

32   
 (R) R L (R) R L (R) R | L (R) R L (R) R (L) L

33   
 (R) L R R (L) L (R) R | (L) L (R) R (L) R L L

34   
 (R) L L L (R) L L (R) | L (R) R R R R (L) L

35   
 (R) L (R) L (R) L R (L) | R (L) R (L) R (L) L L

36   
 (R) L L L (R) (L) R R | (L) L L L L L L (R)

Check out Joe's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *Master Studies* at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com)



# Understanding the Language of Music

## Key Signatures and Scales

By Ron Spagnardi

*Modern Drummer* founder Ron Spagnardi wrote a very educational book called *Understanding the Language of Music, a Drummer's Guide to Theory and Harmony*. This book presents the basics of theory and harmony in a very organized and easy to understand format. It is an excellent book for drummers looking to learn about the language of music beyond drumming, and further their musicianship. This month we will continue to reprint the parts of Ron's book on Key Signatures and Major Scales so drummers everywhere can continue to learn about not only the language of drumming, but the language of music!

There are twelve major scales in music, one for every note on your keyboard. Every scale has its own key signature, ranging from no sharps or flats (the key of C), up to five sharps (the key of F#), and six flats (the key of G<sup>b</sup>). The key signature appears at the very beginning of the staff on the lines and spaces. It tells us what

notes are played sharp or flat throughout the piece, unless cancelled by a natural sign.

The example below shows the key signatures for each of the twelve major keys.

The image displays twelve musical staves, each representing a major key signature. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature symbol (sharps or flats) on the appropriate line or space. The keys are arranged in three rows of four:

- Row 1: C Major (no sharps or flats), G Major (one sharp), D Major (two sharps), A Major (three sharps)
- Row 2: E Major (four sharps), B Major (five sharps), F Major (one flat), B<sup>b</sup> Major (two flats)
- Row 3: E<sup>b</sup> Major (three flats), A<sup>b</sup> Major (four flats), D<sup>b</sup> Major (five flats), G<sup>b</sup> Major (six flats)

### The Twelve Major Scales

The twelve major scales (one octave ascending and descending) appear in the following example. They're the building blocks of everything that will follow. Practice each scale on your keyboard slowly, and try to learn one new one every day.

Keep in mind that the accidentals (sharps and flats) would not normally be written next to each note, as that's already been established by the key signature. We've included them here simply to make it a bit easier for you to learn each scale.

Also, notice the numbers (1 through 8) beneath each note. Every note of an eight-note scale is assigned a number. These are called the scale degrees. Using the C major scale as an example, C is the first degree, D is the second degree, E is the third degree, etc.

Practice all of the twelve major scales. Also pay careful attention to the *scale degree* numbers beneath each note. You'll need to be familiar with them when we move on to basic chord structure in Part 4.

C Major (no sharps or flats)



Scale Degree: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8) (8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1)

G Major (one sharp: F#)



Scale Degree: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8) (8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1)

D Major (two sharps: F# and C#)



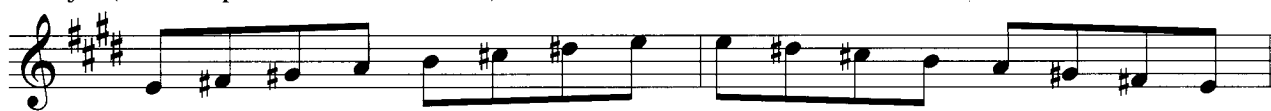
Scale Degree: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8) (8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1)

A Major (three sharps: F#, C#, and G#)



Scale Degree: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8) (8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1)

E Major (four sharps: F#, C#, G#, and D#)



Scale Degree: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8) (8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1)

B Major (five sharps: F#, C#, G#, D#, and A#)



Scale Degree: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8) (8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1)

F Major (one flat: B<sup>b</sup>)



Scale Degree: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8) (8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1)

## Ascending

## Descending

B<sup>b</sup> Major (two flats: B<sup>b</sup> and E<sup>b</sup>)



Scale Degree: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8) (8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1)

E<sup>b</sup> Major (three flats: B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>, and A<sup>b</sup>)



Scale Degree: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8) (8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1)

A<sup>b</sup> Major (four flats: B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>, A<sup>b</sup>, and D<sup>b</sup>)



Scale Degree: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8) (8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1)

D<sup>b</sup> Major (five flats: B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>, A<sup>b</sup>, D<sup>b</sup>, and G<sup>b</sup>)



Scale Degree: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8) (8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1)

G<sup>b</sup> Major (six flats: B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>, A<sup>b</sup>, D<sup>b</sup>, G<sup>b</sup>, and C<sup>b</sup>)



Scale Degree: (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8) (8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1)



Check out Ron's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *Snare Drum Duets* at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com)



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# Christian McBride

By Mark Griffith

**W**e all know the old saying, “Drummers don’t hire drummers, other musicians hire drummers.” So it makes sense to listen to other musician’s opinions of drummers. It doesn’t take much to get bassist Christian McBride to discuss drummers. As a sideman, he has played with everybody, but there are a choice few drummers that he has called upon to appear in his own bands and on his own records. His new band is called the New Jawn and features drummer Nasheet Waits. They have released two records so far, *New Jawn* and *Prime*, and the music (and the drumming) is unbelievable! *Modern Drummer* wanted to get a different view on drumming from the bassist’s perspective, and who better to ask but Christian McBride.





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**CM:** When I put a band together the first call is always the drummer, every band revolves around the drums. As a bass player, that's the most important relationship I have in any band. Plus, a band is only as good as it's drummer. The drummer can make or break the band. We hear bands that have really great drummers but they're loud, they're busy, and they're not very musical. They're flashy, they've got chops, but they don't bring a good vibe to the bandstand.

**MD:** Growing up in Philly, who was the first jazz drummer that you ever heard and played with in Philly?

**CM:** I think the first Philly jazz drummer that I heard and fell in love with, was probably Bobby Durham. I was a freshman in high school, and a group of musicians came and did a week of master classes for a bunch of students. Bobby Durham and Terri Lyne Carrington were the drummers. Terri Lyne was only 20 or 21 at the time, it was great to meet her because I'd heard all about her. Hearing Bobby Durham play was amazing. I remember thinking this cat is swinging! Then I heard the (Philadelphia jazz drummer) Al Jackson playing with Tony Williams (not the drummer,) Eddie Green, and Tyrone Brown. (Al was lefty,) and he was swinging hard. But the guy who became one of my best friends and great mentors was drummer Byron Landham. Byron is three years older than me and he could play all that Elvin Jones, Jack DeJohnette, Tony Williams, Art Blakey, Philly Joe Jones stuff. He knew the history, so Byron and his older brother Robert were my guys. Later on, Joey DeFrancesco and I would hang out with Mickey Roker and learn from him too. I also got to play with Edgar Bateman, he was serious!

**MD:** You played a lot with Brian Blade when you started working with Joshua Redman. That was a band with filled with future bandleaders, and you were all

very young at the time, what was it like playing with a young Brian Blade?

**CM:** I always call Brian Blade the anti-drummer. Brian Blade is the first drummer I ever played with when I've heard people say, "Hey Brian can you give me more please?" What other drummer is ever asked to play louder and give more? Brian is such a painter, he's such a dancer, and he's such a sensitive musician; That's why I call him the anti-drummer.

**MD:** You worked with Brian with Joshua Redman until 1994, but you released your first solo recording called *Gettin' To It* in '94. Let's start there. You had already been in New York for a while working as a sideperson, and there were a lot of drummers that you could have chosen to be in your first band. I know Lewis Nash made your first record, but then Lewis didn't do the touring with you for that record, could you explain those circumstances?

**CM:** Yes, Carl Allen and Greg Hutchinson were swapping in and out of my first touring band, and Lewis Nash was on the record. By 1994, those are probably the three drummers who I had played with the most. Carl and I had worked together in Freddie Hubbard's band, we played together in Benny Green's trio, and done various gigs around New York City. The same went with Lewis Nash, by 1994 we had been playing with Mulgrew Miller and we had done a lot of studio work together. Out of the drummers in my age bracket Greg Hutchison was my favorite, and he was one of the first people I met when I moved to New York. Greg and I always had a very special friendship bond. Then there was Tony Reedus, who I worked with a lot, may he rest in peace.

**MD:** Tony actually introduced me to you, he was a fantastic drummer, I miss him.

**CM:** I do too. When I did that first record, I knew Lewis wasn't going to be able to

do any touring because he was the most working-est drummer in all of New York. I initially called Greg is to go on the road with my first band. However, at the same time Greg got the call from Ray Brown and there was no way that he would have turned that down, so Greg went with Ray. Carl was working with so many people at that time as well, but I just took a shot in the dark to see if he would do it, and he said yes. Because Greg and Carl were both so busy at that time, I kind of flip flopped between Greg and Carl because when Greg was off from touring with Ray he still would come and

Hearing Bobby Durham play was amazing. I remember thinking this cat is swinging!

Ebru Yildiz



play gigs with me.

**MD:** You and Greg, you and Carl, and you and Tony, had made so many records together at that point. What was it about Carl and Greg that that first that first pulled you towards them?

**CM:** When it comes time to play music with a drummer, especially when you're playing acoustic jazz, you have options for the interpretation of the time. It's important to find someone who's on the same page. If a drummer and I can agree on the time and it feels exciting, I can (pretty much) play with anybody. The way people play the drums (or any

instrument for that matter) it's like a fingerprint, no two drummers have the same approach. With Greg, it was nice to find someone my age, we listened to the same stuff inside of jazz and outside of jazz, and he has a very bouncy pop to his playing, it's kind of hard to describe. If you have a problem playing with Greg, I would assume your time is not very good. It's the same exact thing with Carl. Carl Allen's main man (for all-time) is Art Blakey. I never got to play with Art Blakey, but I feel like Carl's time (especially in a particular tempo) is as close as you can get to Blakey. Carl and I

between the bass and the drums with regards to time. Oftentimes, we may create problems that don't exist by over analyzing things to an extent that doesn't actually happen on stage. When somebody counts a song off, 1—2—1,2,3,4, you play! If it's not working, you just have a conversation at the end of the set. You ask each other, "What can we do to hook up better?" When things are not hooking up, it's not like somebody is an eighth note ahead of the band, it's probably a matter of rushing or dragging. Most of the time, depending on the song and depending on the vibe,



I don't mind a little bit of rushing, I think that's natural. But dragging—that's that feels like slow death. If a drummer doesn't drag, I'm cool.

**MD:** Going back to what you said about a thumbprint, lots of times, I think the difference is someone who (metaphorically speaking) put their thumbprint directly on the paper, or someone who just moved their thumb a little bit and smudged the ink. It's not like there's no thumbprint there, it just might be a little fuzzy.

**CM:** Right, exactly. I think people over analyze it a lot.

**MD:** What do those conversations sound like?

**CM:** Like I said it's usually, "I felt like we weren't really quite locking up well, what can we do?" The

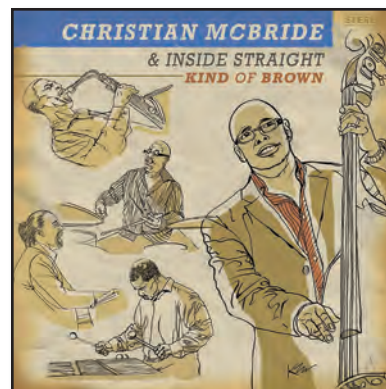
played with Freddie Hubbard together, and because of the miles that we put in on the road together, we knew each other's playing like the back of our own hands. Carl and Ralph Peterson Jr. were probably as close to Art Blakey as any drummer could be.

**MD:** You mentioned the interpretation of time, can you talk about the interpretation of time between the drums and bass a little bit. As a bassist, talk about that relationship.

**CM:** One of the questions that bass players and drummers are often asked to talk about is the relationship

solutions could go from, "Do you need me to play more on top, do you need me to come down a little bit, do you need me to turn my bass a little toward you, or move a little closer?" Maybe it's because we're not hearing each other, or maybe the drummer is not hearing the bass that well. It could be a whole list of things. But generally, it's not that not that deep of a conversation.

**MD:** Deep (musical) conversations brings us to your second record. *Number Two Express* with Jack DeJohnette, Chick Corea, and Kenny Garrett. Did you play any of that music with your working

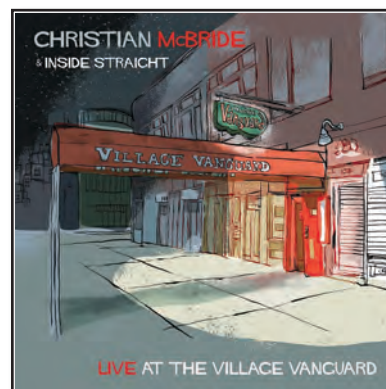


bands with Greg and Carl before you recorded with Jack?

**CM:** Yes, absolutely. *Number Two Express* came out April 15th 1996, I remember the date very well. From early 1996 until my third album, called *Family Affair*, (with Greg Hutchinson.) I played all of that *Number Two Express* music live. There's a recording of my quartet with Tim Warfield, Charles Craig, and Carl Allen from Warsaw in the fall of '96 playing a lot of the *Number Two Express* music.

**MD:** Since you had already played that music with Carl and Greg, before you recorded it with Jack who has a different sense of "time," were there any "discussions?"

**CM:** With the interpretation of time, particularly in the jazz of the 60s when people like Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, and Jack DeJohnette completely blew up the world, you have to listen very closely to play with them. You have to learn their tendencies. When I had Jack on *Number Two Express*, I caught myself playing Russian roulette on the first track. I decided that we would trade twelves with Jack, *I don't know what I was thinking*. I didn't get lost, I just listened. You try to put yourself in Jack's position and instead of trying to count and tap your foot, which almost never works,



you close your eyes and listen and try to become him. I specifically remember that both Kenny Garrett and I got lost coming out of Jack's last 12 going to the head out, but Chick Corea did not even flinch! I have no idea how Chick felt Jack's playing so perfectly. It was probably generational because they both interpreted and conceptualized time and where they were coming from in the same way. That was pretty incredible. Of course, they had that history playing with Miles, but when we did *Number Two Express* they hadn't played together in a very long time. I was quite amazed how Chick felt the time so perfectly throughout Jack's abstractions.

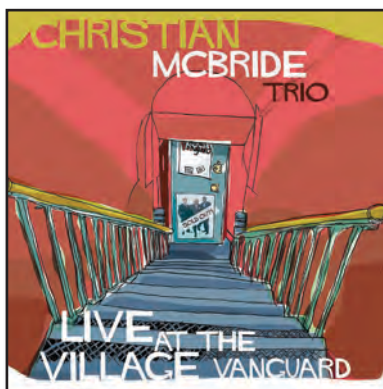
**MD:** I had a long talk with Jack once about time, Jack really pulled me in when he said, "There's all sorts of time. There's circular time, there's square time, there's triangle time, there's oblong time," and it all really started to make sense.

**CM:** (Laughter) That's it! Before we had recorded *Number Two Express*, Jack had said to me, "Don't worry about coming in right on top of the form, sometimes it might be 11 bars, sometimes it might be 13 bars."

**MD:** I asked Dave Holland about that aspect of playing with Jack and Dave said, "I just watch his right hand, and when his right hand goes back to the ride, that's one!" Someone said they did that with Elvin too, just watch his right hand.

**CM:** That's right. You already have an idea of when 12 (or four bars or eight bars) bars is over when you're trading, you have a "feeling," but you just wait for their one. Of course, there are couple of drummers who would be a wise-ass and be "creative" and not give you the one on the cymbal...

**MD:** And those drummers would be named Ralph Peterson, right? (Lots of



laughter!)

**CM:** Absolutely, he had a way of keeping people on their toes.

**MD:** Was your next working band with Rodney Green?

**CM:** Correct. Rodney joined my group in 98 for my record *Sci-Fi*. He came on

**CM:** When we first started playing together, I think he might have been 18 and you know he came up through the ranks of our hometown of Philadelphia. He's actually from Camden, but he got his stripes on the Philly scene working with people like Bootsie Barnes and Trudy Pitts. He worked with all the old-schooler's, and he had a very veteran feel to his time. He was very much still 18 years old, but he had a very mature feel to his time. I had a ball playing with Rodney. And again, I lost him to *another singer* when he joined Diana Krall around 2000.

**MD:** That is when Terreon Gully replaced Rodney in the band, and you did the record *Vertical Vision*. How did you find him?

**CM:** In early 2000 I wanted to start a new "hybrid band." I wanted to play acoustic,



a recommendation from Tim Warfield. Rodney played with me for a couple of years but there was one tour that he had to miss. Actually, Rodney and my pianist Shedrick Mitchell had to miss a tour to go on the road with a singer named Melissa Walker. She stole my whole rhythm section.

**MD:** But she *is* a singer, so she was probably making that singer dough, there are such things as business decisions, correct?

**CM:** Yeah, and of course I wound up marrying Melissa seven years later. (LOL!) But I had to ask her if she remembered when she jacked my rhythm section back in the late 90s?

**MD:** Talk to me about what appealed to you about Rodney's playing?

electric, straight ahead, funk, and fusion (for lack of a better term.) I wanted a group where I could play acoustic and electric bass, have keyboards and acoustic piano, and be able to stretch

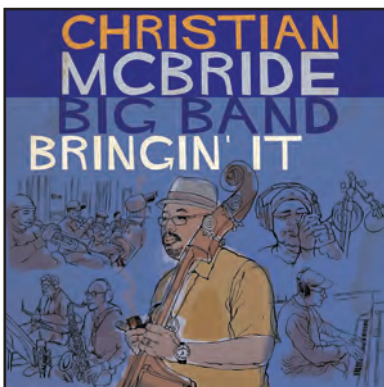




out and do a whole bunch of other stuff. I knew if I could start a dream band, my prototype drummer was Jeff Tain Watts. So I called Tain and I asked who's the mini-Tain? Then, (I finally win one,) Tain told me about a young drummer named Terreon Gully. But he said that Terreon was working with (singer) Diane Reeves.

When it comes time to play music with a drummer, especially when you're playing acoustic jazz, you have options for the interpretation of the time.

I called Diane and told her I was thinking about starting this band and I had heard about her young drummer. She said that she was about to start a new project



and that I should call Terreon because he'd be available. Terreon and I started playing together in the summer of 2000 and that lasted for eight years. That band was together for a nice stretch.

**MD:** I saw you guys a few times, and I love the *Live at Tonic* record, that was a terrifying band. Terreon was like a mini-Tain. I remember loading into a recording studio for a session, and not seeing who was playing in the drum booth and thinking it was Tain, and then Terreon walked out, and I was shocked.

**MD:** Carl and you reunited for your group Inside Straight, the record *Kind of Brown*, and the *Live at the Vanguard* recordings. How had Carl's playing evolved at the point?

**CM:** Between 2000 and 2007, Carl and I hadn't played together at all. Then we played together in 2007 at the Vanguard and it felt like we had just played together the night before. Our pulse is pretty much dead on the money between the two of us.

**MD:** When you put together the big band and recorded *The Good Feeling*, you hired Ulysses Owens, he was really young, how did you find him?

**CM:** I was teaching the summer jazz program in Aspen, Colorado, and Ulysses attended in 2002. He sounded good, but he was still kind of raw. He was still figuring it out. He was going to Juilliard, but he still had some rough edges. He came back to Aspen with the vocalist Charenee Wade in 2006. I don't know what he had been doing between 2002 and 2006, but his playing had just skyrocketed. That was one of the few times where I was so knocked out that I asked a drummer for his phone number. Ulysses reminded me a lot of Lewis Nash, he had that Lewis Nash-Kenny Washington-Jeff Hamilton way of playing brushes, and he actually got some sound out of the hi-hat. His pulse was real swinging, and I could tell that he had been shedding really hard, because he had good hands. He took a brush solo and I said, "We've got a new one, we've got a winner!" As it happened, when it was time for Inside Straight to go on the road, Carl was running the jazz program at Juilliard, so he couldn't go on the road. Ulysses wound up joining Inside Straight, and from 2008 until 2015 he played in every band and recording that I did. He played in my trio (*Out Here*), the big band, (*The Good Feeling*), and Inside Straight (*People Music*.)

**MD:** He played it on the *Live at the*



*Vanguard* trio record too.

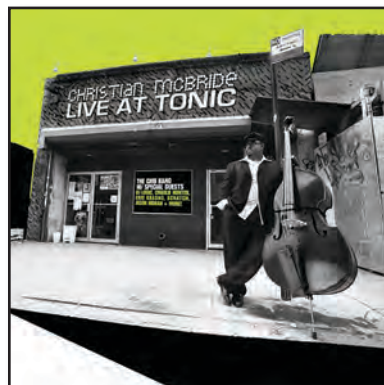
**CM:** He's a super bad dude, and a nice guy too.

**MD:** I know Jerome Jennings and you worked for a little while in the trio, but you never recorded.

**CM:** Yes, he replaced Ulysses in the trio. I love Jerome for many reasons. He's a brilliant thinker, a brilliant player, a brilliant teacher, he's a scholar of the music, and (like you) he was very close with Tony Reedus too.

**MD:** Then you stole Quincy Phillips from Roy Hargrove's band, for your big band records *Bringin' It*, and *For Jimmy, Wes, and Oliver*.

**CM:** Yeah, I feel bad about that one. But you know in the jazz and music world in general we are always borrowing someone from someone else's band. Jazz is one big compound. I heard Quincy playing with Roy Hargrove and I knew I was going to need a new big band drummer, Roy was actually one that gave me the green light, he said you should check out my drummer Quincy Phillips. Quincy is one of these crazy dudes, he's a great piano and organ player, and now he's an ordained minister whose got a church in Baltimore, he's not really gigging anymore. He mostly plays organ when he's preaching and then he gets on the drums, that's one talented dude.



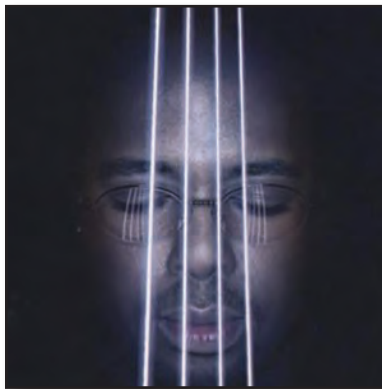
**MD:** When you put your new band New Jawn together, what was your blueprint?

**CM:** I simply decided that this is what I wanted to do, and this is what I was ready to do. Before New Jawn, the trio with Christian Sands and Ulysses got pretty hot, we were we were working a lot and the trio really established a reputation and had a following. Then Christian Sands went on to do wonderful things on his own, we're very proud of him. At that point, I simply didn't want to put together another trio to play the same kind of or similar music. I decided to do a complete 180 just to keep myself and all of my fans on their toes. At the same time and under the radar, I had been doing some gigging with John Zorn, Craig Taborn, Tyshawn Sorey, and Laurie Anderson. But no one noticed that I was playing these avant-garde gigs in plain sight. I didn't try to put together an "avant-garde quartet," but I wanted a quartet that (for lack of a better term) would be more progressive and different from anything that I had done as a band leader.

As I said, for every band, I start with the drummer. With this new quartet, I wondered what drummer could swing, but could also go progressive. Who can go to the outer limits and the outskirts but come back in and dance? And the first person I thought of was Nasheet Waits. I've been a big fan of his for a long time, but we never got to play together except for one gig in 2011. I called him and he sounded interested, and that was seven years and two records ago.

**MD:** How attuned are you to the avant-garde and avant-garde drummers?

**CB:** I've always tried to keep an ear on to the ground or what's happening in the avant-garde scene. I've always enjoyed drummers Andrew Cyrille, Milford Graves, Sunny Murray, Ed Blackwell, and Pheeroan Aklaff. Around 2012 I spent some time with William and Patricia Parker, they have the Vision Festival. I told them, "Everybody thinks I'm a straight-ahead guy but I would really love to do something at the Vision Festival." They were really surprised. You have never heard me talking shit about the avant-garde. Then I got called to do a big gala event with Roy Campbell and Henry Grimes and John Zorn. That's where we first met. I told him I was a big fan of all his groups, and I would love to work with him one day. That's when I started this musical relationship (that everybody missed) with John Zorn. We



played the Vanguard a couple of times, we did an epic trio gig with Milford Graves, and we did a quartet gig with Steve Coleman and Tyshawn Sorey. I was also introduced to Laurie Anderson, and Laurie and I started working together, I'm always trying to keep an ear out to what's going on.

When the first New Jawn record came out, people thought (sarcastically,) *oh this is cool Christian's dipping his toe into a (sort of) avant-garde type of thing. What a wonderful experiment.* But with the most recent New Jawn record, everyone's like, *oh shit... he's serious.*

**MD:** You just mentioned that you and Nasheet don't have a deep history together, so how did your two approaches meld?

**CM:** When I'm playing with Nasheet, I feel like I'm as much of an audience member as I am the band leader. I love watching him play, his level of creativity is so deep, and there's something very specific when he plays up tempo swing tunes. He's the closest I've ever felt to Jack DeJohnette. The way he comps with the bass drum reminds me a lot of Jack. The description I like to use about playing with Nasheet is that it feels like a freshly inflated basketball. You don't have to work that hard to bounce the ball.

**MD:** That's a great analogy, you could refer to different drummers by how "much air they have in the ball."

**CM:** Roy Haynes is the godfather of that, Jack has that, Nasheet, Greg, Justin Brown, Bill Stewart, Terri Lyne, Eric Harland, they all have that. Newcomer Savannah Harris has it too. I want to give her a shout out. Savannah Harris has been working with me for the last eight months because I'm getting ready to unleash a new "20 Something Band" at the end of the year, and Savannah came highly recommended.

**MD:** Terri Lyne told me about her too, I'm gonna check her out. Where is she from?

**CM:** She is from Oakland, but she lives in Brooklyn.

**MD:** Christian McBride could talk forever about drummers, and because of that we will do a Part 2 of this interview. We'll talk about all of the drummers that Christian has played with as a sideperson, although it might be easier to discuss the drummers that he *hasn't* played with. *But that wouldn't be as fun!*



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# Steve Smith's 1980 Sonor Phonic Kit

By Donn Bennett

In early 1980 Journey was preparing to hit the road to support their album *Departure* which included the hit single "Any Way You Want It." By that time, the band was a headline act playing arenas across North America and large theaters in Europe and Japan. Drummer Steve Smith needed a drum set that was up to the job. He embarked on the tour with this 1980 Sonor Phonic set with 9-ply beechwood shells finished in an Oak Veneer.

Steve ordered a number of drums for the kit, which gave him the option of constructing various configurations in order to keep up with his constantly evolving style. The kit includes a total of eleven drums, and Sonor always lists their drum sizes diameter by depth. There were three 24" x 14" bass drums and one 20" x 14" bass drum. 8"x 8," 10"x 8," 12"x 8" and 13"x 8," rack toms and 14"x 14," 16"x 16" and 18"x 16" floor toms.

The configuration that Steve used on the 1980 *Departure* tour was two 24" bass drums, 12" and 13" rack toms with 16" and 18" floor toms. During that tour the band recorded their live album, *Captured*, which features Steve's well-known drum solo on the song "La Do Da." After the *Departure* tour Steve decided to use his 1980 Sonor Oak Veneer kit as his recording kit because of its superior sound. Using this kit, Steve recorded the Journey albums *Dream After Dream* in 1980, *Escape* in 1981, and *Frontiers* in 1982. *Escape* and *Frontiers* included many of the group's biggest hits including "Don't Stop Believin'," "Who's Crying Now," "Open Arms," "Separate Ways" and "Send Her My Love." Steve also used this kit to record the first three Vital Information albums: *Vital Information* in 1983, *Orion* in 1984 and *Global Beat* in 1987. Over the years he recorded many albums using this set with artists including Tom Coster (*T.C.* and *Ivory Expeditions*), Tony MacAlpine



Courtesy of Steve Smith Library

(*Edge of Insanity*), Jeff Berlin (*Champion* and *Players*), Scott Henderson and Victor Wooten (*VitalTechTones*), Frank Gambale and Stu Hamm (*Show Me What You Can Do*). The truly exceptional sound of this

drum set is well documented on all of these recordings.

On the Journey album *Escape* Steve set up the double-bass kit with four rack toms (8" 10" 12" 13") and two floor toms



Courtesy of Donn Bennett

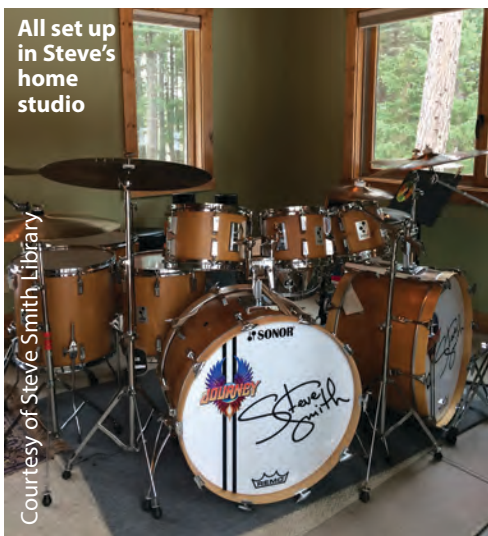
Here's a shot of Steve and the set from 2017 in Journey's Las Vegas museum exhibit.



Courtesy of Donn Bennett



Courtesy of Donn Bennett



All set up in Steve's home studio

Courtesy of Steve Smith Library



Courtesy of Donn Bennett

The entire 1980 Sonor Phonic set.

(16" 18") and on *Frontiers* his set-up had three rack toms (10" 12" 13") and two floor toms (16" 18"). On the first Vital Information album, and side one of *Orion*, he used the same set-up as the *Frontiers* album. Starting on side two of *Orion*, Steve started building the kit around the single 20" bass drum, with 8," 10" and 12" rack toms, 14" and 16" floor toms. This is the configuration he preferred for jazz and jazz-rock and used that set-up on many recordings.

After 1986, Steve started using different lines of Sonor drums and put the 1980 Oak Veneer kit in storage until 1997 when he used the kit on a series of jazz-rock albums for the Tone Center label. By 2005 the kit was back in storage until 2015. Steve used the kit in an expanded configuration in order to prepare for the touring he did with Journey from 2016-2019. You can see the expanded set-up in some of his YouTube videos called Steve Smith *From The*

*Practice Room*, which were filmed during Covid lock-down in 2020-2021.

This 1980 Sonor Oak Veneer kit played a pivotal role in helping Steve Smith define his sound and record some of his most enduring performances. Steve is downsizing his drum collection and is letting this classic drum set go to a new owner who will appreciate its sound and historical significance.



## OUT NOW!

**M**odern 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!

### Benjamin Lackner

*Last Decade*

ECM

Manu Katche' drums

While most of us know Manu Katche' from the impeccable grooves he lays down with Peter Gabriel, there is another side of Manu Katche'. Like Jon Christensen (and Jack DeJohnette) before him, Manu Katche' has developed into a quintessential ECM drummer. Through his work with Jan Garbarek and on his own solo records, Manu has developed a unique sound and approach that is unparalleled. With pianist Benjamin Lackner on *Last Decade*, Manu keeps the music flowing with a sublime drive and ease. Listen to his drumming on "Open Minds Lost" Manu lets the music happen and provides the frame that we all know as ECM.



### The Joe Farnsworth Quintet

*In What Direction Are You Going?*

Smoke Sessions

Joe Farnsworth drums

For the last 25 years Joe Farnsworth has been one of the busiest jazz drummers in the world. He has played with legends and his peers. But now he is playing with musicians who are younger than him. While spending his whole career playing in the tradition of Max Roach, Art Taylor, and Philly Joe Jones, Joe's musical horizons are widening. While he has built recordings around Cedar Walton, Kenny Barron, and Wynton Marsalis in the past, this new record is built around Joe's interactions with guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel and youngsters Immanuel Wilkins and Julius Rodriguez (while Joe and bassist Robert Hurst hold everything down.) The title comes from a famous Elvin Jones quote, and the comparisons don't end there. Listen to the solo on "Filters" and "Bobby No Bags," the boogaloo of the title track, and the exchanges on "Safe Corners," it doesn't get much better than this.



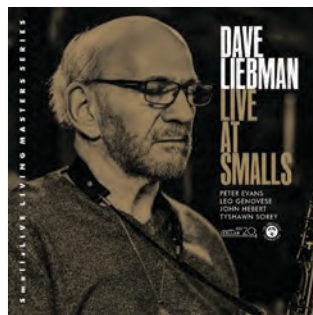
### Dave Liebman

*Live at Smalls*

Cellar Music

Tyshawn Sorey drums

Pair a renowned jazz master with a band of fiery younger veterans, then just sit back and let the beautiful sparks of music fly around in the air. While Liebman has worked with nearly every great jazz drummer that you can think of (Elvin Jones, Jack DeJohnette, Billy Hart, Al Foster, etc...) his playing with the rhythm section of drummer Tyshawn Sorey, bassist John Hebert, and Leo Genovese has lit a fire that we haven't heard from Liebman in some time. While some of Sorey's other recordings may require a specialized musical taste, his playing with Liebman is freewheeling, bombastic, and exactly what you would expect when you pair a legend with an exciting rhythm section. This band is painting some exceptional music and are just on a different level.



### Kitt Wakeley

*Symphony of Sinners & Saints, Vol. 2 The Storm*

Studio Seven Media

Kenny Aronoff (4 tracks) and Brent Berry drums

This record was a big undertaking. Placing guitarists Joe Satriani, Nuno Bettencourt, Orianthi, and Nita Strauss in front of an orchestra is big enough, but when the big groove is provided by Kenny Aronoff and Brent Berry, well that's pretty BIG! Big grooves and big guitars abound on the record, the relationship between Satriani and Aronoff is growing (after two of Joe's recordings and a tour together,) so the interplay is exciting, but the playing between Strauss and Aronoff is pretty good too. And let's not ignore Brent Berry who contributes a good share of big grooves with Bettencourt and Orianthi. The unique arrangements of "Stairway to Heaven" and "We Will Rock You" are particularly interesting.



## Hazelrigg Brothers

*SYNCHRONICITY: An interpretation of the album by The Police*

Outer Marker Records  
John O' Reilly Jr. drums



What took so long? Musicians have consistently named The Police's *Synchronicity* as a very influential recording, and musicians have been covering "pop" songs creatively since the beginning of music. So why has it taken so long for a trio to take the challenge? The Hazelrigg Brothers have answered the questions and were up to the challenge. This is NO lounge trio covering popular songs. The Hazelrigg Brothers are creating interesting arrangements and "derangements" of these tunes and really making them their own. So how does a drummer interpret the manic and influential drumming of Stewart Copeland into jazz versions of *Synchronicity*? Ask John O' Reilly Jr. Or better yet just listen to this record, it's really good!

## Chembo Corniel Quintet

*Artistas, Musicos Y Poetas*

Chemboro Records  
Wilson "Chembo" Corniel Jr.  
hand drums and percussion  
Joel E. Mateo drums



Sometimes it's hard to keep track of all the amazing music that is being released. Let's all thank the orishas that the Chembo Corniel's new *Artistas, Musicos Y Poetas* did not fall through the cracks. Corniel and drummer Joel E. Mateo set such a great groove for the rest of the band to explode upon, it's amazing. Together they truly sound as one. And as an added bonus, between them, they wrote most of the records arrangements. The opener "Volando Con Don Pancho Terry" is a real burner. The breakdown or P.R.I.D.E. is truly amazing as it comes out of nowhere. Their version of Eddie Palmieri's "Pa'La Ocha Tambo" and Monk's "Evidence" would make the original composers scream with pride. Gracias Chembo!

## M.E.B.

*That You Not Dare to Forget*

Sony Legacy

Vince Wilburn Jr., Lenny White drums  
Pedrito Martinez (1 track) percussion

M.E.B. is a project featuring a bunch of Miles Davis alumni including drummers Vince Wilburn Jr., Lenny White, Ron Carter, John Scofield, Marcus Miller, and Darryl Jones, and including guests Vernon Reid, Stanley Clarke, Wallace and Antoine Roney, Jeremy Pelt, Donald Harrison, and others. Musically it is coming directly out of the tradition of Miles' *Decoy*, *Man with the Horn*, *Tutu*, and *Amandla*. The groove is heavy, and the drumming sits deep within the textural fabric of the tunes. There is even a couple of Miles Davis solos and voice samples from the archives.

The wonderful spoken word poem composed and beautifully recited by Rashae Reeves on the title track is an absolute highlight. Producers Vince Wilburn Jr. and Lenny White did a fantastic job on this project. I wish this recording was longer, but I am told there is more coming!



## The Yellowjackets

*Parallel Motion*

Mack Avenue Records  
Will Kennedy drums



With all due respect to the other drummers who have played in the legendary band Yellowjackets (mainly Ricky Lawson and Marcus Baylor,) Will Kennedy is the drumming sound of the Yellowjackets. Welcome back Will! His slinky groove that slips and slides simultaneously between funk and swing, and he is back with the band on the recent *Parallel Motion*. Will is never heavy handed but never light and passive. His relaxing feel always finds the right place to sit within the music, and his sound is natural, balanced, and well mixed on this record. His hookup with new bassist Dane Alderson is impeccable. And the arrangements and compositions of Bob Mintzer and Russell Ferrante provide a nice playground for the band to explore. The grooves on "Onyx Manor" and "Samaritan" are worth price of admission alone. This is a very enjoyable fusion record that is highly recommended.

## John Riley

*The Master Drummer Expanded Edition: How To Practice, Play and Think Like A Pro*  
Hudson Music



After three masterful books (*The Art of Bop Drumming*, *Beyond Bop Drumming*, *The Jazz Drummer's Workshop*, and one essential video called *The Master Drummer*;) John Riley has put together yet another essential and creative text to teach the ideas behind developing as a great player and a master musician of the drum set. John's organizational skills come to the forefront as he breaks everything down into five sections: Technique, Groove, Creativity, Musicianship, and a section of Transcriptions. To any drummer wanting to develop his or her musical and drumming skills, there is a lifetime of study and learning in these pages. John doesn't teach styles and licks, he teaches universal ideals and applies them to music and drumming. He does this with his deft observational skills, an ability to explain things clearly, and a deep reverence to creativity within musical and drumming mastery. John Riley is a Master Educator, this (and all of his) materials demonstrate that.



## Rufus "Speedy" Jones' Slingerland White Marine Pearl double bass kit



Rufus "Speedy" Jones earned his nickname while playing for the big bands of Count Basie and Duke Ellington. Rufus was never an overly subtle player; he could always be counted on to light a fire under other players.

Rufus used the kit shown here when he played for Duke Ellington. It's a 1970 Slingerland kit with two 14 x 22 bass drums, two 9 x 13 toms, a 16 x 16 floor tom, and a chrome over brass snare drum. The drums are finished in a White Marine Pearl wrap, and all the stands are original Slingerland models.

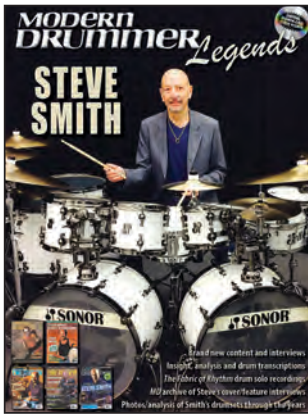
Although Louie Bellson had pioneered the use of two bass drums in the late 1940s, it was still a rarity in big band performance in the 70s. But Rufus Jones made the most of them.

This comes from the book *Crash: The World's Greatest Drum Kits*, available at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com)



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## FLYER

### PIT STOP



New for 2023, ddrum has added the Pitstop configuration to the SE Flyer line. This configuration is even more compact than the original, featuring a 15x16 Bass Drum, 7x10 Mounted Tom, 12x13 Floor Tom, and a 6x13 Snare Drum. The Pitstop shares all the features and improvements from the Bop configuration, including gull wing bass drum spurs, new snare throw-off, new double tom holder, included cymbal boom and floor tom memory locks. Like the Bop kit, the Pitstop comes with a Bass Drum lift to allow the bass drum beater to strike the smaller head in the proper place. ddrum, has also added the Vintage Sparkle finish to the SE Flyer line. This finish along with the black bass drum hoops with matching inlay give this kit a real look and feel of a vintage drumkit.



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