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Eric Singer

Prelude to a **KI**ZZ

SPECIAL!
Lenny White
Transcription
"The Muscian"

Greg Hutchinson

The Pocket is the Pocket

Sherdian Riley

Always

New Products from
Melodics and SE Microphones

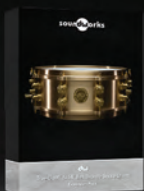
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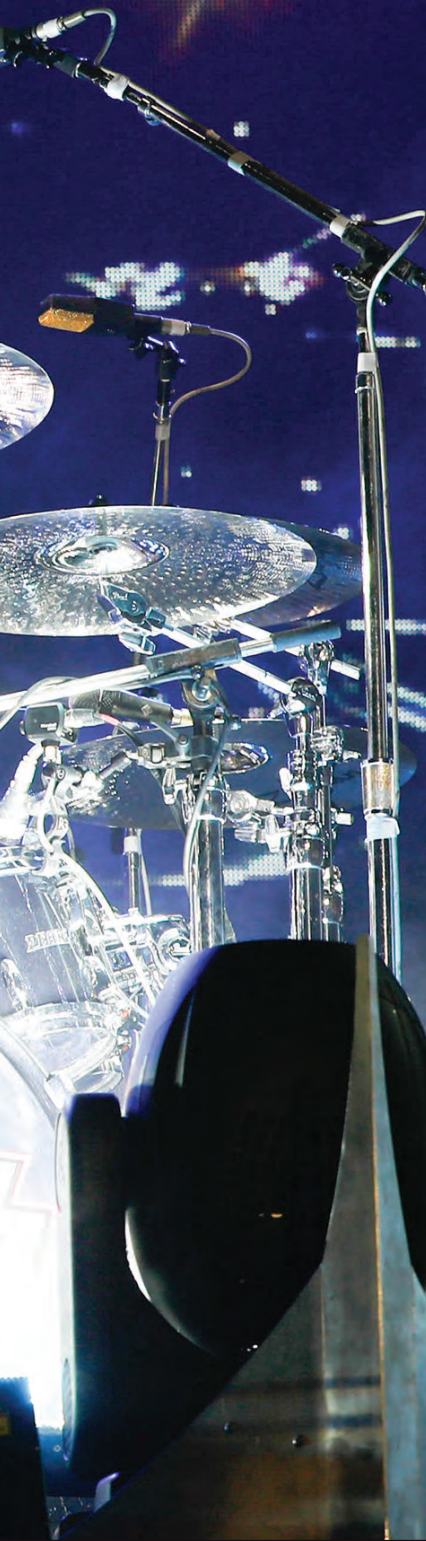
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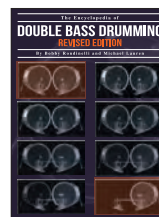
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Keeper of the Drums

After reading this month's feature interviews with Eric Singer and Greg Hutchinson, you might notice a common subject, and I love when that happens. If that common subject was Buddy Rich, Tony Williams, or Steve Gadd it wouldn't be a huge deal. But when both Eric and Greg talk about their love and deep respect for drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, it makes me smile.

Please don't get me wrong, I LOVE Buddy, Tony, and Gadd. But I have admired "Smitty's" drumming ever since I saw him in the 80s with saxophonist David "Fathead" Newman, with Steve Coleman in the late 80s, and with Dave Holland in the 90s. I even saw "Smitty" leading his own band and playing some very difficult music from his records *The Road Less Travelled* and *Keeper of the Drums* in 1993. When he was the drummer on *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno from 1995 through 2009, I watched whenever I could. His more recent work with Kevin Eubanks, Orrin Evans, and Billy Childs, shows that "Smitty" is still in top form, and getting better. And, to some, he still remains *somewhat* "under the radar."

However, when both Eric and Greg bring up "Smitty," (without any prompting from me!) I am reminded how great the art of drumming and the drum community truly is. Eric, whose resume' includes Alice Cooper, Gary Moore, and KISS; and Greg, whose resume' includes Joe Henderson, Betty Carter, and Common, both mentioning (and revering) the same drummer is what *Modern Drummer* and the brotherhood of drumming is about (to me.)

For those who don't know... Marvin "Smitty" Smith can do it ALL. He has chops and technique to burn, he can play in any odd time or strange form you can create, he's creative, has a strong pocket and back beat, he swings HARD, possesses damn good double bass drum chops, he's funky, can read anything, and has a wonderful sound and touch on the drums. "Smitty" is a very good teacher, a consummate pro, has appeared on over 200 records, and is one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet. He even went toe to toe with Steve Smith in a drum battle at the 1991 *Buddy Rich Memorial Concert*.

So, what's my point? No matter who you are, what style of music you play, and how "good" you are, there are thousands of drummers out there to inspire you. And no matter who the newest, fastest, drum flavor of the month (or year) might be, there are always hundreds of drummers out there who have been doing it for a long time, are always getting better, show no sign of stopping, sound amazing, and get everyone's respect. Along your drumming journey, you might have even missed a few, like Marvin "Smitty" Smith, *Keeper of the Drums*. But that's why we at *Modern Drummer* are here for you.

Listen and learn!

Mark Griffith

Editor-in-Chief & Director of Content



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CTO **Jason Mehler**

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Marketing and Collaboration **Danny "Ziggy" Laverde**

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CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Donn Bennett, Clayton Cameron, Bob Campbell, Peter Erskine, Dom Famularo, Bob Girouard, Mike Haid, Brian Hill, Daru Jones, Nic Kubers, Chris Lesso, Peter Magadini, James Petercsak, Tony Verderosa

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Simple Elegance and Class



For this month's *Modern Drummer* Kit of the Month, Shawn Messick has sent us pictures of his simple but elegant Gretsch Catalina Maple seven-piece kit, in the Burgundy Fade to Black finish. The Evans hydraulic black chrome heads really look great, as does Shawn's full complement of Meinl Cymbals. Finishing everything off is a custom Dallas Drum Co. snare finished in electric blue and trimmed with gold hardware. What a classy looking kit, it's true that sometimes simple and less says much more. Thanks Shawn!



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The Twain Shall Meet

By Peter Erskine



I started my musical studies at age 5 by taking drum lessons, I was certain that my place in the world would be that of a jazz drummer. Watching television as a child, it was Leonard Bernstein who best captured and redirected my imagination with his *Young People's Concerts* broadcasts in the early 1960s. At the time, my musical training shifted from the drumset to the xylophone, with classical music summer camps augmenting my weekly lessons. Looking back, I realize that I never had the necessary discipline to find my voice in the classical realm. Improvisation, and making music *feel* good, was a perfect avenue for my particular talents, if not an escape hatch of sorts. Jazz and other contemporary improvised music suited me. Add opportunity to the story (when I went on the road to begin my true schooling in music,) and my true calling as an itinerant sideman drummer was furthered. But I always looked to the classical players for inspiration.

Just recently I was contacted by a colleague from the classical side of things. A highly respected and renowned player who was confronted by an improvisatory opportunity (or challenge) outside of their comfort zone and realm of playing experience. With a premiere performance around the corner, what should have been a welcome respite from the written score was instead producing anxiety.

We met by way of Zoom. I commenced with some chestnut bromides, those time-tested bits of wisdom that are meant to shed light and bolster confidence. My friend was too savvy for philosophical band-aids, and I felt more trite than helpful. Not one to be deterred by any near-perceptible eyeroll, I persisted. I decided to base my advice on the drum-centric theme of, "The Art of Playing Legato on a Staccato Instrument." Why? Well, most non-jazzers will try to swing when venturing into the realm of "jazz," even if they don't mean to. The result is usually stiff and triplet-y. Like an

American tourist speaking French with a really bad accent, which is not pleasing to the speaker or the listener. And so, I began playing eighth notes on the snare drum while singing those rhythms as notes connected to one another (legato) while *slightly* accenting the off beats. You know, the amusing old "do - be - do - be - do" bit.

"To be is to do" – Socrates
"To do is to be" — Sartre
"Do be do be do" — Sinatra

That said... *TRY IT!* Sing any melody that has a steady stream of notes in this legato manner with the off-beats *slightly* accented, and you will be swinging in no time. *Pun intended.* Now *PLAY* that on the snare drum while you are singing it. Play the notes as if you are blowing air through the phrase.

"But, Peter, I don't know what notes to play!" My reply: don't worry about the notes. ANY notes can be good notes

(especially in contemporary classical music!) But if the musician does not “own” the rhythm, the listener will sense that right away. I think it is safe to say, in a world where there are so many lies and deceptions, people really WANT to trust and believe in a musical message. All I’m suggesting is to be honest. Honesty thrives where there is trust. TRUST YOURSELF, and TRUST the MUSIC. Just TRY IT.

This was a good start. It was at this juncture that I paused to recommend a book written by pianist and educator Kenny Werner called *Effortless Mastery*. I am also recommending it to you, should you have ANY desire to improvise (and you SHOULD have the desire to improvise if you play the drums.)

Getting back to this lesson, I encouraged my student to “take human bites” and utilize short rhythmic bursts (or note samples,) and give these bits of musical DNA the old theme and variations treatment. There’s more than one way to skin a cat, and any variation on a theme is the start of a new melody. There are no *wrong* notes right now, only *choices*. The beautiful thing about playing the drums is that we’re faced with constant *opportunities* to make choices, or the constant *obligation* to make choices. Give yourself permission to play one note, then the next, and then the one after that. Listen to these notes as you allow them to come into being.

I demonstrated by spontaneously riffing on Bartók’s “Concerto for Orchestra,” and then drumming the be-bop melody of “Billie’s Bounce” on my snare drum. But I was still not answering the question of how to make an improvisation sound good? Suddenly, I remembered my own experience on an “improvising machine” as the late John Wyre liked to call it.

John — rest in peace — was a founding member of the trailblazing percussion collective NEXUS, and improvisation was a very big element of who they were. When he would

improvise, I noticed that he had a lot of patience, he was never in a hurry for an improvisation to go to any specific place. It might be part of my “Type A Personality” that I preach intent when improvising, but John saw and heard things through a different prism. This became evident to me when I visited him in his home in St. John’s,



Clockwise from top left: Ignacio Berroa, Jeff Hamilton, Matt Willson, and Will Kennedy.

Newfoundland, not too long before he passed away. Before lunch, he said, “I want to show you my improvising machine.” It was a large, marimba-like instrument. The “bars” were made of outdoor furniture redwood planks. You could play it standing on either side of the instrument. As John and I started playing, I was being “clever,” while John just smiled. He kept playing a very simple idea, while I was being fast, thematic, and busy. John wasn’t in any hurry to go anywhere. Oftentimes, the beauty in improvisation is that you don’t need to hit a “home run.” In John’s way of thinking, hearing, and seeing life, it exists as it is, and it is what it is. Hence, there are no wrong notes. The intent was in the doing, NOT in the final result.

My new-found student liked this example, and found a handle, an open pathway. Using space for notes, silence

for time, contrast for musicality’s sake, and so on. There’s your intention, there’s your letting go, and there is your ownership. It is not necessary to be able to play the saxophone like Michael Brecker, the piano like Bud Powell, or the drums like Buddy Rich to become a member of the “Improvisor’s Club” (where all members are welcome.)

I went on to explain that my favorite practice sessions TOLD me what to work on simply by my listening to my playing, and by allowing my weaknesses to guide me to my strengths. The weaknesses reveal what needs working on. They guide and direct me on what to practice so that my playing builds on itself.

These moments of honesty with oneself are as close to the best therapy that I can imagine. To put it more spiritually: these are the moments (outside of being with my family) that I feel closest to God. She’s showing me the way. A good God will do that. (*Extra credit if you get the joke.*)

NEXUS’ John Wyre lives, and he did a wonderful musician a fine favor this time around. I am happy that I could connect those dots. It seems that in everything I do,

I am a big band drummer connecting the dots. Some destinies have a LOT of intention.

My musings this month are inspired by both my recent visit to Japan, and my subsequent pilgrimage to New Orleans to participate in the 15th annual Jazz Education Network conference. Among other master musicians, the four great (pictured) drummers served to teach, inspire, and show me more of the way. Bottom line, play what YOU want your music to sound like, and learn your instrument to at least that level.



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

NEW *and* NOTABLE

DW Launches New Expansion Pack for DW Soundworks™

Drum Workshop launches new expansion pack for its premium virtual studio instrument (VST) and drum sample library, DW Soundworks™: True-Cast™ Expansion Pack, featuring the limited edition DW MFG True-Cast 5 x14" Snare Drum.

Only one hundred of the DW MFG True-Cast 5 x14" Snare Drums were made in 2023. These sand-cast, seamless pure bronze drums, developed in conjunction with renowned drum educator and session player, Dave Elitch, offer a unique, potent voice which is dynamic and distinct.

The powerful DW Soundworks™ software, is a virtual instrument that equips drummers, multi-instrumentalists, and producers with an expanding sonic palette of DW, Gretsch, and Slingerland drum sounds, including ones not widely available, like the DW MFG True-Cast 5x14 Snare Drum.

The DW MFG True-Cast 5 x14" Snare Drum Expansion Pack captures the authentic tonality of the rare DW True-Cast 5 x14"snare drum with sounds sampled at 24-bit, 88.2 kHz in the DW factory. This realistic audio experience faithfully provides all the full attack, low-end punch, and dark, earthy tonality of the original drum, making it widely available to all. DW Soundworks'



deep range of processing controls and effects means users can reproduce the DW MFG True-Cast 5 x14" Snare Drum sound specific to a particular microphone, room, ambience, or dynamic.

The new expansion pack is ideal for use with the DW's wireless acoustic-electronic convertible DWe drum kit or as a VST plugin. It is PC and Mac (VST2, VST3, AU and AAX) compatible. To find out more about the DW MFG True-Cast 5 x14" Snare Drum Expansion Pack and DW Soundworks™ or to purchase please go to <https://www.dwdrums.com/software/>

beyerdynamic Celebrates 100-Year Anniversary

As one of the leading manufacturers of quality headphones and microphones since 1924, beyerdynamic has maintained its reputation as a trusted audio brand, due to its pristine sound quality and the introduction of the DT 48, the first dynamic headphone ever made. As the company embarks on its centennial, it's celebrating 100 years of milestones.

Eugen Beyer: A True Pioneer

Originally hailing from Russia, beyerdynamic's founder, Eugen Beyer began manufacturing cinema speakers and founded "Elektrotechnische Fabrik Eugen Beyer," laying the foundation for what would become one of the world's oldest manufacturers of headphones and microphones.

beyerdynamic's First Products.

The DT 48 was the first set of dynamic headphones ever introduced ("DT" stands for Dynamic Telephone). These headphones featured better sound quality and achieved higher levels than the first modern headphones invented by Nathaniel Baldwin in 1910.

With the release of the M 19 in 1939 - the first studio-quality dynamic microphone— beyerdynamic continued its trajectory of making audio history. Many of its products introduced back then are still being manufactured today - which speaks to beyerdynamic's unwavering commitment to quality and tradition.

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Today, beyerdynamic still manufactures all of its professional headphones and microphones in Germany - and it's still a 100% family-owned business. "Like any company, we've changed a lot over the past 100 years," said CEO of beyerdynamic, Andreas Rapp. "But what has remained unchanged throughout our history is our commitment to constant innovation and developing products that create an unrivaled sound experience. We're looking forward to celebrating our centennial as a brand and can only imagine what we'll accomplish in the next 100 years to come." To learn more, visit <https://north-america.beyerdynamic.com/100-years-beyerdynamic>.

SONOR Expands Kompressor Series Snare Drums

Following the successful launch of the Kompressor Snare Drum Series metal shell snare drums earlier this year, SONOR is wasting no time in adding two new wood snare drums to the line-up. These German Beech shells are equally powerful, responsive, and versatile as their metal counterparts, covering a vast range of musical styles with the warm midrange tone that beech is known for. "These will quickly become your go-to wood snare drums," promises SONOR Brand Manager Jeff Mulvihill.

Made in Germany, these instruments project with the dynamic and articulate sound characteristic that SONOR is known for. Mulvihill continues, "The heavy beech shell produces full, warm, tone with evenly balanced lows, mids, and highs, projecting the beauty of the sound like no other." Featuring the SONOR proprietary Cross-Laminated Tension Free (CLTF) shell construction process and Optimum Shell Measurements (OSM), the slightly undersized diameter allows for perfect contact between the shell and the drumhead in all tunings. Simultaneously,



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New Gretsch Colors for 2024

Gretsch Drums is delighted to introduce three new finishes for its flagship USA Custom and Broadkaster kits made in the South Carolina factory: Rosewood Twilight Gloss Lacquer, Classic Sunburst, and Purple Marine Pearl, made famous by Nic Collins.

The nitro-cellulose glass lacquer finish of the Rosewood Twilight dark fade makes this rich deep color feel warm and sumptuous. The vibrant crimsons bleed into darkening chocolatey burgundies giving the kit a glow and radiance.

The timeless Classic Sunburst is a flash of vivid golden sunshine as it fades at sunset through muted oranges into earth browns. The hand-rubbed stain shows off wood grain to generate a vintage impression which is both striking and eye-catching.

The Purple Marine Pearl was developed following a specific request from Nic Collins. Collins asked Gretsch to build a kit for a tour with Mike & The Mechanics with the exact look of Black Marine Pearl, only in purple. Liaising with the factory he agreed on the shade of purple and Purple Marine Pearl was born, a captivating, opulent, and decadent new Gretsch Nitron finish.

The shell interiors of all the new finishes are completed with the classic Gretsch Silver Sealer and most importantly all have



'That Great Gretsch Sound'! To find out more about the new finishes and all the other great Gretsch products, please go to [gretschdrums.com](https://www.gretschdrums.com)



MELODICS

Now for Acoustic Drums

By Jason Mehler

Melodics is a subscription-based software platform designed to help people develop their skills on various musical instruments. Like popular video games such as *Rock Band*, Melodics incorporates challenges, levels and points to gamify the process of learning and practicing. Melodics was previously only available for finger drums (MPCs), keyboard, and electronic drums. However, the company recently announced compatibility with acoustic drums, marking a significant development in its music education offerings. For this product close-up, I will test the software and features using an acoustic drum kit.

The Idea

Founder Sam Gribben, former CEO of Serato, envisioned an app that made learning and practicing an instrument fun and engaging. Gribben states, "I had drum machines and pad controllers for years, and it frustrated me how hard it was to learn new patterns and beats. I've watched tons of videos from expert finger drummers, but it always felt so hard to develop the dexterity and muscle memory you need." The idea was to create a gaming-inspired platform that encourages the repetition and muscle memory essential for mastering a musical instrument.

How the Acoustic Drum Feature Works

The new acoustic drum feature of Melodics requires at least one microphone and uses machine-learning to pair each acoustic drum or cymbal to the internal instruments inside the software. Once paired, your drum set has essentially become a game controller.

Subscription Selection

After choosing an instrument, you are presented with the subscription selection page. At this point I expected to see an option for the free version but was only presented with a 7-day trial. According to their website, the free version of Melodics is available as a limited free plan after you complete a 7-day trial. To start the trial, choose a plan and enter your payment method. You'll have access to Premium Melodics features during the trial. If you decide to cancel your trial, your account will be reverted to the limited free plan at the end of the trial period. You can cancel at any time.

Once a plan is chosen and payment method entered, you can download the Melodics app. The plan options at the time of this writing are as follows: **Standard:** \$29.99USD/month (Billed Monthly) or \$131.88 USD (Billed annually) which includes: Unlimited play time, 1200+ lessons, 170+ Courses, Complete guided path, Advanced practice mode. **Premium:** \$34.99USD/month (Billed Monthly) or \$179.88 USD (Billed annually) which includes: Full songs catalogue! Songs added weekly, Unlimited play time, 1200+ lessons, 170+ courses, Complete guided path, Advanced practice tools.

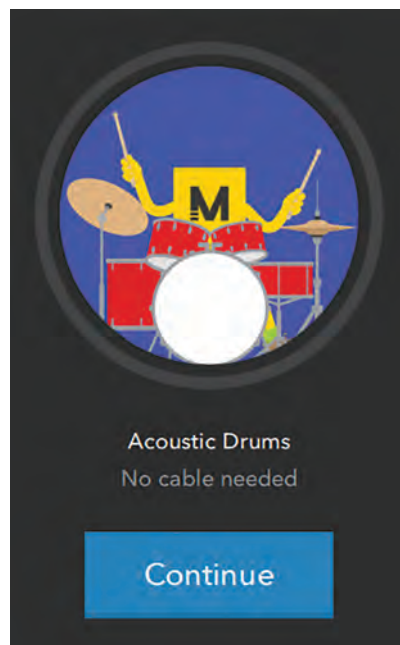
Software setup

Melodics software runs on Windows, macOS, and iPad. Windows and macOS versions can be downloaded from the website. The iPad version can be downloaded from the iPad App Store. Here are the system requirements at the time of this writing: **Windows requirements:** Windows 10 or later, Intel® Core™ i3 processor or an AMD multi-core processor. **MacOS requirements:** MacOS 12 or later, Intel® Core™ i3 processor. **iPad requirements:** iOS 14.0 or later. After downloading and installing the software, you are taken through steps to setup your instrument. The first step is to choose the instrument you wish to play.

Next, you need to choose the input microphone and the output device. The software will verify that it can detect the sound of you hitting the drums. It must be hit hard enough to meet the required level on the meter. The next step is to pair each drum with the software. One thing I noticed that was pretty cool is that you can use any sound to represent the individual instruments. For example, if you were using pots and pans or just banging on your desk instead of drums, you could pair those sounds to the software, as long as the sounds are distinctly different from each other. Once paired, you will choose between four skill levels as well as your main goals for learning. This will dictate how the software will present its features to you. For this review, I chose the easiest option and basic learning goals. Finally! We are about to hop into actually playing the drums!

Playing Experience

I chose practice mode so I could acquaint myself with the software. It's important to note that you'll need to position your computer or keyboard close to your drum set for easy access to the software's playback and navigation controls. When you start a lesson, the individual drums are listed vertically, and the playback moves from right to left. The object is to hit the specified drum when the colored square reaches the center



line. The color of the square will change depending on whether the hit was early, late, on time or missed.



With my system, I noticed that it took a bit to get used to the timing of the software. In my case, I had to hit the drum slightly early to register a perfect hit. I wasn't too bothered by it. I'm sure this varies and may even be related to the distance of the mic and speakers from the drum set, much like a phasing issue in a studio. In my case the mic and speakers are about six feet from the drums.

Feature Overview

The software has several features to explore including a guided path, which is basically an on-ramp of lessons ranging in skill level from grade one (beginner) to grade six (advanced). Other features include a song library of popular tunes varying in musical style and skill level, a progress section that tracks your achievements like your skill level, trophies for certain benchmark accomplishments, and records that you have completed.

A Real-World Teaching Experiment

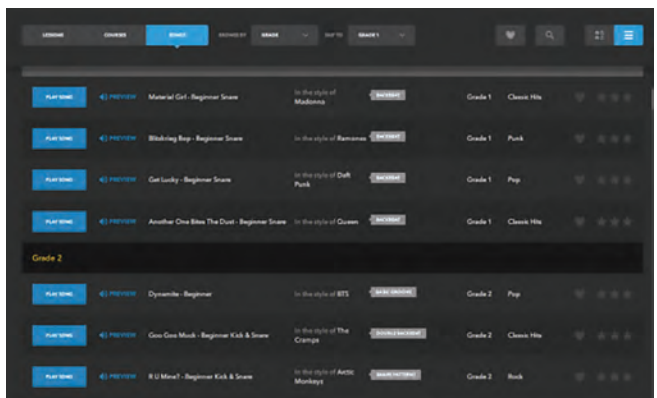
For my review I wanted to put this gamified learning to the ultimate test. The first thing I thought of was to consult a few gaming experts. Luckily, they live in my house and range in age from six to twelve. Yes, I am referring to my three children. Though I am a musician, my kids haven't yet shown an interest in picking up a musical instrument. The perfect scenario to see if Melodics would help spark an interest.

I set up a child-sized Ludwig kit that had been collecting dust for years. I called in my six-year-old and asked him if he wanted to play a drum game. He was excited and quickly sat on the kit. I started the first lesson and guided him through the objective. He took to it immediately and celebrated as he saw the blocks changing colors. When the lesson is over, the software tallies the score and displays the result count. He actively tried to beat his own score each time we ran through the lesson. While he was playing, I would correct his grip and stroke. It almost felt like I was tricking him into eating his vegetables.

My ten-year-old had a similar reaction, although she was much more critical of herself and needed a lot more encouragement. She wasn't quite fooled into the gaming experience, but loved some of the songs that were available in the library and just asked me to play them.

My oldest child thought the whole thing was pretty cool, though he didn't score very well and lacks patience. He also loved the available songs.

At first, I wasn't sure that they were overly impressed enough to make it a habit. Then a beacon of hope appeared when my youngest showed up the next day asking to play drum game. Eureka! He has since asked daily. I will continue to try with the other two kids.



My Takeaway

I really enjoyed reviewing the product and do feel that the Melodics platform is promising, especially for young musicians starting out. The subscription price may feel a bit steep, but there is a free version that can be evaluated to see if Melodics is right for you. I can see drum instructors using it as a teaching tool to expand their curriculum and introduce an element of fun and competitiveness. Furthermore, the unrestricted access plus the constant updates and additional songs/lessons being added weekly, I think the paid version may be worth the price tag. Give Melodics a try at: <https://melodics.com>.



SE Electronics BL8 Boundary Microphone

Get Your Kicks

By Jason Mehler

In 2023, SE Electronics introduced their BL8. It is a rugged, small condenser boundary microphone, great for kick drums, cajons, pianos, speech, conferencing, room micing / ambience, stage floor miking and more. For this month's product close-up, I was provided a pair of BL8 mics, one with a half-cardioid polar pattern and the other is the omnidirectional version.

What's in the Box?

You get a sense of the build quality just by the weight of the box and the attention to detail in the packaging. Included with the microphone is a red leather carrying pouch with a soft inner liner, and adjustment tool for manipulating the switches located on the underside of the microphone, extra foam pop-filter in red or black, the user manual, and a few branded decals.

Specifications

Capsule: The heart of each microphone is a hand-crafted small-diaphragm true-condenser capsule. This design choice is critical for capturing detailed and accurate sound, contributing to the microphone's ability to deliver a pristine audio experience. **Power Requirements:** 48 volts of phantom power. **Connectivity:** 3-pin male XLR connector.

Sound Quality and Versatility

Polar Patterns: The option between half-cardioid and omnidirectional patterns provides flexibility depending on the recording environment and desired sound capture. **Frequency Range:** A wide frequency range of 20 – 20,000 Hz enables these microphones to capture a full spectrum of sounds, making them suitable for various applications. **Sensitivity:** At 25 mV/Pa

(-32 dBV), the mics are sensitive enough to pick up fine details, yet robust in handling louder sounds. **Maximum SPL:** The impressive max SPL of 143 / 153 / 163 dB SPL (with 0/10/20 dB attenuation pad) allows these microphones to handle extremely loud sounds without distortion, making them ideal for high-volume environments. **Equivalent Noise Level and Signal-to-Noise Ratio:** With an equivalent noise level of 14 dB(A) and a signal-to-noise ratio of 80 dB, the microphone promises clear, low-noise audio capture. **Dynamic Range:** The dynamic range of 129 / 139 / 149 dB (with 0/10/20 dB attenuation pad) highlights the mics' ability to handle a wide range of volumes smoothly. **Low-Cut Filter and Attenuation Pad:** The switchable low-cut filter (80 / 160 Hz, 6 dB/oct) and attenuation pad (10 / 20 dB) provide additional control over the sound capture, enabling users to tailor the mic's response to the specific recording situation.

Build Quality and Style

The BL8 is just plain solid. It's heavy, low-profile body and black metal grill seems sturdy enough to survive a stampede. I also love the look of the BL8 mic. It reminds me of a Lamborghini Countach. It's a shame that it will be hiding inside my bass drum.

Microphone Features

On the underside of the BL8, there are three switches. The first switch is a low frequency cutoff. The switch allows you to cut out all low frequencies below 80Hz or 160Hz. You could also disable it to allow all frequencies through. The second switch is an attenuation pad. This allows you to drop the decibels by -10dB or -20dB for high SPL sources like bass drums. The



third switch is the character switch, which provides two different EQ voicings or presets.

The microphone is also compatible with the Kelly SHU bass drum mount, which suspends the microphone inside the bass drum, attached by four rubber O-rings. The mount further isolates the mic and reduces unwanted vibrations.

Testing the BL8

Rather than step through the various switches of the mic and match the sound head-to-head with other brands, I chose to focus on the differences between the omni and half-cardioid versions of the BL8. I set the attenuation switches on both mics to -10dB and set the character switches to "Classic", which is a great setting for bass drum. I won't be messing with the switches again for this article.

To begin I set up two drum kits side-by-side. On the left, a Mapex Mars Birch with the SE BL8 half-cardioid mic. On the right, a Yamaha Beech Custom with the BL8 Omnidirectional mic. I tested two different mic placements: On the floor in front of each bass drum and inside each bass drum.

The mics were connected to a PA system and placed on the floor in front of each bass drum facing the resonant head, just off the rim. Both mics sounded spectacular right out the gate. The thing that was most noticeable at first was that the half-cardioid BL8 was more susceptible to vibration than the omni. Just walking around the area in front of the bass drum produced sound. This, however, was easily controlled by placing a small blanket underneath the mic. Between the two mics, the half-cardioid had a little more punch when placed on the floor in front of the kit. However, the omni



still sounded great. Keep in mind that placement of either mic outside of the bass drum will pick up ambient sounds from around the kit. Moreso with the omni than the half-cardioid. For more isolation in a recording scenario, it is common to use a heavy blanket or kick drum "tunnel" to minimize the bleed from the cymbals and the rest of the kit.

The next mic placement was inside the kick drum. The mics were placed on a small blanket inside each bass

drum facing the batter head, centered between the batter and resonant heads. I then re-installed the front bass drum heads.

The sound from each kick drum was wonderful. Both mics captured the unique characteristics of the drum. I feel like the omni really shined because it captured more of the front head, yielding a sound rich in tone and body. It delivered a clean low end and an articulate response from the beater. The half-cardioid mic produced a driving natural punch with great low frequency response. Overall, both microphones performed exceptionally.



My Takeaway

I would not hesitate to use either of these microphones as my primary kick drum mic. The BL8 is an exceptional microphone, and I would say one of the best available. I've always chased a specific sound from a kick drum mic, and the BL8 has it. Furthermore, the sturdy construction makes the BL8 a perfect choice for traveling drummers, especially when combined with the Kelly Shu mount and ventilation cable routing. Go out and get the SE BL8. You won't be disappointed.

The BL8 retails around \$269. Check it out at: <https://seelectronics.com/products/bl8>





Eric Singer

Prelude to a **KISS**

By Mark Griffith

Why would the title of an interview with KISS's Eric Singer draw a title from a classic *Duke Ellington* composition? Well, I'll let Eric explain that, "I have music playing 24/7 in the house, it's usually the Sinatra station on SiriusXM. Today, I like to listen to music that that's the antithesis of what I do."

In this interview Eric and I talk about his entire career before Kiss, the "prelude" (if you will,) and his 26 years in KISS. You'll see how being asked to appear in a 1984 *Women in Rock* video and an Olivia Newton-John video for "Culture Shock" in 1985 started his career and led directly to Eric joining KISS in 1991. Eric details how to make a name for yourself, survive in the music business, and have a long career playing drums for the most popular artists of all time. But it isn't just KISS... Lita Ford, Black Sabbath, Gary Moore, Brian May, Queen, Alice Cooper, Paul Stanley, Badlands, Ronnie Montrose, and KISS have all called Eric's number to record and tour, and it all started with an important mid-western upbringing right outside of Cleveland, in Euclid, Ohio.



Kristin Daw

MD: I've said it many times, but in this business, longevity is the biggest achievement that we can attain. Longevity means you can play well, people like being around you, and you have got all your stuff together. All of that is wrapped up in one word, professionalism. And amazingly, that professionalism was displayed to me yesterday when, one day before our interview, you called me just to confirm that everything was still going as scheduled, and to make sure there were no mix-ups. That's professionalism!

ES: Musicians can be flaky, but you don't have to be flaky. In fact, if you want a long career, you can't be flaky. Gene Simmons always told me, "Eric you're the consummate pro." That means a lot, and it was because of my upbringing. I have to give credit to both my father and my mother. My mother and father were like yin and yang. Every scenario that could happen in life, whether it was musically or otherwise, could be covered by either of their personalities. My father had a very big ego and was a strict disciplinarian about everything. My mother had a softer side with compassion and generosity. I always felt like an even blend of both my parent's personalities.

I grew up in Euclid, OH and I'm glad I was raised there. I grew up on the East side of the city, but in the summer of '69 we moved to a different part of town with a different school district. It was only 54 blocks away, but suddenly, I was going to a different elementary school and the kids were different. All the kids were hippie kids, they were into rock 'n roll and it was just a different vibe. I remember they all liked Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, and Deep Purple.

Ohio is the heartland of America, and a lot of bands had their strongest base in that part of the country. A lot of times you don't realize things until you're older, but I have really started to realize how impactful that whole environment was to me. We had WMMS on the radio which was one of the most influential radio stations in the country. Bands like Rush, Meat Loaf, and Bruce Springsteen broke in America because WMMS and the Cleveland DJ's started playing them. Growing up there, I had a lot of great experiences going to see concerts.

I met a kid named Jim Ellis who influenced me a lot. He had a cool Fender Precision Bass and a blue sparkle Kustom amp. Jim was into a lot of cool music, he's the guy that introduced me to the MC5 and Iggy Pop. He bought me Iggy's *Raw Power* and Paul McCartney's first solo album for my 12th birthday. He introduced me to bands like Nazareth and Golden Earring, and when punk started happening, he was into the underground punk scene. Jim told me to check out Television, Talking Heads, and The Dead Boys (out of Cleveland.) Jim and I saw Pere Ubu, and the band that opened for them was Devo. I remember seeing Devo and the Rubber City Rebels. Jim Ellis really exposed me to music that I probably wouldn't have discovered on my own. I wasn't really into the punk thing, but I was open minded to a lot of music. While I was listening to all of that, my older sister Monique introduced me to the first Chicago album, The Temptations, The Supremes, and all the Motown stuff. That whole environment really contributed to what I ended up doing and what I do. Today, most of the music I listen to is 50s and 60s jazz.

The Cleveland area was a great breeding ground for drummers. I grew up with Michael Cartellone from Lynyrd Skynyrd, Jimmy Clark is a great drummer from the Cleveland

area who played with Joan Jett and Deborah Harry. Now he's Lars Ulrich's drum tech. Louie Bellson got a friend of mine named Ray Porello the gig with Count Basie. Ray's dad played drums, and so did his two sons. Louie would have Ray sit in and eventually Basie offered him the gig. But then he got in a car accident and ruptured his spleen. Butch Miles took his place, and he never got the gig back. Then Ray got the gig with Sammy Davis Jr. and he did that for a long time, Ray's younger brother Rick took his place with Sammy when Rick was only about 19. I really looked up to all of these guys because they were great local drummers.

MD: There are drummers like that in every region. They haven't achieved drumming "fame" for whatever reason, but they inspired an entire generation of drummers.

ES: I'll give you another one. Kevin Valentine was the drummer in Donnie Iris' band. Kevin was two years older than me. In high

Gene Simmons always told me, "Eric you're the consummate pro." That means a lot, and it was because of my upbringing.

school I remember watching his band practice through their basement window. He got into the band Breathless who opened for KISS in 1978 on the *Destroyer Tour*. Kevin was the local kid from my neighborhood that had made it already. I used to go watch him play at the clubs, he was a great drummer that always played like a seasoned pro even when he was young. He played just the right way and he had just the right feel. When I moved to LA and became (kind of) established in the LA scene, Kevin moved out there too. I recommended him to Cinderella when they switched drummers. After I met Paul Stanley and was doing demos with KISS (I wasn't in KISS yet,) I recommend Kevin to Paul and Gene, he started doing demos and did the *Psycho Circus* album in '98. It felt great to help a guy that I looked up to and who influenced me as a kid.

Like you said, those local guys have a big impact on you, and you don't realize how much of an influence they had until you get a little older and look back. They set the bar and led the way. Sure, you must have long-term goals, but those local guys showed you the short-term goals, and that those goals were achievable, which is just as important.

MD: Your dad was a local musician too.

ES: My dad was a band leader, my mother sang and played violin. Of course, I saw The Beatles and The Stones on Ed Sullivan, but I really loved the Dave Clark Five because the drummer was the leader, and the band was named after him, and he had that cool red sparkle Rogers kit.

My first kit was a blue sparkle Dixie set, (which was actually Pearl before they became Pearl.) But my dad bought me a Rogers kit in 1972 for my 14th birthday. It was silver sparkle with two mounted toms on and a 24" bass drum. I wanted that kit because it reminded me of the Dave Clark Five. Although I was a very tiny kid, I wanted that big 24 because almost every other kit in the store was a 22 or a 20.

I started playing in my father's society band when I was 14, we played at the local Hofbrau house, Oktoberfest, everywhere! We played every kind of music: Ethnic (Hungarian) music, show tunes, the American songbook like Cole Porter and Gershwin. When you play all these different kinds of music it can be very helpful. You have a familiarity with different styles in your drumming arsenal and you can draw on those styles to create drum parts in bands. When you are playing in a band that is writing music, you might think, "I'm gonna play a snare roll or marching cadence, or some sort of ethnic beat in this section. You can do that because you learned to play different kinds of music, and you are finding a way to apply that vocabulary. I used to get frustrated because my dad would be tough on me. He had a very strong personality, a big ego, and had a disciplinary taskmaster kind of mentality. I would voice my frustration with him and the other guys in the band would tell me to just listen and pay attention. I didn't know it then, but I know it now. My dad was teaching me how to deal with big personalities and big egos. That has really helped me in my career. I was hypersensitive when I was younger, my dad would yell, "You're not playing it right!" Sometimes he would kick me off the drums and he'd play. He could play drums a little, he didn't have any kind of chops, but he could play. He knew how to play the right beat with the right feel, and that's what he was trying to teach me. He always took me to see all the big bands like Louie Belson, Buddy Rich, Maynard Ferguson, the Air Force big band, and Basie.

From that point on, and for the next 10 years, I was always working in bands on weekends. I got to see a lot of great concerts, but there was a lot of concerts that I missed because I was working in bands. All through high school, when my friends were hanging out and partying on the weekends, I was playing in bands. I didn't always like playing in my dad's band, but it gave me the structure and discipline that I needed to learn. I learned how to be in a band, how to be a good band member, and how to work for people. My father didn't take crap from anyone, and he ran a tight ship.

We all start by picking up a pair of sticks, but we all go on our own paths. We may find some common ground with a lot of other people along the way, and that common ground

is what you try to impart and share with people through sharing experiences. We're all gonna have our own individual takes on that journey, but at least by giving people your point of view, others can learn. You can learn from good drummers and bad drummers, you can learn what to, and what not to do, as long as you keep your eyes and ears open. You must be open minded and receptive to that. You can try to mimic and imitate someone to a certain degree, but you're never going to be that guy. Even if you become technically more advanced than that guy, you're not going to be him.



Felipe Laverde

The only way to get good at something is by doing it. You can practice a lot but learning the application of what you've been practicing is how you get better. That's when you move up to a higher level. You can only be great in your basement for so long. A lot of guys are great in their basements, but as soon as you throw them into the real world of playing and traveling in different environments, that's when you find out if you can do it. It's not about just being able to play at home and being really good, it's about dealing with the routine of traveling and playing when you're sick or rundown. We just finished this last KISS tour, and I started touring with Lita Ford in 1984; that means I've been touring for 39 years, and (so far) I've NEVER missed a gig. That includes instances when I've been as sick as a dog with every kind of flu imaginable.

MD: I have played some gigs while I was really sick too, and we always play very well when we're sick. Why do you think that is?

ES: Yeah, they are always great nights until we get back to the hotel and collapse. I think it's partly adrenaline. But once you've learned to play, and you get experience playing a lot of gigs, I don't want to say it's "cruise control" because that isn't it. But you learn how to make drumming an involuntary muscle like breathing or your heartbeat. Involuntary muscles move whether you think about them or not, and when you start overthinking stuff you can actually make things more complicated than they need to be. But the only way you learn to develop that sixth sense is to just play naturally and not overthink things. I've been on stage playing and suddenly I'm in "auto mode." I definitely don't mean this in a negative way, but I'll literally be playing and think, "I gotta make sure I call and pay my credit card," or "I gotta call mom," or *whatever*... When that happens, you don't get lost because the drumming and the music is so ingrained in you. You're so confident, comfortable, and experienced in all these different environments, that everything is almost "automatic," and you can do it without thought.

The key is being able to deal with adversity, that could be illness or whatever. I've lost three family members while I've been on tour. You learn to compartmentalize things in your life. You can't fall apart even though you want to mourn and be able to grieve. It's not about being insensitive or being impervious to your emotions, it's about realizing that there's a time and a place, and you just can't stop everything because something happens. You know you have to go through it, and at the appropriate time you can address your own personal emotions. It's not about making yourself insensitive or robotic, it's just a necessary survival tactic.

MD: Vinnie Colaiuta told me in an interview once that, "Thought is the enemy of flow."

ES: That's it! Vinnie Colaiuta is my favorite all around drummer. Vinnie can play any kind of music, and he plays everything very authentically. His vocabulary is amazing. I use the word vocabulary instead of chops. Vinnie can speak a lot of languages on the drums, and he speaks all the complicated languages that exist and even the ones that are almost extinct.

MD: What music are you listening to, and what music has meant the most to you throughout your life?

ES: Of course, I like all the fusion stuff. As I get older, I can really

look back to my youth and identify which drummers really influenced me. Of course, I love Buddy Rich and Louie Bellson, but I always wanted to play rock. I remember seeing The Beatles and the Stones and all the bands on Ed Sullivan, but I was only six in 1964. I really started understanding and comprehending what drummers in bands were doing around 1973. By that time, I had been playing drums for five or six years, and when I saw a drummer in concert, I knew what he was doing. Maybe I couldn't do certain things on the technical level, but I knew what they were doing.

My early inspirations were guys like Cozy Powell on Jeff Beck Group's *Rough and Ready*. Those two Jeff Beck records were a little funkier. Even though Cozy didn't have crazy chops he had the right feeling, approach, and style for that music. Carmine Appice has always been one of my favorite drummers because Carmine always got a great sound and feel. When he was with Rod Stewart, listen to "Hot Legs" and all that stuff. Beck, Bogert, & Appice (BBA) was great drumming too. Denny Carmassi was amazing on the Montrose records. That's the timeline of music from when I was around 16 years old. Obviously, there's John Bonham, I love Deep Purple and Ian Paice, especially on *Machine Head*, and Humble Pie's Jerry Shirley. I like hard rock drummers that have an English feel and style. I always thought Carmine

When you play all these different kinds of music it can be very helpful. You have a familiarity with different styles in your drumming arsenal and you can draw on those styles to create drum parts in bands.

and Denny had that English feel. I tell all my drummer friends if you want to listen to great rock drumming with a slightly progressive sense, Prairie Prince's drumming on that first Tubes album is amazing. I discovered Simon Phillips on that *801 Live* record, Michael Schenker's first record, and Jeff Beck's *There and Back*, but he was also on Judas Priest's *Sin After Sin*. I was buying everything that Simon did around that time, I love his drumming.

MD: And both you and Simon both grew up playing in your father's jazz groups.

ES: I thought Simon sounded like a rock drummer that played in a fusion-y way. The stuff he plays is not jazzy and over your head for a rock context, he stayed more linear. He has serious rock chops, but he plays busier. He played a lot of cool stuff, but he still had a rock vocabulary. I loved Tommy Aldridge with Pat Travers, Mark Craney on Gino Vanelli's *Brother to Brother*, Terry Bozzio on the Brecker Brothers' *Heavy Metal Bebop* and with Missing Persons. I love Steve Smith's playing in Journey, but also with Montrose and Jean-Luc Ponty. Dennis Chambers can play anything. However, the guy that never got enough attention is Marvin "Smitty" Smith. He's amazing and really played a lot of great music. Watch some of the videos of Marvin in his early

years. He never got the accolades like Weckl, Gadd, Vinnie, and Dennis, but “Smitty” can play at that level. Again, he has that multiple vocabulary, and plays a lot of styles.

I’m obviously not that kind of drummer, I’m a rock drummer, it’s great to be a chameleon, that’s an amazing skill and attribute, but there’s also nothing wrong with wanting to be a rock drummer that plays with bands. I loved KISS “the band,” *Dressed to Kill* was my favorite record. Even though Peter Criss was never a *direct* drumming influence on me, KISS as a whole was *most definitely* a major influence as “a band.” That’s what I aspired to, that’s how I looked at myself, I wanted to play the music that those bands played.

interaction.

MD: Most drummers know you as the longtime drummer in KISS. But there was a lot before that, how did this whole journey start?

ES: When I first moved to LA I was laser focused, I intended to sign up at PIT (Percussion Institute of Technology) and I met with Joe Porcaro. I decided to wait until the next semester to sign up, in the meantime I saw that Casey Scheuerell was giving lessons. I had just seen him on TV with Jean-Luc Ponty and remembered



Ronn Dunnett

Today I listen to 90% jazz: Art Blakey, Jimmy Cobb, and Philly Joe Jones. I like anything Miles Davis has done. He played with a beautiful pure tone. He was the most influential musical pioneer (jazz and rock-jazz fusion) ever. Look at all those fusion bands that came from Miles. Those fusion guys like Tony Williams, Lenny White, Billy Cobham, and Alphonse Mouzon were rock stars when I was a kid. One of my most influential albums is Billy Cobham’s *Spectrum*, that’s what got me away from some of the more basic rock drumming. Billy Cobham and Lenny White are two of my favorites, but as I’ve gotten older, I really think Lenny is the perfect blend of everything that I like in jazz and rock fusion drumming, I love him on his record *Venusian Summer* and on Return to Forever’s *Romantic Warrior*. I recently saw him with (bassist) Buster Williams a few years ago at a small theater in downtown LA on Washington Blvd. I made sure I got there early so my seat was about eight feet from him. He was set up sideways, so I was looking at him from the side, I got to really watch him. That’s how I love to watch a drummer, I want to see drummers from that open side so I can watch the foot-hand interaction and see the technique and the dynamic of that

that he sounded great, so I called him up and started taking lessons from him. He was really cool; I had already taken lessons from a guy in Cleveland who was teaching me the Alan Dawson stuff and using Ted Reed’s *Syncopation*. Casey had me do some different exercises and encouraged me to be inventive and try my own things with that book. Instead of playing figures with the left-hand, I started playing time on top and doing all the figures with my feet, because I was heavy into double bass at that time. After a while I asked Casey (who now teaches at Berklee) about going to PIT. He said, “I think I know what kind of drummer you wanna be, my advice to you is you to keep taking lessons privately from different people, because if you go to PIT you’re going to have to spend so much time on that curriculum, which is great and you’ll learn so much, but you’ll have no time to play in a band, and I think that’s where you’re at. You should take lessons, get different points of view from people, but you should start playing in a band. I just think you’re at a point where you should just get out and play.” He actually convinced me *NOT* to go to PIT, and he was a teacher there. He was doing the right thing. That was good advice *for me* based on where I was at in

my 25-year-old life. In the four or five months that I took lessons from Casey, he was not only a big influence, but he taught me to follow my instincts and have confidence in myself. Confidence can be instilled by what you do, but sometimes other people can instill it in you, and you should always listen to somebody who is already doing what you want to do. Casey was from that whole group of drummers like John "JR" Robinson, Vinnie Colaiuta, and Steve Smith. Those guys were all were at Berklee at the same time. That era produced some serious drummers that are some of the most influential drummers of our generation.

They say that luck is when opportunity meets preparedness. When an opportunity presents itself, you must be prepared enough to take advantage of that opportunity, and that's what I did. Sometimes you're just not ready, but when I auditioned for things, I was always very prepared. When I really knew the material and felt confident, I had a much better chance than just going in cold and not knowing the situation and the material. You shouldn't audition for something if you don't know the material and you're not prepared. It's not about showing a band that you can *play*. It's about showing people that you can play *their* songs. I always took the time and respect to learn a band's material and played it like it was on the record, unless they told me otherwise. A band would always hear that I did my homework and was playing things verbatim. Later, they might say, "We do it a little bit different live, or we do this section a little bit different, so you can take some liberties there."

My first audition came because someone saw me at a Carmine Appice Drum Off contest, I must give credit to Carmine. I didn't win, I took third place, but Brenda Lee Holiday called Carmine and got my number and asked me to be in a Playboy video called *The Women of Rock*. The guy that played bass in the video owned a rehearsal studio where Lita Ford and Black Sabbath rehearsed. Randy Castillo had been the drummer with Lita, but he was going to quit, and that bassist told me that I'd be good for Lita's gig. He told her about me and let me bring my kit to one of his rehearsal rooms for two weeks to practice and learn her album *Dancing on the Edge*. I learned that whole album verbatim. Randy Castillo was the drummer on that and there was a lot of good drum parts. She did a cattle call audition of about 10 drummers. When I played, the first thing she said was, "When I close my eyes it's like Randy's not even gone." I'll never forget that. I learned that record note for note, so when we played it was exactly like the record. I made sure that I gave it a good shot, and it paid off. That's what started me on my journey. I always have to give props to Lita Ford; she gave me my first break.

Lita was dating Tony Iommi at the time, and he was producing some of Lita's demos and was working on new material for an album. She told me that Tony wanted me to play drums on some of his demos. It was kind of surreal, the next thing you know I'm in the studio playing on the Black Sabbath album *Seventh Star*. That was the first time I ever played on a record, and I have to admit I was not that experienced. But because I had put a lot of work in, and I was so laser focused it helped launch my career.

MD: After the Black Sabbath record, how did your career progress from gig to gig?

ES: The Sabbath thing was a great experience. When I first got the gig, the tour got postponed a couple weeks, so instead of starting in Chicago the first gig was in Cleveland. My first big gig coming back to Cleveland was playing in Black Sabbath. When I left, I was a kid working at King's making trumpets and saxophones, I literally reinvented myself and I came back two and a half years later in Black Sabbath. I looked completely different, I was a different drummer, and I was a different person. I'm still the same guy, I've always tried to keep my attitude and my ego in check, that's very important, but it was very surreal. After that first Sabbath record, they switched singers from Ray Gillen (Ray and I ended up in Badlands together,) but that situation didn't work out. Tony Iommi brought in Bob Daisley to play bass, but Bob didn't like the new management. Bob called me up to tell me that he was going to play with Gary Moore, and

The only way to get good at something is by doing it. You can practice a lot but learning the application of what you've been practicing is how you get better.

that he had told Gary about me. Bob told me that he thought this would be really good for my career and give me some credibility on my resume' because everybody knew how great all of Gary's drummers were.

MD: Gary always had great drummers in his bands. Tommy Aldridge, Ian Paice, Bobby Chouinard...

ES: Actually, Bobby did the tour after he replaced Ian Paice on the record. I thought it was very cool that Ian Paice was so humble to talk about that situation. No matter how good you are, and Ian's a true legend, sometimes you're not the right fit, not playing great, or just not right for the situation. Ian got replaced on the album, and Gary brought in Bobby Chouinard, and he did the tours opening for Rush and Queen. But that was very brave of Ian to talk about that. Everybody has been fired at some point in their career.

I flew over to London without telling anybody because I was still in Black Sabbath. I did an audition, and the callback and I got Gary's gig. We went on tour for the *Wild Frontier* album and did a live concert video called *Live from Stockholm*. I met Jake E. Lee on that tour because he came to one of the Gary Moore shows. Ozzy came to our gig at the Hammersmith Odeon earlier in the year because he was firing Jake and was good friends with Gary. Ozzy always wanted Gary to play in his band. Four months later, Jake and I were getting together to form Badlands. That record came out in 1989, and I got fired from Badlands.

I immediately called everyone I knew in the business to tell them I was looking for a gig, I called up Doug Goldstein who used to work for Black Sabbath as a security guard and later became Guns 'N Roses' manager. Doug was out with Great White and Alice Cooper and he told me that Alice needed a drummer. A week after I got fired from Badlands I auditioned for Alice, got

the gig in January of 1990 and suddenly I'm on tour with Alice.

I have to say, as a kid I loved all those musicians that I was working with, it was a surreal journey for me. I remember doing the Black Sabbath album with producer Jeff Glixman. I knew he had produced Gary Moore *Corridors of Power* and *Victims of the Future* and I said to him, "If you ever work with Gary Moore again, I would love to have the chance to play with him." Two years later I was in Gary's band.

While I was recording with Badlands in New York City in the beginning of '89 someone told me that Paul Stanley needed a drummer for a solo tour and that Paul wanted to meet me. The KISS office was around the corner from my hotel. I walked over, gave him some CD's that I played on, told him what I had done, and left. That night Jason Flom from Atlantic Records came to the Record Plant and said, "I just saw Paul Stanley at the China Club, he told me you're playing drums on his solo tour, congratulations!" As soon as I got home, I got a message saying Paul wants to start rehearsals, so I flew back to New York and crammed about 25 tunes right off the bat.

MD: That's a lot to learn, how do you learn tunes?

ES: I'm not a chart guy, I've tried doing that, but it goes back to what we spoke about before. I want to be able to play songs instinctually, reading a chart (no offense to anybody) isn't me. Some guys can read anything, and they're really good readers, I was a good sight reader when I was a kid. But to me, the right way to play songs is by *knowing* the material, not by *reading* the material. That way you can really make it *feel* good, you can focus more on tempo and feel, as opposed to trying to remember where you are in the song.

Later that year, when I was living in LA, Paul asked if I could play on some KISS demos. Eric Carr lived in New York, but

everyone else (Bruce Kulick, Gene, and Paul) all lived in LA.

So, I played on a bunch of KISS demos, but I went back on tour with Alice Cooper after that. That's when I referred Kevin Valentine which got him in the mix with the KISS family in early 1991. I was working with Alice, and we were home on a break when Paul called and asked me to do the tune for the soundtrack to *Bill and Ted's Bogus Adventure*. I cut that with Bob Ezrin producing. I think they wanted to test the waters with Bob. I went back on tour with Alice and got a message from Paul saying that they needed some help in the studio to record because Eric Carr was ill. I agreed to do some of the record because I was only home for two weeks, and then have Kevin Valentine do the other half. I started to work on some of the material from the work tapes and that night I was in a rehearsal room with Bruce Kulick teaching me the reps. We started rehearsing, did some pre-production, and started cutting tracks. In the meantime, they tried some other drummers who didn't work out. One of them was Aynsley Dunbar because Paul loved that big Whitesnake record from 1987.

MD: He's killer on that record, everyone assumes it's Tommy Aldridge because he did the videos.

ES: Aynsley is a one of my heroes! He's a phenomenal drummer but he wasn't right for what KISS was doing. They even had Eric Carr come back and play twice, but he had just had heart surgery and just wasn't up to the task. That's when they called me because I had done that tune for the soundtrack. I talked with Shep Gordon (Alice's manager) and I cut the drum tracks for



Ronn Dunnnett

the KISS record *Revenge*, and went back out with Alice for two weeks while the band overdubbed their parts. I came back and did the same thing on another batch of tunes. The last tune I cut wasn't working, so they brought Kevin Valentine in to do that track. After we did that record it still wasn't a given that I was joining the band. After Eric Carr died tragically, they considered other drummers before they decided on me to be the drummer in KISS. I prepared the way I always did, and in 1991 I joined the band. We did MTV *Unplugged* in the summer of '95 and then went into the studio to record *The Carnival of Souls*, that album got shelved because they decided to do the *Reunion Tour* from 1996 to 2001.

This is when grunge came around, and Alice didn't work for five years. I was a little concerned during those years because there wasn't any work for what I was doing. I thought that I might have to re-invent myself or find something else to do. I wound up subbing for Jimmy DeGrasso in Alice's band when Jimmy joined Megadeth. Fortunately, a friend told me that Brian May was looking for a drummer to replace Cozy Powell because he had recently passed away, so I called his management only to find out that Tony Iommi had already recommended me. Brian had (of course) played with Roger Taylor and Cozy Powell his whole life, and Steve Ferrone had done a short promotional tour, but Brian was looking for something else. Brian is a hard rock guitar player at heart, and when I auditioned it went over like gangbusters. Queen is probably my favorite band ever, so that was a dream come true. I kept subbing in Alice Cooper's band, and I even did some gigs with Queen as their second drummer when Roger would go out front and sing. Then Queen got Paul Rodgers, and they elected not to use a second drummer. Rufus Taylor later became their second drummer, but he joined The Darkness, and now they have Tyler Warren, and he's simply amazing.

Brian and Roger are the coolest guys ever! It was very hard not to be a "fanboy," but inside I was freaking out! Actually, when I first joined Brian's band, a mutual friend was talking to him, and Brian said that he thought that I didn't care that I got the gig. It turns out I was being too "cool," and "professional," in hiding my excitement. Brian thought that it seemed like I didn't care if I got the gig. You have to remember, however humble somebody is, everyone still has an ego, and no one wants to be around someone that is indifferent and doesn't care. People want to see genuine enthusiasm for their gig.

MD: That's another great point about professionalism, sometimes it's a fine line to walk.

ES: That was a great self-teaching moment for me. Sure, you have to act like you've been there, and be humble. People say, "fake it until you make it," but you can't really fake it. Being humble, being qualified, and "getting it" is important. "Getting it" means knowing what it takes to get there and stay there.

MD: All that professionalism answers the question about getting into, and staying in KISS for 26 years.

ES: I came back to KISS in 2001 and recorded *Sonic Boom*, a few live records, and *Monster*. If you want to

be gainfully employed and have longevity in the music business, you realize that there are certain factors you can't control. Health issues, age considerations, or if people decide to just stop. But the important thing is that you must be honest with yourself about what you do and what you don't do. I realized a long time ago I'm a drummer, not a songwriter, and not a front man. I'm not that guy, I don't have that personality. I'm a good band member and a team player. That is a skill set you have to develop as well as being able to play well.

I know so many guys that are great musicians in many ways,

I like hard rock drummers that have an English feel and style. I always thought Carmine and Denny had that English feel.

but they can't get out of their own way. It's a shame, a lot of them are people whose talent I really respect. I see someone who is so talented and wonder why doesn't this guy do something? Why isn't he doing more? I get frustrated for them because I see someone who is more talented than everybody I know, and five times more talented than I could ever be. It's frustrating to watch, but some people can't get out of their own way. It's not just about your ability on your instrument, or your talent for writing songs. You must know how to channel that into a productive way of working and getting along with others. It's called the music *business*, not music *friends*. If you don't like that it's a business, then don't join a band, and don't try to make a living playing music. You can't just do whatever the hell you want and just play music for yourself in the music business, I know guys that think that way, and it doesn't work!

Life is very simple to me, it's about quality of life. You can have a great quality of life if you do something that you enjoy doing as a job. Hopefully you'll be generous and help pay for the less fortunate. It's good to help others, but you must be able to survive, and unfortunately that costs money. Therefore, if you make more money, you can have a better quality of life, and help more people. It's not about being rich and famous, it's just about your quality of life. I look at life from the basic essence of what life is. I worked in factories, I had regular jobs, I worked at a Ford dealership as a parts counter guy for a couple years. I did all that and I realized I didn't want to do that. There is nothing wrong with it, but I had aspirations and dreams. I wanted to be a musician. I knew that from the time I picked up the sticks as a kid, I wanted to be a drummer and play in a band. I wanted to be in the biggest band because I had the posters on the wall, and I looked at them every day. I didn't want *fame*; I had a passion for

music. I always felt that somehow, deep down inside, I was supposed to do this. But I knew that I was going to have to figure it out. You don't know how to get there, you just have the feeling that you could be one of

I really think Lenny is the perfect blend of everything that I like in jazz and rock fusion drumming...

the guys that are doing it, you just have to figure out how to get there. That was the challenge, figuring it out.

In life, things happen, families, divorces, death... You have successes, you have heart breaks, and you have losses. You learn to navigate the emotional landscape that life is going to bring you along the journey. That stuff doesn't stop when you're successful, it's not a matter of *if* you're going to experience those things, it's a matter of *when*. Everybody's gonna experience life, not in the same way necessarily, but everyone is going to experience these things, so learn how to be strong and step up to the challenges as they happen. You gotta be tough to survive in the music business, it's not for everybody. I wonder if a lot of younger people have that toughness. I know the journey that I went on, I know how the business was, and what it's become. The same business model isn't there right now, you don't have that scene.

When I moved to LA in late '83 it was the prime hotbed of rock music. The scene was blowing up, that was the place to be in the music world, every weekend on the Sunset Strip was like Mardi Gras. I don't know what's up for the future of a lot of younger musicians aspiring to do the same thing that I did. It was a unique culture and a vibe that was going on, I'm glad I got to experience it, but it's not gonna be like that again. Every era has its own time and place where things happen. Whether it was San Francisco in the 60s, New York in the 70s, or London. England always produces amazing music, almost all my favorite bands came from England. It's hard to believe that such a small country has produced such an influential amount of music and musicians, that's just unprecedented. But the first thing any young musician must do is get into the cultural mix of a music scene and catch the musical wave when it happens. I have always felt that I was able to do that in Ohio and then in LA I navigated that wave until today.

I don't even know what I'm going to do next, I'm not even thinking about it. I'm going to do what I've always done, stay in the moment, be prepared for opportunities when (and if) they present themselves, and take things one day at a time. As John Lennon said, "Life is what happens while you are making plans." I'm going to keep navigating, and keep swimming, because if you stop swimming you'll drown. Like we said at the beginning, it's about longevity. But I'll add this. Longevity happens on every level. Everyone is not going to be lucky enough to play in a band that plays in arenas in front of thousands of people and flies around on a private jet. I'm not sure what I'm going to do or what I want to do next. But I know

one thing, going forward I only want to play with people that I like, or play the music I like, period. I'm not gonna do a gig just for the money because I don't need the money. I'm not independently wealthy, but I set myself up where I'm OK. I live very reasonably and humbly, and I'm not extravagant.

20 years ago, I met and played with Ronnie Montrose for a while. I did that because I liked him, I got along great



with him, and I loved his music. That first Montrose album with Denny Carmassi was a big influence on me as a drummer. I loved and admired Ronnie Montrose, that gig didn't pay any money, it was purely about playing the music and the experience of playing with Ronnie. I have no problem playing clubs if it's the music and somebody I want to play with.

MD: Talk about the importance of living within your means as a musician.

ES: I've seen people make mistakes, I'm not gonna name names,

but I remember in the '80s certain bands and guys became big. Suddenly, they're buying big homes and flashy cars, fast forward to a few years later, and they lost it all. Trust your own sense of responsibility. Don't rely on accountants, managers, and other people to do that because they'll make bad choices and then they'll say, "Oh well..." In those situations, there's no recourse, the money is gone, you're not gonna get blood from a stone. I've been exposed to some dodgy managers along the way, some of the guys that were notorious and have made music history with their bands. Thankfully, I wasn't managed by them personally, and they didn't have anything to do with my personal finances. But I was in those bands as an employee, and I remember thinking (and mind you I was very inexperienced,) I just can't understand the choices they're making; it was so obvious to me that these were bad decisions. I had a very hard time understanding why people made these bad choices, but then I started realizing that drugs will make people do bad things and make very bad decisions.

Here's the rule, if you make \$10, don't spend \$12. With every \$10 you make, pay your bills, put some away, and if you have some extra money left over, now you have some savings. Support and sustain your standard of living but keep your standard of living reasonable so you can afford your life. Do your best to avoid debt or incur as little debt as possible. That's going to be the savior. I'm not gonna preach to somebody and tell them how to run their life, but I have zero debt. I pay my credit card in full every month, I have no car payments, no house payments, nothing. I pay my bills like everybody else: healthcare, property tax, utilities, food, that's it. My monthly nut is the stuff that happens every day. I've seen a lot of musicians that make \$10 and spend \$11 and they never have anything saved. Then, if things dry up, or (God forbid) you have a health issue, or something like COVID happens and you can't work, you'll get through it.

MD: Here's the big question, is KISS *done*?

ES: Well, I don't think they're done. I think it's gonna morph into some other kind of business model. That is an unwritten script at this point. I know I'm still involved; I think I'll still be involved in certain aspects for a while. They decide what direction they're going to move. I'm part of a team, even though Gene and Paul are the leaders of that team and the owners of the company, they know that the band with Tommy and I have had a lot of success together. This KISS lineup has been together for 20 years, I would like to think that they look at us as good team members and good assets to the company. It is a business, it's a company, it's a band, it's a brand.

MD: We should all be fortunate enough to be "a brand."

ES: Every band is a brand, it's a brand of music. Sure, they choose to get involved in other things outside of just music with marketing and stuff like that. A lot of bands probably wish they could have all the merchandising and stuff that KISS has. I think they've done fantastic for themselves, there's a lot of things they've done that have become commonplace in the music industry. They were the first to put their name on their guitar picks. They weren't the first artists to do meet and greets, I was told it was the band Alabama, but somebody that worked for KISS told them to think about doing what Alabama was doing, nobody even knew about it. They expanded that into these fan experiences like coming to sound check, playing unplugged, and doing

special things for which you could charge a premium. That happened because bands weren't selling records anymore, and if you're not selling records, you're not getting publishing. Fans don't understand that the way you used to make a living



as a musician is writing songs and putting out records. Then you toured to support that record. Now you do a new record to have a reason to tour, the model has completely flipped. The only way to make money now is by touring and selling merchandise. And part of the merchandising is the meet and greets.

When I went to a concert as a kid, I never went with an expectation of meeting the band. I just wanted a good show, I never went to hotels and tried to meet bands. I didn't want to *meet* them I wanted to *be* them. Maybe that's just my mindset, but I have no problem with it. It's all about participation, if you don't like something don't participate. If I'm watching TV and I don't like a channel, I change the channel. I don't sit there and keep watching and complain that I wish they would do this or that and go on chat forums and complain about why the show (that I supposedly like) is not doing what I want. Bands, like people, don't stay frozen in time in perpetuity, what do you want, *Groundhog Day*? Cast your vote for something through participation. If you like something, support it! Whether it's local bands, jazz music, classical music, or whatever. I think jazz music is the highest and purest musical artform, and those musicians get paid less than anybody.

MD: Like Art Blakey said, "We need to keep appearing, so we don't start disappearing."

ES: That's a great statement.

MD: After being in KISS for 26 years, what have you learned?

ES: Gene and Paul are good teachers, there's no perfect scenarios, everyone you work with and even within your own family, you might like 90% of someone, but you must accept that there is 10% that you might not agree with. I have a long

enough experience to look back on my life with Gene and Paul to know they are survivors, and I'm a survivor too. I've survived this business, when you learn to be a survivor, sometimes you make very difficult choices that might impact other people. Sometimes that's what you do to survive a particular scenario or situation as it's happening. I have learned to have a better respect or understanding of that, I may not like it, and I might not handle it the same way, but you can do that when it's *your* band and *your* business. If somebody else does things differently, as an employee you have to go along with it. I don't have to agree with it, but I have to respect it. They're allowed to do things their way and make their own decisions. Those guys came from nothing and turned into something big. But they had stuff happen to them where money was stolen, and bad business decisions were made. They got burned, when that stuff happens you put on armor and become more protective and less trusting. Being that way will force you to make very shrewd decisions, but I respectfully understand that being shrewd is a survival tactic.

I don't believe in screwing people over in any way, but I understand that sometimes you have to make tough choices. A good example is when Gene and Paul did the *Reunion Tour*. They have a certain standard of living and lifestyle, and they didn't want to lose that. They knew that if they did that tour, they could continue their standard of living and lifestyle, and

that's what they did. I think most people would have done the same thing, I don't blame them one bit, they did the right thing for themselves.

My grandparents and my family always taught me to be smart, save your money, and live within your means. I'll give credit to my upbringing, but I'm just wired that way. Some people are wired to be

more responsible, maybe I'm too responsible. I don't take a lot of chances in certain areas of life. My mother used to tell me to take chances in life, because success is what happens to people that take chances. That's why I took the chance and moved to LA. When I moved to LA I didn't know any musicians or people, and I didn't know anything about the LA music scene, but I figured it out. I tell people to be a quick study, be a chameleon so you can adapt to different environments, have your eyes and ears open, always be open

minded, pay attention to what's going on, and don't get too high or too low. Then you can figure it out, assimilate, and act like you've been there.

For Eric's tour kit rundown go to moderndrummer.com/eric

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



This KISS lineup has been together for 20 years, I would like to think that they look at us as good team members and good assets to the company.



Alex Kluff

Greg Hutchinson

The Pocket is the Pocket

By Mark Griffith



Courtesy of Greg Hutchinson



The music world has been aware of drummer Greg Hutchinson for a long time, through his jazz work with legends like Joe Henderson, Betty Carter, Johnny Griffin, and Michael Brecker. His work with his contemporaries like Christian McBride, Roy Hargrove, and Joshua Redman is just as compelling. But then came his work with the legendary rapper Common, and we were given a clue that “Hutch” was not only a great young NYC jazz drummer.

Today, Greg has finished his first recording under his own name called *Da Bang*, and we hear his improvisatory skills combined with his programming work filtered through the lens of modern hip-hop. His playing on *Da Bang* leans more towards J. Dilla than “Philly” Joe Jones. The result is a bangin’ new record that will keep the dancefloors full.

MD: Congrats on the new record *Da Bang*, it sounds really good. However, I have to tell you that it threw me for a loop as much as it did when Karriem Riggins took a left turn into hip-hop 10 or 15 years ago. And now he’s a top producer in that field.

GH: Karriem is my buddy, I’ve known him since he was probably about 14, he used to come see us with Roy Hargrove in Detroit, I always knew he had that side, and he always knew I had that side, but we never knew to what extent. That’s why it was only fitting that he produced my new record with me. His skills are crazy and just having him in the studio is amazing, I can look over at him and he’ll say, “That’s hot,” or he’ll look over at me and say, “Let’s do that one more time.” It’s all about friendship.

MD: Did his change in direction influence your change in direction?

GH: No, that’s the funny thing, I was able to grow up in New York City with all the great jazz legends, but my family comes from the Caribbean. I wasn’t born into jazz, I came up

around Caribbean music. And because I grew up in New York City, I grew up around the corner from Biggie, I used to play with Stetsasonic, I went to school with a brother who was in Whodini, I used to hang out with Big Daddy Kane, all those influences were already and always there inside of me. It just so happened that in New York City, I got into playing a lot of jazz, but I never stopped loving hip-hop, it's at the heart and soul of everything for me. That groove, and the way people move instantly to a beat, I love music that grooves in that kind of way. Now that we are celebrating 50 years of hip-hop, it was time that I did this.

MD: I always heard that in your jazz playing.

GH: Oh yeah, it was always there. The only thing that changes is in the way that you improvise, but the way you improvise still must be in line with where the music is moving. If you're playing anything against that, then that's counterproductive to the groove. The best jazz drummers all swing hard, and that swing was the popular music of the day. The more things change, the more they don't really change, the pocket is the pocket.

MD: I've been saying that for years, swing, groove, pocket... It's all the same thing, people just have different names attached to it.

GH: You're right, it's all the same thing.

MD: Your jazz playing has always had more bottom; your bass drum has always been a little bit more present than a lot of other cats. Where did you pick that up?

GH: In use that idea when I teach. I'm glad you hear that. The bass drum is just another drum, sure it's a bigger drum, but it's the foundation. We always talk about feathering and how you play the bass drum super softly, but it's also a part of

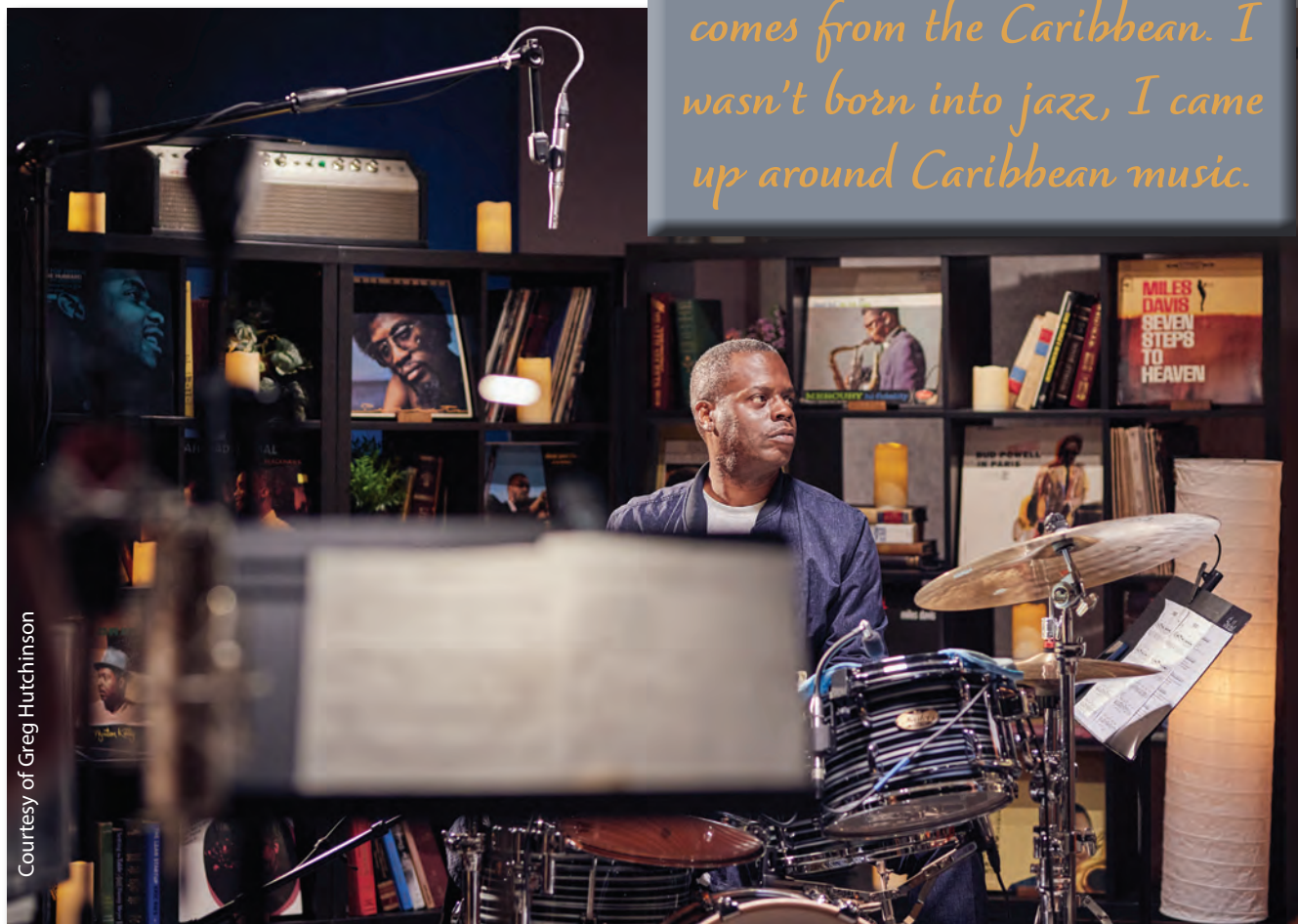
the conversation in your comping ideas. Tap dancers have two feet, we have four limbs, you gotta utilize everything to create a sound and a groove. That's always been my thing, I pride myself on that, because not a lot of people can really do it.

MD: Playing with jazz singers always made me aware of that. Did playing with (vocalist) Betty Carter make you more aware of the bottom?

GH: I think it was always just listening to everyone's playing and seeing how different cats would manipulate the bass drum and the sound of the bass drum. Philly Joe would do it one way, Tony did it differently, Elvin did it his own way, James Gadson did it in a whole different way. Steve Gadd uses the bass drum differently in different genres, and then there's how John Bonham did it. All the different genres of music utilize the bass drum differently, but it always creates that bottom. You just have to gain the understanding of how each incredible player was able to manipulate the bass drum.

Working with Betty and other vocalists definitely had something to do with it, Betty was a perfectionist. She wanted you to sound better than the night before every single night.

I was able to grow up in New York City with all the great jazz legends, but my family comes from the Caribbean. I wasn't born into jazz, I came up around Caribbean music.



Courtesy of Greg Hutchinson

I take pride in my playing with her. But my early teacher was Marvin "Smitty" Smith, he was my next-door neighbor. Smitty was diverse back then playing with Benny Golson, Steve Coleman, Sting, all these different things. and he's even more diverse now. After Smitty, I studied with the great Kenny Washington. Between those two guys, I got a chance to really check out what was going on with the sound of the drums and especially how the bass drum was being used.

MD: Early on, how did jazz and hip-hop meld in your playing and in your mind?

GH: To me they are two different things, but they're closely related.

Jazz and hip-hop are definitely different in terms of vocabulary, and I'm not one who likes to mix the two vocabularies. However, jazz is such a diverse term these days, so that is changing. Jazz covers a lot of different music but there's a sound for the drums for playing jazz, and there's a sound for the drums for playing heavier backbeat music. I don't necessarily want an open 18" bass drum if I'm playing hip-hop music, and I don't want to play jazz on some big ass drums either. Sonically you need to have the right sound for whatever you're playing.

Where (I think) the two do come together is that the best hip-hop and jazz music to me, is music that takes you on a journey and has a consistent groove. But there are always elements that are thrown in to make you open each layer of your mind. That's how you get that total groove. To me, jazz is the same. You improvise a lot, but you have to understand the layers that you're improvising on, and how to paint the picture. It's all about painting the picture with the music, that's the same across all genres of good music.

MD: When I was listening to the new record the word "authenticity" came to mind. You have always had a very authentic jazz approach, and your hip-hop music is very authentic as well.

GH: You must be authentic. If you're going to play a music and it's not authentic then you haven't done your homework. If I'm gonna play some Cuban music after I've hung out with all the baddest Cuban cats, I'm gonna have to go shed some more and make sure that I have the vocabulary and know what the music's about. You can't say, "Well I'm going to just do it because I think I can do it." No, no, no. There are lot of people that think they can do things, and it doesn't come out sounding very good at all.

MD: In those instances, I always think it sounds like someone is playing "at" the music from the outside in, instead of playing music from the inside out.

GH: That's exactly what it is, and it feels that way too.

MD: So, in the way you approach either jazz or hip-hop music, what do you do to make something sound truly authentic?

GH: Knowing the vocabulary, knowing the history of the language and what the music is about. Then being able to understand how you are going to achieve that. How do you



get to that? In jazz, how do you create and understand that sound? You go back and you listen to Max, Philly, and Blakey. You listen to all those guys! You learn how they sound. Then you incorporate your two cents into it. But you can't play something if you haven't listened to the music. You must understand where things come from and how they work, that's the only way you can really do it. In terms of jazz, you check out Blakey, Max, Papa Joe Jones, Big Sid Catlett, Baby Dodds, Gene Krupa, and Buddy Rich. You must check out the beginnings, the history, all the way up to now, then you copy, steal, and forget. You must do those

I got into playing a lot of jazz, but I never stopped loving hip-hop, it's at the heart and soul of everything for me

three things in all genres. Otherwise, you're just going to sound like someone else. That's my problem with popular music and drumming today. A lot of cats all sound the same. Steve Jordan is different from Omar Hakim who is different from Dennis Chambers who's different from Narada Michael Walden, or whomever. There's a big difference between all of those guys.

MD: You must look for, accentuate, and focus on those differences when you are really studying the great drummers.

GH: I was just watching one of those Berklee drum things, and everybody sounded the same. It seems like everyone wants to sound exactly like the other guy or girl, and no one wants to be different.

MD: How do you apply authenticity to hip-hop?

GH: It's the same. You've got to check out and know some

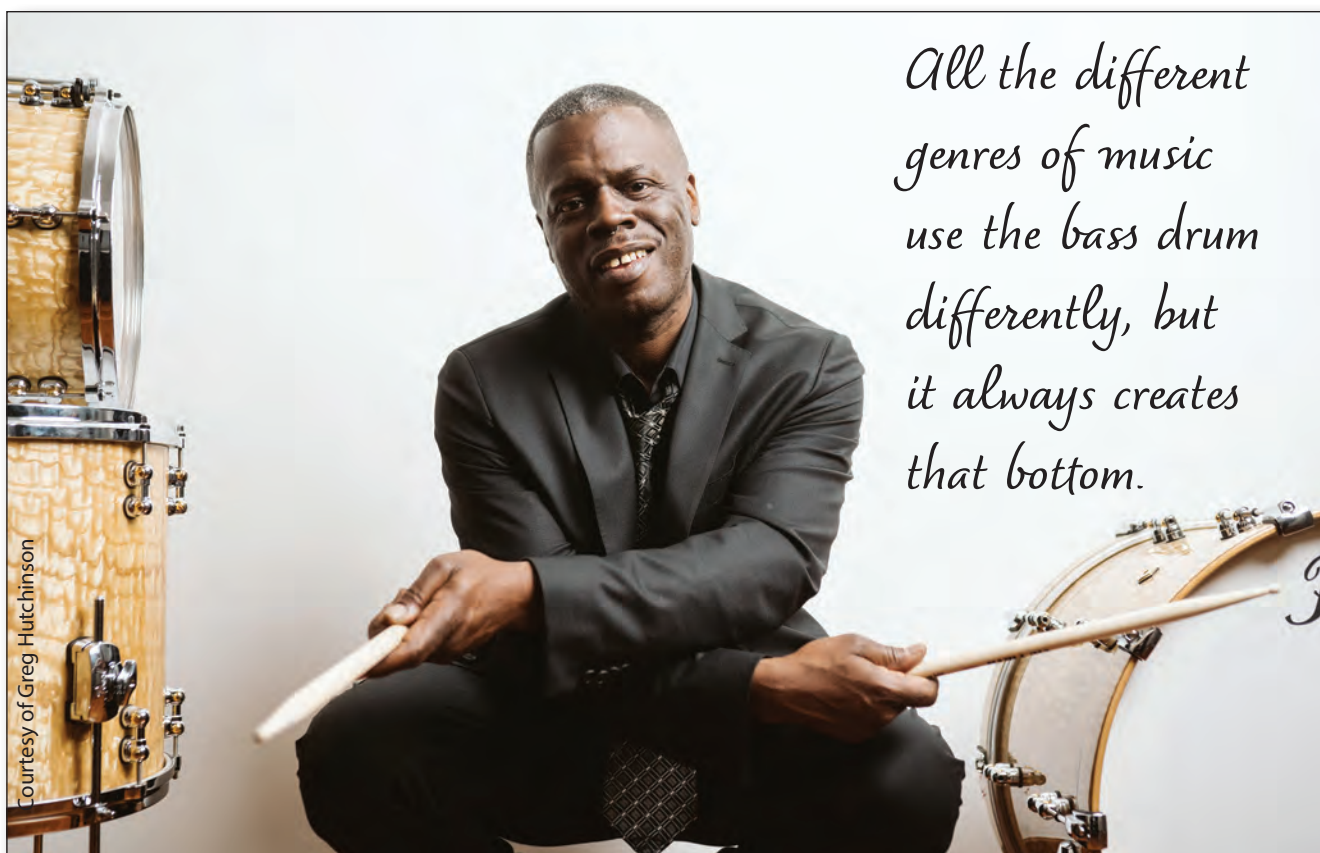
records. You have to understand where the groove is. You have to understand where the groove is, and how you want to play the groove. I was fortunate to know Karriem and J. Dilla, and they helped me implement all of that. You should understand the different ways that you can make something feel by where the drums lie, and how the bass and snare drum play into that role. On top of that, you want to manipulate the hi-hats to manipulate the groove, it's really an art form. There are great producers out there like Black Milk, Timbaland, Pete Rock, 9th Wonder, DJ Premier, Madlib, Q Tip, MF Doom... Everybody has their own sound, it's like drummers, there are a lot of bad dudes out there.

When I talk about Karriem, the thing that sets him apart is that he plays drums. Yes, he's programming, but he's doing it from a drummer's perspective, and so do I. A lot of guys learn to program, but if you actually play the instrument, you'll have an edge in that department. Dilla played drums too. On many beats that I programmed on my record, it's difficult to say whether it's

way, it won't work. That's what I mean when I talk about being authentic, if you don't do the homework you're just falling in line. Don't study the musicians of "now," go back and listen to the originals, really study where the sound came from. What is the sound of rock? How do the drums sound in rock music? How do you hit the drums differently in different genres of music? Then go forward, that's what people like Matt Garstka, Thomas Haake, and many other great rock drummers of today have done. Try to understand how they got to where they are.

MD: How has your jazz playing influenced your hip-hop playing, and how has the hip-hop influenced your jazz playing?

GH: The sounds, some of the younger generations of musicians are open to learning all styles and infusing them. Over time, things like these things were bound to happen, the two genres have always played off each other. If you listen to all genres of music, you'll find that there's a common groove, and if you understand that, then it's not really different. The language is different but the way that you approach it, and what you're



All the different genres of music use the bass drum differently, but it always creates that bottom.

programmed drums or me playing. That's how we wanted it. It's all about taking people on a ride. That's the most important part right there.

MD: If you are playing rock or R&B, how do you achieve authenticity in that approach?

GH: It's the same across the board, it's not genre specific. If you don't know the work of John Bonham, Keith Moon, or Neil Peart then how are you going to play rock music? If you want to play any music, you need to study, you must understand who and what came before you. You need to know what that specific music is supposed to sound like. You can't do it another

trying to do is the same, the ultimate goal is to make people feel good.

MD: I can hear the J. Dilla influence on the new record, did you know him?

GH: Yes, I got to meet him a few times a long time ago through Karriem. I grew up as a fan, I heard how Dilla changed hip-hop beats. You can go back and talk about the Sugar Hill Gang and go forward to Kool Herc or the Furious 5. All those groups created the sound of the hip-hop rhythm, it completely changed when you got to Q-tip and Madvillain. When you listen to Dilla you understand how he was able to manipulate the drums in

his own way. He had a way of chopping samples and making you feel like you were having an experience. With Dilla every beat is an experience, in hip-hop he's the producer's producer.

MD: What are some of your favorite Dilla recordings?

GH: My favorite one of his albums would be his solo record *Welcome to Detroit*. Then the Q-Tip *Amplified* album, the Pharcyde, it's incredible how important his personal contribution was. I don't think people even realize how bad he really was.

MD: What did you absorb from Dilla, and what influence does he have on your new record?

GH: I think it's just that feeling. How to make people feel good. It was always there, but when you hear someone actually do it, it opens your eyes to what's possible. That's what we should try to learn and pursue in music, how do we make the music feel good, so people will remember all of those beats, because they mean something.

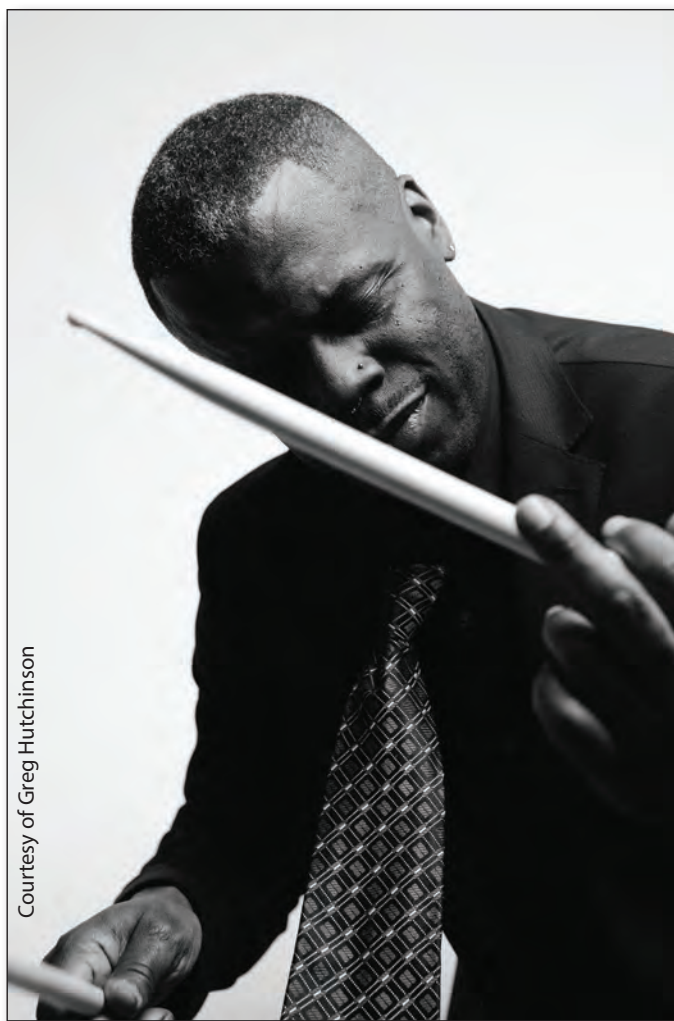
My album is wide open, it has so many different nuances, I just want people to feel good, I want there to be something for everyone, from grandma and grandpa down to the little ones. I want everyone to grow with this record, I wanted it to be like a Steely Dan record of contemporary hip-hop music.

MD: The tunes are all really short, was that intentional, and why?

GH: Very intentional, yes. I was thinking about the listeners of today. This album is a beginning, a first step. I want to whet the appetite, because what we have coming next is even crazier. I want this record to be played in the clubs, we made a record of all singles, it isn't a jazz record, it's completely different. I wanted it to be very precise and hit you hard with everything, and we wanted it to make people dance.

MD: Like you said, I had a tough time telling what was programmed and what you were playing. How do you approach programming?

GH: I always try to keep the approach of a drummer. I'm a drummer first, I start with



Courtesy of Greg Hutchinson

craziness, then I tone and strip that down to the beat. I look for the head nod in it, once I get the head nod from the bass and the snare drum then everything comes together. I'm always humming things in my head, I keep humming and basslines in my head, then I just go ahead and start programming, that's pretty much how I do it. Sometimes I'll just sit there for a while and listen to something for hours before I start to piece the rest of it together. I always want to make sure I'm hearing it right. I'll leave the room, and come back, and then start again the following day. Because if it still feels the same way the next day, then you know you got something.

MD: It's interesting that you said that you start with "craziness," and you start taking stuff away. I think that's the opposite of the way a lot of people think of drums and music, talk about that editing process.

GH: You don't need a lot, you don't always have to keep adding, overplaying,

or adding layers, the simplicity is in the groove, and if you think about it that way the music has a chance to breathe. If you put too much in it, the groove doesn't breathe, that's what I'm talking about, less is better, less is definitely more, with less you let the listeners' ears absorb what you're trying to get across. I listen to some music and just think, "OK, that's just too much." It doesn't have to be "all that, all the time." There's a time and a place where you can give it to them, but if you take the listener on a journey, then they're much more able to enjoy the

experience. Across the genres, that's the main goal. You don't need to show off all your chops, I've done enough records and enough playing, I've done that. Now I want to see people get up, I want to make people move and dance. This record is like a big ol' dance party.

MD: People often forget, jazz was originally dance music.

GH: Hip-hop is a continuation of that, I just want to take it over here now, then I'll bring it back, and bring everything together.

MD: So, when you can play your

*You must be authentic.
If you're going to play
a music and it's not
authentic then you haven't
done your homework.*

ass off, as you can... Why program?

GH: Because it's just a different sound, it bangs differently in the club. It's a different sonic, that's all. When I'm playing this music live, it's all live, there's no programming. I still have the sounds that I can integrate, but it's me playing everything. When we play live everything you hear on the record is being played on stage. We might use some samples, but we've got to hit it live on the drums, that's also the visual part. Like Anderson. Paak, my guy Chris Dave, or Mike Mitchell, we hit hard, let's get it on! *That's* what you want to see in a live show.

MD: That answers my next question, are you playing this music live?

GH: Yeah, we're about to, I've rehearsed a band in Europe, we have the troops ready, I have a few other things to finish up here in the States, but then we're ready to go on that journey.

MD: Let's talk about a couple specific tunes, tell the people about the message of "Straight to the Heart."

GH: You can interpret that tune in different ways; basically, it's an opening statement to where this music is coming from, and the experiences that were going on in my life at the time when I was writing the music. It's just about making people understand that I'm giving the listener a musical offering that truly comes from my soul and straight from the heart.

MD: The playing and the singing on "Crazy Games" is unbelievable. She has a fantastic voice.

GH: That's Leona Berlin. Listen to the chorus where she's saying "Lord, Lord, please give me the strength to keep going." The song is about how life is a crazy game. This whole album was created during a stage in my life where I was going through a divorce, just trying to figure out who I was and where I was going. I met Leona through Warner Music, and as soon as we sat down, she could just tell that I was in a weird state. She got the inspiration for this song from that first meeting. This record is about how sometimes we need to ask for help in life and try to understand how things are falling.

MD: I love the message of "When You Go."

GH: I wrote that after Kobe passed away, but it was also about Wallace Roney and everyone we lost during the pandemic. On top of that, I wanted to let everybody know that they might be physically gone, but they're still here in spirit. I also wanted to make the point to not wait until it's that time to acknowledge and celebrate someone, give each other love while we're all still here.

MD: "Fly Away" is a standout drumming track, and the drums sound amazing!

GH: That's an homage to Tony, the sound is the sound of a small Gretsch set that I have, I brought it to Italy, and I just recorded that in a small room. Then we beefed up the drums some more, when I got it back to the studio, where we were able to make it

sound completely different. We loved how that came out: it was crazy what we did with the mix, it sounds completely different when you hear it on bigger speakers.

MD: What drums are you using to switch back and forth between all this music?

GH: Except for that track, all the drums are Pearl Masterworks. I have a big kit 12, 13, 14, 16, and I switch between a 14x18 or a 16x22 bass drum. I'm about to get my hands on the new Pearls that just came out, those are Pearl Maple-Gum with Bubinga. My cymbals are Paiste Masters, sometimes I'll use some 2002s, but mostly the darker Paiste Masters, they work for everything. My Vic Firth sticks are J1 models.

MD: Are you living full time in Italy now?

GH: When I got married (a long time ago,) I moved there and ended up staying. Italy was the first place I travelled when I was on the road at 17. It is a peaceful place to go to when I want to get out of the States for a little while, just to rest my head. Now I'm fortunate to come back to the States and do a lot of different things and have a good time playing some good music.

Sometimes you just need to get away. But it feels good to come back because I don't feel so mentally cluttered.

MD: Are you always going back and forth?

GH: No, I'm still living there, hopefully I'll be back in the next two years or so, that's the plan.

MD: The playing on "My Turn Now" is some of your best playing on record to date, what can you tell me about that tune? Is that you singing?

GH: No, I originally sang on all the original songs, but that's my guy Kameron Corvet from Atlanta. He's a super bad dude. I decided not to sing any of the tunes and go with some people I knew because I wanted to get a certain sound

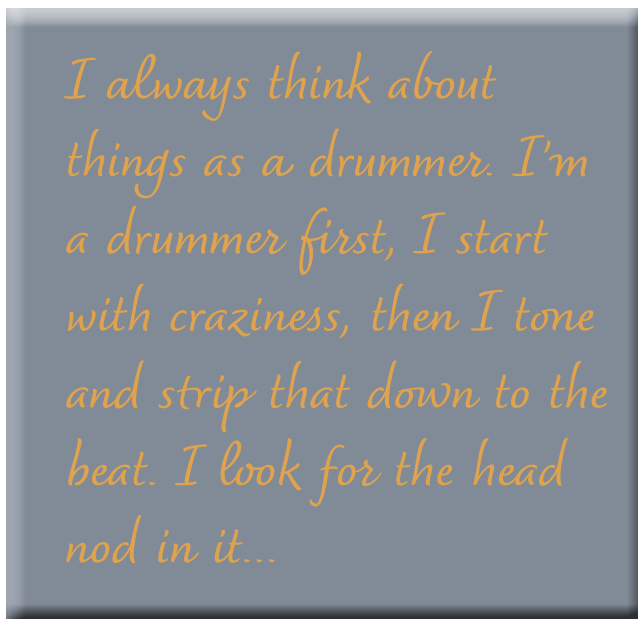
happening. I'm glad I did that. One thing at a time, you know?

I've been waiting a long time to put out a project and do my thing, and that's what this is. It literally represents "My Turn Now." it's me having a chance to put out some music that represents where I am in life, what I'm thinking about, and how I want to proceed in the next phase. I've done the jazz thing, I've played a lot of jazz music with a lot of the greats, and I'll never ever go away from that. But I wanted to challenge myself with something different.

MD: This record reminds me of Common's *Electric Circus*, I know you toured with him, but was that record an influence on this project?

GH: Yeah, I can hear that. We did the *Water for Chocolate* record back in the day, Karriem hooked me up on that tour, Common is my dude.

For me, *Da Bang* is a complete experience. Go through, listen, enjoy, close your eyes, and just sit back and listen. *Da Bang* will paint the picture that it's supposed to paint. I don't want to tell





Courtesy of Greg Hutchinson

people what they should feel and how they should see it. I just want them to experience it for themselves, that's my approach to it, and that's what I've been telling everybody. Just check it out and listen to it for what it is. Having the connections to both sides of all the music is super important to me, I enjoy curating those relationships and keeping them open, so people know music is just music.

MD: I'm sure you were approached several times about doing your own jazz records, why didn't you do any of your own jazz recordings as a leader sooner?

GH: I just wanted to take my time and be patient. This way I could sit back and watch what everyone else did, come in with something different, and then get to it.

MD: I have to commend you on that, because I think a lot of young musicians are putting out projects before they even have a voice. Do you agree?

GH: I take my time, I'm in no rush. But it is hard to say, this generation is different. Maybe it's the fact that those old heads, OGs, old giants aren't around anymore to give the guidance, in all the music genres. People have to take their own different path, I'm not mad about that, but maybe they should just be more conscious of what they're putting out, really think about the music and how it affects the listeners. How you can make them feel moved, as opposed to, you know, the other side, which is just "industry thinking." Let's get back to making good records, back to the days of great bands like Steely Dan, Prince, Earth, Wind, & Fire, making records that matter. But paths are different for everyone, and I can't tell people what to do if they have a chance to do something. I'm glad I got the chance to apprentice with all those legends and my good friends like Peter Martin and Christian McBride.

MD: Let talk about some of your drumming mentors, and what you learned from each of them?

GH: We should start with "Smitty." He was such a force because he was a two-way drummer, he could do many different things. I was his next-door neighbor, and one day he knocked on my wall because he heard me playing, and said, "Let me show you some things. That was the best thing that could have happened for me. He's always my go to, I can talk to him about anything. He guided me and was always there for me, so yeah that's my dude!

MD: What are some of your favorite Smitty records?

GH: I love his own records! *The Road Less Travelled* and *Keeper of the Drums*, the records with Steve Coleman, I always used to see him with Art Farmer in New York, that has been super important.

MD: I know Kenny Washington and you are very close, what did you learn from 'Wash?

GH: He was actually married to my aunt for a while, so he was always close. I was around him from high school on. As you know, he is a stickler, he really put into me the whole concept of getting a good sound out of the the instrument and learning the history of all forms of music and of whatever you're doing. For me, that became incredibly important, and it still is! Having voices like Kenny or Lewis Nash around was priceless. I got to hang with those guys and really learn from them. They also taught me how to handle myself and how to conduct myself in the music business, which was also essential.

Although, I could say that about all the Masters who were around New York City at the time... "Tain," Art Taylor, Victor Lewis... They always gave me a lot of encouragement, so I could never stray away. It's great to have people like that around, who are always encouraging you, that was the most important aspect of it, the encouragement. And I'm trying to carry that forward.

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



Sheridan Riley

Always Deft, Driven, and Devoted

By Paolo Ragusa



Nicole DiBenedetto

Since their 2014 debut, Alvveys have skyrocketed to become one of the most beloved rock bands around. Their excellent 2022 album, *Blue Rev* cemented their indie rock hero status, and a huge aspect of their satisfying sound is owed to their versatile drummer, Sheridan Riley. Riley has been an indie devotee for over a decade, and beginning at the young age of 17, toured with multiple bands until joining Alvveys in 2017. The music on *Blue Rev* is a masterclass in dynamics, style, and composition, making Riley one of indie rock's most indelible drummers. During their extensive tour with Alvveys this summer, *Modern Drummer* caught up with Sheridan Riley to talk about her journey behind the drum kit, joining the Alvveys, and recording the drums for *Blue Rev*.

MD: You're in the midst of a tour with Maggie Rogers right now – what's going on in the world of Sheridan Riley?

SR: Well, I'm at the Comfort Inn in Troutdale, Oregon, just outside of Portland. It's our last night opening for Maggie Rogers. I just had a bold roast and a water. I went on a walk and checked some emails. We're trying to find Promark Shira Kashi Power 5As, but they're very hard to find. That was one of my text exchanges today!

MD: Good luck on your search! I'm sure you'll find them in this big giant country we live in. I would love to hear about your evolution and history with the drum set. I know you obviously joined Alvveys later into the band's trajectory, and you played in other bands before. So, talk me through how you first fell in love with the drums all the way up until joining Alvveys.

SR: It sounds corny, but I've always remembered wanting to play the drums. My dad's a guitarist, a classic rock guy (but he also loves Sarah McLachlan,) he's a "chiller," as you could say. He played all the time in the house. I remember rock n' roll music playing in car commercials; there was a Chevy car commercial when I was younger. That drum intro specifically, I was excited about that when I was around four years old. I don't remember it as, "That's when I decided I want to play drums," but I remember being like "OMG." I remember asking my parents for a drum set, and they'd say, "What about trying the recorder? Or cello? Or

piano?" I remember playing around with a toy snare. It was a lifetime of waiting, and it finally happened.

I got a drum set when I was 12, and at that point my parents were really supportive. I was adamant about wanting that. When they finally gave in, they got me a silver Sunlight drum set. I remember them getting me the book *Beginning Drum Beats*, and I poured through it the first week of having it. I wanted lessons, and they got me a teacher. I grew up in Long Beach, California. I think in Southern California, you don't think about growing up in a place where "this is the scene." In the late '90s to early 2000s, I guess the musical culture was rock-oriented. There was KROQ and KLS on the radio, so going on drives with my dad was always very fun. I'd always ask him who was who – he knew a surprising amount of personnel,

and he swore that, "All good bands have to have a good drummer."

In middle school, I joined the jazz band and went to school with other musicians in the band room. I went to middle school with Chad Wackerman's son, who

was also in the jazz band. So that was pretty unique. Growing up in the adolescent radio rock world, there was Green Day, No Doubt, and The Killers. Then I became a classic rock geek and was really obsessed with a very niche band called Led Zeppelin

It sounds corny, but I've always remembered wanting to play the drums.

[laughs]. Chad Wackerman was such a nice humble guy and helped get our school a nice drum set. I remember he taught us, "If you play a Latin rock song, just turn the snares off." When we talked about dynamics, he said, "Start closer to the rim and move towards the center of the rim to hear the dynamic shifts." It was really cool to have those nuts and bolts from someone who was a child prodigy/genius. He was just there for his son, trying to make his music program better.

MD: How did your drum journey continue when you got to high school?

SR: That was when I stopped listening to Led Zeppelin for four years. I joined jazz combo and jazz band. I got really into Wilco and started listening to more jazz. I heard Miles and Coltrane for the first time, while I was learning Gordon Goodwin big band

stuff in school. That was not as fun for me. Doing the big band was a good education, but I wasn't great at it. Musically, it wasn't fun for me. The small group jazz combo music, like playing "Red Clay" for the first time, or playing "Footprints," that was like, "Oh my God. What is this world?" Hearing the drum part on John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme, Pt. I – Acknowledgement" was thrilling!

Another thrilling thing that Chad Wackerman told me in middle school was about how playing a 16th note fill on top of a swing-rooted or triplet-rooted piece, and how it created a disruptive quality that was really powerful. Bonham did that all the time. Hearing Elvin Jones throwing disruptive triplets while he was playing around with the time... that was so exciting. But I also really got into Wilco and Glenn Kotche. His rock pocket is great, that got me into Kenny Buttrey, Levon Helm, and these Americana and roots drummers. Also, Kotche's ear for percussion and having a real compositional focus and intention in his drum parts, no matter how simple... That is profound!

I got really into Deerhoof, Tortoise, and The Johns throughout high school. I'm still trying to be good with genres as a drummer. Some of those drummers were shocking and broke the mold, but that's not what you're *always* supposed to do. We can't *all* be pioneers. I was also getting into The Meters and Zigaboo. I was, in a way, gravitating towards molten, heavy feeling drums. After that, I started trying to play lighter and contemplating being ahead of the beat.

MD: Continuing on with your first band and experiences touring, how did that lead you to the path of joining Alvveys?

SR: I joined my first band called Avi Buffalo when I was in high school, and we got signed to Sub Pop. Full disclosure, it's hard to not talk about the drama with that band. But I started touring

when I was 17. That began an eye-opening experience of what it's like playing in bands outside of jazz. I remember opening for Vetiver and Modest Mouse, and being on tour with these older, more experienced musicians gave me a lot more information on tuning. I think that was the big thing between 18 and 25, I was just trying to figure out how to make my drums sound "right."

I remember meeting a guy who sent me a PDF of *The Drum Tuning Bible*. That's a groundbreaking book and it has been amended several times. It's like an encyclopedia of drum heads, one line from it was the opposite of how I was functioning. It said something like, "Being able to play a good-sounding kit is better than playing lots of things on top of it. When I wasn't on tour, I said yes to every gig. There were years of my life where I played between three and seven nights a week in dive bars. I'd play with psych jam bands in Long Beach or "get your shaker on" Santa Monica-shuffle shows.

I lived in Southern California until I was 23. A year later, I was living in Seattle, and I got a Facebook message from Chris Cohen. He wrote, "Hey I need a drummer. It would be temporary until I find someone stable and closer to home." So I went on tour with Chris, and I was obsessed with Chris' music, like *Overgrown Path*, I loved that record. I started touring with Chris around 2016. It was an honor to play his songs. He's such a nice, calm, chill guy, and his band is so good. I toured with him for three months and I remember it was a great, fulfilling, learning experience. That was a good experience of learning how to be a team member and learning how to be an extension of a good band member. Being supportive in the song is like being supportive in real life.

MD: How did touring with Chris Cohen lead to Alvveys?

SR: We were opening for Andy Shauf in 2016. Andy is Canadian, and so that winter tour was mostly in Canada. Alec O'Hanely, Kerri MacLellan, and Molly Rankin of Alvveys were at the Toronto

show. Chris got an email a few days later from them saying they were gonna need a drummer starting in December and asked if he had a connection. I knew who Alvveys were. I worked at a record store in Long Beach, and I remember stacking their records and

thinking "Oh, I like this band." I was familiar with them, so I got in touch with them. I was just as nervous sending the right kind of email to them as I was playing with them!

They were really nice, and we sent emails back and forth. They asked, "How about a trial gig in Boise?" and I said "okay." When I first moved to Seattle, I was an administrative professional for the Seattle Drum School. I was working for music teachers and was around drum geeks, that was helpful. My rehearsal room

Growing up in the adolescent radio rock world, there was Green Day, No Doubt, and The Killers. Then I became a classic rock geek and was really obsessed with a very niche band called Led Zeppelin.

I got really into Wilco and started listening to more jazz. I heard Miles and Coltrane for the first time, while I was learning Gordon Goodwin big band stuff in school.

was my job, and I'd stay after to play Alvveys songs. I remember thinking, "I need to make this work and do a good job."

I bought a binder and charted out all their songs. Al picked me up from the airport and we went to Al and Molly's apartment. Molly's said, "Oh hi, I'm making dinner," they were down to earth and easy to talk to. In hindsight, they were taking a big risk— but the gig in Boise went well, and they asked me to be a part of the band. That's basically how it started in 2017. We toured pretty consistently, and I remember hearing the demos for *Blue Rev* in the Fall of 2019. Spring of 2020 was when we were

songs compositionally.

SR: Well, I have to give my homeboy credit. "Many Mirrors" is Chris Dadge's drum part. When Alec and I talked about it, he told me to sort of "Keith Moon" it. I remember sending him a David Axelrod record, we kind of liked '60s drum sessions. That kind of musical zeitgeist is pretty dear to both of us, but it's hard to slip that in all the time. With "Many Mirrors," that was something he would reference. That song is really fun to play because it's just guitar-riff-focused— their riffs are so amazing. Whenever I could sneak in an open hi-hat, he'd be really supportive of that.



initially going to record— we all know what happened in the Spring of 2020. With Alvveys, Al and Molly are really in touch with the sounds they want for their songs— Al is basically the music director.

They really like a low, full, beefy-sounding drum set. Playing with Alvveys has actually been physically, one of the hardest drum jobs, which I didn't realize. Chris Dadge is the session drummer on a lot of their songs, he was playing very consistently, and playing lots of quick kick patterns on songs that were over 150 bpm. I remember thinking, "Oh God, I have to sound like a drum machine." The dynamics had to be so consistent, I had to get my (drumming) act together like I never had before. I thought, "This is a rock band, I have to sound like a rock drummer." I've always liked rock music, but I really had to do it."

MD: I wanted to talk about the specific drum parts of *Blue Rev*. Watching you at the Outside Lands Festival in San Francisco this year, I was struck by "Many Mirrors," you were really killing it with that particular song. I'd love to hear more about it and other

MD: What was the evolution from hearing the initial *Blue Rev* demos to eventually recording the drums?

SR: It was really interesting because of the way it worked out with the pandemic. Canada had the longest shutdown in North America. They were very strict about it. I remember being on group text threads with Chris and their old friend Moshe. The four of us would be on Google Docs talking about drum parts, and me being Zoomed in during drum sessions. They'd say, "I like that," I think part of it was being happy to communicate again and work on something collaboratively.

That was when we started working more heavily with Shawn Everett, who produced *Blue Rev* with Molly and Al. Shawn is great, he would say, "You guys really know how to play your songs!" He was so positive. Given the pandemic, we hadn't exactly worked together and very intimately quite yet. Also, given the amount of time it took for us to get there, there was a lot of, "Okay, let's just try!" Shawn was really good at bringing the buoyancy out of everyone. A lot of that record comes from those

takes— on day two in the studio, he said, “That’s a great fill! I love that fill!” He got the best out of everyone.

We practiced a lot of the songs, and there was a lot of dialogue. The dBs, The Feelies, and The Smiths were big rhythm section guides. I was trying to practice the kick drum starting on upbeats to keep things sounding (kind of) metronomic. Once we were in the studio getting a lot of the takes, things were not particularly that drawn out.

MD: Looking back, do you feel a lot of pride from what you made?

SR: I was really excited by it. A lot of the production choices, colors, and even some of the vocal takes were pleasantly surprising to me. Listening back, it felt a lot like them, but it also sounded like a really cool collaboration between Molly and Al.

Hearing my drumming with them, it felt nice and felt good. I hadn’t heard myself with them before in that context. A lot of the time Shawn was saying, “I just want you guys to do exactly what you’re doing,” and that was really fun. But to be honest, I didn’t know what they wanted to keep.

MD: It’s good you’re giving Shawn Everett his flowers. I appreciate that as an indie lover.

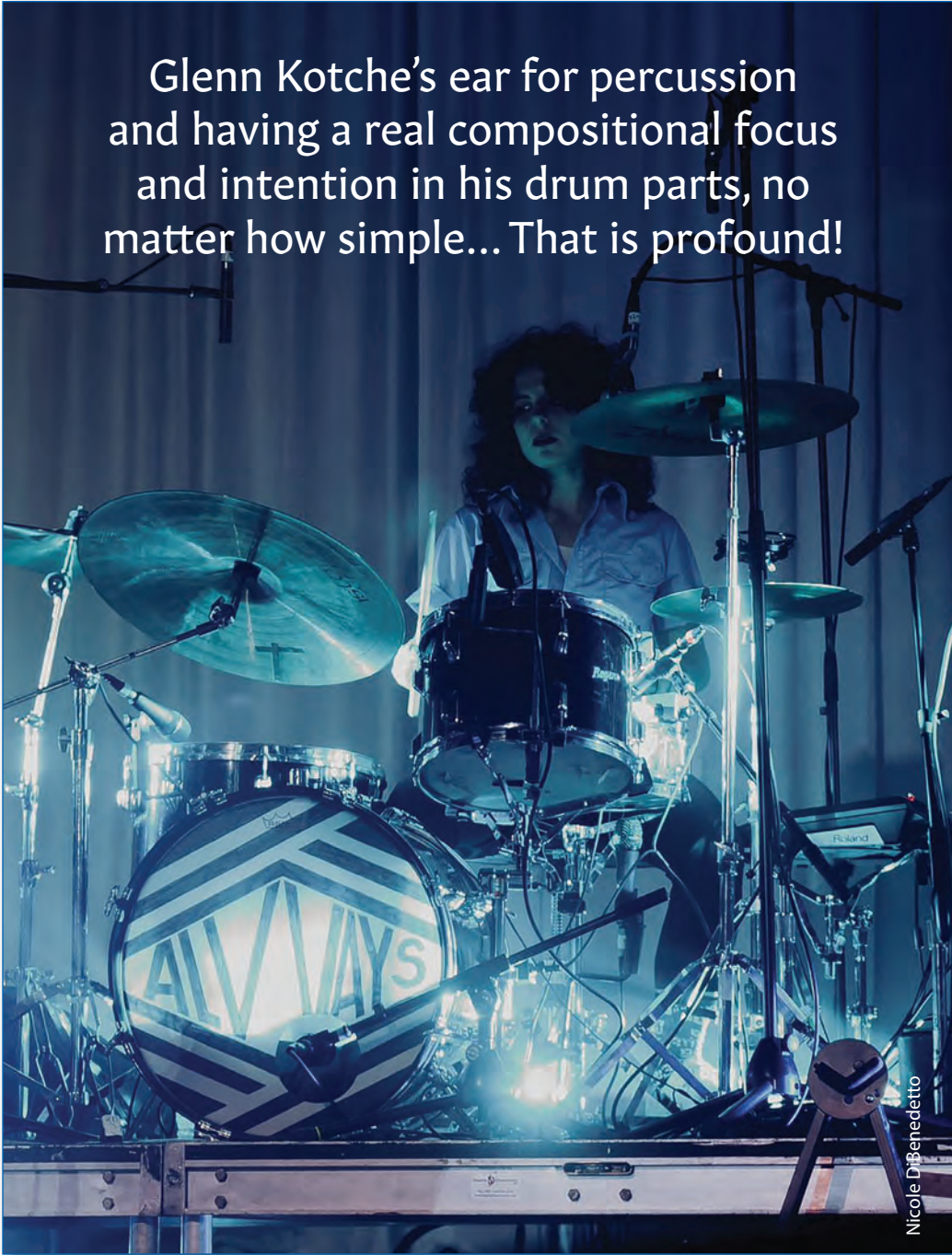
SR: Yeah! I had no idea what to expect, and to sort of emphasize this tender time, it was almost like a funny reality TV show— because we hadn’t seen each other for a year and a half, and then you’re in an AirBnB in Los Feliz with Shawn Everett, and you have to make a record [laughs]. I think we were all hoping for the best, but there was no way of knowing how it would turn out, we just had to be comfortable, assertive, team players. Shawn

just brought a calming, positive energy.

MD: This tour for *Blue Rev*, both with Maggie Rogers and alongside Alex G, has seen Alvvays playing some of the biggest shows they’ve ever played. What has the difference been between playing those Antisocialites shows back in 2018/2019 and now?

SR: Ironically, it has been easier. I still get nervous, but I think there has been this vibe that has been cultivated between the band, we’re here to have fun. We all know each other by this point, and we know how to work with each other. I think a lot of the nerves when I first joined was me thinking, “If you’re the drummer, you better not screw up,” I was getting through the hurdles of figuring out triggers and subs on stage. Now we know how to do this pretty well, and how to do it *together*. There is this new threshold for us. Because we all worked on that record together, and have made a pretty dedicated effort to make the shows what they are, I think it’s less scary than it could be. Being a hired gun would be scarier right now.

MD: Do you play live to a click?



Glenn Kotche’s ear for percussion and having a real compositional focus and intention in his drum parts, no matter how simple... That is profound!

Nicole DiBenedetto

SR: Sometimes, it depends. As drummers, you realize that everyone is in charge of playing in time. This is actually the first time everyone on stage could hear the click. They had some playback issues during the first tour, where the click would stop playing during a song." Now we use a click, but I use a pedal that's synced to the SPD, and I'll just flip it on and off. I use it as a reference at this point. I like having the click, but we're using in-ears for the first time, all of us. Molly and I have been on ears before, but I had this janky rig of a four channel mixing board next to me, a click, and a stereo mix, with in-ears connected to that mixer. Now we have a playback genius, guitar tech, and a drum aficionado in the backline who can help us. We are still using a click, I like it especially if you're jet lagged and time and space feel different, the click doesn't lie.

MD: Walk me through your gear setup.

SR: I have a Rogers, Cleveland era, Holiday kit. I found it the kick drum shell recently, just the shell, I cobbled together all the tension rods, that was a fun "drum hobby" move. We're using coated Emperors on the toms. The snare is a Super 10. For a while, we were using a Pearl Jupiter snare, which was cool because it was chrome over brass. But the Super 10 steel with a controlled sound on the head has been really good for us. Everything is tuned really low, so I'm trying to hit center and get the "whip" on.

My cymbals are mixed. I have these late '60s Zildjian 14" hats that I love. I am using an 18" K Custom dark crash and a 20" Avedis thin crash. For a while I was using one crash, but it's really nice having another crash for ergonomics. There's a lot of crashing in these songs. I got my ride when I worked at a music store in Seattle. It's a 22" Istanbul traditional medium, when it came in, I thought, "This is it. I'm buying it!" Some of the tempos on the ride, I don't want to billow, and I don't want to accidentally crash the ride. I'm trying to keep the dynamics in check. With this band, I wanted to know what the rebound was going to be.

MD: What is your favorite song to play live?

SR: "Pomeranian Spinster" is really fun to play live. It's one of the fastest ones, and Molly sings her heart out. She just goes for it every night, and I

feel inclined to meet her where she's at. It's kind of scary to play, but I like it like that.

MD: I would love to hear if you have any advice for younger drummers, especially drummers who like bands like Alvvays, Wilco, and others in the indie space. What's something that you'd like them to know?

My rehearsal room was my job, and I'd stay after to play Alvvays songs. I remember thinking, "I need to make this work and do a good job."

SR: That's a great question. My advice would be to treat your instrument well, and figure out the tone you want in your songs, and find a good snare sound. Whether your bandmates know it or not, they want you to do that. Those subliminal things are something they can't communicate. Pay attention to the sound you wanna get from the drums. That's a gear thing, but that's also a

touch thing. I wish I had started that journey sooner. I still take lessons a lot, it's good putting yourself in situations with people who are better than you are. Also, being around people who are supportive— find places where you can simultaneously play, while being cared for and supported. Be nice and inquisitive. I wish I was less shy in the beginning, and I wish I would have asked more questions. Lastly, surround yourself with all the best musicians that you can.

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



Will Oliver

Inside Drum Workshop's DWe

By Mark Griffith

Now that the Drum Workshop DWe kit has been around for a few months, and people are starting to play them, *Modern Drummer* had some questions that we wanted to ask about possibly the most groundbreaking advancement in modern drumming. After *Modern Drummer* reviewed the kit in the December issue of 2023, and after watching and reading the many other reviews, we had a few follow up questions. We were eager to pose these questions to the many people that helped create and develop the DWe: DW Founder, Don Lombardi; VP of Technology Development Dave Coons; DWe Product Manager Mark Morales; DWe Brand Manager Mike Sutton; and drummers Thomas Lang and Chad Wackerman, who were both instrumental in the development of DWe.



MD: Don, congrats on the success of DWe. How have overall sales of DWe been?

Don Lombardi: Thank you. The initial response from our dealers and consumers has been overwhelmingly positive.

We were sold out of our initial load in inventory the day we launched, and we continue to receive re-orders. We currently have a backlog of orders for multiple months and continue to ramp

up production to meet demand.

MD: With the present costs of DWe, who was this product initially designed for?

Mike Sutton: When we were designing the DWe kit we looked at drummers

who were looking for the best electronic drum kit playing experience whether they were professionals or hobbyists alike, so the appeal is broad. What we found out is that players want a premium product, which is very similar to what we see in our DW Collectors and Performance customer data. These customers expect the same high-quality build standards that we have in our acoustic lines, with the same DW innovation that we have always focused on to make drummers' lives easier.



MD: Was the original plan to use the DWE system on a regular drum with a regular mylar head, what problems did that present?

Dave Coons: We certainly explored the feasibility of using mylar heads with our wireless trigger systems. Mylar presents two specific challenges. First, the triggering accuracy is compromised due to the vibrational properties of the mylar material, particularly on the larger shell sizes. And second, the mylar heads are unnaturally damped while the trigger foam is touching the underside of the head, so the drums don't respond well as acoustic drums.

MD: Why is the cross-stitched mesh head on the BD different from the rest of the mesh heads, is it just for durability?

Mike Sutton: The new 2-ply woven mesh bass drumhead that is installed on the DWE bass drums is a new drumhead design that is specifically made for the DWE kit. It was a collaboration between DW and Remo, with the result being a drumhead that has a more acoustic feel with less bounce, better response when it's being played, and increased durability. We also installed a Falam Slam patch at the factory to prevent any premature wear as well.

MD: Is there anything different in the acoustic DWE kit from a standard DW kit?

Don Lombardi: The only difference between the kits are the inclusion of the wireless trigger stacks and small mounting brackets that are attached on the inside of the shell via the standard lug screws.

MD: Is DWE currently available to be installed on any DW kit?

Mark Morales: No, DWE is currently only available in the DWE specific configurations we have included for

the launch. We have four and five piece configurations with five color options to appeal to a wide audience.

MD: Are there plans for a stripped-down "lite" version of DWE?

Mike Sutton: We are constantly



monitoring market feedback and are actively looking for opportunities to bring DWE innovations to other products. But there currently are no plans to bring

a "lite" version to market as we just launched the current DWE offering.

MD: Is there any plans to offer a single drum as an add on to an existing acoustic kit?

Mike Sutton: We currently offer individual DWE drums as add-ons for your DWE Kit or as an add-on to your acoustic kit. If you are just looking to add a single drum like a snare drum then the only additional items you would need are a DrumLink wireless hub which is available for purchase, an audio interface for audio playback, and of course a computer so you can use the included DW Soundworks software which comes with the drum.

Also, if you already have a DWE kit and the DrumLink wireless hub, the DW Soundworks supports up to 30 inputs. These are 30 multi-zone inputs so you can make the mega kit that you want. For example, making a kit with four kick drums, nine toms, three snares, and 14 cymbals is no problem. We offer toms from 8" to 16", 20" and 22" bass drums, two options for 14" snares, and cymbals from 14" to 18."

MD: Is there any plans for the Roland V-drum platform and the DWE hardware to converge in any way?

Dave Coons: Now that Drum Workshop is part of Roland, we are able to share IP and best practices to be leveraged across both V-Drums and DWE where it makes sense. For example, DWE is already utilizing Roland's industry leading mesh drum heads, among other technology components. I would expect more synergy to come to market in the future as our development teams are now collaborating on a daily basis.

MD: Is there any plans to converge-migrate the Roland sound library and the DW Soundworks library of sounds? Even as an upsell or an add-on?

Dave Coons: While V-Drums and DW

Soundworks are designed with different sound technology, it is likely that many of the core sound libraries will be shared across both platforms in the future. The power of DW and Roland working together brings more value to drummers by offering a combination of the most authentic electronic and acoustic drum sounds anywhere.

MD: Do you have the plans of offering the DWe modularly, so it could be used on other branded (or already owned) kits?

Dave Coons: We have no plans to sell the wireless triggers as standalone components.

MD: I have heard comments that the cymbals are acoustically loud, are there plans to address the design of the cymbals to solve the acoustic sound that they produce?

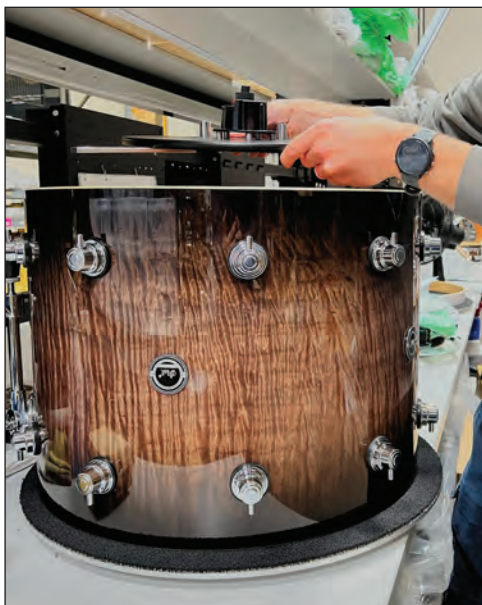
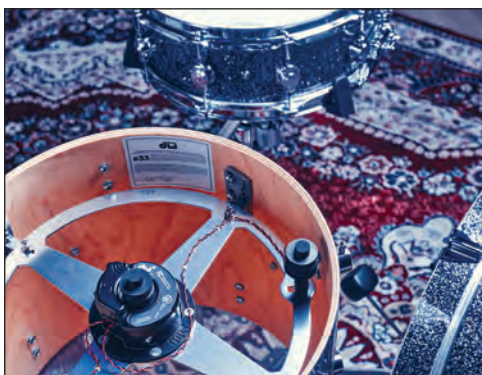
Mark Moralez: We chose to produce metal cymbals to provide an authentic playing feel without compromise. While rubber cymbals are quieter, metal cymbals give a familiar stick feel and rebound. This along with the full-size kit makes the drummer feel more at home and allows for a comfortable playing experience. With other e-drums on the market players often feel like they must change their playing style to accommodate the kit. The feedback we've gotten from artists of all styles is that they don't feel they have to change the way they play to play our kit. As DWe progresses, we'll continue to consider all feedback we get to continue to develop products that our customers want.

MD: At what point did the wireless idea come to the forefront?

Mark Moralez: In 2016 after a meeting about e-drum cable management we decided to investigate the possibility of creating a wireless electronic drum system. After some research, we were introduced to Paul Piscoi and Versatrigger. Versatrigger was a small company at that time, but had already created plugin style boxes to adapt existing pads to transmit wireless midi data. We got very excited after the initial tests and could see that the technology could be more fully developed and integrated into a full kit. After creating a working kit prototype, Don and Chris Lombardi were impressed enough to continue development.

MD: How far does the wireless work?

Mark Moralez: Our wireless signal can transmit and receive quite far. We've



gone over 100 yards in testing. For regulatory compliance, we restrict the output gain to stay within guidelines, and promise an official range of 30 yards. We have seen that it can extend beyond that.

MD: How did the battery solution for wireless transmission come about?

Mark Moralez: Since each drum and cymbal have their own intelligent circuit board, we had to provide power to each of them. One of the main goals we had when considering a wireless trigger solution was to ensure battery life would be sufficient and not become a concern during live playing situations. The way we handle battery conservation is tied to the specific wireless protocol we have developed for DWe that wakes up a trigger only when it is hit and then sends one small packet of data before going back to sleep. There is no audio being transmitted. This proprietary method conserves battery life so that each trigger should get between one and two years of battery life expectancy before needing to be changed. As a user, you can monitor your battery level of each trigger from right inside the DW Control software.

MD: Who is currently using these either live or for recording purposes?

Don Lombardi: Working with artists has always been core to our success in designing products that help drummers in real world situations. We have an incredible group of artists who have been involved in developing DWe with us including Chad Wackerman, Thomas Lang, Trevor Lawrence Jr., Stephen Perkins, and others. Artists such as Nisan Stewart and Gerald Heyward are already using DW live on stage. Other artists such as Curt Bisquera and JR Robinson have been using them on professional studio sessions.

MD: Chad and Thomas, how early were you brought into the DWe development?

Chad Wackerman: I started doing the sampling library in August of 2021.

Thomas Lang: I got involved in the R&D, testing, and internal marketing of the whole project way back in 2018.

MD: Have either of you had any reservations about using electronics before DWe?

Chad Wackerman: No, I have a long history with electronics. I've always tried to learn from the sound

engineers that I work with in the studio and live too. I've always been interested in why things sound the way they do. You can get so creative with electronics. I've always been drawn to that.

Thomas Lang: Absolutely not. I've been using electronic drums since the early 80's and they are an essential and omnipresent element in my work as a professional drummer and producer. There is no way around electronics in today's line of work of any professional musician. I have used electronic drums since 1983 and have been a Roland V-drum endorser since 1997, and now having the best of both worlds, acoustic and electronic drums—in one product, is the ultimate win for DW and Roland, and the DWe kit is the ultimate tool for professional drummers.

MD: What past experience do you both have in playing electronics?

Chad Wackerman: Starting in the 1980's, I was in Frank Zappa's band and before the 1984 tour Frank just said we are going electric. We compromised with an acoustic DW bass drum and DW snare, real Paiste cymbals and 11 pads triggering a modified Simmons SDS7 unit. After that I started using hybrid setups with a rack of effect units and three samplers. I didn't trigger the drums so much but used the electronics for sounds I could not achieve acoustically. For the Zappa 1988 tour I used that setup and was

also plugged in to Frank's Synclavier system through a Roland Octapad and Dauz pads. The interesting thing was that I never knew what sounds he would put up in the Synclavier. That was so fun. I also used various electronics for some of the Allan Holdsworth records too. On tunes like "The 4:15 Bradford Executive" I was playing the melody from a Kurtzweil and an Octapad.

Thomas Lang: I have been using electronic drums on stage, in the studio and for practicing for decades and I have nothing but positive experiences using electronics and/or hybrid setups in all those situations. I have not only used e-kits as a performer, but have also helped design products, was part of creating sounds and samples for Roland sound modules, I have helped

with research and development and was part of designing and testing many components of various versions of the V-drum kits over the years. I have not only used electronic drums and sample pads with bands on tour in all types of venues but have also performed and demonstrated V-drums as a product specialist and clinician for several decades. I would say I have more experience than most drummers with playing electronics.

MD: What contributions did each of you make to the development of DWe?

Chad Wackerman: I recorded many kits with a fantastic sounding room and huge mic collection. We were locked in there for over a month recording 16 velocities per drum! I have continued being a beta

using it as a drum kit with all the choices of drum sets and cymbals, All mixed with choice of ambient mics, efx, etc... It also works great in your DAW. It's a game changer in the world of drums and electronic drums.

Thomas Lang: I will use the kit for recording session work, for performing live and for rehearsing and practicing. The kit is more versatile than any other drum set in existence, and I intend to fully exploit its capabilities. I will use it as an acoustic kit when needed but will mostly focus on the electronic side, specifically for recording sessions, band rehearsals and for practicing. There is no other kit that feels as natural and responds as precisely as the DWe kit, it is by far the easiest kit to set up and move because of



tester for the kits and software ever since.

Thomas Lang: I was brought in to test the kit, give feedback, comments and make suggestions, as well as assist with promoting the project internally in the company and with potential partners and collaborators at the time.

What type of things are you going to be using the DWe system for?

Chad Wackerman: The DWe kit is designed for the drummer. Playability was key. It's designed for the acoustic drummer to feel very much at home. You can set it up to be very dynamic, sensitive, and expressive- like your real kit. They've created a convertible (electric or acoustic) kit and that's never been done before. It's wireless and its triggering is very fast. That's huge, and without cables. I'll be

the wireless capabilities and it is by far the best looking, real, also fully acoustic, and most versatile drum set on the market today. It's a game-changer and no-brainer and it will be put to extreme use in my daily line of work.

Thanks to everyone for answering our questions! *Modern Drummer* hopes that this has answered many of our readership's questions concerning the DWe. We also hope that this has been an informative article concerning the creation of DWe, and how the the amazing DWe concept will continue to move forward.

For more information check out dwdrums.com/dwe/

Cymbal Swap

Try Before You Buy

By Mark Griffith

As a lifelong cymbalholer (and a longtime member of that defunct website) I don't know why someone hasn't thought of the idea of Cymbal Swap before now. But thankfully two drummers and cymbal lovers named Justin Netti and James Saullo had the foresight and sense to create the amazing service called Cymbal Swap. It was exciting to sit with Justin and James and talk about cymbals and how Cymbal Swap began.

MD: Cymbal Swap is a great idea, how did you guys come up with it?

JN: I had the same set of cymbals for nearly 20 years because I didn't have money to keep buying and trying new stuff. I had some great Zildjians, but as my musical taste and playing changed, I realized I needed to upgrade and change. I knew I needed to try something different, but there were no music stores close by where I could try cymbals.

James and I are cousins, and James always had a phenomenal and impressive collection of cymbals, I was always kind of jealous of him because he had some really great stuff. He would let me borrow his cymbals, then he actually gave me a set of new cymbals that were wonderful, but I still was looking for "something else" that really spoke to me.

I asked him if there was a place where I could rent a bunch of cymbals and try different weights, models, and sizes so I could figure out what I really liked. James and I are like brothers, we talk about drums and cymbals on a weekly basis. We started looking for a cymbal rental service and there was absolutely nothing out there. We discussed the idea of Cymbal Swap and wondered if we should actually do it. At first, we were just brainstorming, but on July 4th, 2021, we came to the decision that we should form the first

online cymbal rental company.

JS: Justin came up with good ideas all the time when we were younger, I would usually shoot him down, and he would usually prove me wrong. The idea of Cymbal Swap was so crazy, ingenious, and perfect, that we knew we needed to do it. Now I have faith in his ideas.

Justin's first set of Zildjians were given to him by Maynard Ferguson's production manager, Ed Sargent, a friend of his dad, who toured together decades before.

what kind of piqued our interest and planted the seeds for Cymbal Swap.

Now we're starting to see all the different cymbals and color palettes from the big names and the independent cymbal smiths, and Cymbal Swap is developing relationships with all of them. It's just unbelievable. There are too many drummers out there that don't realize what is happening in the cymbal world today. I have a whole set of hand-hammered cymbals on a drum kit, I never

thought in my wildest dreams that was possible. Only the pros used to get hand hammered cymbals, it's a beautiful thing. We're in a cymbal renaissance, it's the golden age for cymbals. If people don't realize that, they have got to look at what's out there, because now you can design a cymbal like a professional, and we're here to help drummers find the cymbals of their dreams.

MD: Where do each of your own cymbal tastes lie?

JN: I've developed an interest in jazzier darker and thin cymbals.

I grew up listening and learning a lot from James and what he was buying at the time, he taught me how to play drums, so I followed in his footsteps. Once you start playing live and meeting other drummers you see and hear different sounds and I was always interested in experimenting with different cymbals like putting two crash cymbals together to make 16" hi-hats, and matching cracked cymbals to make cymbal stacks before they're really



Some of them were a little too heavy, and some of them were a little too light.

Justin was playing in an indie rock band in Austin, Texas, and I had a bunch of different Zildjians here in New York State. One time when I went to visit him in Texas, and I brought him some K Customs and just left them there for him. He had a Zildjian Deep Ride, and I gave him a 22 K Custom that was a little lighter and more appropriate for that music. I think that's

became a thing. I was always conditioned to get Zildjians because they were very popular and what a lot of professionals used. But I was always interested in seeing what Paiste and Sabian were doing as well. **JS:** I was always a Zildjian guy, and I've always gravitated towards K's, I got really into EAK's (Early American K's) and I have a pretty good collection of EAK's. But I also play in a punk band for that heavier stuff I've got a full set of Z Customs, and I played in a jazz fusion band so for that I like thin crashes and medium thin rides. It is always wild to see what else is out there. I was always the guy that would only play Zildjians, but now that I've seen other cymbal brands and the independent cymbal makers, I've really been able to explore and learn about them. Like I said, for the first time in my life I have a couple of different kits, one kit has Cymbal Craftsman-Royal cymbals, and the other has Zildjian EAK's, but I'm always switching things around. I am also fascinated with some of the new Sabian's and the independent hand-hammered stuff that we're seeing. The hand hammered stuff is just incredible and unbelievable.

MD: What brands of cymbals does Cymbal Swap have in stock?

JN: We have over 30 brands of cymbals in stock, and we're dealers for 20 of those brands. We're dealers for Zildjian, Paiste, and Sabian, but we have a whole network of independent and boutique brands as well, including: Big Island Cymbals (Kapaau, Hawaii), Collingwood Cymbals (Bristol, UK), Constantine Cymbals (Turkey), GM Designs (Austin, TX), JD Sagurton Custom Cymbals (Mahwah, NJ), Mehteran Cymbals (Turkey), Mongiello Cymbals (Philadelphia, PA), Pergamon Cymbals (Turkey), Red Cymbals (Melbourne, Australia), Royal Cymbals / Cymbal Craftsman (Hanover, MA), Sihi Cymbals (Finland), Skretas Family Cymbal Company (New Braunfels, TX) and Timothy Roberts Handcrafted Cymbals / Stack Ring Percussion (Winston Salem, NC).

Not all the brands are cymbal makers, some of them are designers. GM Designs (from Austin) creates some really off the wall instruments that you won't see from any other brand. Gabriel Martinez designed a 24" ride (the Signature Jupiter Ride) with a 10" bell that is wild, it's over 5,000g (11lbs).

What's amazing is that many of the cymbal smiths are a close-knit bunch of people that don't foster competition, they are collaborating. They do workshops together, and they are all friends. They

inspire each other, and they listen to each other's cymbals, it's a very cool community, and we love working with them all. We want to become a centralized hub for the cymbal smith's, not only can we offer the cymbal smiths and artisan cymbals in one place, but we can help those companies with their marketing. It's not that we want to shy away from the major brands, but sometimes people just want a custom cymbal, and they have no idea that they can get that.

We're always looking at the indie brands that you don't usually see in drum shops. A lot of the independent brands are hand hammering cymbals; whether it's in their garage or a little workshop. Their quantities may be smaller, but the craftsmanship is out of this world. We met a lot of these cymbal smiths at the Chicago Drum Show last year and the variety of sounds that they can create for customers is amazing. Whatever a drummer's style

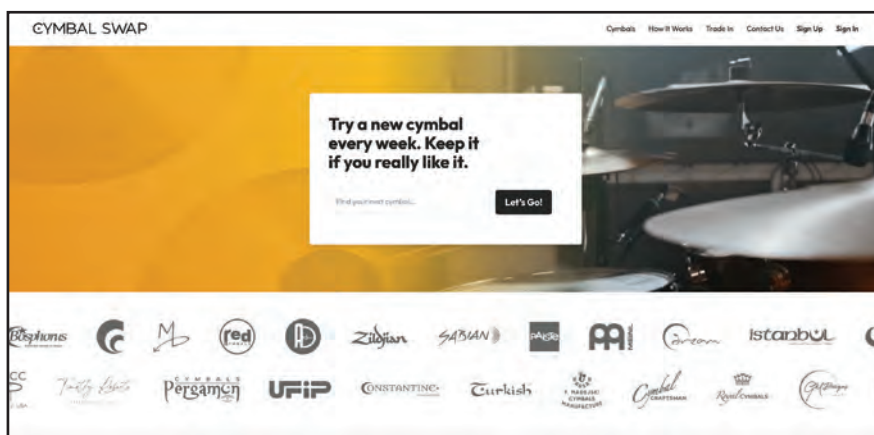
show the tears in my eyes because it's so cool. I get chills thinking about the small community of cymbal smiths.

Before the show we went to Steve Maxwell's shop and met Paul Francis and Sarah Hagan, we watched Paul hammer a cymbal in person, talked to him and purchased a bunch of cymbals for the site, and some for me too. He invented the Zildjian cymbals that we were drooling over as young drummers, and we were sitting there sharing cymbal stories with him. We are now dealers for Paul's Cymbal Craftsman Cymbals and Royal Cymbals, and we are collaborating with Paul and Sarah.

MD: Were you guys ever a part of the long running Cymbalholistic website and community?

JN: No, but we knew about it, and had heard a lot about it. Were you a member there?

MD: Absolutely, I learned a lot.



is, you can dial in the exact cymbal sound that you want. A lot of the cymbal smiths are so specialized that even if it's not exactly what you want, they'll take it back and modify it to make sure it's just right.

JS: I'm a perfect example of a guy that thought he would just only play one brand of cymbal for the rest of my life. Then I experienced some of this other stuff at the Chicago Drum Show, I started meeting these amazing people, their families, and some of their workers, they are wonderful people. I went to Mike Mongiello's booth and start hitting cymbals, I hit a crash and immediately said, "That's mine!" I hit a couple more rides, and I said, "That ride needs to go to Cymbal Swap shop!" We went to Timothy Roberts booth and were playing his cymbals. The whole family was there, I looked over and Timothy is sitting at a kit with his baby on his lap with ear protection, and I'm just I'm trying not to

JN: By the time we were planning Cymbal Swap, the website had closed, that was a shame. Someone told us that Cymbal Swap is like Cymbalholistic 2.0. I've reached out to Chad (the owner of Cymbalholistic) and asked if there was any way to collaborate, just let us know. That's the thing, we're collaborators. We collaborate with local shops, we're not trying to compete with them, we partner in doing drum clinics with local shops, it's all about collaboration.

JS: We love the brick-and-mortar shops and have a great relationship with them. We just want to see the entire community grow.

MD: What are some of the most popular cymbal brands that people are buying from you?

JN: Zildjian, of course, is still the most popular brand. I think because everyone's so familiar with the major brands and

they're comfortable with them. They already know the quality and the sound of Sabian, Paiste, and Zildjian. Meinl is very popular right now, we're not a Meinl dealer yet, but they're very popular.

However, we're starting to see through our cymbal rental service that people are much more willing to try things that maybe they wouldn't have tried before. They're more comfortable because they know they can return any cymbal they rent from us. A lot of shops typically don't want a cymbal back or have cymbal rentals as an option, but our shop is designed for the purpose of trying something before you buy it, on your own kit. Some of the custom brands are very expensive cymbals, buying one is an investment of \$600, \$700, or \$800, so you want to make sure that you're really in LOVE with that cymbal. We are seeing more people trying out Royal, Cymbal Craftsman, Mike Mongiello, and Pergamon Cymbals. While a lot of people haven't heard of the companies in Turkey, they have trained with the masters from the old Turkish brands. Master cymbalsmith Sertan Oztopuz from Constantine spent 32 years at Istanbul (with both Agop and Mehmet after the split,) and others have trained with Agop or Mehmet from Istanbul. Maybe there's a hesitation because someone doesn't know the name Pergamon, but when you dig deeper these families have been making cymbals for over 30 years, and the quality is out of this world.

JS: The thing about Cymbal Swap is that our customers are getting the knowledge and learning about the brands through the relationships that we have with the brands. Justin works with customers to pick the right cymbals. The knowledge he has gained from dealing with our companies and customers is amazing. I used to feel like I had more cymbal knowledge than him, now it's definitely been flipped. He is really helpful to our customers. We can guide them in a direction, and Justin knows our collection. His education and knowledge can accelerate somebody's cymbal knowledge pretty quickly. Customers can learn by renting a cymbal, as opposed to the past when you would have to buy a cymbal.

That was a huge investment, and you might not even like the cymbal when you got it home on your set. With Cymbal Swap you can gain that knowledge by renting a cymbal and paying a small fraction of the cost of the cymbal to try it for a while. Not only do we have touring drummer drummers that get whole sets of cymbals, but we have customers who are novice drummers looking for help. Anybody can really accelerate their knowledge by using our service, I wish I had this when I was a younger drummer first buying cymbals.

JN: We have a customer that is disabled, and he loves our service. His closest shop is two hours away and he just can't get there. He has told us that our service is allowing him to try out things in a way that

we will take it back, even if it's a special order. About 95% of the cymbals that we actually get back because people aren't happy with them are bought by someone else. We now take trade-ins too, where a cymbal may not be right for one person, it might be perfect for someone else.

MD: Are there any cymbal myths that you would like to dispel for the drummers out there?

JN: I understand that people have brand loyalty, brands are important, but I think maybe it's taken too literally. Some drummers think that you can't mix brands. I've played some different brands that certain cymbals mesh very well with. The misconception that brands don't mix is dispelled when you hear them side by side. That's another benefit with



he couldn't have done before. The point is that we cater to drummers that can't get to, or don't have a shop near them, which unfortunately is a lot of people.

MD: What are most people looking for when they contact you?

JN: When a lot of people are reaching out, they're looking for a ride. That's the staple or the centerpiece of your cymbal setup. It's smart to start there and build around it. Many people are looking for a smoky dark thin ride that's versatile. I think people want versatility. But it depends on what style they're playing. Some people want smoky, but a lot of people are asking for something that cuts through the mix, and a bell that cuts. Usually when people reach out, we can put together three cymbals that might fit their needs. A lot of people will rent three or four cymbals at a time, whether it's from the same brand, different brands, or at different weights. We don't discriminate, even if we special order something and they don't like it,

our services, when you're looking to pair a cymbal with your existing cymbals. I have had cymbals that did not pair well together. The really easy way to figure that out is through our service. At the end of the day, it's the sound that matters.

Some people think that lighter cymbals are the answer because they hear these jazz players, or they think that the thinner cymbal is always going to be better. Not true. I have also found that some cymbal series that are known for dark sounds, could be brighter than something that's known to be bright. I've done the side-by-side comparison with some Zildjian A's and K's and sometimes an A is actually a little bit darker than the K. Lastly, size isn't an absolute determining factor in what a cymbal sounds like. Don't be so dialed into playing (for example) a 22" ride, or 14" hi-hats. There are so many variables to a cymbal beyond size.

People also mistakenly think that because Cymbal Swap is a rental service,

all our cymbals are getting beat up as rentals. If someone rents a cymbal for seven days, are they playing that cymbal for seven days straight, several hours a day? I doubt it. Most cymbals come back to our inventory looking brand new. Our inventory is hand curated, we're not gonna send out a cymbal that has a crack or looks horrible and trashed. It's a huge misconception that our inventory is all used and beat up cymbals, that couldn't be further from the truth.

MD: Do you guys have any aspirations of becoming a brick-and-mortar shop?

JN: Absolutely, that's in our five-year plan. We're based out of Denton, Texas, (Dallas/Ft. Worth area) and there's a fantastic drumming community here. Right now, we're hyper focused on becoming a specialty cymbal shop providing great customer service to drummers all over the country. Being centrally located, we can ship pretty quickly to New York, LA, Chicago, and Nashville. We are staying hyper focused on cymbals right now, but we are facilitating repairs, modifications, custom ink, laser engraving, trade ins, and other cymbal specific work too.

MD: Do you guys rely on sound files for your business?

JS: For anyone that has relied on a sound file of a cymbal, they know that once you get it in your house, on your kit, in the studio, or on stage, the sound is gonna change. There's nothing like playing a cymbal in person. You can use the weight and a sound file to home in on what you're looking for, but through talking with these cymbal smiths, I've learned that (a lot of times) people think they know what they want, and you make something exactly to their specs and they're still not happy. The cymbal smiths have the knowledge of making cymbals that have been described to them. But sometimes it just comes down to trying something out.

MD: I couldn't agree more, not to mention the way a cymbal feels, and the difference in different people's touch.

JS: The strength of Cymbal Swap is being able to own the exact cymbal that you want. You might have an idea how a cymbal sounds or looks. Maybe you have read a review, seen an advertisement, or heard your favorite drummer play it. Then you order or buy it and it's not exactly what you want. It doesn't pair with your cymbals well, it's too loud, or the response isn't what you anticipated.

We all know that you can play two of the exact same cymbals, same size, and model; and because they're a different

weight, they're different, and sometimes they can be very different. Anyone that's played or knows about cymbals knows there's a range of acceptable sound for a certain cymbal when it leaves the factory. But cymbals are all pieces of art, even the machine-made ones. That means they all are different, so it really helps to have someone help you with the process of picking out cymbals, and it's nice to know that you are under no obligation to buy a cymbal that you really don't like after you've tried it.

MD: OK, so let's get down to it, how does choosing and buying a cymbal from Cymbal Swap work?

JN: It's just like buying a cymbal online. You create an account, you load up your

cart with cymbals, generally most people get three at a time, but some people just want one, and that's totally cool. You choose your rental duration, anywhere between 7 and 28 days (in weekly increments,) you choose your shipping option, we offer UPS, FedEx, and US Postal Service. The cymbals arrive with a prepaid return label, so you can try them out and send them back after you have played them for the determined amount of time.

However, if you rent them for 14 days, but you know within the first day or two that they aren't for you, slap the return label on the box, send them back and that second week is refunded to you. You don't overpay. If you want a cymbal a little bit longer you can extend your rental. And if you like one, but another one's going back, you have a lot of different options. We are always working with people to make sure they are happy, and that's the important thing. We're really great about getting shipments out within 24 hours. Out of hundreds of rentals, we've only had one cymbal package get delayed. Because we're in the Dallas area, and kind of centrally based, we can get stuff to the East and West Coast within three to four days.

MD: Have you had any issues with shipping and cymbals getting damaged in shipping?

JN: Knock on wood, no. We have had zero cymbals lost or damaged in transit. We

Right now, we're hyper focused on becoming a specialty cymbal shop providing great customer service to drummers all over the country.

have really mastered the art of cymbal packing, I have to credit Filip Madejski from Warsaw, Poland. I purchased a cymbal from him years ago, and the way he packaged his cymbals was amazing, and it has become our standard. We use sustainable paper packaging too.

MD: What if someone wants a cymbal that you don't have in stock?

JN: Some people look at our collection and don't see what they want. In those cases, all you have to do is reach out to

us, if we're a dealer it's pretty simple to get a cymbal within a week or two, we have great relationships with our brands.

However, even if we're not a dealer, that doesn't mean that that all bets are off. We have reached out to brands that we didn't have in stock and became

a dealer through that initial customer request. We're willing to work with anyone whether they want a special order or a custom design.

What's really cool is if someone custom designs a cymbal with Cymbal Swap and they don't like the final product, we'll take it back. Typically, custom orders are all sales are final, but not with us. However, with most of the cymbal smiths, I don't know why you would want to send a cymbal back, I've seen some amazing hand hammered cymbals come from a cymbal smith and I want to keep them for myself.

MD: I can only *imagine* that temptation.

JS: That's been more of a problem for me than Justin.

JN: We are really all about community. We really love sharing the knowledge that we have learned from the independent cymbal smiths of our community, and the major companies, and helping drummers find the PERFECT cymbals for them. We appreciate our customers, vendors, partners, and friends for all of the support this last year and looking forward to continuing to grow our company and team in 2024!

MD: Again, I'll say I don't know why it has taken so long for someone to create this type of service, you have filled a necessary void, and *Modern Drummer* wishes you huge success in your business.



"The Magician"

Transcription by Marc Atkinson

Experience a timeless performance by Lenny White and Return To Forever, true pioneers of fusion music. Highlighted from the album *Romantic Warrior*, this month's featured transcription is "The Magician." Recorded in 1976 and penned by Stanley Clarke, the performance captures the band at its zenith. As you delve into mastering this piece, note Lenny's unique approach—he plays openhanded, utilizing his left hand on the hi-hat and right hand on the snare, and even riding with his left hand. This results in many grooves and fills leading with the left, adding an extra layer of complexity to the performance. As always embrace the uncomfortable, take it slow and never stop when your tired, stop when your done!



Music Key

CRASH CYMBAL	BELL OF RIDE CYMBAL
RIDE CYMBAL	CLOSED HIHAT
MOUNTED TOM	MOUNTED TOM
MOUNTED TOM	SNARE
FLOOR TOM	FLOOR TOM
BASS DRUM	OPEN HIHAT FOOT
HIHAT FOOT	

♩ = 155

24

Musical staff 24: A single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature. It contains six measures of music. The first measure has a 6/16 time signature, the second a 5/16, the third a 3/16, the fourth a 9/16, the fifth a 6/16, and the sixth a 5/16. The notes are mostly quarter notes with stems pointing up, and some have an 'x' above them.

29

Musical staff 29: A single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature. It contains six measures of music. The first measure has a 5/16 time signature, the second a 3/16, the third a 9/16, the fourth a 6/16, the fifth a 2/4, and the sixth a 7/16. The notes are mostly quarter notes with stems pointing up, and some have an 'x' above them. There are also some eighth notes and sixteenth notes.

37

Musical staff 37: A single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature. It contains six measures of music. The first measure has a 7/16 time signature, the second a 6/16, the third a 5/16, the fourth a 7/16, the fifth a 6/16, and the sixth a 5/16. The notes are mostly quarter notes with stems pointing up, and some have an 'x' above them. There are also some eighth notes and sixteenth notes.

42

Musical staff 42: A single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature. It contains six measures of music. The first measure has a 5/16 time signature, the second a 7/16, the third a 6/16, the fourth a 5/16, the fifth a 7/16, and the sixth a 6/16. The notes are mostly quarter notes with stems pointing up, and some have an 'x' above them. There are also some eighth notes and sixteenth notes.

47

Musical staff 47: A single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature. It contains six measures of music. The first measure has a 6/16 time signature, the second a 6/16, the third a 6/16, the fourth a 6/16, the fifth a 6/16, and the sixth a 6/16. The notes are mostly quarter notes with stems pointing up, and some have an 'x' above them. There are also some eighth notes and sixteenth notes.

52

Musical staff 52: A single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature. It contains six measures of music. The first measure has a 6/16 time signature, the second a 6/16, the third a 6/16, the fourth a 6/16, the fifth a 6/16, and the sixth a 6/16. The notes are mostly quarter notes with stems pointing up, and some have an 'x' above them. There are also some eighth notes and sixteenth notes.

57

Musical staff 57: A single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature. It contains six measures of music. The first measure has a 6/16 time signature, the second a 6/16, the third a 6/16, the fourth a 6/16, the fifth a 6/16, and the sixth a 6/16. The notes are mostly quarter notes with stems pointing up, and some have an 'x' above them. There are also some eighth notes and sixteenth notes.

62

Musical staff 62: A single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature. It contains six measures of music. The first measure has a 6/16 time signature, the second a 6/16, the third a 6/16, the fourth a 6/16, the fifth a 6/16, and the sixth a 6/16. The notes are mostly quarter notes with stems pointing up, and some have an 'x' above them. There are also some eighth notes and sixteenth notes.

66

Musical staff 66: A single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature. It contains six measures of music. The first measure has a 6/16 time signature, the second a 6/16, the third a 6/16, the fourth a 6/16, the fifth a 6/16, and the sixth a 6/16. The notes are mostly quarter notes with stems pointing up, and some have an 'x' above them. There are also some eighth notes and sixteenth notes.

70

Musical staff 70: A single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature. It contains six measures of music. The first measure has a 6/16 time signature, the second a 6/16, the third a 6/16, the fourth a 6/16, the fifth a 6/16, and the sixth a 6/16. The notes are mostly quarter notes with stems pointing up, and some have an 'x' above them. There are also some eighth notes and sixteenth notes.

74

Musical staff 74: A single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature. It contains six measures of music. The first measure has a 6/16 time signature, the second a 6/16, the third a 6/16, the fourth a 6/16, the fifth a 6/16, and the sixth a 6/16. The notes are mostly quarter notes with stems pointing up, and some have an 'x' above them. There are also some eighth notes and sixteenth notes.

77

80

BRUSHES

85

93

To Timp.

97

Timpani

To Dr.

102

110

117

121

129

137

TYMPANI

DRUMS

141



145



150



154



158



162



166



170



174



178



185



NO TEMPO...APROX RYTHM

193

Musical staff 193: Drum notation in 4/4 time. It begins with a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a quarter note, a quarter rest, and a quarter note. The rest of the staff consists of a continuous eighth-note pattern with accents.

197

Musical staff 197: Drum notation in 4/4 time. It features a continuous eighth-note pattern with accents, including a triplet of eighth notes. The staff concludes with a quarter note and a quarter rest.

201

Musical staff 201: Drum notation in 4/4 time. It consists of a continuous eighth-note pattern with accents, featuring several triplet markings over groups of eighth notes.

203

Musical staff 203: Drum notation in 4/4 time. It consists of a continuous eighth-note pattern with accents and triplet markings.

205

Musical staff 205: Drum notation in 4/4 time. It features a continuous eighth-note pattern with accents, including a triplet of eighth notes. The staff ends with a quarter note and a quarter rest.

208

Musical staff 208: Drum notation in 4/4 time. It begins with a quarter note, followed by a quarter rest, and then a quarter note. The rest of the staff is a continuous eighth-note pattern with accents. A triplet of eighth notes is marked. The staff concludes with a quarter note and a quarter rest.

TEMPO

212

Musical staff 212: Drum notation in 4/4 time. It consists of a continuous eighth-note pattern with accents and triplet markings.

216

Musical staff 216: Drum notation in 4/4 time. It features a continuous eighth-note pattern with accents and triplet markings.

220

Musical staff 220: Drum notation in 4/4 time. It consists of a continuous eighth-note pattern with accents and triplet markings. The staff ends with a quarter note and a quarter rest.

225

Musical staff 225: Drum notation in 4/4 time. It begins with a quarter note, followed by a quarter rest, and then a quarter note. The rest of the staff is a continuous eighth-note pattern with accents. A triplet of eighth notes is marked. The staff concludes with a quarter note and a quarter rest.

231

236

242

248

252

258

264

270

Marc Atkinson, a dedicated musician, honed his craft under the guidance of the renowned Gary Chaffee. Now calling Las Vegas home, Marc is on the brink of unveiling his labor of love—a comprehensive transcription book that promises to captivate music enthusiasts worldwide.



delete, Delete, DELETE! Masters Of Minimalism

By Chris Lesso

“Half my life is an act of revision.”

—John Irving

Deciding what to cut away is the playground where the real masters play. The root meaning of the word decision is ‘to cut away’. Knowing what to DELETE refines your expression to a sharp point, revealing more of you. Becoming a lifelong student of drumming is to embody the art of not doing, as well as doing (or taking action.)

Masters of minimalism fascinate me. Painters like Picasso, drummers like Phil Rudd, songwriters like Neil Young; how do they do so much with so little? Music is so much more than just notes; it’s the space between them that gives them meaning. The masters turn their weaknesses into strengths by doing so much more with less. They create things of depth with simplicity. Time spent exploring what you DON’T do matters.

One of the most potent ideas you can assimilate into your drumming, is to always be on the hunt for non-drumming influences to find more of your voice from your drumming expression, loud and proud. Here are some of my favorite stories of restriction leading to beautiful art born into the world. Endeavor to bring these stories to life within your drumming, and train your mind to see examples of victories over difficulties all around you!

The great artist Pablo Picasso, devastated by the suicide of his close friend, went into his famous ‘blue period’ where he painted only in shades of blue for three years. Somehow, by imposing limits of only using one color, he got deeper into the spectrum of possibilities and emotions that were always there within each color, but hadn’t been explored before.

For songwriter Joni Mitchell, restriction led her to create a specialized style all her own. Having polio as a child gave her a weak hand that limited how many chords she could play on the guitar. Instead of playing the victim, she became the hero by using the obstacle as the way forward. She changed the tuning of her guitar to be able to get richer chords with simpler hand shapes, getting bolder as she went. This has become the secret of the Joni Mitchell sound.

Movie director Steven Spielberg was forced to delete as a way to create the masterpiece JAWS. The unintended secret of its runaway success was that the mechanical shark didn’t work as expected. This panicked the crew to where Spielberg was sure his Hollywood career was over. As the shark failed and the budget quickly blew up, Steven had to use the art of space to

tell the story. Forced to adapt, his new ideas became horror movie standards. He used enticing camera angles and ruthless editing to lure our own imagination into creating the shark. Through the entire movie you never actually see the shark, but it sure doesn’t feel like it. You’re seduced into creating one in your own mind, conjuring a much more terrifying reaction than any special effect. Spielberg knew the deepest fears of his audience lived inside their own minds, and he used their imaginations to stoke them to the surface. Restriction forced creativity under pressure, bound by necessity, Spielberg used the only tools he had, in ways he never imagined.



Besides the minimalistic film approach of using less to affect more, anyone that has seen Spielberg’s masterpiece knows that the iconic musical score by John Williams touches a fear deep within the viewer. In another example of minimalism (or deletion) Williams creates one of the scariest theme’s ever by only repeating two notes.

In drumming, Jojo Mayer’s band NERVE purposefully imposes restrictions on themselves to keep their edge sharp,

while challenging and unlocking the bands creativity. NERVE is a good example of a band pushing themselves into the unknown. Instead of competing to sound like everyone else, the restrictions they use brings out their bold individuality through deletion. They purposely avoid the common tools used by most bands to invoke reactions from listeners. It’s always harder to do more with less, but by taking the road less traveled, the results can be captivating. Some of the restrictions the band uses as their modus operandi are:

- No attention grabbing by fancy unison parts or melodies.
- No common harmonic tension and release structures.
- No set lists.
- No breaks in between songs, hence no emotional release points for the audience to applaud

The great ones all push for discovery by embracing restrictions. If you delete so much that you later must add some back, then you’re on the right track! See what examples you can find in your own life, and note your favorites. Architecture, film, cooking... Deletion is everywhere! In the end, strength in art needs restriction as a tool of necessity. Don’t add, but delete, Delete, DELETE! To find your voice.

Get a free video lesson on rocking your basics. TRANSFORM through DRUMMING today! Connect with Chris to start your ‘Life Through Rhythm’ journey at chrislesso.net/LTRDRUMMING

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



Endurance Exercise with Fill-Ins

By Joe Morello

Joe Morello combined the idea of Endurance Studies with his Fill-In studies in his book *Master Studies*. These are not "drum fills," instead they are endurance exercises built on the idea of filling in between the primary rhythm of the exercise. The endurance exercises are not necessarily patterns you will use when playing, but you will be able to use the technique that you develop in any way you want. You may be able to hear a million "hip" phrases in your mind, but if you can't get them out, they won't do you any good. So these exercises are created to give you the facility and endurance to play what you hear in your mind. These exercises may also stimulate your imagination, which will, in turn, develop your own creativity.

This exercise should also be practiced starting with the right hand. Start slowly and gradually work it up. Each line should be played eight times.



4/4 L L L L L L L L | LRLRLRLRLRLRLRLR

7/8 L L L L L L L | LRLRLRLRLRLRLR

6/8 L L L L L L | LRLRLRLRLRLR

5/8 L L L L L | LRLRLRLRLR

4/8 L L L L | LRLRLRLR

3/8 L L L | LRLRLR

2/8 L L | LRLR

2/4 L LRLLR

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



The Bass Drum Owners Manual:

Applying the Moeller Technique to the Bass Drum, More Hand and Foot Combinations

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 (and foot) control that is based in an old, popular, and useful hand technique called The Moeller Technique. Michael addresses the essential components of bass drum and hi-hat control. Let Michael's wisdom and the wisdom of the Moeller Technique help you improve the control, sound, and eventually speed, of your feet, regard-less of musical style.



Alternating Strokes, Hands and Feet

When playing alternating strokes between the hands and feet, the bass drum strokes used are dictated by the tempo of the notes. Slower tempos require leg strokes, while faster tempos use ankle strokes. Start playing the following exercise slowly and gradually increase the tempo. You will discover where you must switch from leg to ankle strokes. Remember to keep the foot and ankle as relaxed as possible in order to maximize the rebound of the beater.



Hand and Foot Combinations

The following exercises will aid in the development of your musical ideas and their execution. Many great drummers incorporate hand and foot combinations as a large part of their vocabulary. Including the bass drum in fills and solos will balance the sound of the drum set. These exercises are first to be played as written, with the hi-hat on the downbeats. This will help develop a strong sense of the pulse and is a great independence builder. When you're comfortable with each exercise, orchestrate freely around the drum set and drop out the hi-hat for a nice melodic approach.

♩ = 76

9. * 3 3
 L L L L A D L A D

10. * 3 3 3 3 3 3
 A D L L A D L L L L

11. 3 3 3 3
 A A A D A A A D L L L L

12. * 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
 A D A D L L L L L L

Hand and Foot Etude #1

♩ = 80

The musical score for 'Hand and Foot Etude #1' is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of 80 beats per minute. It consists of seven staves of music. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The drum notation uses 'L' for left hand, 'A' for right hand, and 'D' for bass drum. 'X' marks indicate specific strokes. The score includes several triplet markings (indicated by an asterisk and the number 3) and repeat signs. The drum notation for each staff is as follows:

Staff 1: L L A D A D L L A D A D A A D A D L L A D L

Staff 2: A D L L A D L L L A D L A D A D A D A A D

Staff 3: A A A D A D A A A D L A A D A A D A A D A D L L

Staff 4: L A A D L L A D A A A D L L L A D L L L A

Staff 5: D L L A D L A A D A D L L L A D L A D L

Staff 6: A A A L L L

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

* Remember, When playing faster change the consecutive leg strokes to ankle strokes.



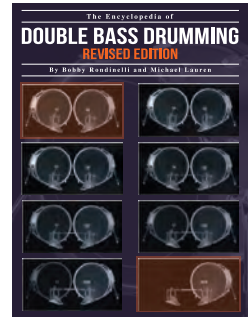
The Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming

Five to Sixteen Consecutive 16th Notes

By Bobby Rondinelli

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

This month we are returning to the original text of this outstanding book. All of 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 the book.



- This month's lesson builds upon previous examples of smaller note groupings.
- We didn't try to include every possible combination, but there are more than enough ideas here to get you started in the right direction.
- We have included more syncopated snare rhythms than in previous chapters.
- The various hand foot exercises will open you up to the limitless possibilities of syncopated double bass drumming.
- Develop your own voice. Experiment.
- Double bass drumming is not the exclusive domain of rock, many of the bass drum patterns here are very funky.

Warm-Ups

1

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

2

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

3

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

4

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

5

1 R L R L R L R R L R L R
2 L R L R L R L L R L R L
3 D I D I D I D I D I

6

1 R L R L R L R R L R L R
2 L R L R L R L L R L R L
3 D I D I D I D I D I

7

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

8

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

9

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

10

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

Beats

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21



Musical notation for exercise 21, featuring a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The exercise consists of a sequence of eighth notes with beams, starting on a middle C and moving in a stepwise fashion across the staff. There are 'x' marks above the notes, indicating specific drumming techniques. The exercise is marked with a repeat sign at the beginning and end.

22



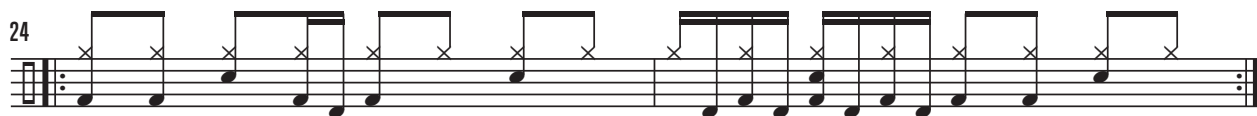
Musical notation for exercise 22, featuring a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The exercise consists of a sequence of eighth notes with beams, starting on a middle C and moving in a stepwise fashion across the staff. There are 'x' marks above the notes, indicating specific drumming techniques. The exercise is marked with a repeat sign at the beginning and end.

23



Musical notation for exercise 23, featuring a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The exercise consists of a sequence of eighth notes with beams, starting on a middle C and moving in a stepwise fashion across the staff. There are 'x' marks above the notes, indicating specific drumming techniques. The exercise is marked with a repeat sign at the beginning and end.

24



Musical notation for exercise 24, featuring a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The exercise consists of a sequence of eighth notes with beams, starting on a middle C and moving in a stepwise fashion across the staff. There are 'x' marks above the notes, indicating specific drumming techniques. The exercise is marked with a repeat sign at the beginning and end.

25



Musical notation for exercise 25, featuring a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The exercise consists of a sequence of eighth notes with beams, starting on a middle C and moving in a stepwise fashion across the staff. There are 'x' marks above the notes, indicating specific drumming techniques. The exercise is marked with a repeat sign at the beginning and end.

26



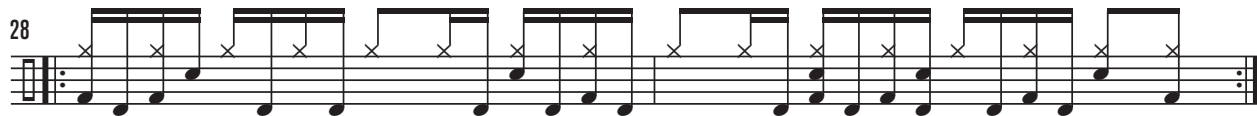
Musical notation for exercise 26, featuring a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The exercise consists of a sequence of eighth notes with beams, starting on a middle C and moving in a stepwise fashion across the staff. There are 'x' marks above the notes, indicating specific drumming techniques. The exercise is marked with a repeat sign at the beginning and end.

27



Musical notation for exercise 27, featuring a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The exercise consists of a sequence of eighth notes with beams, starting on a middle C and moving in a stepwise fashion across the staff. There are 'x' marks above the notes, indicating specific drumming techniques. The exercise is marked with a repeat sign at the beginning and end.

28



Musical notation for exercise 28, featuring a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The exercise consists of a sequence of eighth notes with beams, starting on a middle C and moving in a stepwise fashion across the staff. There are 'x' marks above the notes, indicating specific drumming techniques. The exercise is marked with a repeat sign at the beginning and end.

39

Musical notation for exercise 39, showing a sequence of eighth notes with cross-sticks (marked with 'x') on a single line (F4) and a single space (C5).

40

Musical notation for exercise 40, showing a sequence of eighth notes with cross-sticks (marked with 'x') on a single line (F4) and a single space (C5).

41

Musical notation for exercise 41, showing a sequence of eighth notes with cross-sticks (marked with 'x') on a single line (F4) and a single space (C5).

42

Musical notation for exercise 42, showing a sequence of eighth notes with cross-sticks (marked with 'x') on a single line (F4) and a single space (C5).

43

Musical notation for exercise 43, showing a sequence of eighth notes with cross-sticks (marked with 'x') on a single line (F4) and a single space (C5).

44

Musical notation for exercise 44, showing a sequence of eighth notes with cross-sticks (marked with 'x') on a single line (F4) and a single space (C5).

45

Musical notation for exercise 45, showing a sequence of eighth notes with cross-sticks (marked with 'x') on a single line (F4) and a single space (C5).

46

Musical notation for exercise 46, showing a sequence of eighth notes with cross-sticks (marked with 'x') on a single line (F4) and a single space (C5).

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Understanding the Language of Music

Form and Structure

By Ron Spagnardi

Modern Drummer founder Ron Spagnardi wrote an excellent book called *Understanding the Language of Music, a Drummer's Guide to Theory and Harmony*. This book spells out the basics of theory and harmony in a very easy to understand way. It is a fantastic book for drummers looking to learn about the language of music beyond drumming. We are honored to reprint the parts of Ron's book here in *Modern Drummer* for everyone to read and learn.

This month we will be talking about a vital subject to drummers (and all musicians,) form and structure. All music has a form and structure, and it is essential for drummers to know what the form and structure is for any song or music they are playing. Musical forms exist whether you are playing music by Sinatra, Santana, Slipknot, or Snarky Puppy. If we know what the form and structure is, then we will be able to play the song from a more musical standpoint, and mark (and play) the sections of the form and structure more appropriately. But there is an ever-growing number of forms that can be used in composition, so let's dive in.



Let's take a short break from scales and chords to examine another essential aspect of the language of music, known as form and structure. Along with melody, harmony, and rhythm, a musical composition generally fits into a pre-determined form of some sort. Most popular music is written in phrases, and the manner in which those phrases are assembled determines the structure of the piece.

The phrases, most often presented in units of eight bars (though longer and shorter units are also common), are assigned a letter name. The initial eight-bar phrase of a composition is designated as letter A. Other phrases that differ from the A phrase are called B, C, and D respectively. Let's look at some of the more common musical forms.

The AABA Form

The AABA form is one of the most common in music. Here the opening eight-bar phrase is presented in the first A. The same

phrase is then repeated (the second A). The following eight-bar phrase is quite different melodically and harmonically from the first two, and is called the B section (also referred to as the bridge or release). Finally, the original eight-bar A section is repeated once again. All four eight-bar phrases equal a common thirty-two-bar, AABA composition.

There are literally hundreds of thirty-two-bar AABA tunes. Duke Ellington's "Satin Doll," Johnny Green's "Body And Soul," Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage," Thelonious Monk's "In Walked Bud," and Billy Strayhorn's "Take The A Train" are just a few based on this form.

Here's a basic outline of a thirty-two-bar, AABA form. Note the repetition of the three A sections (with the exception of a few chord alterations at the conclusion of phrases), and the new harmonic structure of the B phrase.

A

Cm7 Fm7 B^b7 E^b7 D^b7 C7 F^o B^b7 E^b Dm7 G7

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8)

A

Cm7 Fm7 B^b7 E^b7 D^b7 C7 F^o B^b7 E^b7 A^o D7

(9) (10) (11) (12) (13) (14) (15) (16)

B

Gm A^o D7 Gm Cm7 F7 B^b Fm7 D^o G7

(17) (18) (19) (20) (21) (22) (23) (24)

A

Cm7 Fm7 B^b7 E^bΔ7 D^b7 C7 F^ø B^b7 E^bΔ7 A^o D7

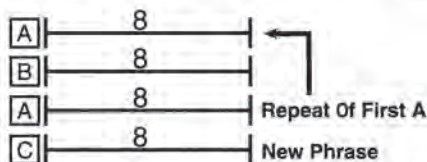
(25) (26) (27) (28) (29) (30) (31) (32)

The AABA form can also be an extended version, where each phrase is sixteen bars or longer. Cole Porter's "Love For Sale" is a good example of an extended AABA. Occasionally unorthodox combinations like 8-8-8-12, 12-12-12-12, or 12-12-8-4, as in Richard Rodgers' "Little Girl Blue," are used.

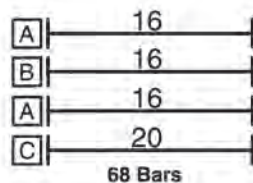
Be aware that not all tunes follow the AABA format. When further phrases are incorporated into the tune, those are generally designated as the C and D sections. Let's examine a few of these.

The ABAC Form

The ABAC structure has *three* distinctly different sections (A, B, and C). Frank Loesser's "If I Were A Bell" and Horace Silver's "Strollin'" are two good examples of ABAC tunes. Here's a sample:

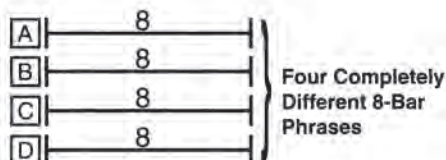


Interestingly, ABAC tunes aren't always thirty-two bars. Jobim's "Desafinado" is written as an ABAC, but with its sixteen-bar A and B sections and twenty-bar C phrase, it has a grand total of sixty-eight bars.



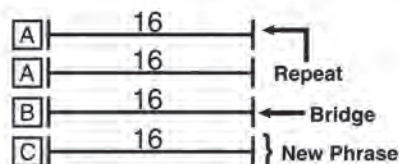
The ABCD Form

Another popular form that uses four totally different sections of melodic and harmonic material is the ABCD structure. A few good examples are Harold Arlen's "Come Rain Or Come Shine" and Ray Henderson's "Bye Bye Blackbird."



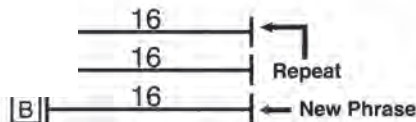
The AABC Form

This structure is unique in that the C phrase, which follows the bridge, is totally different from the previous two As. Cole Porter's "I Concentrate On You" is a good example of an extended AABC format (16-16-16-16).

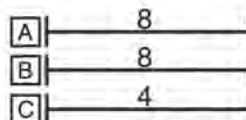


The AAB And ABC Forms

Two other commonly used forms are the AAB (Cole Porter's "Night And Day") and the ABC structure (Joe Zawinul's "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy"). Here again, each phrase may vary in length. Note the extended sixteen-bar structure of Cole Porter's "Night And Day."



Compare the previous example with Joe Zawinul's "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy," a very concise 8-8-4 within an ABC structure.



The Twelve-Bar Blues

Another common form in both rock and jazz is the twelve-bar blues. The blues format consists of three four-bar phrases with a common harmonic structure (generally all dominant 7th chords). When a rock or jazz player improvises on a blues chorus, he or

she is carefully following a specific chord progression throughout the twelve-bar structure. See the basic twelve-bar blues format below. (We'll be examining blues progressions in greater detail a bit later.)

The diagram illustrates a 12-bar blues progression in B-flat major. It is divided into three four-bar phrases. The chords for each bar are as follows:

- Bar 1: B^b7
- Bar 2: E^b7
- Bar 3: B^b7
- Bar 4: B^b7
- Bar 5: E^b7
- Bar 6: E^b7
- Bar 7: B^b7
- Bar 8: B^b7
- Bar 9: F7
- Bar 10: E^b7
- Bar 11: B^b7
- Bar 12: B^b7

Verse/Chorus Form

The verse/chorus form has been used extensively for years on hundreds of popular hits. Lyrically speaking, the verse conveys the basic information of the song and serves as a setup to the chorus. The chorus, which is generally the strong, memorable section of the song both lyrically and melodically, focuses on the meaning and essence of the song.

There are many variations of the verse/chorus form, and bar lengths can vary greatly. A few examples are shown below:

1	2	3
A—Verse	A—Chorus	A—Verse
B—Chorus	B—Verse	A—Verse
A—Verse	A—Chorus	B—Chorus
B—Chorus	B—Verse	A—Verse
A—Verse	A—Chorus	B—Chorus
B—Chorus		B—Chorus

As you can see, there are numerous musical forms and form lengths utilized by composers. As a drummer, it's important to always be fully aware of the structure of the tune you're playing and to know where you are within that structure.

Listen carefully to the solos of some of the great drummers, and you'll very often hear the form being stated within the solo. In many cases, you'll even hear the melody of the tune presented rhythmically. Max Roach, Roy Haynes, Joe Morello, and Jack DeJohnette are among the masters at this.

Take time to *really* listen to different types of music, and try to determine the structure of tunes you enjoy. Begin to analyze tunes from song folios, sheet music, and fake books. This is an excellent way to improve your understanding of form and structure. In essence, develop your ability to listen analytically.

Check out Ron's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *Understanding the Language of Music* at moderndrummer.com



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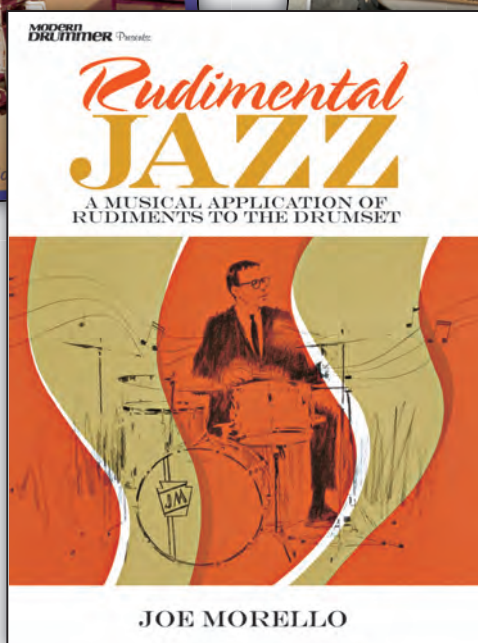
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Stickman

Music and Drumming Inspired Art

By Mark Griffith

As drummers, we inspire other drummers and other musicians, but our creativity and our beats also inspire and entertain many non-musicians. That is (perhaps) the most important part of playing music. That inspiration can manifest in many ways. Therefore, why not ask another artist, painter “Stickman,” exactly how drums and music have inspired his artwork. Stickman and I also discuss the similarities between drumming and creating visual art, and why today, so many drummers are becoming visual artists.

MD: What is your background as a visual artist?

Stickman: My love of art actually began when I was about six or seven years old. I have a brother who is about four years older than me and he brought home the KISS *Destroyer* album, seeing that cover pretty much started art for me. I remember just staring at that album cover, they were like mythological

an instrument at that point. But my musician friends started as musicians at 12 and 13, all my friends are already in bands, and I didn't even know one chord. I figured since I was so far behind them, I should do something else, but I did know that I had a talent for art already because I had been creating art since I was six. I figured out that art could be my contribution to rock'n'roll.

Rock'n'roll was such a big thing in my life, hearing Mötley Crüe had changed my life so that's how this all started. My first jump into making money with art was painting skulls on Harleys, and someone suggested that I should put some of this stuff on canvas. That steam rolled into my first show, and that's how I ended up here. But I never strayed from my love of music. Music was always my muse, I have the same passion as any musician. Not learning how to play a musical instrument is probably one of my biggest regrets.

MD: How has music and drumming inspired your artwork?



creatures at the time, and that started my love of art.

Being Canadian, your childhood goal is always to become a hockey player, but I always created art, I just never saw it as much of a career path. I was 18 or 19 when my hockey career ended, and to be honest with you, I wish I would have picked up

Stickman: I remember it as if it were yesterday. My brother brought home Led Zeppelin's *Physical Graffiti* and the KISS *Alive* album. I was young so I had some pop music in my life, but when I heard the beginning of Mötley Crüe's "Shout at the Devil," that cadence and that haunting riff literally blew my mind. Nikki

Sixx now says he got that from David Bowie, who became a big inspiration to me later. But *that* was the day the Michael Jackson posters came down, and Judas Priest, Iron Maiden, and Mötley Crüe posters went up. But it didn't only change me, it changed my entire neighborhood. Growing up in my era, it was the myth and the mythology about these bands. You couldn't verify anything, there was no internet, everything became stories that you heard at school and in the park. I remember hearing stories that Alice Cooper cut his head off last night, or Ozzy hung a person on stage during a concert. At that early age rock'n' roll was like Greek mythology, it was wild, and it set your imagination on fire. That's probably why I still paint a lot of that older stuff, we lost that stuff with the internet, but it has stuck with me to this day, it was a huge influence.

MD: At that point what kind of art were you into?

Stickman: I was into a little bit of everything. I'll steal a line from Sean Mullins and say, "Back then I was drawing portraits to keep my belly full of beer." I was painting whoever would give me 25 bucks. However, when it came time to do something for myself it would always be something to do with music. When it was suggested I put some stuff on canvas, the first thing I thought of painting was music. At the time I was reading the book *According to The Rolling Stones*.

I'm a huge Stones fan, and there was a picture of Mick Jagger in that book that I painted. I titled the painting, "Please Allow Me to Introduce Myself." From that painting on, I never did anything else, music and art punched me in the mouth at the same time. I remember thinking, "Oh this is what I'm supposed to be doing." It wasn't only the visual aspect, but while I was painting someone, their music filled my house. When I started painting Mick I was listening to the Stones, I became almost a method actor while I was painting. If I was painting Motörhead, I'd start wearing black jeans and a leather jacket. One time I came upstairs wearing a purple scarf, and my wife asked me, "Who the hell are you painting now?" And of course, it was Prince. It became ingrained in me as much as any kid that picked up a pair of drumsticks.

MD: How did drumming specifically influence your art?

Stickman: I gravitated towards any music that had a marching cadence, for me drumming didn't have to have a lot of fills or any crazy stuff, it was just that cool marching sound. I really got into drums when I was in my early 20s when my close friend James Dyer became the drummer in Vedanta, and when he went on tour I teched for him. I did the load ins and load outs, and I hit the drums at soundcheck. On that tour we talked a lot about drumming. He was classically trained, so he introduced me to what made Danny Carey so good. I think my relationship with him really drew me in to looking at drummers a little bit differently.

I don't know if this is true, but I find drummers to be like goaltenders in hockey, goaltenders and drummers seem to be a little bit *different*. I think about them as the "wild men." I always say that I paint wildlife, because I gravitate to rock music and that

"on the edge" lifestyle. I like to paint the circus of it all, and when you look at guys like Keith Moon, Bonham, and Tommy Lee, they seem like the wild guys, and I always gravitated towards that. However, I do have one problem with drummers, they are a pain to paint. You guys move too damn much and are always covered up by your drum sets, you're way at the back of the stage, it's just hard to capture you guys. I have to get creative when I'm painting a drummer, otherwise I'm painting a lot of blur, which is why I (sometimes) focus on the drums themselves. My recent painting of Bonzo really focused on his clear orange Ludwig's, and I did the same with Neil Peart. In my recent Taylor Hawkins

painting that we donated I was actually able to do more because he was standing behind his drums as an encore at a show, so I didn't have to focus on his drums.

MD: Have you ever painted any actual drums?

Stickman: No, just drumheads and I'm actually working on a new concept to premiere in the summer of 2024.

MD: The drum set itself becomes a piece of art, and I think that's what pulls a lot of people to the drums, the visual beauty of the instrument: Shiny chrome, bronze, different finishes, angles... it's almost a vocational sculpture.

Stickman: And the drum set usually changes on every tour. One of my favorite things is

seeing Frank Beard's drum set when I go to a ZZ Top concert. They are always so artistic. Frank really puts a lot of hot rod culture into his drum set, I love that. Neil Peart changed his kit for almost every tour.

MD: And drummers couldn't wait to see how Neil's kit had evolved and changed with each new record.

Stickman: There is a lot of interesting and difficult aspects of painting drums. I'm really good at painting chrome, I cut my teeth on being able to paint chrome and shiny surfaces, I love that. But a lot of times, painting (or taking pictures of) drums will create various stages of focus. When I was painting Bonzo's clear drums, what made it so difficult is that I counted seven different levels of focus in the reference material. I had to paint parts super sharp because they are right up front. But as you go further back on the set, things become blurrier. You can't paint the foreground in the same way that you painted in the background, it's challenging. Not to mention that the transparent aspect of those specific drums always makes it tough as well.

MD: That is really how we create, compose, record, and mix music as well. Within a mix or a composition, there are several different levels of focus.

Stickman: Another cool thing about comparing art and music is through the "process." Not all songs are written the same and not all paintings are created in the same way. So, when someone asks, "What's your process?" I have to explain that my process on *this* painting was this, but my process on another one was very different. It's the same way a songwriter will describe how for this song we started out with the guitar riff, and for that one we started out with the lyrics. Sometimes an entire melody is written

I have a brother who is about four years older than me and he brought home the KISS *Destroyer* album, seeing that cover pretty much started art for me.

before the harmonies. It's a tough thing to explain your process because it changes with every song, and it changes with every painting.

MD: There are a lot of drummers who are becoming visual artists. Ringo Starr is a fantastic painter, Jay Weinberg (ex-Slipknot) is an amazing artist, I recently interviewed Rick Allen from Def Leppard about his painting, Prairie Prince (drummer for The Tubes) is a world-renowned visual artist, and there are many drummers like Steven Perkins and Steve Smith who are creating art with time exposure photography with lighted sticks in a dark room. Why do you think drums and visual art is becoming so closely related?

Stickman: What I said earlier about drummers being a little *different* is a compliment, and it's possibly the answer to your question. I think when we say that someone is, "Marching to the beat of their own drum," that's a layered statement, and in general a real asset. I find that drummers are more accepting. There's an artistic thing that seems to happen more with drummers. I think a lot of musicians (in general) want to become visual artists, but it seems that more drummers actually do.

MD: What relationships do you see between drums and art?

Stickman: Drummers have this sculpture in front and around them all the time, and they get to (and can) manipulate that sculpture in many ways. You can even paint on the drumheads to express something, which is done with the front bass drum heads a lot. I used to paint some drumheads, that's another aspect of the visual art of drumming. A lead singer has to express himself with his leopard pants, leather jacket, and wardrobe. Drummers have a piece of art around them that they change to express themselves differently, that's probably where it comes from as well. I also think that because it's a more violent instrument, it lends itself to a lot of expressionism. In visual art, expressionism and impressionism is when an explosion of emotion comes out of an artist. I think that expressionism or impressionism is a little "easier" to achieve when you get to hit something with sticks, instead of (for example) looking for the right chord.

I also think it's because so much of what you guys do is relatively hidden. As a listener, unless you are sitting behind a drummer, you probably don't know what their feet are actually doing, and most of the people watching the drummer can't even see his hands from in front of the kit. Then when you really get a chance to express yourself visually, you jump in. Like Mick Jagger (and Lemmy Kilmister from Motorhead) said, "Anything worth doing, is worth overdoing."

MD: What music and drummers are inspiring you today?

Stickman: There's a Canadian band that's been around forever called the Glorious Sons that I just started to dig into. I've been a late adopter of them, I just started listening to them in the last month. I'm also a little bit embarrassed to say, but for some

reason Avenged Sevenfold just slipped under my radar, but my wife took me to a show, and they blew my mind. Their drummer Brooks Wackerman is amazing! Avenged relies on visuals a lot, their album art is my type of stuff, but the visuals at their show blew my mind. They were doing stuff visually that I've never seen before like live animation that wasn't prerecorded. I'm also a huge Tool fan, I just saw them. Tool punches me in the mouth visually. I've done a few different Tool pieces over the years, but I've never painted Danny Carey, and he's my favorite drummer. I'm quite convinced that he might not even be *human*. I think that my next Tool piece will probably be focused on Danny Carey.

MD: What are those bands inspiring you to paint?

Stickman: Usually when someone's music hits me, the art will come about eight or nine months later. It's a "slow drip" for me. What inspires me to create a piece of art can't just come from one point of inspiration, it takes four or five different layers of inspiration to fall into place. It's like playing Tetris, everything starts to fall in and then it kind of reveals itself. I'm in the infancy of Avenged Sevenfold and Glorious Sons, so it won't hit me for a while.

MD: Where can we see some of your drum and music inspired art?

Stickman: I have my artwork in many galleries across North America, and my latest gallery tour, "Against The Wall" runs through 2024. It is awesome for me to make these live appearances and travel to meet my collectors, in the past few months I have been so lucky to have solo exhibitions at fine art galleries in Toronto, Edmonton, Austin, San Diego, and Tampa. In the Spring of 2024, we are planning appearances in Denver, LA, Las Vegas, and a couple more. It's important to know that my work is available and accessible to everyone, as an artist I want everyone to own a Stickman. My collectors (for the most part) are in their 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s; but it's totally amazing to see how a really younger audience is becoming focused on my works and really enjoying the imagery of this timeless, forever music. That's why my works represent more than just one timestamp in music. I am asked to create special commissions regularly which span all musical styles, genres and eras.

MD: How can someone contact you?

Stickman: I can always be reached directly on my IG and through my website. And the fine art galleries who carry my work are always available on both as well.

For more information go to <https://www.stickmanfineart.com> and #stickmanfineart on Instagram or linktr.ee/stickmanfineart

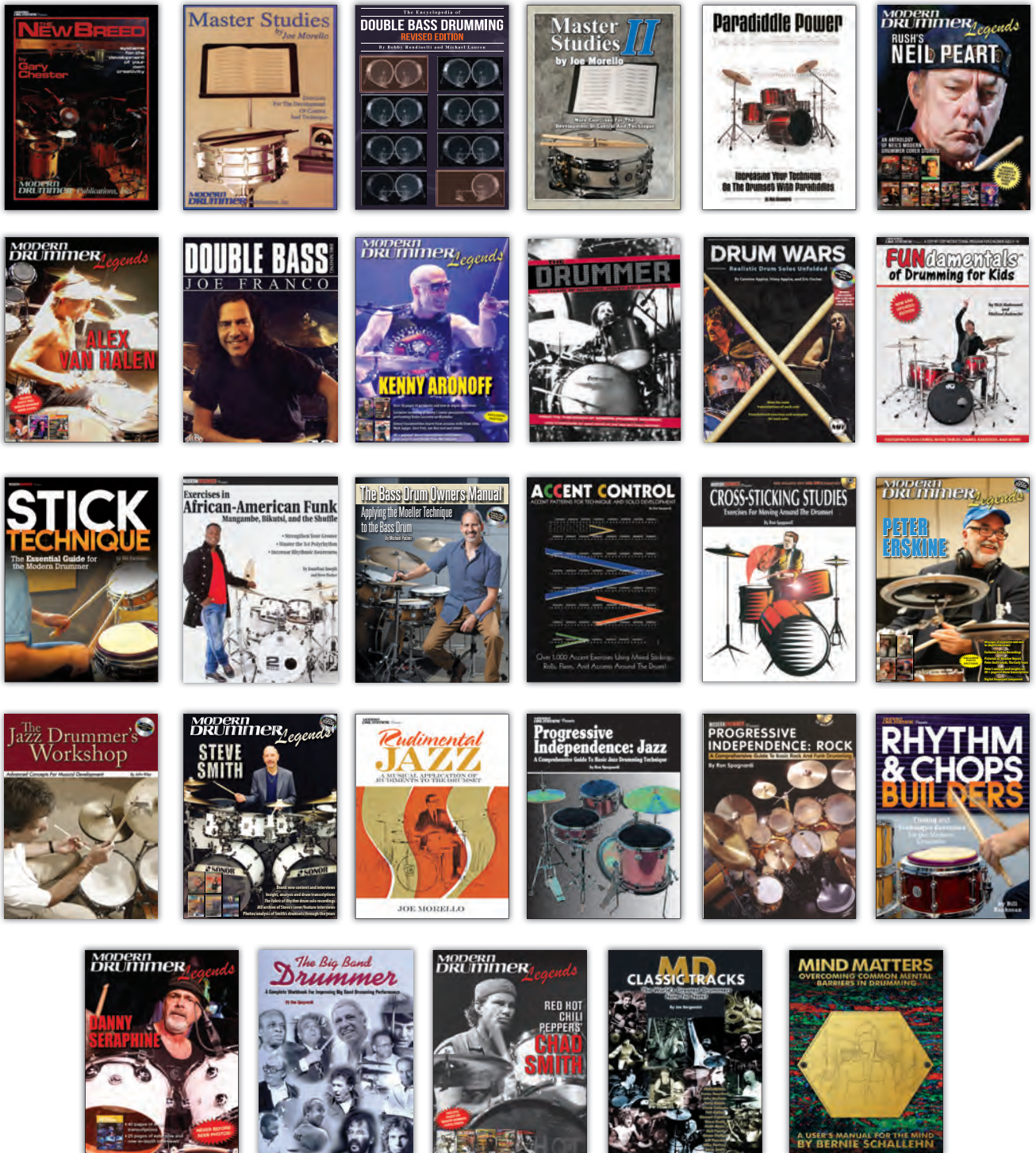
Check out Stickman's profile page, at moderndrummer.com



In visual art,
expressionism and
impressionism is
when an explosion of
emotion comes out
of an artist. I think
that expressionism
or impressionism is
a little "easier" to
achieve when you
get to hit something
with sticks...

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What do Charlie Watts, Simon Phillips, and Thomas Lang All Have in Common?

By Donn Bennett



The Lovely 6.5 x 14 Heuer Solid Steam Bent Quilted Maple Snare

Shane Peck

There's never been a more unlikely group of drummers corralled to record an album than the curious trio of Charlie Watts, Simon Phillips, and Thomas Lang.

In 2009, Austrian producer Peter Viehweger assembled some of LA's finest players to record an album for a South African singer known as "Mimi." The recordings took place at Simon Phillips' Phantom Recordings studio in Los Angeles. The group also included bassist Lee Sklar and percussionist Luis Conte. Simon Phillips engineered, and Thomas Lang helped with the editing and post-production. Drumming duties for the 12-song album were shared by Thomas Lang, Simon Phillips, and none other than Charlie Watts of The Rolling Stones.

Executive producer, Ferdinand Huemer thought his pal Charlie Watts



Old school tube lugs and Stick Chopper clip hoops

Shane Peck



Charlie Watts' inscription inside the drum. To Chris, Thank you for this lovely drum... Charlie Watts



Charlie Watts and Thomas Lang at Simon Phillip's Phantom Recordings Studio 2009. You can see the Heuer snare behind Thomas.

would be perfect for several of the songs on the album. Watts and Huemer were cohorts from the world of Arabian horses, so he didn't mind extending the invitation. Watts was reluctant. He rarely played sessions outside of The Rolling Stones or his own jazz projects. He also felt intimidated playing next to chops masters like Thomas Lang and Simon Phillips. Charlie finally agreed to the sessions, "If I can be the first one, because I don't want to follow either of those guys." Once he got started, he had such a great time that he stayed at the studio for the entire week after finishing his parts so he could watch Thomas Lang and Simon Phillips record theirs.

Thomas Lang recalled that Charlie enjoyed being in the studio, was a true gentleman, and was really enjoyable to be around. Thomas continued, "He was

really nervous, but he totally delivered his trademark feel. It was beautiful to watch. After the session Charlie stayed another week just to hang out. I spent a lot of time with him. He was such a gentleman and wonderful man."

The snare used on the sessions was rented from Chris Heuer at Heuer's Drum Lab. Chris Heuer has a decades long reputation as one of the finest drum craftsmen in the business. He is well known by top drummers all over the world for his remarkable restorations, customizations, and custom-built sets and snares.

They chose to use this custom Heuer 6.5" x 14" solid steam bent quilted maple snare drum in a honey lacquer finish. The snare is set up with 8 tube lugs, a Drum Smith throw off and single flanged "stick chopper" clip hoops. It's a truly an

extraordinary drum. It's no wonder that Charlie Watts made a point of signing the drum "To Chris, Thanx for this lovely drum..."

Chris kept the snare in his studio snare rental inventory for many years. The drum was a popular choice amongst his "A-list" clients, not only because of its super articulate sensitivity and cracking back beats, but also because drummers loved the opportunity to play a drum that had been played by perhaps the most renown rock drummer of all time.

When Chris decided to downsize and relocate his shop, he asked if I'd be interested in having the drum. I bought it without thinking twice! Charlie Watts has been a massive influence on me and gear he has used almost never comes up for sale. I wasn't going to let this one get away!



OUT NOW!

Modern Drummer is delighted to spotlight 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 is not restricted to only recordings, we will also be spotlighting new books and DVD's that are being released. We encourage our readers to listen to the recordings that inspire them and keep looking for new musical avenues to explore. You'll never know what new music you might find inspiring! Listen and learn.

Gerald Cannon

Live at Dizzy's Club: The Music of McCoy and Elvin
Lenny White, drums
Woodneck Records



Gerald Cannon has put together a band of first call jazz musicians for his new live record (Eddie Henderson, Sherman Irby, Joe Lovano, Steve Turre, Dave Kikoski, and Lenny White.) It doesn't get much better than that! The music is (mostly) written by McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones, again it doesn't get much better! The legendary Lenny White sounds masterful on this record, his swing is undeniable, his glittering musicality is stellar, and his creativity is just a given. Lenny is one of the all-time great fusion drummers, but he is an amazing straight-ahead jazz drummer, and this is on perfect display on Gerald Cannon's new record. Lenny's sound is warm and inviting, and his playing is on another level. Listen to his mallet-work on "Three Elders," and his sense of adventure on Elvin Jones' classic "3 Card Molly." Those are some pretty big shoes to wear, and they fit Lenny to perfection. His contributions and solo on McCoy Tyner's "Blues in the Minor" are impeccable. Listen to the perfect hook-up between Cannon and White, they give a clinic in empathy and drive.

Keyon Harrold

Foreverland
Chris Dave, Marcus Gilmore (2 tracks,) drums
Concord Jazz

Featuring artists like Common, Robert Glasper, and Chris Dave, trumpeter Keyon Harrold has told us what *Foreverland* is going to sound like, and it does. Chris Dave's drumming drives most of the record as only his unique sense of backbeat can. Dave's twisted Latin drumming on "Beautiful Day" is exciting. "Foreverland" is filled with wonderful Chris Dave's signature shifting beats. Chris' falling down the steps rumble is what I refer to as "hip hop Elvin" on the song "The Intellectual" is amazing. Marcus Gilmore's contribution on "Paranoid" and "Gotta Go" is holding a constant interactive conversation with the trumpeter in a way only Marcus Gilmore can. Harrold's lyrical trumpet playing, strong musical concept, and the many guest vocalists make this a fantastic musical package to enjoy.



Violent Femmes

Violent Femmes
Victor DeLorenzo, drums
Craft Records

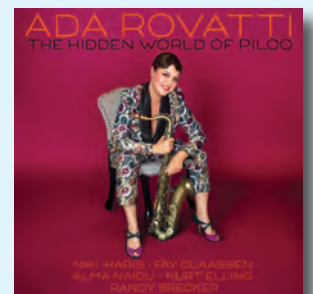


In 1983 this post-punk trio from Milwaukee released their first record, which has become an absolute musical classic. Walking the line between English Skiffle, American Rockabilly, Gene Vincent, Bob Dylan, and the Talking Heads, the Violent Femmes are much more than their classic hit "Blister in the Sun." This reissue features the original record (which has never sounded better!) and a CD of extra tunes and live material. But this is *Modern Drummer* so what about the drumming? Victor DeLorenzo has a swinging post-punk drumming concept that is based around the sound of the brushes, he is part Gene Krupa, part Papa Jo Jones, and part Dickie Wells, and that is what makes this band so cool. DeLorenzo's brush playing sets the scene for the Femmes, and the sound of Victor's brushes allows for musical subtlety and nuance in the same way that WS Holland's drumming set the stage for Carl Perkins and Johnny Cash. There isn't another band that sounds like the Violent Femmes, and there isn't another drummer that sounds like Victor DeLorenzo, who else can you say that about? This is essential listening.

Ada Rovatti

The Hidden World of Pilo
Tim Dudek drums
Pilo Records

Supporting soloists like saxophonist Ada Rovatti, trumpeter Randy Brecker, vocalists Kurt Elling and Niki Harris, and guitarists like Dean Brown, Barry Finnerty, and Tom Guarna on a recording that also features a string quintet sounds like a BIG ask for a drummer. Thankfully, drummer Tim Dudek frames Rovatti's music, and supports the soloists with taste and a strong sense of pocket and groove. Dudek's sound is strong and big, but never *too big* for the music. In fact, the same can be said for the outstanding rhythm section that also includes pianist Simon Oslender and bassist Claus Fischer. Rovatti's compositions and arrangements are world class, and the band and musical guests play them perfectly.



Todd Mosby

Land of Enchantment
Vinnie Colaiuta, drums
MMG Records

Todd Mosby has created an inspired recording of groove and nuance. It starts quickly with "Place in the Sun" which puts Vinnie Colaiuta's sense of groove front and center. Vinnie's groove breaks leave us smiling, as does his strong connection with bassist Rhonda Smith.

"Moonrise Samba" has Vinnie leaving space for percussionist David Leach, and their collaborative groove is worthy of Carnival in Rio. "Native Dancer" has Colaiuta (again) laying it down in strong support of saxophonist Tom Scott (who also kills it on "A Place in the Sun.") "A Distant Light" is the nuance that I previously mentioned, in lesser hands this beautiful song would become a dirge or jump a few notches to a more "comfortable" tempo. But Smith and Colaiuta let it sit, simmer, and settle to perfection. Colaiuta drives Mosby's short arrangement of "Norwegian Wood," but his contribution is essential in shaping the arrangement. I must also mention that this is a beautiful sounding audiophile quality recording.



Marlon Simon

On Different Paths
Marlon Simon, drums and percussion
Roberto Quintero, congas and percussion
Rhumer Mora, bongos
Truth Revolution Records

Upon listening to Marlon Simon's new record, an apt description escaped me, so I must rely on Marlon's own description, "Roots music, Latin American Rhythms, European Classical music, and the Latin Jazz tradition are reimagined as a blend that suggests Latin Chamber Jazz." The drum and percussion world should be much more aware of Marlon Simon, he is a master drummer, percussionist, and composer. And all of these components have never been on better display than on the record *On Different Paths*. Bassist Boris Koslov and pianist Edward Simon round out the rhythm section and guide us through eleven deeply emotional compositions. The Venezuelan drummer leaves more space than his contemporaries, but his sense of space is impeccable.



Lisa Hilton

Coincidental Moment
Rudy Royston, drums
Ruby Slippers Records

Pianist Lisa Hilton is back with another strong recording and another strong drummer supporting her at every turn. Rudy Royston is no longer a newcomer, he has become a mainstay on the modern jazz scene. As always, his drumming is creative, restless, and swinging as ever. Hilton's compositional twists give Royston (and bassist Luques Curtis) ample space to poke and prod the music into unexplored territory. Trumpeter Igmar Thomas is a nice soloist providing some yin to Hilton's yang. Rudy Royston has been one of the brightest drummers on the jazz scene for a while, listen to the interesting ways Royston chooses to state the time and accompany the other musicians on *Coincidental Moment*, he is not just along for the ride, he is driving the bus. His jagged creativity fits Hilton's music perfectly.



Benjamin Koppel

White Buses: Passage to Freedom
Antonio Sanchez, drums
Cowbell Music

Benjamin Koppel is a musical storyteller. The story behind this record is as compelling as it's music and deserves more attention. The music is haunting and beautiful, and it tells the story very well. Antonio Sanchez is also a superb storyteller, either on the drums, as a bandleader, or on his soundtrack work. Antonio is the perfect drummer for this record. Dissection of such a mountainous and important work is pointless, listening to and feeling it is essential. Sanchez floats into and out of time, coloring and shading the band featuring vocalist Thana Alexa, pianist Uri Caine, and bassist Scott Colley. Antonio is playing Koppel's music, not playing time or supporting, he is an equal part in this music, and he does it with the utmost taste and musical sympathy. To quote the liner notes, this record is, "A meditation that transports us beyond the shadows of grey. It breathes life. It is vivid with the colors of humanity." I couldn't have said it better.



Tony Escapa's Ricky Martin Touring Set



Jason Mehler



Jason Mehler



Jason Mehler

Drums: DW Design Series Acrylic w/ True Hoops. 6x14 Black Ice Sparkle Edge Snare drum (maple center), 6.5x14 Ribbed Brass over Steel (spare snare drum.) Rack Toms: 8x10, 9x12, Floor Toms: 12x14, 14x16, 16x18; Bass Drum: 18x22 Bass Drum w/ Collector's Series claws

Heads: Remo Toms - Ebony Emperor top / Ebony Ambassador bottom; Snare - Ambassador X14 coated (edge snare); Spare Snare - CS Dot coated; Bass Drum - Ebony PS3.

Cymbals: Paiste 15" Formula 602 Classic Medium Hi-Hat, 14" PST X Hi-Hat, 8" Signature Prototype Micro Hi-Hat, 19" Formula 602 Classic Thin Crash, 18" Formula 602 Classic Thin Crash, 20" Formula 602 Classic Paper-Thin Crash, 22" Formula 602 Classic Medium Ride, 14" Signature Prototype China, 16" Signature

Prototype China, 8" Signature Splash, 10" Signature Splash, 20" PST X Swiss Medium Crash.

Hardware: DW 9000 series stands, DW 9000 pedals, Ahead Spinal Glide Drum Throne, DW Claw Hook Clamp for Microphones, DW Phone mount.

Cowbells: LP Raul Pineda Signature, LP Downtown Timbale cowbell.

Electronics: Yamaha DTX-Multi 12; Klang Kontroller Immersive Personal Monitor Mixer

Microphones: Earthworks DM20

In-Ear Monitors: CTM CT400 custom

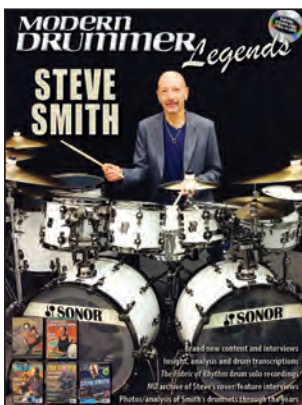
Drumsticks: Vater H-220

Accessories: Snareweight M1 muffler



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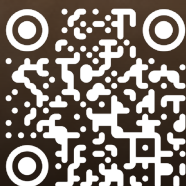
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