

Product Close-Up: Yamaha EAD-10 & Tandem Drums Drops



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SEPTEMBER 2024

El Estepario

Trust The Process

Mannequin Pussy's
Kaleen Reading

Matt Fielder of
VMP (Vinyl Me, Please)

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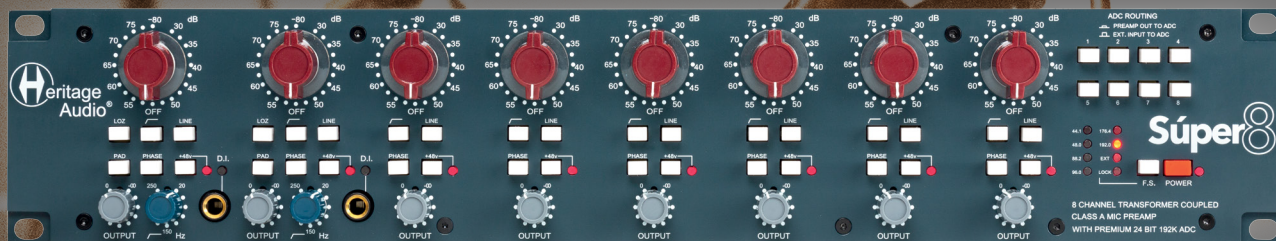
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Obsession

Last month I suggested the idea of becoming “obsessed” with music and drumming. Unfortunately, the word obsession has gotten a bad reputation. Obsession is defined as a “compelling motivation.” Compelling means, “evoking interest, attention, or admiration in a powerfully irresistible way.” The word motivation signifies, “the general desire or willingness of someone to do something.” When applied to things, (NOT people) obsession is a very good thing.



I believe that any healthy obsession (even if it is temporary) is very good for any person. Whether the obsession is a sport, a subject in school, any of the arts, cooking, any hobby, health, music, or (yes) drumming; becoming obsessed is how many of the greats in that field began. Of course, an obsession should not get in the way of the typical requirements of one's life.

An obsession often starts by wanting to learn and know everything there is to know about a subject. Even if an obsession turns out to be short-term, that isn't necessarily a bad thing. Because that passion will teach you about really learning about something. Later in life, you can take what you have learned from your obsession and apply it to anything. Learning is learning, no matter what the subject. On this topic, I often direct people to an enlightening and influential book by chess and martial arts champion Josh Waitzkin called *The Art of Learning*. But what does all of this have to do with drumming?

If you really love drumming, allow yourself to become obsessed and passionate. Develop a healthy preoccupation to learn as much as you can about all kinds of drums, drummers, and drumming. Spend time listening to, watching, practicing, and experiencing drumming. This passion might expand into an obsession with music. After all, they are related subjects, drumming usually exists within music. Your obsession with drumming and music might lead you towards learning more about communication, chemistry, world and US history, physics, psychology, math, sociology, and how all of that relates to drumming and music.

In time, if you “grow out of” your healthy obsession for drumming, that's OK—you will take the learning process and information with you to whatever passion is next. But drumming will have taught you how to learn, how to become obsessed, and how to be GREAT in whatever you choose to do. Drums will have taught you about *The Art of Learning* just as chess and martial arts taught Josh Waitzkin.

If you don't “grow out of it,” you might become a truly great drummer and maybe even a great musician. But always beware of mediocrity and passivity, they often lead to boredom and apathy, and they are the enemies of obsession and passion. But the road to true greatness (in any field) starts with obsession and passion.

What are you obsessed with and passionate about?

OK... prove it!

Mark Griffith
Editor-in-Chief, Director of Content
Modern Drummer



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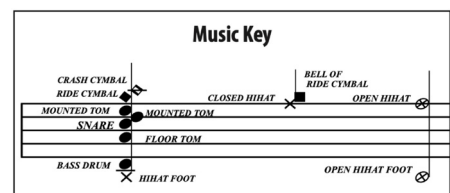
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Broadly Speaking

By Peter Erskine

Near the conclusion of an album project being recorded in New York City at Sear Sound, I was overdubbing a simple shaker part to a track we had just recorded. Unnoticed by me, the arranger and pianist Alan Broadbent was watching me intently. As soon as the red light went off — meaning that the microphone was no longer feeding audio into the Pro Tools session — Alan opened the sliding door of the drum room and came up to me with tears in his eyes. “I love your seriousness,” he said, and then he walked out of the room. Wow.

Several months later, I confessed to my analyst that I was feeling “fragile,” as if the slightest emotional provocation might bring me to tears. By this, I don’t

mean that I was afraid of (for example,) a confrontation; I seemed more ready than ever to voice my displeasure about musical matters in or out of the studio. But talking about music or emotion felt very hair-triggering, somehow. The word “verklempt” describes that vulnerability well. In any event, I recently found myself surrounded by classmates from the arts high school I attended over fifty years prior, the Interlochen Arts Academy. This was a joyous reunion and gathering. There were smiles all around.

But there I was, choking on a word whenever I used a term strikingly similar to Alan’s sentiment. My trigger was “earnestness.” Every time I got to that word earnestness,

which seemed inescapable to me as I struggled to explain what moved and impressed me the most when I was a teenager amid these other young musicians, my eyes filled with tears. This happened several times during the reunion. Especially when speaking with my former percussion section mate, Ken Broadway, a wonderful timpanist who went on to become a world-class pianist. Needless to say, I wonder why I got choked up.

Please note that I did not write, “I wondered why,” as if to imply that I figured things out in due time. I did not, and I’m still wondering, to be honest. However, I’m going to give it the ol’ college try. Having repeatedly written about “intention” in these pages, regular readers will be familiar with my reliance on the word. In general terms, it means an idea or a plan to carry out. In drumming and musical parlance, I use it to suggest focus and attention along with a specific goal, as when an actor might question, “What’s my motivation?”



In other words, to play in such a way so that the hands and feet are not moving automatically. My father put it simply, "Say what you mean and mean what you say." (Substitute "play" for "say.") Going back in time, it was the intentionality of the young musicians that stuck with me all those years ago. But what's so remarkable about youthful intentionality?

Ah, youth— Having just passed the threshold of being 70 years old, I cherish my maturity and the fact of having survived this long. I see myself in the continuity of things, so I am not jealous of youth then or now. In fact, I appreciate youth that much more. But the purity of youthful musical expression strikes a resonant tone inside of me. Sure, there will be some excesses and technical wobbles, but there is an undeniable seriousness of that moment as it is being lived and expressed by the youthful player. Attending a concert by the Academy's symphonic orchestra a few years ago while I was a board member there, I asked a fellow Los Angeles musician whose daughter was attending the school "why" their playing sounded so good. Not "good"

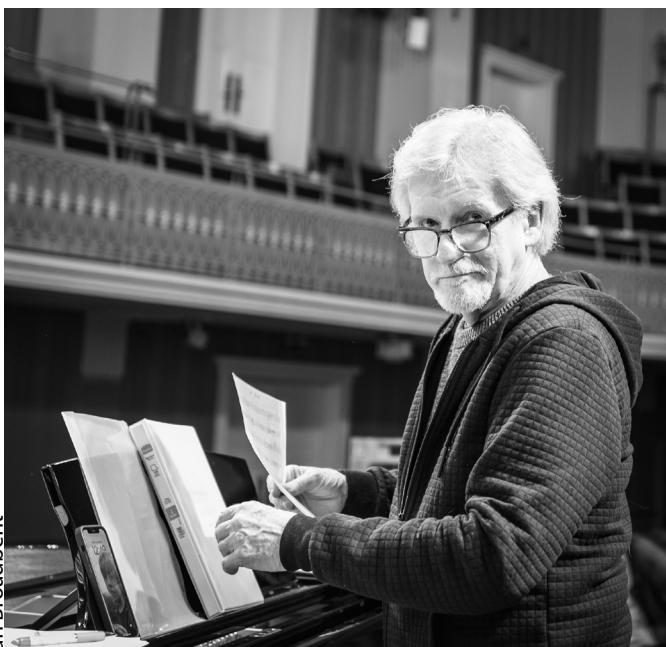
as compared to other school orchestras, but "good" on its own, compared to ANY orchestra. What was this magical synergy? He likened it to the sensation of first love, and the overwhelming power of that experience.

This made immediate sense to me. When speaking with my old classmates about their earnestness, was I merely



Ken Broadway & Peter Erskine 'Then and Now'

Alan Broadbent



wishing to relive the emotional wallop of a first love? And does this connect to Mr. Broadbent's moment with me?

Another studio story, this one going back to the early 1990s during the recording sessions for my fourth solo album titled *Sweet Soul*. As I wrote in my memoir *No Beethoven*, "... my favorite memory from that album is watching Kenny Werner do the one overdub on the otherwise straight-to-stereo recording, adding a 'string pad' to Vince Mendoza's ballad "Ambivalence." We are recording DAT-to-DAT with no room for error or fixing; Kenny is playing a synth in a remote booth, unaware that I am watching him play; he conducts himself with his right hand as he improvises his chordal arrangement using his left hand. He is in ecstasy, and so are we." The notes were great. The intention, the seriousness, and the earnestness of his creative act made the moment unforgettable. It translates into every listening of the track. Beauty.

Let's say you see flower in a small vase atop a table while dining in a restaurant. When's the last time you

looked at a flower, I mean, REALLY looked at a flower and the shape of its petals? Or marveled at the food on your plate that was created by a chef? Or admired how that plate was brought to your table by the server? Or appreciated the earnestness of the person who brings that glass of water to you? Earnestness can be every bit as moving whether performed by a waitperson, musician, teacher, health care provider, or public service official. The act of, and the appreciation of the act, are both things to strive for in terms excellence.

Okay, okay. Peace, love, and flowers, man. So, like, if I wish my drumming to be groovy, like, it will be, right? Or to put it more cynically, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." IT TAKES PRACTICE, LOTS OF IT. AND TALENT TOO. I can wish to be a great basketball player, but I do not have that talent, and I doubt that I might ever be able to master the basic skill sets required to be a good basketball player, let alone be an Olympian.

So, this might be a good time for the BIG QUESTION. Do you feel that you were born to play the drums? Do you WANT to play the drums? Do you LIKE to play the drums? If your answer is "yes" to any or all those questions, then I feel it safe to say that you are well on your way. Remember, in addition to all of the above, IT TAKES TIME. There are no shortcuts to excellence. The song from the Broadway musical *Damn Yankees* may have said it best, "You Gotta Have Heart." 🎵

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



Kenny Werner & Peter Erskine 'Then and Now'



KIT OF THE MONTH



Tama Superstar Warlord Combo

This month's Kit of the Month comes to us from Andrew Naish. Andrew's kit is actually a combination of two different Tama kits. The first kit is a Tama Superstar Hyperdrive Dark Mocha Fade kit in 7x10, 8x12, 12x14, 14x16 toms and a 18x22 bass drum. The other kit is a Tama Warlord Exotix Limited Edition Bubinga in 7x8, 8x10, 9x12, 12x14, 14x16 toms, and a 18x22 bass drum. Andrew uses a mix of Zildjian A Custom Rezo cymbals, and Paiste 900 series cymbals. He also uses a 2Box Drumit electronic module with four additional toms and cymbals.



NEW & NOTABLE

Jonathan “Sugarfoot” Moffett endorses Turkish Cymbals, New Sabian Vault Drop Cymbals, Roland establishes further design lab, Simmons Unveils Titan 50 B-Ex Electronic Drum Kit



Jonathan “Sugarfoot” Moffett Endorses Turkish Cymbals

Jonathan Phillip “Sugarfoot” Moffett, the renowned American drummer, songwriter, and record producer, has officially announced his endorsement of Turkish Cymbals. With a career spanning over three decades, Moffett’s musical journey has left an indelible mark on the industry. Known for his quick, articulate bass drum work, Moffett earned the nickname “Sugarfoot.” His precision and stamina set him apart, and his energetic drumming style became iconic. In 1979, Moffett’s professional journey took off when he joined the Jacksons. His association with the Jackson family, particularly Michael Jackson, lasted for more than 30 years. He contributed to legendary albums and world tours, leaving an indelible mark on pop music history. Other notable collaborations have included, Madonna, George Michael, Elton John, Stevie Wonder, Quincy Jones, Diana Ross, and Lionel Richie. Moffett’s kung-fu-inspired drumming style includes the famous “one-handed cymbal catch,” and the “backlash-whiplash” cymbal crashes. These moves showcase his precision and showmanship. Moffett’s search for the perfect sound led him to Turkish Cymbals. He found the right feel and unmatched quality with their handmade custom cymbals. Jonathan looks to help inspire his own unique line of handmade cymbals in the very near future. “I have been looking for MY sound for many years and I always find myself gravitating to Turkish Cymbals” says Moffett. “... only Turkish Cymbals have it.”

New Sabian Vault Drop Cymbals

As part of Sabian’s on-going Vault Drop program, where new and innovative cymbal designs are launched initially on a limited basis; Sabian has released a new, striking, wide lip China cymbal.

As the name suggests, the cymbal has a massive lip that encompasses half of the cymbal. Says head of SABIAN Research and Development, Randy Ross, “This larger edge allows you to dig in for a louder, roaring sound. Unlike most other Chinas, you can also play it lightly to conjure a softer sound, reminiscent of a crash or suspended cymbal.” Adding further, “Despite its size, the HHX Wide Lip China is quite controllable and capable of riding or crashing. The unique bell and edge sounds can be played separately and together for great effects. And furthermore, it also works well played with mallets.” Like all Sabian Vault Drops, the 22” HHX Wide Lip China is available for a limited time only, starting today.



Roland Establishes Roland Future Design Lab to Fuel Music Technology Innovation

Roland Corporation, the culture-defining maker of electronic musical instruments and applications, announces the launch of Roland Future Design Lab, an R&D group formed to help design the future of music creation. As a dedicated team of advanced Roland technologists, Roland Future Design Lab will research trends in music, technology, and culture and prototype innovative music creation experiences to inform future product development.

With a focus on boundary-defining innovation, Roland Future Design Lab will explore the creative possibilities presented by emerging technologies such as AI, WEB3, virtual and augmented reality, low-latency wireless connectivity, and more. The team will actively seek input from music creators around the world to garner feedback from end users. Strategic partnerships will be integral to continued success, with the recently established rela-



tionship with Universal Music Group and the resulting “AI For Music” and Music Provenance initiatives being led by Roland Future Design Lab.

Roland Future Design Lab is led by Roland Corporation’s Paul McCabe, who was recently promoted to senior vice president of research and innovation. Throughout his Roland tenure, McCabe, a dedicated music composer and IT enthusiast, has excelled in various leadership roles, including VP of global marketing and multiple positions at Roland Canada, such as president and CEO, COO, product manager, and marketing communications manager.

“We have entered one of the most exciting and dynamic moments in the history of creativity, where many new technologies are reshaping how we compose, produce, perform, and enjoy music. At Roland, we believe these technologies offer tremendous potential if applied responsibly,” said McCabe. “Roland Future Design Lab has been established to continue our leadership in music technology innovation and maintain our position as a driver of creative culture well into the future.”

“Roland’s mantra of, ‘We Design The Future’ has guided our approach and company values for decades. The introduction of Roland Future Design Lab showcases our commitment to this deeply mindful approach by allowing us to stay ahead of trends in a rapidly evolving industry,” said Roland Corporation CEO, CIO, and Representative Director Masahiro Minowa. “We are confident that these efforts will both propel us toward growth and success and provide innovative offerings for future generations of music lovers and creators.”

Simmons unveils Titan 50 B-EX Electronic Drum Kit

Simmons announces the Titan 50 B-EX Electronic Drum Kit, the newest addition to its Titan range. This iteration provides four toms and two crash cymbals to help deliver more sound and playing options over the original Titan 50 kit, while remaining a highly affordable electronic drum option for players. The Simmons Titan 50 B-EX Electronic Drum Kit delivers the feel, size, and sound of real drums, making it perfect for all ranges of players, from beginners to pros.

The Titan 50 B-EX’s large and responsive 10-inch dual-zone mesh snare drum is designed with a low rim profile combined with high-speed triggering, providing enhanced playability and accurate rimshot detection. The kit

also comes with four 8-inch mesh toms and four responsive 10-inch cymbals — hi-hat, ride, and two crashes with choke. The 6-inch kick pad connects to the included kick pedal or the players’ own, including double-kick pedals.

The full-sized four-post rack is extra sturdy with steel construction, rectangular profile, and adjustable mounts to keep all the parts locked in place. The rack is designed to be expandable with an adjustable length side rail so users can add another tom and cymbal.

The Titan 50 B-EX Drum Kit’s module features an all-new library of drum kits, recorded at a major studio with sounds based on top-selling albums. The high-quality samples emphasize quality over quantity, with full-length toms and crashes and stereo room ambience built into the sounds, and its advanced V.A.R. (Variable Attack Response) technology provides expressive dynamics and realistic performance.

With its alternative sound sets, players can now replace the factory sounds with custom Titan Packs from the Simmons Signature sound library that features kits with the full module memory dedicated to reproducing the drum sounds as close to the original recorded sounds straight from the studio.

The Titan 50 B-EX includes technology to help players



practice and customize the sound of their kits. A new practice tool measures timing accuracy, and Bluetooth audio and MIDI allow users to connect apps and play along with a tablet or smartphone. A tablet shelf is included with the module, and Titan’s free app for iOS and Android allows users to edit kits and play along with their music library.

With great-feeling, full-sized pads, outstanding drum sounds and the latest in e-drum technology to help improve playing, the Titan 50 B-EX is a powerful new mesh drum kit from Simmons, the original innovators in electronic drums. The Simmons Titan 50 B-EX Electronic Drum Kit is currently available with a U.S. list price of \$449.99 🛒

Yamaha EAD10

By Jason Mehler

If the Yamaha EAD10 System is new to you, you're a few years late to the party. Since its debut in 2018, the EAD10 Drum Module has made waves in the drumming world for its ease of use as a simple drum miking system with triggering capabilities. One of the more prominent examples of the EAD10 in action is by the popular YouTuber Jorge Garrido, known as El Estepario. Jorge has been creating drum video content with the Yamaha EAD10 since 2018, amassing millions of followers on social media. In last month's issue of *Modern Drummer*, MD's Mark Griffith sat down with Yamaha's Matt Rudin and drummer Charles Ruggiero to discuss the EAD10's development, its original purpose, and the creative ways drummers have been utilizing the popular drum module. In this month's Product Close-Up, we'll get a hands-on look at the EAD10 and explore some of its features.

What's in the Box

The EAD10 comes in a small, printed box and includes the Drum Module, the Sensor Unit, the PA-150 Power Adapter, 8-foot connector cable (ribbon cable containing two TRS male to male 1/4 inch), a mounting bracket with two wing bolts to mount the drum module, three Velcro

cable straps, two adhesive rubber cushions to protect your bass drum hoop when mounting the sensor unit, and the EAD10 Owner's Manual.

System Specifications

The EAD10 Drum Module has 50 preset scenes with up to 200 user programmable scenes. There are 11 reverb types, with 21 mic effects, and 10 trigger effects. There are 757 voices (sounds) that can be triggered, with a maximum polyphony of 64 simultaneous voices. For recording, the internal memory can store approximately 1 min 30 sec of audio, and around 90 min per file when using an external flash drive.

Sensor Unit

If you take a closer look at the EAD10's Sensor Unit, you can see inside the device through the vented grill on the top. Inside are a pair of microphone capsules fixed in an X-Y (90 degree) position. They are designed to pick up a balanced stereo image of the drum kit. I assume they are dynamic microphones because they do not require 48v phantom power. What you can't see through the vent is the piezo-style trigger element which captures vibrations



from the bass drum rim. Both the mics and trigger send their signals through the ¼ inch cables to the EAD10 Drum Module.

The EAD10 Drum Module

At first glance, the drum module reminds me of a personal headphone monitor that you would see in a recording studio. It's a very clean and simple design with six large knobs for the core functions of the system like controlling the master volume, or the levels for the click, effect, reverb, and trigger. The largest knob changes the presets which Yamaha calls "Scenes." There is a small two-inch LCD screen and several rubberized buttons to navigate and control the remaining functions of the EAD10 Drum Module. On the rear of the EAD10 Drum Module are the physical ports for 12v DC power plug, USB (flash drive and host/computer), triggers 1-6, input from the Sensor Unit, an auxiliary input, and outputs for Left and Right audio.

Setup

Setting up the EAD10 system is so simple, I'd trust my cat to do it. It was obviously designed to be very easy to get started.

Hardware wise, all you need to worry about is the Drum Module and the Sensor Unit. The Drum Module can sit on a flat surface such as a table tray, or it can be mounted to a stand base. Note that if you intend to use the mounting bracket for the



drum module, you will need to purchase a drum clamp like the Yamaha CSAT-924. This is a very common drum clamp design, so you may already have something that will work to mount the module to a stand base.

The drum sensor unit mounts to the top rim of your bass drum. You can use the provided rubber pads if needed, however the unit itself already has some padding built in to protect your drum. You simply slip it on to the rim and tighten the single screw at the top until the unit is secure. Avoid overtightening. That is it for hardware.

You then connect the power cable to the Drum Module and attach the ¼ inch connector cables (marked A and B) to both the Sensor Unit and Drum Module. The ports are clearly marked “A” and “B” on both devices, so it’s a no-brainer. The only thing left before you start hitting the drums is to connect a set of headphones.

Playing the EAD10

I set up the EAD10 on my Yamaha Beech Custom drums. The setup process took me about 15 minutes, including the time spent looking for a clamp/stand combo to mount the drum module. Once all set up, I slapped on the headphones, powered up the EAD10, and it was off to the races.

I, like many other drummers, was more than pleasantly surprised by how good my drums sounded right out of the gate. It was like that moment in the movie *Ratatouille*, when the food critic had a flashback to his childhood, only my flashback was to when I knew nothing about recording. Back then, I just wanted to get a decent drum sound for my band’s demo. Instead, I spent countless nights wrestling mics and cables, pouring over manuals, hunting for information (pre-Google), fighting phase issues, measuring distances between mics and sources, all that work to get a mediocre drum sound in the end. And here in a matter of 15 minutes, I had a better drum sound than I could’ve ever imagined back then.

When my tears subsided, I started to play around with the knobs and various scenes in EAD10 Module. “Arena,” “DynaPhaser,” “Psyche,” and so on, were all very cool and fun to experiment with. The Module’s basic functions like levels, scene changes, etc. are easy to navigate with the knobs. However, because of the EAD10’s minimalist aesthetics, some of the more powerful features are hidden within the menu and system itself, you navigate those features using the smaller buttons and LCD display. It didn’t take long to get acquainted with the menu system. The menu options are intuitive enough to where I wasn’t rushing to the manual for answers.

After playing for a while, I did find myself adjusting the position of some drums and cymbals to bring them closer or farther from the Sensor Unit. That worked for most of the drums,

and I only needed to play slightly more aggressively on the hi-hat and the outer extremes like the floor tom. Overall, balancing the sounds of the kit was very manageable, and the pros far outweigh the cons.

I wanted to try out the additional triggering options, and it just so happens that I had a new X-Percussion ARC bar trigger on-hand, which I will be reviewing in an upcoming issue of *Modern Drummer*. I connected it to trigger port 3 (snare) on the rear of the module and the trigger worked wonderfully. The scenes are already preprogrammed with sounds for each trigger, which are fun to explore. Changing the sounds is like any e-kit or drum module. Simply hit the pad and the settings will appear for that specific trigger. Then use the navigation buttons to scroll through the available voicings.

Getting Creative

I tried mounting the Sensor Unit to other things such as my desk, a pancake drum, a Child’s toy drum kit, and cymbal stands. In some cases, the trigger’s threshold was not sensitive enough to fire, but it still made for fun experimentation. I also tested the EAD10 using a Rode Wireless Go to record to a portable camera and it worked flawlessly. I may bring it to a live *Modern Drummer* video shoot such as a Tour Kit Rundown, where time is very limited, and we need to capture drums and unscripted dialog simultaneously. There are many other uses I can think of, but the point of the EAD10 is that having such an easy-to-use and versatile recording tool inspires creative experimentation.

Conclusion

There is no doubt the EAD10 Drum Module has changed the game by allowing drummers to stay focused on their playing and creativity rather than fighting to get a usable drum sound. I’d go as far to say that every drummer should try out the EAD10 and consider making it a part of their gear collection. The EAD10 Drum Module Retail for \$599. Check it out at: <https://usa.yamaha.com/>



Tandem Drums Drops

By Jason Mehler

Tandem Drums has a product that you may have seen. They're called Drops, and they are weighted felt pads, created as an alternative to sticky gel-style drum dampening pads. *Modern Drummer* was sent a set of Drops to check out for this Product Close-Up.

About Drops

Originally introduced through a successful Kickstarter campaign by the makers of Mono drum bags, Drops are steel bearing-filled muffling pads, made of a thick, durable felt, stitched around a molded silicone tab. Drops securely attach to standard tension rods by applying downward pressure to the silicone tab.

The Concept

Drops are a gravity-based muffler, secured in place by a flexible silicone tab which allows the pad to slightly lift off the head when the drum is struck, and return to position in a "soft landing", essentially acting as a gate to allow the drum's full tone muffle the head vibration and control the overtones.

Drops Review

For this review I was provided 2 full sets of Drops, which come in four sizes: 40 grams, 60 grams, 120 grams, and 200 grams. They feel very durable and could probably take a beating. The pad surface is not flat, rather it is rounded like a small thin pillow. To test the grip of the silicone tabs, I attached all the drops to the tension rods



of a 14" Tama Star Classic snare drum. I proceeded to flip and shake the drum aggressively in the air above my head to try and dislodge the pads. I then placed the drum on the floor and grabbed the felt portion of one of the Drops and pulled upward, lifting the drum. In both cases the Drops held strongly.

Next, I used the Drops to muffle my drum kit. I tried all four weight variations on several drum sizes and tunings. I found that on the snare, I am partial to the larger 200 gram Drop because it is similar in shape and performance to a wallet. The 200-gram Drop also works well on the floor toms, controlling overtones, while not sounding choked. The 60- and 120-gram drops did a good job on the smaller toms, with the same open tone response.

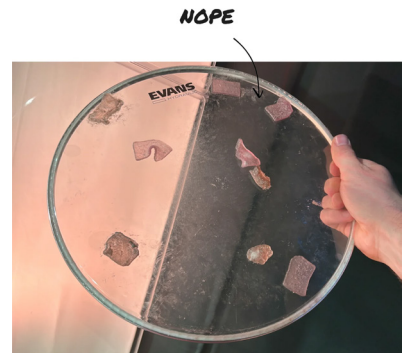
The 40-gram Drop was interesting, because it wasn't a very noticeable difference when used by itself, but when I added another 40 gram Drop to the same drum, it was like magic. I also realized that when using two Drops, you can really dial-in your drum sound by randomly positioning them in different places around the drum.

Conclusion

Tandem Drums Drops work as advertised. They are durable enough to last for a very long time and they stay out of the way of your drum tone. I don't hate gel-style dampeners, but I do admit they can get a bit messy. With these, you won't need to worry about that.

Tandem Drum Drops can be purchased individually or as a combo pack. The combo set of four Drops retails for \$59.99 and can be purchased on their website at:

<https://tandemdrums.com/> 



FOUR WEIGHTS



EL ESTEPARIO

TRUST THE PROCESS

BY MARK GRIFFITH

With over 5,000 online drumming video clips and millions of subscribers, Valencia, Spain's El Estepario (Jorge Garrido) has become a worldwide drumming sensation. Today it seems like every drummer has been forwarded a video from a friend saying, "Check THIS guy out! He's AMAZING!" El Estepario's online drumming is simply jaw dropping, and he is influencing drummers everywhere. If you aren't convinced, watch the video of him playing "Holy Wars" by Megadeth or his version of the Backstreet Boys tune "Everybody." They are two of his favorites because they include (ironically) a few mistakes. In this interview, El Estepario's humility and his passion for drumming and sharing information comes through loud and clear, but there is MUCH more to him than meets the eye and ear. He is now explaining some of his drumming vocabulary and learning processes on his Drumeo course, and there is more to come! We don't hear El Estepario interviewed often, but he and I talked candidly for several hours, prepare to be very surprised!

Photos courtesy of Alesis Drums / El Estepario



MD: How did you first start playing drums?

EE: That's a great question. I started to play when I was 12 years old. I had a lot of energy, and I didn't really know what to do with all that energy, but drums were the best solution to that. In the beginning, I wanted to play guitar and my older brother wanted to play drums, but at some point, that changed. I found a local teacher, and for five euros an hour I took lessons. My parents took me to this guy for an hour every Monday for a year before I had access to a real drum kit. It is absolutely necessary for a drummer to take lessons because it's very hard to buy a drum kit and just start practicing or playing. The first thing you need to do is get with somebody that already has a drum kit and learn. As soon as I had a real drum kit of my own, I stopped taking lessons. There was nothing wrong with him as a teacher, but I wanted to explore the instrument by myself.

MD: What was your first drumset?

EE: My first set was a second-hand Ludwig Accent, I sold that to get a white Tama Imperialstar six-piece kit, I sold that to get a Mapex Saturn kit that I had for a long time, they were great drums.

MD: What kind of things were you studying with your first

teacher?

EE: To be honest, he had a lot of passion and that's what I liked about him. He started as a trombone player, and at 60 (or so) he realized that he wanted to play drums. He didn't know much about drumming, but he had a strong musical background. Because of the trombone he could sight read and he knew a lot about music, but he didn't know much about the drums, he had only been playing for four or five years when he met me. He really taught me about the passion that he had for the instrument, that's where we really connected.

He tried to teach me to read but I was not interested in that at all. He taught me how to hold the sticks, he taught me a lot of paradiddles and rudiments, and we did the whole *Stick Control* book. He explained singles, doubles, and fills... the basic stuff.

MD: After you stopped taking lessons, did you join a band?

EE: After I was practicing with him for a year, I could recognize the instruments on the set that were being played on recordings. If we're honest, in drumming you usually already know (basically) what's happening, you can use your ears to tell you what's happening. Older

drummers always talk about how hard it was to realize about what drummers were doing, but they didn't have any visual help that we have today to understand what was going on. Once YouTube started to appear, you could watch performances and solos and see what was happening. Nowadays, anyone who has the desire has a way to learn. Maybe it was harder before, but now there is so much material out there. I just had a lot of passion to learn!

MD: That's the one thing you can't teach, passion.

EE: The songs that I wanted to play from Sum 41, Green Day, and even Slipknot were hard to play because of speed and endurance, but they were not really that complicated. It's not hard independence stuff, it's just regular drumming. You can listen to it, and you can play along. Maybe you are not as fast, but you can play around a little bit on top of the song, that's what I did, and I did it as much as I could. But I back to your question, don't think

I think that's something that happens to a lot of people when they start playing the drums, they never dig a little deeper and find the more complex languages inside of the drumming community, and I think that is a big mistake.



I was ready for my first band; in fact I didn't even want to join a band.

MD: Why not?

EE: I come from a very small town, and in order to be in a band, I would have had to move my drum kit to a rehearsal space with the rest of the band. I only had one drum kit back in the day, and I hated the idea of moving my kit to a band practice space where I couldn't practice drums. I just wanted to play on my own and I didn't see the point in performing with a band. The first time I joined a band it was because they had a drum kit, and I didn't have to move my drums into the rehearsal space. But even then, I never wanted to become a full-time drummer. I don't even think I even want to do that today, it's a terrifying idea and a very hard life, I think it would be an awful choice for me. So I concentrated on my studies, it was a hobby, no pretense whatsoever, I didn't want to be a rock star!

MD: How did your drumming progress from that point?

EE: My main drumming idols and influences start with the music of the 90s. I was very influenced by the nu-metal drummers back in the day like John Dolmayan from System of a Down and Joey Jordison from Slipknot. I was

listening to the same music that all the young people were listening to. Later in life I listened to Snarky Puppy and Mark Guiliana and found out that drumming was way more complex than I thought it was in the beginning. I think that's something that happens to a lot of people when they start playing the drums, they never dig a little deeper and find the more complex languages inside of the drumming community, and I think that is a big mistake. I found a drummer here in Spain named Miguel Lamas, he's an amazing drummer that has a style similar to Thomas Pridgen. He plays a lot of paradiddle-based

I was always interested in the drumming not the person behind the drumming, I didn't care about the person, I would just watch drumming for the sake of drumming.

ideas, but he also has a pretty solid groove. I had the pleasure to play with him when I was 17 years old. That that was the first contact I had with somebody that I consider to be a real drummer. He was not only somebody

that was playing mainstream music, but he had way more vocabulary and was able to play more complex things that came from jazz and jazz fusion. As soon as I met him my whole world changed. Miguel was a couple years older than me, and I had never seen anyone that young and from my own country playing stuff that I couldn't even understand. I thought I knew how to play until I met him, and as soon as I met him, I realized that I had a lot to learn. He changed my whole career and inspired me to start practicing the way I should have been practicing from the start. I began to explore everything that there is to drums and drumming, my world exploded! I started paying attention to the people that everyone talks about like Vinnie Colaiuta and Thomas Lang. I heard them as the real drummers that play for the sake of drumming. I just wanted to explore how far I could take the drums, and I started to dig deeper into the whole drumming community.

MD: How did you hear about Miguel, and where did you hear his playing?

EE: We played a show together in Valencia, I was playing with my first band, and he was playing with one of the many projects that he had. He started talking to me and he was



asking me to lend him my drum kit and cymbals for the show. He was asking a lot of questions that I considered to be “stupid,” they were questions that a guitar player would ask a drummer. After I saw him play, I thought he was kidding me, because he sounded like 1000 people playing the drums at the same time, since then he’s been an idol for me.

MD: What band was Miguel playing in?

EE: He was playing with his solo project. It was a trio of an amazing guitar player, an amazing bass player, and an amazing drummer. That was his solo project, but he has recorded everything that has come out in the last 10 years with the top pop bands, but he still has a lot of projects and underground stuff where they just

perform.

MD: Is he is he a popular drummer in Spain?

EE: Yes, he was the first drummer to break the national barrier and have success outside of Spain. For some reason, nobody from Spain has represented (endorsed) a brand like Pearl or Meinl. He was the first one to do that and that encouraged me. He told me, “If I can do it, maybe someone else can.” He proved it was possible, I just wanted to try, I didn’t think I was going to make it.

MD: At that point in your education, what type of drumming things were you downloading and watching on YouTube?

EE: I would just type “drum solo” and the best results would appear. Whatever appeared I would

download it. That’s where I first saw Jojo Mayer and Thomas Lang, the drum solo from Thomas’ *Creative Coordination and Creative Control* videos were the first results that appeared when I typed in “drum solo.” That was actually a very good experience because I could witness thousands of drummers that I didn’t know. I was always interested in the drumming not the person behind the drumming, I didn’t care about the person, I would just watch drumming for the sake of drumming.

MD: You are a drummer that came up on “Internet Drumming” and “Drumming for the Sake of Drumming.”

EE: I don’t know if it’s going to be good in the long term because the interests of the typical internet

I’m not a drummer, I don’t consider myself to be a drummer. I think the most accurate term to describe what I do is “content creator.” That’s what I am. Content creators only care about one thing: views. ... That means that I’m working for the audience and not working for the music, and that is a very important distinction to make.



audience are pretty stupid. Most of the time you need to do a lot of stupid things to get attention. Eventually you might find yourself drumming for a very big audience, but nowadays I'm drumming for a lot of non-drummers. That means I need to factor in a lot of stupid stuff that you wouldn't have to do in a normal drumming situation.



There is a need to look cool, that's a problem. I need to shave every time I record. My shoes must be clean, my gear must be shiny, none of that makes sense. All of that is just poisoning the whole atmosphere. You need a beautiful kit; you need the most expensive cymbals... I find all of that to be very poisonous to society and the drumming community. It all started with Twitter, in order to get attention, you had to put a lot of information in very little space, you needed to butcher songs to get attention. On YouTube I can have more of balance. The things I do on Instagram are appealing to some people, but I wouldn't recommend playing like that anywhere! I don't know if that's a good role model for drummers to look up to. I think it could be very counterproductive and very poisonous for people that have just started playing drums.

MD: I agree, there is a lot of drumming out there on the internet that has a lot to do with "drumming" but not much to do with "music." But how did you come to realize that, because I think it takes a lot of young drummers a long time to come to that conclusion.

EE: Yes, it takes a lot of people their entire lives to realize that. What people need to understand is that my job is

Students and teachers both must take responsibility for their parts in the learning process... At a certain point the responsibility falls upon the student, not the teacher. In today's world, that has gotten a little flipped around.

to get views. I'm not a drummer, I don't consider myself to be a drummer. I think the most accurate term to describe what I do is "content creator." That's what I am. Content creators only care about one thing, views. In some cases, it's money, but it's all about views. To get more views, I study the analytics of my posts and I study the

performance of my posts. I have been creating content for five or six years, and I have posted a lot of videos. In that time, you really get to know what people want to see and what people don't want to see. I try to get the maximum number of views according to the statistics of the content that I post. That means that I'm working for the audience and not working for the music, and that is a very important distinction to make. I try to replicate (not only) the drumming skills, but the attitude, the



clothes, the background, the camera, the lighting... Every single factor is important. But I think there's a couple of problems in there. Most drummers don't realize that, and they take you as a "drumming role model." I am not trying to be a drumming role model, I'm just working to get big numbers, I'm not working for the music. It is shaping drumming in a way that shouldn't happen, but it's not just me, it's everywhere! If I wasn't doing it, other people would be doing it. I'm really sick of all the hate because social media is not all negative. Thousands of people pick up the drumsticks after watching my videos, and I don't get any credit or money from that. For example, Joey Jordison was my role model, he is the reason why I picked up the sticks. He changed my life forever without even knowing it. I started to play drums and now I make a living playing drums because of him. I would say the most important thing about being a social media guy is the inspiration I provide. I just wish people would respect what I do because it's just work and it's free. That's all I ask for. No one is paying to see anything.

MD: I'm not going to ask you to give away any social media secrets, but what do people want to see on social media?

EE: I can give away secrets, I don't care... I encourage



people to start doing what I do, but it takes so much work that I'm pretty sure most people would just quit. I could talk about thousands of key factors. Smiling is good, smiling makes it look like whatever you're doing, you are doing it effortlessly. That's one of the biggest comments that I get it, "It always looks like you could do more." I took

I think that dedication came from watching my parents work, even today they are workaholics, they work for 10 to 12 hours every day. That has stuck with me. But they didn't explain that philosophy to me, I just saw it as an example. The best way to teach your kids is by example, not with words.

that from the book *The 48 Laws of Power* and applied it to my content. The book says that you need to look as if you can always do more. I also see a lot of content creators that share their personal problems on the platform, I would never do that. I don't talk about depression on my platform even when I have been depressed. I don't talk about personal financial struggles even when I've had them. On my profile I try to look invincible, that is very important. My content needs to look good, fresh, and happy. I don't talk about politics (why would I?) I think

that's good advice to start. I always try to look happy, share happiness, and never look like I have any problems. That can be distressing as well because it shows the downside of social media and how fake everything is.

MD: How did you develop your social media presentation, who did you try to emulate?

EE: It's going to sound ridiculous, but I think the most I've learned about creating content for the internet has been from the Adult Film Industry. They have a goal in mind, and they want to sell you the product. They get your attention, and they smile at the camera. I have a friend in that industry, and I learned a lot from her. We are talking about analytics and statistics; she is the person I learned the most from about posting content. I learned a lot from those people, they have a skill, they smile, and they try to give good vibes and appeal to as many people as possible. Ultimately their goal is to sell you something, their social media channels are just the tools that they need to have an amazing and big reach. They need to be very appealing to a lot of people. I was able to look at it not from a sexual way but just from a statistically, intellectual, and interesting point of view. Those people are brilliant, you can like it, or you can dislike it— But the way they sell things and the amount of money that they make is not something that you can underestimate, they are not stupid people. I'm telling you if you want to learn from somebody on how to post content and make money, look at the people in the Adult Film Industry.

MD: Explain to me how you went from downloading drumming videos from the internet to how you are playing drums today, explain that process?

EE: With the things that I can understand (but can't play) I always recommend looping things. I would rather listen to something 10,000 times looped at full speed, than listen to it a couple times at a very slow speed. With things that are more complicated, if there are a bunch of ghost notes that you don't understand maybe you need

to slow it down to see what is going on.

Today I try to loop things, back in the day I don't think there were many things that I needed to slow down. Once again, we can go back to Joey Jordison. You can listen to a Slipknot song and there's a bass drum pattern going very fast. Your brain can understand it, you just cannot play it, but you understand what's going on. I always like to make a difference between

complicated and complex. There are complicated things that you understand but you cannot play. And there are complex things that you cannot play because you cannot understand them. For example, "Bleed" from Meshuggah has that herta pattern going on, and maybe you cannot play it, but you can understand it. Snarky Puppy might be something that you cannot play because you don't understand what's going on because it's constantly changing. I think those are two different types of art that you need to approach with two different strategies.

MD: I always tell students that we are constantly dealing with two different challenges. If the student can't understand something, then it's my responsibility to help them understand what it is and help them find and travel the road to absorb what they can't understand. If the student fully understands what something is, but they can't play it yet, it is the teacher's job to reinforce their understanding, and assist in travelling the path. But in that scenario, the responsibility lies upon the student to put in the time to absorb (practice) whatever it is they want to learn. Is that what you mean by the complicated vs. the complex?

EE: Yes, that is the same thing. Students and teachers both must take responsibility for their parts in the learning process. The distinction that you explained makes total sense.

At a certain point the responsibility falls upon the student, not the teacher. In today's world, that has gotten a little flipped around. A lot of people are struggling with their instruments (or whatever endeavor we are talking about,) I don't think they understand how much responsibility or potential they have— if they would just apply enough time on their craft (whatever craft that is.) That is definitely an issue nowadays. I think George Orwell said that there would be a time where there's so much information available that the governments are not even going to try to hide it, they're just going to allow the information to be free and available, because so much information is eventually going to kill the will of people, I think that's where we are right now. For example, you can learn everything about

drums online, however I don't see a translation between the amount of information available, and the number of amazing drummers out there.

MD: When you are looping things to learn, how long are the loops?

EE: They can be long or short loops, but I work with them for a long time. I like to loop odd-time signatures, it is a very good practice tool. I recommend "Skip Step" by Nate Smith which is in 17 / 16. It's nice to have a couple loops in every time signature. For 5 / 4 I use "Mission Impossible" and "Take Five." "15 Steps" by Radiohead also works for five. When you need to improvise or play in those time signatures you must have something in your head that you find familiar.

MD: Do you count them out?

EE: I don't really use my voice much.

I would just start the metronome and practice that pattern again and again while trying different syncopations with the left hand. That's something that I did for probably two years, two hours a day.



Most people try to count when they're playing odd time signatures, I just go straight to the hardware that we all have (your brain) that I have already programmed with those odd-time loops.

MD: What else did you do on the drums, before you became an online content creating sensation?

EE: From when I started drumming at 12 until I was 19, I was very dedicated, I practiced one or two hours every day, but drumming was just a hobby. As I told you, I never wanted to become a professional drummer, but I was dedicated. I think that dedication came from watching

going to practice a lot. I would play for four hours in the morning, rest for an hour and a half, so when my brain started again, I could practice for four more hours. I did that for four solid years, that was the philosophy that I had back in the day. It was practicing for the sake of practicing and once you start practicing it doesn't even matter what you're practicing because (as they say) even a broken clock is right twice a day. If you have an office job, you go to the office for eight hours a day. I don't understand people that want to be musicians, but they don't practice, it makes zero sense to me. Look around you, everybody

around you is spending eight hours a day working on their craft. At some point you need to practice eight hours a day, that's what you do to become better than the rest of people, it's just basic math.

MD: What did you practice?

EE: I was not a responsible drummer in terms of practice, I know a lot of people have practice books and practice routines, I didn't. I used YouTube, Instagram, and whatever I saw that I liked, I just practiced it. People always ask me what they should practice because they are out of ideas. I ask them, "Can you play everything? No? Then it's not very hard to figure out." If you want to play double bass at 300 BPM, you can start at 100 BPM and build it up. It's the same thing with your hands, and it's the same thing with everything. I think that has affected my drumming in both good and bad ways. The good way was that I feel like I gained a lot

Sometimes when people ask about practice, they ask for specific exercises. But for me it has never been about exercises, it's about the way you approach drumming and developing a system.

my parents work, even today they are workaholics, they work for 10 to 12 hours every day. That has stuck with me. But they didn't explain that philosophy to me, I just saw it as an example. The best way to teach your kids is by example, not with words.

But then, after I dropped out of university, I realized that if I wanted to pursue a career as a drummer, I really had to raise the bar. I had to practice much more. I didn't have a job so all I did for the whole day was practice and play drums. I made sure I had the proper nutrition and proper rest which are two very important factors if you're



of skill in very little time. The bad way is that I find my drumming to be very robotic. My drumming evolution was something that I forced into my brain. I think anyone with a couple eyes and good taste can see that when I'm drumming. I lack a lot of subtle details that can make everything sound very different. A proper drummer that has been practicing properly for two decades has learned about those subtle details, I totally get that, and I'm sure you can see it too. But most of the internet audience cannot, they just don't have that level of appreciation. But anyone that knows about drumming can see and hear that, it's not a secret.

MD: When you were seeing things online, and trying to replicate (or learn) them, what was hard?

EE: For a couple years I tried to play a solo that Miguel Lamas played on the Tam Tam Music Festival. He uploaded this beautiful solo, and I just tried to replicate everything he did in that solo. I remember having a lot of problems with the foot samba pattern while playing groups of three notes with the right hand on the ride

with two notes on the body and one on the bell.

MD: 1 e and, or 1 and a?

EE: He did both and at a crazy speed that no human should be able to play. I would just start the metronome and practice that pattern again and again while trying different syncopations with the left hand. That's something that I did for probably two years, two hours a day. I must say that I did eventually realize that after 3 1/2 hours the human brain cannot keep learning, so I put the TV in front of me and I watched TV while I practiced the most mechanical movements like finger technique and double bass. I would just watch the TV and try to play with the metronome for hours. I don't think it's healthy for your brain to practice eight hours a day.

MD: It's interesting, I have a whole process that I call "TV Practice" too. When you can get to the point where you're watching TV and your hands are working they are supposed to do mechanically, you've achieved a certain point of unconscious muscle memory. I have also read that when we are learning something right

before we sleep, our brains keep processing it while we sleep. So by getting some sleep halfway through your practice routine your brain was still practicing and processing.

EE: I've read that too.

MD: What else did you practice?

EE: I have always been very interested in coordination. Coordination can give your playing personality very quickly. It's probably the thing that most drummers never practice. Everyone worries about the basic stuff, speed, dynamics, etc. But coordination allows you to play things that nobody on planet earth can play. You could even sit down with (for example) Chris Coleman and play a complex pattern, and even Chris Coleman is going to have some trouble until he has practiced it for a long time. I have practiced independence and coordination for a long time, lately I've been doing some crazy things that have taken a lot of time. But I should also say that back in the day I was already interested in practicing different weird patterns with several pedals. To develop independence and



Every aspect of drumming has a lot of interesting things going on, and that's why good drummers value all kinds of drumming and drummers.

Drumming and music are a language, and you need to learn how to appreciate all the different aspects of drumming to appreciate everything that different drummers are saying.

coordination, the most important thing was that I was developing a system. Sometimes when people ask about practice, they ask for specific exercises. But for me it has never been about exercises, it's about the way you approach drumming and developing a system. Let's say for example, you're playing a clave' with your left foot and a bass drum pattern with your right. I always try to switch the clave' to the right and the bass to the left foot. I did this with the hands too. We have four limbs, and you can switch the different patterns of a beat between the four limbs. Just by doing that with one very simple groove, you already have years of practice. Developing that system and exchanging the roles of the hands and feet is a very interesting way of approaching drumming. It offers thousands of exercises and ways to approach things that you already know.

MD: You have fast feet, how do you set up your pedals?

EE: Drums are very tricky for a very

simple reason; we must deal with something that is placed between us and the instrument. With the hands we have the sticks, and with the feet we have the pedals. A pedal that is set up to play very fast, and I'm talking about 240 BPM, is probably not going to work very well for very slow tempos. I have found that most of the drummers that can play ridiculously fast have a lot of trouble playing very slow because they are using different muscle groups. If you are using double strokes with a heel-toe or the swivel technique to play very fast with your feet, you are using very small muscles.

MD: Are you are talking about the fast twitch muscles vs. slow twitch muscle groups?

EE: Yes. Therefore, whenever you need to play at 120 it's difficult because the bass drum pedal springs are tensioned to the max and the beaters are super close to the drumhead. Those same drummers have a lot of trouble playing slower grooves. Coordination works the

same way. You can spend years learning how to play polyrhythms of seven against five against three against four. But that doesn't mean you're going to be able to play clave' over a song pattern. Every aspect of drumming has a lot of interesting things going on, and that's why good drummers value all kinds of drumming and drummers. If someone who is not a drummer sees Nate Smith play a groove, they are not going to understand why drummers appreciate Nate Smith because they don't play drums. They don't have the knowledge to appreciate the beauty of the things that he's doing. Nate Smith is somebody who holds the pocket at very slow tempos and adds a lot of different musical details. There's as much value in that as there is in someone playing blast beats at 280 BPM. But people cannot understand that until they learn the vocabulary. Drumming and music are a language, and you need to learn how to appreciate all the different aspects

I used to play in a cover band called Orquestra Monte' Carlo here in Spain. It was a cover band that played a lot of different songs, we had a four hour show with all different kinds of repertoire. We played all over Spain... I did that for four years and I never spent any money... I save all the money that I make.



of drumming to appreciate everything that different drummers are saying.

MD: Do you personally have any difficulty playing slow or fast?

EE: I try to keep things in the middle, because today I need to be playing 80s music and tomorrow I need to play the next Slipknot hit, so I need to be very balanced and in the middle. But that can be a good tool or a bad tool because I'm not a specialized drummer. I am not a brilliant drummer in any style, but I can play a lot of things that can appeal to a lot of people. What we (as drummers) need to work on depends on our surroundings, why do you want to work, and what is your work? We all must find that balance.

MD: I know this is a tough question to answer, but are you naturally a reasonably smart person?

EE: I have always said that I like putting effort into things, and I rely on that more than the predisposition of being smart. I don't consider myself a smart person because I work very hard to get better at things. In terms of intellectual things like university, I was pretty good, but I studied a lot. When I was in university studying political science and sociology, I studied most of the time, and when I

was not studying, I was drumming. I would say I am very disciplined and a hard worker, but I don't know how intelligent I am.

MD: Today, do you have any aspirations of joining a band and playing music?

EE: Yes, I am starting my own project right now. We hope to be touring by next year, but we only have three songs written and recorded, and to be honest I don't think we're going to be a massive deal. I am going to keep going with my drumming channel, that's what puts food on the table. Of course, I want to try making music, but just for the sake of making music. I don't want to create a band hoping to be the next big thing. It will be the opposite for me, my band is not looking for attention from the outside world, but I do think that my band is going to be good for my heart.

MD: Living in Spain, how influenced have you been by



I'm trying to get better with a double pedal, but I don't know if that's a good idea. With a double pedal you forget about a whole important aspect of drumming. I haven't played a groove with a hi-hat in months... I feel like I'm sacrificing way too much, so I don't know if I'm going to continue with that routine. But that's what I am working right now.

Spanish music, be it traditional Spanish music or Spanish rock or pop?

EE: I don't think that any Spanish music has influenced me at all. I've never liked the popular Spanish music and bands, I think there are a lot of great Spanish drummers that have influenced me, but it's never because of the music that they play to make a living. Those drummers are good studio and session musicians, but I'm interested in their performances outside of their respective bands. I like what they do at drum festivals and the things they play on their solo projects. I don't think Spain has created much amazing music, today it's all party-beach music and reggaeton.

MD: What other interests do you have outside of drumming?

EE: I like to be at home enjoying my life. I never have enough time to take care of things, so now on the weekends I do laundry, cook something beautiful, and enjoy the little things that most of the people don't pay attention to. I like to clean my house, I like to work in my garden, and I love spending time with my dogs.

MD: What drummers today are you listening to and inspired by?

EE: That's a very good question, I don't really pay attention to the

drummers on social media. The only drummer that came out of social media that I really care about is Greyson Nekrutman, he's a good friend of mine. Nowadays, I find myself going back to the drummers that first caught my attention: Chris Coleman, Eric Moore, Thomas Pridgen, David Coleman... I love that little kid that plays like crazy, JD Beck, he's awesome. Mike Mitchell was JD Beck's teacher and Mike is an amazing drummer that doesn't get enough recognition. There are so many drummers that are doing interesting things, Larnell Lewis is a terrific drummer and an awesome guy as well. Benny Greb, Anika Niles... there's so many of them.

MD: The drum world is a close-knit community and that's a special thing. Musicians that play other instruments don't have what we have. Drummers look out for each other, help each other, teach each other, and hang out together. Have you experienced that?

EE: I've been asked this question a couple times. Unfortunately, I haven't really experienced that because I don't really go out as much as I should, and when I go out (again) I'm in Spain. People say that I should go to the States and keep building my career, but I like it here. I have my family here, my car, my dogs, and the good weather. I'm very chill. When I go out people don't recognize me, there is not as much of a drum community here as there is in the States. I only experience the drum community online, and apart from a couple of bad experiences, most of the people are amazing and awesome to me.

MD: What gear are you playing?

EE: I just started playing Alesis electronic drums, I just got

... my biggest strength is to be able to replicate or emulate things that have already been composed at the drums. I've been doing this for so long that it isn't a big deal for me to listen to something and be ready to play it and record it very quickly.



the brand-new Alesis Strata Prime kit, and I love them.

MD: Are there any issues with the Strata Prime kit tracking, considering how hard and fast that you play?

EE: None.

MD: After all those earlier kits, what acoustic drums are you playing today?

EE: I have been playing my custom Varus drums that are made in Valencia, Spain. My favorite Varus snare drum is a 6.5 x 14 cast brass drum. Varus has provided me with more sizes and more drums than I will ever need. My cymbals and sticks are Meinl, I love their German way of organizing things. I use 20" crashes, 22" rides, 20" China's, and 16" Hi-hats. I change the models that I use all the time because I love them all, but my favorite ride cymbal is a 22" Symmetry ride, that's the best ride I've ever played. I focus on pedals and thrones because those things come between us and the drums. I use a Pearl tractor style throne, and Yamaha FP 9 pedals set to medium tension.

MD: What music are you listening to today?

EE: This might be a disappointing answer, but I barely listen to music. I have so much work that when I'm away from the kit, I don't even listen to music. I used to love listening to music when I was training, cleaning, or whatever. But nowadays, whenever I listen to music it's mostly music without drums. I've fallen in love with electronic music, whenever there's a bass drum going at 120, my mind disconnects, and it makes the whole day easier for me. I play so much music and it's always the same three songs, I have played "Toxicity" hundreds of times. I'm so tired of that music that I don't listen to much music. I know that is a disappointing answer.

MD: No, sometimes we need to give our brains a rest. Especially today when we are constantly bombarded with information and content 24-7. It is nice to give our ears and brains a rest, I get that. What are you working on drum-wise? What can't you do, that you would like to learn or get better at?

EE: That's interesting because to be honest, I'm trying (a little bit) to step away from the drums. I have 4 million people subscribed to my channel, and I'm not making nearly as much money as I should be making. If I was not playing copyrighted music, I would have been a millionaire a long time ago, but that hasn't happened because the music that I play has a copyright. So all that money has gone to whomever. Now I'm trying to focus on building a different business model and I'm starting to shoot interviews. I'm doing interviews with people that I respect and admire. That will be content that I can monetize, that's important.

MD: If you aren't making that much money from your content creation, how are you making a living?

EE: I used to play in a cover band called Orquesta Monte Carlo here in Spain. It was a cover band that played a lot of different songs, we had a four hour show with all different kinds of repertoire. We played all over Spain. Spain is a country where there's always party and there is a massive market for those bands, there are thousands

of them. Maybe it's the same in the States. You can make a living, or at least you used to be able to, performing with those bands. I did that for four years and I never spent any money. I'm also a very cheap guy, I save all the money that I make. I saved €60,000 while playing in that band. Spain is way cheaper than the States, you can live comfortably on €1000 a month. After I left that band, I started my side hustles, but they weren't a big success. I started up a Drum Academy on Patreon and I started making a little bit of money on YouTube because at the time they had a different policy and you only gave away 50% of the revenue that they produced. I was also giving drum lessons by a webcam, and I performed on Twitch... As soon as you start walking that path different opportunities appear, if you have your eyes open. I don't have a massive income source, but I have a lot of different things that allow me to make a living.

In terms of improving my own drumming, I'm trying to get better with a double pedal, but I don't know if that's a good idea. With a double pedal you forget about a whole important aspect of drumming. I haven't played a groove with a hi-hat in months. I'm just trying to get faster because it seems like there is a barrier that I've never been able to overcome, I have tried to get better at that, but I feel like I'm sacrificing way too much, so I don't know if I'm going to continue with that routine. But that's what I am working right now.

MD: What are your drumming strengths?

EE: Maybe I'm wrong, but I would say my biggest strength is to be able to replicate or emulate things that have already been composed at the drums. I've been doing this for so long that it isn't a big deal for me to listen to something and be ready to play it and record it very quickly. That's what makes me be able to put out so much content. I'm very good at that. I don't specialize in anything, I like playing everything which has made my drumming stay towards the center of the spectrum, but I can play many different things that people like.

MD: Do you ever practice improvising?

EE: I do that a lot, especially to warm up. I just start playing whatever comes to my mind and I do that for at least 40 minutes every single day. It's good to try to come up with different ideas.

MD: What is your daily practice routine?

EE: I warm up with improvising, then I work on some finger technique with triplets between 160 and 190 BPM. With the bass drum I try to play sixteenth notes nonstop between 160 to 200 for 10 minutes every day focusing on control and speed. I also try to play alternate singles with my hands for 10 minutes between 160 and 200 BPM. I do some rolling with my wrists too. The rest of the time is basically practicing chops and stickings. I don't really practice grooves at all, but I want to have the technique to play whatever grooves I need to play, but I don't play with the subtle details that everyone develops over time.

MD: What stickings do you like and favor in your playing?

EE: What a great question! I'm in love with four stickings.



Ultimately speed is a form of control, so you need to prioritize control over speed.

Paradiddles, inverted paradiddles, paradiddle-diddles, and six-stroke rolls. I try to practice all the different permutations of those stickings to produce 10,000 different stickings. That is another way of studying. Sometimes you have a sticking, but that sticking is going to change depending on many notes you play. You can start any sticking from different points within the beat, that's something that nobody does. With a paradiddle you have the four (or eight) different places that you can start it without changing the accents. If you change the accents there are thousands of possibilities of just that one sticking. I try to work on those four while also practicing the different permutations by starting on a different point in the beat. You can also change the doubles or the singles to a kick and see how that sounds, and if it sounds good, you can add that to the to the list too.

MD: The possibilities are endless! What is your favorite to play of those four?

EE: Six stroke rolls are beautiful; I just move the right hand to the crash, and I play it very fast. You can use the six-stroke roll as sextuplets over any groove and it sounds very good. I would say that's my favorite rudiment that I can play. That is an interesting rudiment, two doubles and two singles, and you can play it very fast when you master it.

MD: You mentioned speed and control on the bass

The best teacher that somebody can have, is often themselves. In order to understand that, the first thing that you need to do is to legitimize and validate yourself.



drums, how do you explain the difference between the two?

EE: If you want to see the master of control, watch Eloy Casagrande. Watch him playing live. Ultimately speed is a form of control, so you need to prioritize control over speed. I feel that most people try to set up the bass drum pedals for speed, but if you don't have control over the beater, you're going to find yourself with very sloppy drumming. It's like we talked about the drummers who can play very fast but cannot play slow. I am always trying to fall in the middle and to be in the middle, you need to develop control over the beater. I may not be the fastest, but I know where my beater is.

MD: Do you view the hands the same way?

EE: Basically, yes, it's the same thing. I switch between hand techniques because I find it a little easier to switch techniques with the hands. For snare drum playing, I recommend using your fingers as much as you can, but if you're playing blast-beats or playing fast rolls around the set, you need that extra rebound from your wrists. Toms don't rebound as much so you are

validate their knowledge more than we validate our own knowledge, that's the biggest mistake people make. People ask... What can I practice? What's a good exercise? I don't know, I don't know you, I don't know how old you are, I don't know how tall you are, I don't know what music that you listen to. The best teacher that somebody can have, is often themselves. In order to understand that, the first thing that you need to do is to legitimize and validate yourself. People often come to me saying, "I added these hi-hat notes to your exercise, is that OK?" They are trying to get that validation. Sure, adding the hats is a good idea, if you find new alternatives, go for it. As a human being looking to grow, you should understand that you can practice these different variations and permutations for a lifetime.

MD: I always tell students that music is one of the only subjects where the end justifies the means. If something sounds good, then it is a good idea. If it sounds bad, then it's not a good idea. Like you said, it's pretty simple. If you can be your own best teacher, then

Trust the process. That works for everything in life, that might disappoint people because it's about philosophy and life and not about music. People always want to learn the exercise to get faster in five minutes, but the obstacle is usually something personal that you need to understand better about yourself.

probably going to need a little bit of wrist motion that something like the Moeller technique can provide.

MD: In your Drumeo course, what have you found that most people WANT to work on? And what have you found that most people NEED to work on?

EE: It's interesting, in the beginning it was supposed to be an advanced course. I wrote something that they considered to be advanced, and we wound up cutting it in half. Now we have a course that's somewhere between beginner and intermediate. People say, "I can't play it yet, what should I do?" The answer is easy, keep going—you'll get it. It's not that complicated, just keep going. Most people don't have a problem with the exercises, they have a problem with the way they look at the exercises. They are marketed as 10-minute workouts, but that's just a standard measure. For some people it's going to take a year, for some people it will take a minute. When people don't see a result in 10 minutes, they lose their minds, and they don't know what to do because it's hard. I think the biggest thing that people need to do is just trust the process. No matter how long it takes, you will get there, trust the process!

Something that I learned very early on, is that people don't feel legitimate enough with themselves to learn from themselves, which I find to be super weird. With the kind of idol worship that drummers have, they see great drummers as prodigies, and we try to

what have you learned from yourself?

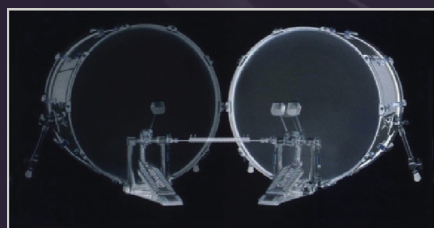
EE: Trust the process. That works for everything in life, that might disappoint people because it's about philosophy and life and not about music. People always want to learn the exercise to get faster in five minutes, but the obstacle is usually something personal that you need to understand better about yourself. Maybe you need to change the way you look at the world, if you trust the process and have worked hard on something, don't judge the things based on the result. Trust that if you keep doing whatever you are doing, as long as you are satisfied with your effort, there will be power and victory in that, and you should be happy. You should be confident that hard work will pay off, and if it doesn't, at least you tried. A lot of people are scared of trying, and not trying is the biggest failure of all. If you really want to do something, go for it, don't be afraid to fail. Failing is an opportunity for you to learn; if you fail at least you tried. I know that's a scary idea, but if I am 80 years old and dying on my deathbed, I don't want to look back and think, "I should have been a drummer or a painter." I want to try, and if it happens, that's a beautiful feeling, but if it doesn't, that won't be as bitter as regret. 🙏

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

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Photos by CJ Harvey



Kaleen Reading of Mannequin Pussy

By Felipe Laverde

Philadelphia's Mannequin Pussy cathartic music is a gift that makes you want to rage and go against the man, but it also makes you reflect about your existence in this lonely, harsh world we live in. Formed in 2010, the group has garnered attention for their powerful performances and distinctive style that blends elements of punk, indie rock, hardcore, and pop. The music that Kaleen Reading (drums, percussion), Colins "Bear" Regisford (bass, vocals), Maxine Steen (guitar, synths), and Marisa Dabice (guitar, vocals) make is a perfect balance between these genres. After joining the band in 2014, Kaleen and Mannequin Pussy have been firing on all cylinders between the non-stop touring that has gained them a loyal and diverse fan base and recording one EP and four albums. Kaleen's first two albums in the band *Romantic* (2016) and *Patience* (2019) have been well-received for their intensity and emotional depth. Their latest release *I Got Heaven* (2024) released through Epitaph Records is the best representation of what Mannequin Pussy means and what each person in the band brings to the table. *Pitchfork* chose the album for their Best New Music list and rated it an 8.8 out of 10, calling it "an essential, wide-ranging record that's mouthy, messy, and self-assured that mixes hardcore punk and pop music." At the base of this fully realized album is Kaleen's powerful and dynamic drumming that shapes a path for these songs to breath and come alive. Originally from New Jersey, Kaleen started her journey as a drummer in her early teenage years while taking classes at School of Rock. She formed her drumming style and technique by touring with the all-female tribute band Misstallica and is now living her drumming dreams with Mannequin Pussy.

MD: How did you find the drums?

KR: I always was instinctively drawn towards the drums from what I can remember. When I was young, I saw a drum set at a toy store, and I just thought it was the coolest thing ever. But I didn't even bother asking my parents because I knew it would be a no. Then finally in 3rd grade, they did a little concert band demonstration at my school. All the kids in the band did a demonstration where they played on practice pads. I thought that was the coolest thing ever. I wanted to do that. I took the permission slip home to join the drum line, and my mom immediately said, "No, you're not going to play drums." So, I had to play clarinet instead.

MD: How did you start playing the drums?

KR: I picked up the guitar, and I taught myself how to play guitar. Eventually they opened the School of Rock

in my town, and I went there for guitar lessons. One day I was jamming on guitar with the person who owned the school, who was playing drums. I said to him, "I can play a little bit of drums," and I sat on the drum set and played. After hearing me play, he told me to stay on the kit. Having an adult say that I was good changed my parent's ideas about it. My mom ended up being my biggest supporter and driving me to all my first shows.

MD: What age were you when started to take the drums seriously?

KR: Around 14.

MD: Were you practicing a lot?

KR: My practice was just playing music with people and jamming a lot. When you're practicing drums as much as you can in the house, it gets hard to not annoy anyone.

MD: Which artists or bands inspired you to play?

KR: The earliest band that I became obsessed with was Good Charlotte. That eventually led me to punk music. I also had a sampler CD that had a video of Alkaline Trio playing. I remember seeing their drummer, Derek Grant playing, and I thought that is what I want to do. That is the coolest thing. Dave Lombardo from Slayer was a big one for me. He was my favorite drummer for a long time. Mikkey Dee from King Diamond was also a favorite, because I had to learn the King Diamond stuff for one of my first bands. He's an incredible drummer. Of course, every drummer's favorite drummer is John Bonham. I get a lot of influence from him. I'm a huge Travis Barker fan. I love Travis Barker's creative drum parts. Dave Grohl is an encyclopedia of rock drumming. When I was a teenager, the drums that I played along to and tried to emulate the most was, any Queens of the Stone Age song. Brian Chase from the Yeah Yeah Yeah's is another big one for me. I think Mitch Mitchell

doesn't get enough credit. I think Mitch Mitchell is an amazing drummer and he blows my mind. Also, Bill Ward, I love how he plays the most un-metal stuff and it's so heavy.

MD: It's like jazz-metal. That's what I call it. What were some important lessons that stuck with you from the teachers you studied with?

KR: I got to study with Claude Coleman, Jr. from Ween at School of Rock which was cool. He showed me how to implement books like *Stick Control* and *Syncopation*, that was important to me. The other drum teachers I had showed me so much invaluable music. Drum wise, that was the biggest takeaway that I took from them. All the drum teachers I've studied with have been

My practice was just playing music with people and jamming a lot. When you're practicing drums as much as you can in the house, it gets hard to not annoy anyone.



in bands, so a big touching point for me is that they all had their own styles, brought those styles to the bands that they were in and the drum parts they created. I could really hear that in what they played in their songs. So, I just tried to do the same thing. Figuring out how you play and showing your personality behind the kit was a good lesson I learned.

MD: Were you in any bands during your time at School of Rock?

KR: All my first bands were people from School of Rock that I met. Most of those bands would write original music. But there was a group of girls in School of Rock that were playing King Diamond covers, and they had asked me to join their tribute band, Queen Diamond. Joining that band was pivotal for me getting better at the drums. I learned the entire album *Abigail* by King Diamond. Teaching myself the double bass and the songs helped my coordination.

MD: Were you playing double bass before?

KR: No, I got a double bass pedal to join that band! People asked, "What did you do? You got good quickly." I wasn't sure, but if I think about it now, I think the coordination from the double bass might have unlocked some things.

MD: Did you play a lot of shows with Queen Diamond?

KR: Yeah, we played a lot shows around Philly and New York. But then we formed, Misstallica, which was an all-female, tribute band to Metallica. We had a vulgar name before Misstallica that got the attention of a radio show host. They invited us to play on the radio which helped us sell out our first show, which was cool.

MD: How did you join Mannequin Pussy?

KR: While I was in Misstallica, I wanted to change my drumming style and play indie music. I also wanted to branch out and play with people who weren't in School of Rock. Most of the kids in School of Rock listened to and played the same type of music, which was mostly rock and metal. So, I answered an ad for a female drummer on Craigslist.

Then me and the bass player started a side project called, Low Fat Getting High. Eventually our singer thought what we were doing was cool, and he wanted to be part of it. So he ended up being a part of that too, and we started another band. We were playing New York City every single weekend which was a lot of fun. A promoter that booked our shows, also knew that Mannequin Pussy needed a new drummer, and he came up to me at a bar after a show and said, "Dude, you're so much cooler than the people in your band, you need to join Mannequin Pussy." I wasn't sure because I was into the music I was making with Low Fat Getting High. That promoter booked us (Low Fat Getting High) and Mannequin Pussy on a show together so that me and Marisa (singer of Mannequin Pussy) could meet. Marisa came up to me after the show and said, "You play drums like Dave Grohl, would you want to go on tour with us in the summer? I said maybe at first because I felt really attached to the music we were making. But then there was a little fallout situation that happened with Low Fat Getting High, and I thought, yeah, I'll go on tour

with Mannequin Pussy.

MD: Tell me about Mannequin Pussy?

KR: We're such a band. We're just four very individual musicians, but we all have such diverse musical taste. We put an importance on rocking, but we don't put boundaries on it, we sneak some pop elements in there. We're a rock band who doesn't give themselves boundaries.

MD: How was that first tour?

KR: I think we practiced once or twice and played a couple of warm-up shows. It was a lot of fun being on my first full length U.S.A. tour. It was crazy because it was all DIY shows that were mostly house parties. I think we played one *actual* venue.

MD: You guys always have a very heavy touring schedule; how do you get yourself through a tour?

KR: I've learned that there's way too many opportunities to party on tour. You must choose and moderate that kind of stuff. I also learned that I play much better when I warm up, so I have a basic routine. I have one of those reflex pads and I'll start on the softer side and do single strokes at different tempos. Usually, I try to hit 16th notes at 165 bpm because that's the tempo of "Of Her," and that's

Dave Lombardo from Slayer was a big one for me. He was my favorite drummer for a long time. Mikkey Dee from King Diamond was also a favorite, because I had to learn the King Diamond stuff for one of my first bands. He's an incredible drummer.



the fastest song we play live. I'll also go between single stroke rolls on the pad and doing alternate single strokes between my hands and feet (RKRKRKRK, LKLKLK). I do a little bit of stretching as well. I bring a yoga mat on tour and try to stretch every day and that makes a huge difference as well.

MD: What was the process for writing and recording *Romantic* in 2016?

KR: I think three of the songs might have already been written. I adjusted the drum parts and added drum fills.

in it called, Big Momma's Recording Studio. We recorded there with Evan Bernard and Chris "Doc" Baglivo. That record was just all of us in the same room playing live with no click track.

MD: What kit did you use?

KR: I used my Tama Birch Bubinga kit. That was my first "nice kit" which has a funny story. During my School of Rock days, I was in band called Burnside and we did a battle of the bands, and we won a Tama Rockstar kit.

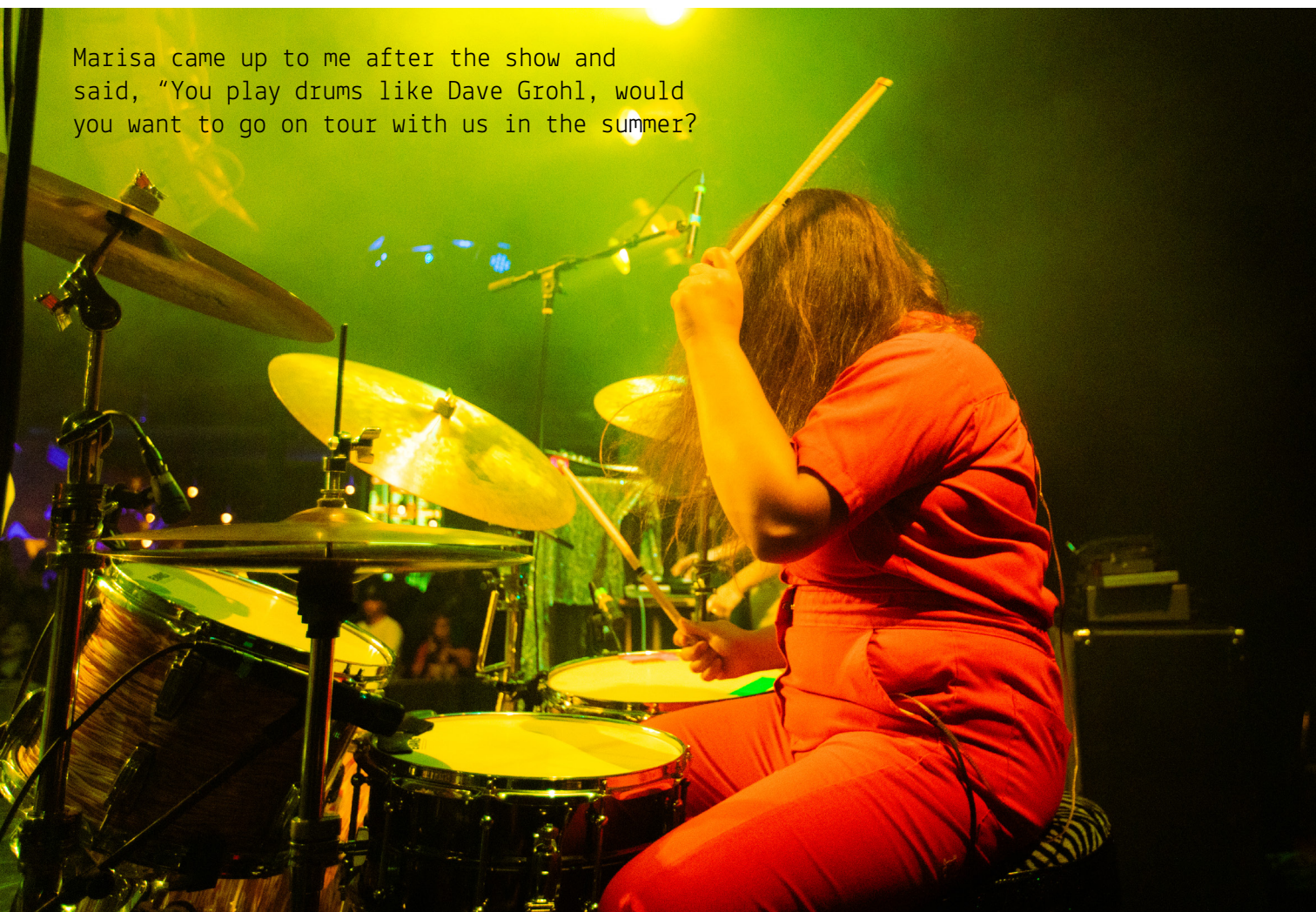
MD: Which battle of the bands was

that Tama Birch Bubinga kit.

MD: Awesome. I love that record. How did you feel when it came out?

KR: I was excited because I finally had music that I had recorded with my band that I had played with for over a year and a half at that point. I could finally say I DO play in this band. We had an album release party at the batting cages, and I remember we freaked out because it sold out. We thought, "Oh my God, this is crazy," around 150 people showed up (laughs).

Marisa came up to me after the show and said, "You play drums like Dave Grohl, would you want to go on tour with us in the summer?"



Most of the time Marisa or Thanasi (our previous guitarist) would have an idea on guitar and then bring it in, and we would just all work on fleshing it out together. We recorded it at a warehouse that me and Bear (bass player) ended up living in. The warehouse had a recording studio

this?

KR: It was just a community battle of the bands, but they gave out music equipment if you won. We won, and I sold the Rockstar kit that we won for \$500, and came up with \$600 more, and used that money to get the Tama Birch Bubinga kit. I just really wanted

MD: Looking at how far the band has come, what do you think were the factors that got you guys to where you are now?

KR: Constant touring has been the key. I don't think this band would have gotten to where it is if we didn't hit the road as hard as we have. I

think that's how we got our fan base. Our friendship is what sticks us together, you spend a lot of time with each other on tour, and that's hard to do it with people that are strictly business or that you don't really connect with in a fun way. I've learned that connecting over music can only take you so far. It's important to have fun in the van and make each other laugh and stuff.

MD: How did you guys fund the early tours?

KR: We've been lucky, we haven't really had to go into our own pockets. We have always (at least) broken even with merch sales, and people being nice and donating at the door, and eventually ticket sales.

MD: Talk about the album *Patience* (2019)

KR: We were already playing some songs from *Patience* on the tours we did before we recorded the album. We had been playing "Drunk II" at almost every show for a year prior, so by the time we recorded it, I knew exactly what I wanted to play. We had to record the album twice because the first time we recorded it, it sounded exactly like *Romantic*. I felt like our writing had elevated, but the sound was just the same as *Romantic*.

MD: You guys wanted a more professional sound?

KR: Yeah, for example, I wanted to record with a click track for the first time but where we first recorded it, we couldn't have separate mixes to adjust our individual click tracks. Before this album I recorded everything live without a click track, but I thought since everyone records with a click track why not do it for this album. (Producer-Engineer) Will Yip reached out and wanted to work with us and we took him up on the opportunity. We weren't too happy with how the first recording came out, and with Will it came out exactly how we wanted to sound.

MD: How was it working with Will Yip?

KR: He pretty much said do your own thing, but he gave me a few ideas. I only had a crash and a ride cymbal when I was writing the parts. So, I wasn't involving a second crash at all. But Will told me to create hooks and melodies with my parts, especially on the cymbals. He had me really thinking about the interaction between the cymbals, it was kind of mind blowing. I remember thinking, "Yeah that totally makes sense, you shouldn't just hit whatever cymbal that's convenient to hit."

MD: Can you elaborate on that.

KR: He was having me think about the sound and the relationship between all the cymbals and how they sound in the song. Instead of hitting what's convenient,



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he had me think about hitting the cymbals like it's a part of the song. Hitting them with intention instead of in the background (if that makes sense.) Instead of using this crash because it's convenient for my body, maybe use that crash on this part because it sounds darker or lighter and it fits well with that note or that part of the song.

MD: Because your roots are in punk rock drumming, you really didn't think about which cymbal sounds best, you thought about the energy of the song because that feels better. But Will made you think about the sound the cymbal produces and how it fits in a song and creating hooks with them. Is that that a good way to explain it?

KR: Yes, totally. That was an invaluable lesson.

MD: How were the tours supporting this album? Did you see a significant rise in people showing up the shows?

KR: We did a long tour after we released *Patience*, and all those shows felt amazing. It was cool to book bigger places. I don't think there was any DIY venues on that tour. We saw that people were liking this and our audience grew quickly. People really wanted to be at our shows, and we were selling them out. It felt incredible.

MD: What did you do during Covid?

KR: We did what most bands were doing, kind of doing stuff virtually, it was weird. I was doing drum lessons. And I was working on some drumming stuff. I started to play to pop music songs, so I didn't lose my mind. (laughs)

MD: What kind of pop music were you playing to?

KR: I was playing a lot of ridiculous beats over Enya and Britney Spears songs. I was really losing my mind. (laughs) But we did write an EP in 2020. We recorded it while everyone was still in lockdown. We went back into Will's studio just to see what would happen if we all got in a room together, and we made the EP called *Perfect*.

MD: How did it feel to come back?

KR: It was awesome to get back in the studio, on a drum set, and to play loud. That EP was interesting because by that time, Will Yip moved on to doing cymbals and drums separately. So, I tracked the EP that way, which was a fun challenge. I wanted to do it, but I wanted it to sound like I was playing everything together. When you do that, you really have to know what you're going to play.

MD: How did you come to playing with (the band) Japanese Breakfast on Jimmy Kimmel?

KR: That was cool! Japanese Breakfast are also from Philly, and we've been long-time friends. Mannequin Pussy opened for their first US headlining tour. We filmed that at the Sellersville theater, because it was still kind of that post-Covid time where people were starting to do things, but they still had the late-night show performances filmed remotely (off set.) Japanese Breakfast have a snare drum marching part on their song "Paprika" and I got to play it with them. It was my first time playing with a click track live. It was pre-recorded so if I messed up, we could redo it. But I think we only played it two times. It was fun to do, and it was fun to practice with my friend Craig Hendrix who plays drums for Japanese Breakfast. We got together and made sure the parts worked. It's fun to play drums with another drummer. It's funny because Marisa (Mannequin Pussy singer) had also performed with Japanese Breakfast on another late-night thing. So, half of Mannequin Pussy have been on late-night show with other bands (laughs). With our band's name, who knows if that will ever happen for us?

MD: Tell me about the lead up to *I Got Heaven*.

KR: Our guitar player left the band in 2021, and we got a new guitar player named Maxine Steen. Everyone was also going through breakups, so it was a weird time for us. But I fell in love during that

time, so I was going through things in a different way. At that point, we had a practice space in Philly where we would get together, jam, and work on the new songs. But nothing really took formation until we got hooked up with John Congleton, who's an amazing producer, and we went to California to write with him. That was our first time going to a different destination to record an album.

MD: How was it writing this album away from home?

KR: That was a cool experience; getting out of town, getting an Air BnB, and basically clocking into work and going to the studio. We had to spend hours and hours writing music and then go back to the Air BnB and do the same thing the next day.

MD: Were you behind a drum set when you guys were writing?

KR: Yeah, I was sitting at the kit, we just all played and jammed until it all came together, and John (Congleton) was a good guiding voice. He would interject ideas, but most of the time he would have us try things differently on some parts. For the song "Of Her," I did a 16th note

hi-hat beat, I remember him pointing at the hi-hat and saying, "Yes!"

There's a little drum solo part in the middle of that song. When we were tracking it at first, I just played a drum beat during the break. I remember him saying, "That's not doing it, do something else," and I just pulled the solo out and he said, "Yeah, that's it!"

MD: In "I Don't Know You" you used brushes. Are you a brush player?

KR: I have used brushes occasionally on some songs. For "I Don't Know You" I just felt like it would fit. When we were writing those songs there was a pair of brushes and I just picked them up. I thought it would be cool to use them. It's still something I'm figuring out live.

MD: Did you always practice brushes?

KR: I've played them in settings where I just use them like drumsticks. I can get the swirling sound, but I don't have technical brush skills. I don't have a good traditional grip.

MD: When you were tracking this album did you write out your drum parts or just play what felt right in the moment?

KR: It's a mix. I intuitively play what I feel and then I think about it after. I thought about all these songs for

If you are mostly self-taught, always reevaluate your technique. At least think about it.



months. I was thinking what fill should go here and what fill should go there. Most of the time we would all be jamming at practice, and I would stay after just to try to hone in on my drum parts. A lot of times I just turn off my mind and play. But for a song like, "OK? OK! OK?" I must know what I'm playing. I must write a drum part.

MD: I was just about to bring that song up. It has such a cool and complicated beat.

KR: I love it too; it's got a lot of RLL patterns around the kit. It was fun to play in the studio.

MD: Looking back to *Romantic*, and now recording *I Got Heaven*, are you a more comfortable player in the studio from the first time you guys recorded together?

KR: Yeah, I think so. Starting from *Romantic*, to playing live with no click track, to using whatever kit I was playing at the time. Now things are totally different, we record with a click track, we've got a producer, and I used four different snare drums on *I Got Heaven*.

MD: What's your favorite track off *I Got*

Heaven?

KR: You know, it changes all the time, but I think "Loud Bark" is one of the songs we're all proud of. If it wasn't our song, I would be listening to it all the time.

MD: What kit did you use to record *I Got Heaven*?

KR: I said to John our producer, I would love to use a Ludwig kit, and he said he had access to one but didn't say what kind. When I got the studio there was a seventies Ludwig Vistalite kit which is typically not used for recording. I tuned it up until it sounded good. I'm not the best at tuning but I have one of those Evans torque keys. That really helps you get a baseline, then you can just adjust from there. The drum sizes were 22", 12", and 16". I also used Zildjian cymbals. The 15" Avedis hi-hats, an 18" K Custom Dark Crash, an 18" K Dark Thin Crash, and a 22" K Light Ride. And (like I said,) I rented four different snare drums.

MD: What kind snare drums?

KR: A Ludwig maple, a Supraphonic, a deep brass snare, and another metal snare that we used on "Nothing

Like". We called it the "Spin Doctor snare" because whoever had rented it before, put on those Evans HD dry vented heads and cranked it up insanely. So, when we were auditioning snare drums, we thought that one sounded crazy, but it worked for "Nothing Like."

MD: What drums are you using live?

KR: I have one of the new purple Ludwig Vistalite kits, and I recently got a Black Beauty snare. It's amazing. I also use the ProMark Rebound 5A long sticks

MD: What advice would you give a younger drummer?

KR: If you are mostly self-taught, always reevaluate your technique. At least think about it. For example, for the longest time, I was hitting my thigh with my drumstick. And I recently just found out that if I raise my snare drum a little bit, that totally fixes it. After all these years, it's nice to not smack the crap out of my thigh anymore. Also find people who play music and play music together. Because that's the only way you can really find your own style and figure out your identity behind the kit.

MD: I definitely hear that on the new album. Where do you see the band in five years from now?

KR: Hopefully with a few more albums under our belt and doing the same thing, but at a bigger level! Maybe being less frequent about shows, but having the shows be bigger.

MD: Thank you for doing this and thank you for the new album. It's amazing.

KR: Thank you! It's a dream come true to be in *Modern Drummer*. I love reading the magazine. 🥁



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

VMP

Vinyl Me, Please

Matt Fiedler is the CEO of Vinyl Me, Please (VMP.) But what is Vinyl Me, Please? It is a combination of a record retailer, a reissue label, and a music distributor. But more than anything, Vinyl Me, Please is a brand that represents music appreciation. Its mission is to bring the world together through a love of music. But why is *Modern Drummer* talking to Matt? When it's at its best, drums and modern drumming lives within music, one might say that music is the vessel that delivers great drumming to us. Without music to contextualize it, drumming just "chops around" and impresses (some of) us without much meaning. The people at VMP are trying to improve the experience of listening to music by manufacturing high-quality vinyl pressings of classic and forgotten music.

VMP curates the music listening experience for people who LOVE music and educates listeners and musicians alike by going through the annals of recorded music history and finding, pressing, and re-issuing pristine LPs of amazing music from the past and the present.

By Mark Griffith

MD: Matt, where does your love of music and vinyl come from?

VMP: My love of music has always been an exploration in curiosity and an interest in the art and appreciation of storytelling. My dad is a guitar player and played in a cover band when I was growing up. The drummer kept his kit at our house, and I got interested in the drums. My dad noticed this and gave me a copy of Sheryl Crow's debut album and said, "Listen to this, and see if you can learn to play along." So, I learned how to play drums while listening to Sheryl Crow records. I eventually started a few bands throughout high school before going to Belmont University to study Music Business & Entrepreneurship. Since then, my love of music has only grown. I grew up listening to my dad's records, and eventually got exposed to electronic and punk music through friends of mine. I remember hearing Wilco's *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* and was blown away. I didn't know that music

could sound like that. It was the way that Wilco created sounds and turned them into music. It wasn't "electronic," they were still using instruments to make the sounds, but their music was much more expansive than anything I had been exposed to. My curiosity and appreciation for music blossomed from there.

MD: How did the interest in music

lead to Vinyl Me, Please?

VMP: Vinyl Me, Please (VMP) was started in 2013, right around the time Spotify entered the US. At that time, it was very clear that the whole model of listening to music was changing. It was going from paying for ownership of recordings to paying for access to music. It's not that we were (or are) anti-streaming, but we're old enough



to remember music pre-internet, and young enough for the majority of our experience with music to have been through a screen or device.

Myself and my cofounder had CDs when we were kids, and our dads had big record collections. We both used to spend hours listening to CDs and records, reading the liner notes, and looking at pictures of the bands we loved. We had an appreciation for physical formats because of those experiences. The idea of VMP grew from this place. We wanted to build something that could celebrate music and bring people around a shared passion for music.

MD: Do you focus on the audiophile aspect of vinyl, or do you focus on the musical content of the music, or do you even distinguish between the two?

VMP: We've been in business for almost 12 years. The biggest lesson we've learned along the way is the importance of quality in the experience of listening to records. We started knowing very little about manufacturing a record, and now, VMP records are regarded as one of the highest-quality records on the market. We've invested a lot of time and resources into our supply chain to make this possible.

At the same time, we try to curate the experience so that it's accessible to a wide audience. We curate a mixture of records, everything from the records you already know and love, to the records you've never heard of, probably never would have bought, but are likely to become your next favorite records.

We have a lot of members who are newer record collectors, some who enjoy it but wouldn't consider themselves an audiophile, and several who are self-identified audiophiles.

MD: How does the VMP release process work?

VMP: We are in a unique position. We have the ability to curate the entire history of music, which can be both a blessing and a curse. We do a lot of catalog releases, but we also do quite a bit of newer releases as well. Our curation team spends a great deal of time going through label catalogs to find the diamonds in the rough, and at the same time, they're fielding pitches from labels about new releases.

We're always trying to answer three questions whenever we're considering a new project. First, is there a story we can tell? Second, can we make it special, or unique in some way? And third, is it worth owning?

MD: For the audiophiles out there, who is doing your remastering and your pressing?

VMP: We work with a couple different engineers, Sterling Sound and Ryan K. Smith does a lot of our records; we've also done a bunch of projects with Alchemy Mastering in the UK. For certain releases we try to find up-and-coming remastering engineers and try things out just to see who else is out there doing good stuff. But Sterling ends up getting the majority of our high value remaster projects. Most of our records are pressed at GZ in the Czech Republic. We also regularly work with RTI, Furnace, and

several others.

MD: How does the VMP Club work?

VMP: When you sign up for the subscription, there are three tracks from which you can choose. Essentials is sort of the cream of the crop, the best of the best. It's the music that we believe is truly essential to the modern vinyl collection. There's a Jazz-Funk-Soul-Blues track which is centered on those genres from all time periods. Lastly, there is the rap and hip-hop track that is obviously centered around rap and hip-hop releases. You can sign up for one track, or all three.

A new record is selected for each track every month, and we announce those about a week before they start shipping. If you don't want that record, you can swap (or exchange it) for something from our catalog. Members



It's not that we were (or are) anti-streaming, but we're old enough to remember music pre-internet, and young enough for the majority of our experience with music to have been through a screen or device.

also get access to our store, which for domestic members gives you free shipping, and special discounts. Our store has most of our archive, and where we put out another five to ten releases per month.

MD: Of course, we all remember the old record clubs, how is VMP different?

VMP: Yes, there is a *history* with "record clubs." Columbia Music House is something that a lot of people bring up, and several labels have tried to create their own record clubs time as VMP has grown. Most of those efforts have either been shut down or are really small. I think the thing that has always differentiated VMP is the authenticity of the experience. VMP was created for music lovers by music lovers, and we go above and beyond to serve the music love. It's not an easy business, and it takes a lot of time, resources, and energy to do it right. Most people don't want to make that investment, but we do.

MD: What do you think is the reason behind the recent interest in vinyl records?

VMP: That's a really good question. I don't know that I would have predicted VMP growing into what it is today 12 years ago, but we were on the front end of what ended up being a really cool and fun trend.

One theory I have is that, as technology has invaded more parts of our lives, the desire for human experiences has become more prominent. COVID was a really extreme

got her a copy of Barbie Soundtrack that VMP recently put out. It's been amazing to watch her unpack the record, read the liner notes and production credits, and to watch her put the record on every morning as she's getting ready for the day. She's obsessed with it, more so than any other toy she got for her birthday! This has made her curious about the other records in our collection and she's started to pull random records off the shelf just to listen to them. It's incredible to watch, and I think it will be as important for her as it was for me as a kid.

MD: The audiophile world can be particularly hard to satisfy, how have you attempted to keep them happy?

VMP: The audiophile can be hard to please, you're right. They care about everything, even the smallest details. As I said, we went from not knowing anything about manufacturing to putting out some of the highest-quality records on the market. The audiophiles have set the bar and challenged us to continually get better.

Audiophiles were skeptical about VMP at first, but we've slowly won them over. This is through both our ability to find records they genuinely want in their collection, and our commitment to quality, even when something goes wrong.

We're imperfect people working with an imperfect format, and we make mistakes every now and again. A few years ago, we put out J. Dilla's *Donuts*. There was a "whoosh" on side

C that we caught only just before we started shipping the records. We dug deeper and found that it was a defect that was never addressed in the previous remastering. We thought it was unlikely most would notice it, but it wasn't up to our quality standards. We shipped the records with a note that called out the whoosh and told people we were in the process of remastering and repressing those discs, and we would send a corrected copy in the next month. That's something our members still talk about, and this kind of integrity is what has earned us the respect of audiophiles and music lovers alike.

MD: What are some of VMP's top sellers?

VMP: We did Black Sabbath's *Paranoid* a while ago, and I think we've sold like 25 or 30,000 copies of that record. We've done all the first pressings of Fiona Apple's catalog, but *Tidal* is one that we've repressed a couple of times. Every time we press it, we sell it out in minutes. We've pressed Gorillaz *Demon Days*, that's a big seller for us, as is Mariah Carey's *Butterfly*.



We curate a mixture of records, everything from the records you already know and love, to the records you've never heard of, probably never would have bought, but are likely to become your next favorite records.

example of this. Being limited to interacting with others through a screen created a craving for real human connection. We saw an uptick in our business as people were investing more in their homes, trying to design their spaces to allow for moments of disconnect, and were desperate to connect with others in a deeper way.

Outside of COVID, there are similar trends in the book industry, and even with the slow food movement. Each of these things are things that require us to pay a premium, and many are happy to do that because of the experience they offer. It's now about convenience, it's about having something you can feel connected to.

The purists will say, "Don't call it a comeback!" I don't know that I agree with that, but I don't think the format is going anywhere. I have a nine-year old daughter. I just

Our curation team spends a great deal of time going through label catalogs to find the diamonds in the rough, and at the same time, they're fielding pitches from labels about new releases.

Digital is like buying processed food. Processed food is chemically engineered for you to love it, but it's not "real." This is kind of how I think about digital. There is a time and a place, and not all digital is "bad," but you'll miss out on a lot of the details if you only listen to digital.

MD: Give me a few records that aren't top sellers, but (to your ears) should be?

VMP: The Books' *Lemon of Pink* is an all-time favorite of mine. That's one of those early electronic records I discovered when I was kid. Early on we did a similar record by an artist called Evenings called *Yore*, that's another minimalistic electronic record that has some amazing layers to it. We did the self-titled Betty Davis album which I feel was totally underappreciated.

MD: That is a funk classic with Gregg Errico from Sly and the Family Stone playing drums.

VMP: People were excited about it when we released it, but I am surprised at how few people celebrate that record. It's an incredible album, and the drumming is impeccable. Another consistent favorite amongst our team is an artist named Jim Sullivan and his album *UFO*. That has become a cult favorite within our member base.

MD: Give me five essential records that you think everyone should have in their collection?

VMP: I'd have to start with Wilco's *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* and *A Ghost is Born*. Kendrick Lamar's *Good Kid, M.A.A.D. City* is in my opinion, another essential record. Sturgill Simpson's *Metamodern Sounds in Country Music* is great. There's an album called *Blackbird* from a band called Fat Freddy's Drop has been sitting in my "now playing" stand for the last three years, so I'd say that's another essential.

MD: For the "crate digging" drummers out there like myself, what is the difference between older records bought at a used record store, and buying new records from VMP?

VMP: Good question, it comes down to quality of the pressing. Vinyl is inherently finite in quantity, so any record you buy is "limited." That said, there are also varying degrees of quality. A lot of records from the 60s and 70s never got quality pressings. They were mass produced, but there are some first pressings that are really sought after. It's hard to tell when you're flipping through bins, but that's where something like the website Discogs can be really helpful in identifying the quality of each pressing.

MD: What about those unfortunate people who are only listening to streamed music, what are they missing?

VMP: Digital is like buying processed food. Processed food is chemically engineered for you to love it, but it's not "real." This is kind of how I think about digital. There is a time and a place, and not all digital is "bad," but you'll miss out on a lot of the details if you only listen to digital. Vinyl is imperfect, but it's also human. Listening to a

record is like opening a portal into the mind of the musicians who are playing. You feel like an audience of one, like the record is being performed right in front you, with all its warts and imperfections.

MD: Does VMP have much of a musician (or drummer) following, and how do you cater to musicians?

VMP: A huge portion of our customer base are musicians, yes. If they're not musicians, they're the kind of people who spend a significant amount of time and money on music, whether buying vinyl, going to shows, or buying merch.

VMP occupies a special place within the music industry. Our audience is made up of "super fans" from around the world. This is where authenticity comes into play. Because we are also music fans, we think about designing the experience for our members with the goal of elevating the listening experience. We work closely with the artist to tell their story the way they want it to be told, and we go above and beyond to ensure that experience is as high quality as possible.

MD: As I looked at your website, I saw a classic Don Blackman self-titled recording (with drummer Dennis Chambers) that is an absolute drumming and funk classic! What drove VMP towards releasing that on vinyl?

VMP: I don't know how we came to that, other than it being an incredible record. Sometimes our curation team stumbles upon a record and says *there's no way that we can't release this*. That's the benefit of the way that we're structured. We're ok taking chances on the curation.

MD: What can we expect to see on the horizon from VMP?

VMP: To be totally honest, we've been too focused on



growth these last few years, and I think we've lost of a bit of our focus as we've tried to expand. I just recently stepped back into VMP and I'm focused on bringing our brand back to the core of what we do. It's been so fun to reconnect with our community and to rediscover all of the things they love about VMP. There are lot of fun things we have planned for the next several months.

MD: Sign me up! 🥁

Green Day's "Before The Lobotomy" drummer Tre Cool

Transcription by Marc Atkinson

"Before the Lobotomy," the fifth track on Green Day's *21st Century Breakdown*, showcases the talent of brilliant punk drummer Tré Cool (Frank Edwin Wright III.) We chose this track because of its simple, yet powerful, odd time signature groove that forms the foundation of the song. If you're new to playing odd time signatures, this is an excellent place to start. When it comes to odd time signatures, I always recommend moving beyond counting and

focusing on feeling the groove and melody. This song is perfect for that approach. Instead of counting, just play and immerse yourself in the pulse that's woven within and throughout the song. As you internalize it, you'll soon find that feeling 7 will become as natural as feeling 4. As Tré Cool himself said, "Play the song, don't play the instrument. I started figuring out how to make the band a stronger unit, to make it jump." This is perfect advice for any drummer.



Music Key

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

GUITAR $\text{♩} = 62$

4

VOCAL

8

7

NEW TEMPO $\text{♩} = 136$

21

26

31

35

39

43

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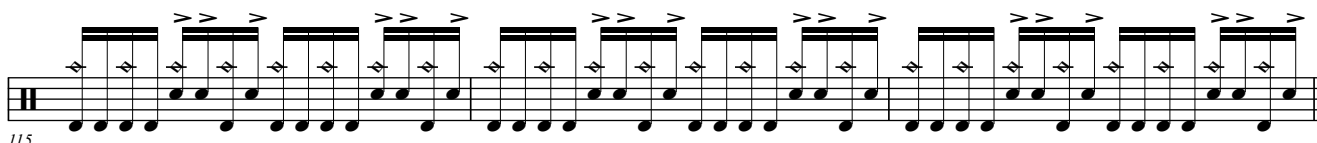
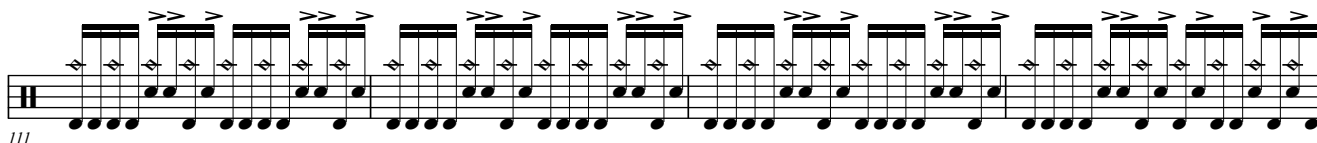
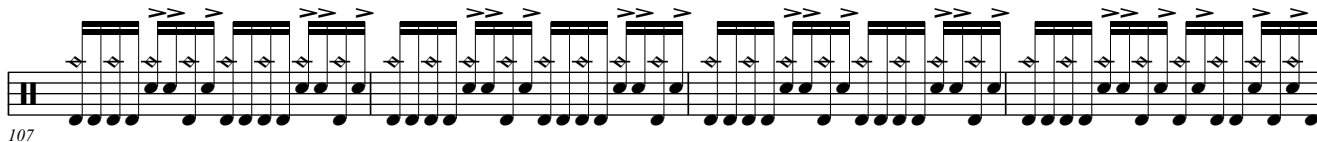
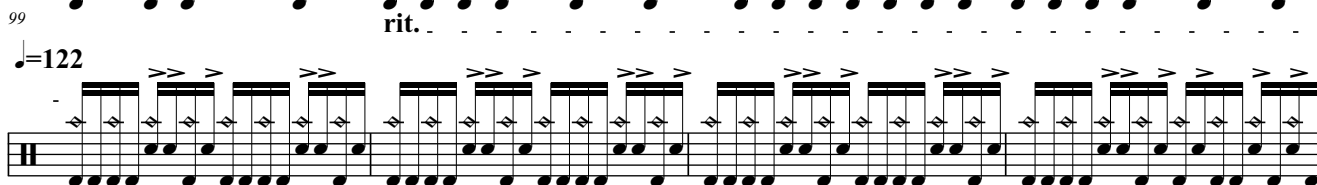
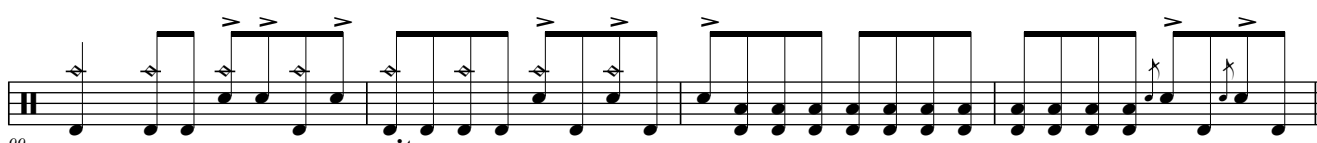
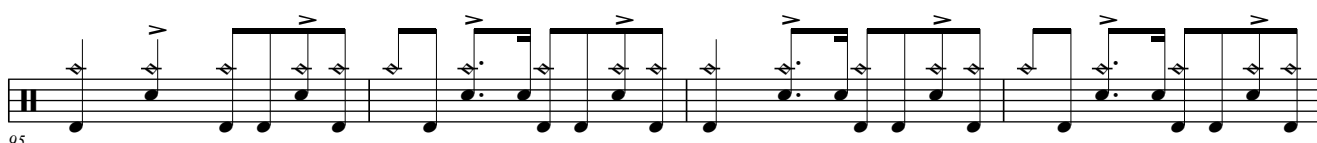
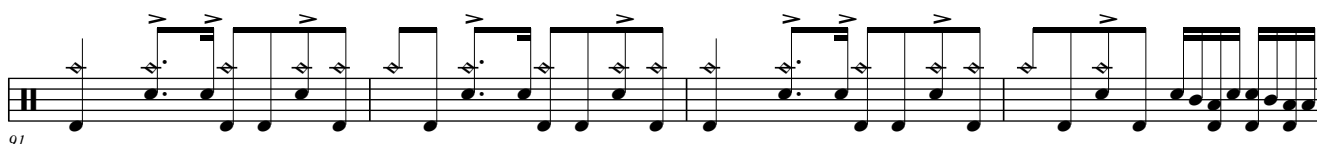
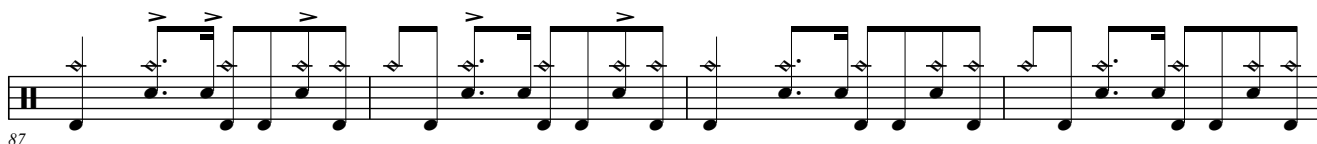
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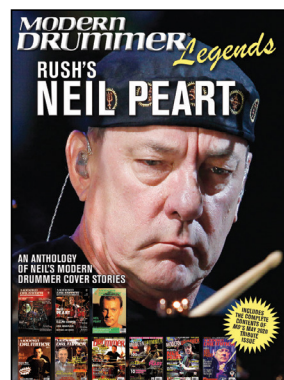
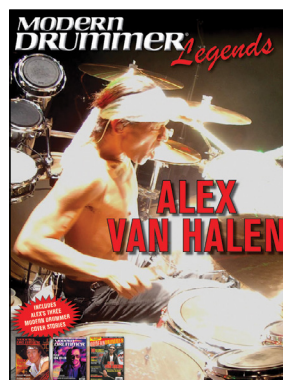
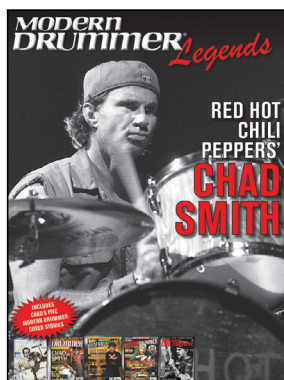
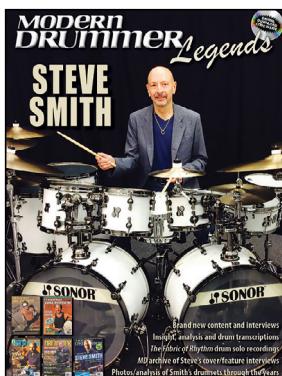


Marc Atkinson, a dedicated musician, honed his craft under the guidance of the renowned Gary Chaffee. Now calling Las Vegas home, Marc is on the brink of unveiling his labor of love—a comprehensive transcription book that promises to captivate music enthusiasts worldwide.

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



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Master Studies: Stroke Combination Studies, 5 Stroke Roll Combinations

By Joe Morello

Going from single strokes to double strokes, to buzz (multiple rebound) strokes, involves different pressures on the sticks. You must be able to change the pressure your fingers are putting on the sticks without tension developing in the wrists.

When going between single strokes and double strokes, the idea is to get the same sound, even though your hands are only moving half as fast when playing the doubles.

When moving between doubles and buzz strokes, the important thing is not to tighten up during the buzz strokes. Your hands will be moving at the same speed; the difference is the pressure you apply with your fingers.

When going from singles to buzz strokes, again, the hands will be going only half as fast on the bounce notes. The idea is to get as many rebounds as possible. Some people try to move their hands too fast because they're not getting enough rebounds. Practice slowly at first so you can concentrate on making the sticks rebound, even though at a slow tempo, the roll will not sound smooth. After you develop the ability to get a good rebound from the stick, you can increase the tempo and close the roll.

This month we will be taking these three strokes (singles, doubles, and buzz,) and creating 5 stroke rolls. Note how the first four notes of the rolls are developed moving from singles to doubles to buzzes.

5-stroke roll combinations

1. $\frac{12}{8}$

2. $\frac{12}{8}$

3. $\frac{12}{8}$

4. $\frac{12}{8}$

5 $\frac{12}{8}$ |
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R R L L R L L R R L R L R L R L

| :||
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

6 $\frac{12}{8}$ |
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R R L L R L L R R L R L R L R L

| :||
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

7 $\frac{12}{8}$ |
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L L R R L R L R L R L R L

| :||
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

8 $\frac{12}{8}$ |
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R R L L R L R L R L R L

| :||
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

9 $\frac{12}{8}$ |
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L L R R L R L L L L L

| :||
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L L L R L R L R L R L

10 $\frac{12}{8}$ |
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L L R R L R R L L

| :||
 R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

The Flow Of Movement

By Chris Lesso

Flow is the space where high performance lives. Athletes call this 'being in the zone,' that magical sphere where you're almost watching yourself from above. Flow is the mastery of our inner world to feel and perform at our best on demand. When we're channeling our craft; it's playing us.

I believe getting into flow is one of the main reasons we drum. This is where that feeling of 'the drums playing you' comes from. We all have those days that feel like the furthest thing from flow, when we stiffen up and overthink our every move. Thought is the enemy of flow, in order to drop into this state our mind must slow for the effortless mastery to begin. Knowing how to surrender and access the zone is what keeps drumming fun, making it a lifestyle for the long game.

How you move is how you groove!

Drumming IS movement. It's a dance, an effortless flow where our signature sound is an echo of our motions. Think of your drums as a 'dream catcher,' the conduit that catches your unique motions for the world to hear. Your movement creates your sound. To sound consistent, relaxed, and flowing, we must move in the same way. This is big magic at work! The flow of movement is how we fearlessly craft our sound on the drums. Have you ever seen a stiff robot playing drums? If they did, they wouldn't groove!

When I started playing drums, I ignored all the foundational steps and dove straight into my favorite music. I already had a background in piano so when I finally got my first drumset I was impatient. I jumped right into playing songs, doing my best to mimic what I heard. It was fun at first, but the cathedral I was building lay on shaky ground. I was squeezing the sticks, and I got blisters. I had no idea how to breathe as I played, or what my limbs were doing in between the notes. I was trying too hard. All I knew was I had to hit everything in front of me, and I got around the set as best I could. I ignored a whole other approach that would have saved me years of playing with tension that slowed me down. And it caught up with me. Only later, through the doubled effort of having to break my bad habits, did I discover that when you know how to move, the groove takes care of itself.

My big 'a-ha' moment came when I played the Kingston Music Fest in Ontario, Canada. Closed off from traffic, the city center was transformed into a playground for bands to take over every club and street corner. It was an array of sound, and on my breaks between sets I wandered around to take it all in. There were so many bands that, as soon as I moved out of earshot of one, I'd drift into another. Wherever I walked, a new band was up ahead while the one behind would fade. I discovered that as I got closer to the music, I could predict how the drummers were moving before I saw them.

Whether the beat sounded fluid or jerky, once they

came into view, I noticed that they moved the same way. It became a living experiment of seeing how the drummer's dance was creating the groove. As I walked through the multitude of bands, there was one bouncy, infectious beat in the crowd that drew me like a magnet. I could only hear it at first, so I had to wait and see how the visual matched up. Sure enough, what I had imagined was now right in front of me. This one drummer had pulled me in, and since sound is an echo of motion, he had the movement to match. Through the dance of our movement, we control the shape of our sound. How you move is how you groove!

To get closer to this ideal, we need a view from the outside. Studying calligraphy, Tai Chi, or tap dancing can help us get more out of our drumming than staying chained to the drumkit. Study the grace of dancer Fred Astaire. Deconstruct the quickness of Muhammad Ali. Watch how animals move in the wild, or how waves crash in the sea. Nothing is off limits to amplify our life through rhythm.

"I look out in the audience, and if the audience isn't grooving, I know something's wrong. I will shift the tempo, I can adjust." - Steve Jordan

Movement through drumming is our gateway into flow. To see this in action, watch a video of your favorite drummer, but with the sound on MUTE. It's revealing to see how the body language of the drummers we love is crucial to their signature sound. This may seem counter-intuitive at first, because we need to hear the drums! But it's how we move in between the notes that really shapes the imprint of our groove. Then, almost like an actor, you can mimic different body language for yourself to see how it affects your voice. This gets us closer to our drumming heroes, so we can get some of their personality in our own playing. Have mirrors around you and video yourself to experiment. Be bold and have fun with the process! With all the noise in the drum world of having to get the latest gear and learn new tricks, none of it really matters. Our sound is in us, and we're here to refine it. Inside you lies the DNA of your sound. Ten drummers using this same foundation will drum in ten different ways. This is why we can never 100% emulate anyone else's style but our own. The journey of finding flow on the drums is different for everyone. It's about bringing a little more of you out into the world. It's rhythm in motion. Now, let's feed our courage so we can unleash it.

Are you ready to unleash your potential in drumming and life? Chris Lesso's LTR DRUMMING METHOD is for drummers who want to reach higher. If you're ready to live your best self through drumming, book your first free session at chrislesso.net/LTRDRUMMING



The Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming: Eighth Notes

By Bobby Rondinelli

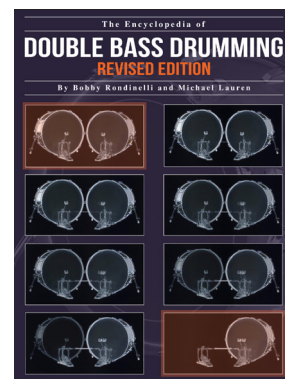
In the new and revised edition of the *Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming*, Bobby includes nine new double bass drumming chapters. The new and expanded edition covers contemporary techniques such as bass drum double strokes, feet-only exercises, binary and ternary rhythms, “skiplets”, beat turnarounds,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

-Eighth note double bass is usually played at fast tempos.

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

-The fills from the 16th note and eighth note triplet chapters will work great with all of the following beats.

-All beats can be played right or left foot lead.



1

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

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

18

19

Exercise 19, first staff: A single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notation consists of a series of eighth notes with beams, starting on a middle line and moving up and down in a pattern. There are 'x' marks above some notes, indicating specific techniques or accents. The exercise ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

20

Exercise 20, first staff: A single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notation consists of a series of eighth notes with beams, starting on a middle line and moving up and down in a pattern. There are 'x' marks above some notes, indicating specific techniques or accents. The exercise ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

21

Exercise 21, first staff: A single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notation consists of a series of eighth notes with beams, starting on a middle line and moving up and down in a pattern. There are 'x' marks above some notes, indicating specific techniques or accents. The exercise ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

22

Exercise 22, first staff: A single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notation consists of a series of eighth notes with beams, starting on a middle line and moving up and down in a pattern. There are 'x' marks above some notes, indicating specific techniques or accents. The exercise ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Exercise 22, second staff: A single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notation consists of a series of eighth notes with beams, starting on a middle line and moving up and down in a pattern. There are 'x' marks above some notes, indicating specific techniques or accents. The exercise ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

23

Exercise 23, first staff: A single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notation consists of a series of eighth notes with beams, starting on a middle line and moving up and down in a pattern. There are 'x' marks above some notes, indicating specific techniques or accents. The exercise ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Exercise 23, second staff: A single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notation consists of a series of eighth notes with beams, starting on a middle line and moving up and down in a pattern. There are 'x' marks above some notes, indicating specific techniques or accents. The exercise ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

24

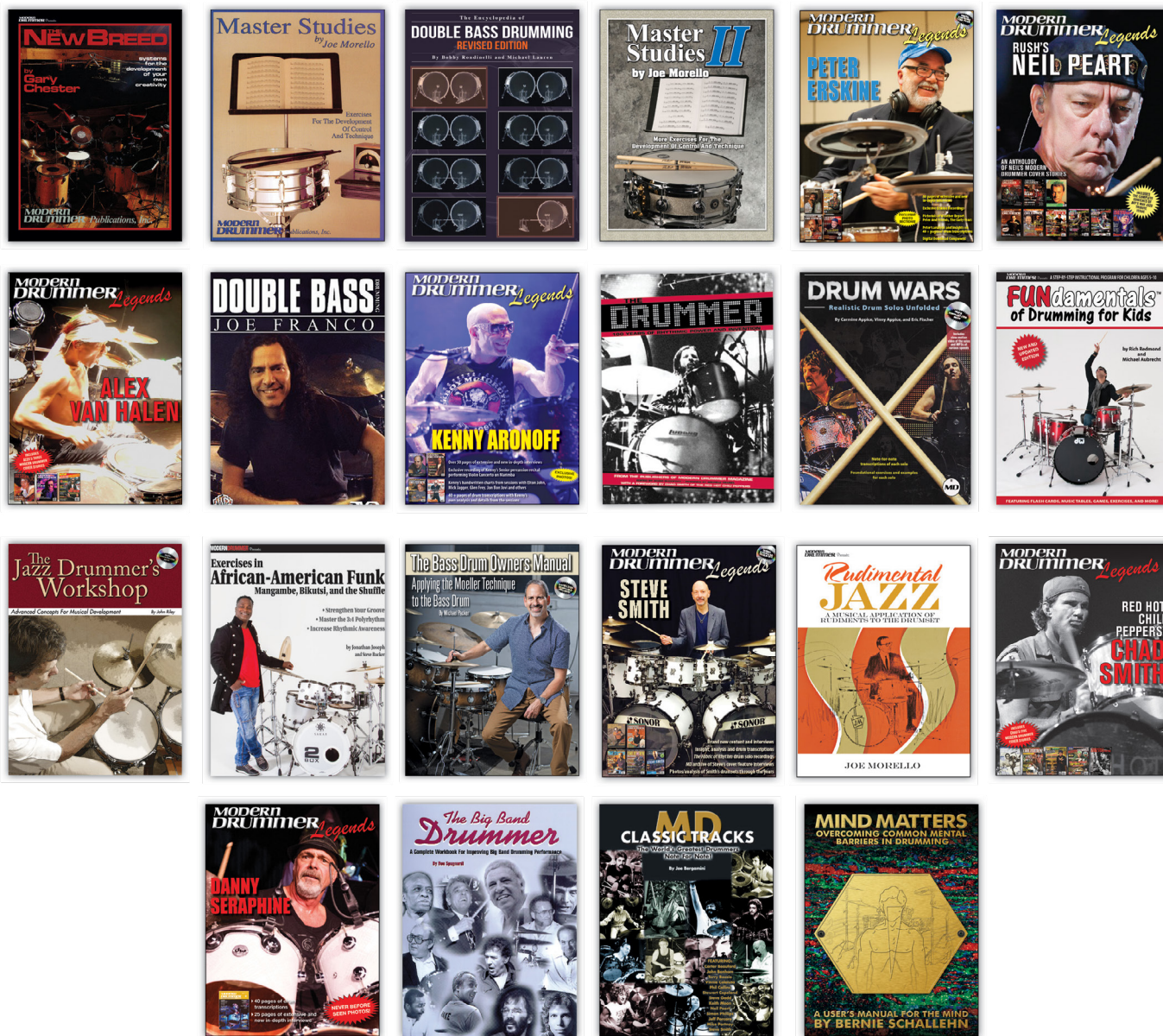
Exercise 24, first staff: A single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notation consists of a series of eighth notes with beams, starting on a middle line and moving up and down in a pattern. There are 'x' marks above some notes, indicating specific techniques or accents. The exercise ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Exercise 24, second staff: A single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notation consists of a series of eighth notes with beams, starting on a middle line and moving up and down in a pattern. There are 'x' marks above some notes, indicating specific techniques or accents. The exercise ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.



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As drummers, our ultimate goal is to effortlessly articulate our musical ideas on the drum set. To help achieve this, I am excited to introduce a new series of articles designed to present concepts and exercises aimed at enhancing your drumming vocabulary. These ideas will prove useful across various music genres, breaking traditional boundaries and encouraging exploration and discovery while still offering structure. First, let's start with hand and foot combinations.

Incorporating the following exercises into your practice routine will greatly aid in the development and execution of your musical ideas. Many accomplished drummers utilize hand and foot combinations as a fundamental aspect of their drumming vocabulary. Including the bass drum in your fills and solos adds a balanced depth to the overall sound of the drum set.

1. Hands alternating starting with the right hand
2. Hands Alternating starting with the left hand
3. Right hand only
4. Left hand only
5. Unison (hands together on different surfaces) starting with the right hand
6. Unison (hands together on different surfaces) starting with the left hand
7. Straight system (right hand on the downbeat and upbeat and left hand on the e's and a's) starting with the right hand
8. Straight system (left hand on the downbeat and upbeat and right hand on the e's and a's) starting with the left hand
9. Sticking du jour (your choice)

exercise, feel free to orchestrate freely around the drum set and drop out the hi-hat for a more musical approach.

♩ = 80

1.  L L

2.  L L

3.  L L

4.  L L

5.  A D A D

6.  A D A D

7.  A D A D

8.  L A D A
(D)

1. Hands alternating starting with the right hand
2. Hands Alternating starting with the left hand
3. Right hand only
4. Left hand only
5. Unison (hands together on different surfaces) starting with the right hand
6. Unison (hands together on different surfaces) starting with the left hand
7. Sticking du jour (your choice)

1. Hands alternating starting with the right hand
2. Hands Alternating starting with the left hand
3. Right hand only
4. Left hand only
5. Unison (hands together on different surfaces) starting with the right hand
6. Unison (hands together on different surfaces) starting with the left hand
7. Straight system (right hand on the downbeat and upbeat and left hand on the e's and a's) starting with the right hand
8. Straight system (left hand on the downbeat and upbeat and right hand on the e's and a's) starting with the left hand
9. Sticking du jour (your choice)

♩. = 100

1.
L L

2.
L L

3.
L L

4.
L

5.
L

6.
L

7.
L

8.
L

9.
L

10.
A D A D

11.
L A D A

12.
A D A D

(D)

Duet 11

By Ron Spagnardi

Ron Spagnardi wrote a terrific book called *Snare Drum Duets: 25 Duets for Two Snare Drummers*. It offers a selection of 25 challenging duets that range in difficulty from relatively simple to more complex. A wide assortment of time signatures is used throughout the book, from 2/4 and common time to 5/8, 7/8, and 6/8, among others. These snare drum duets can be used in several different ways

Two players may use the book as written in duet format, remembering to alternate parts. The metronome marking above each duet indicates the suggested speed at which the material should be performed. However, the tempo can be adjusted up or down in accordance with the ability

of the players. Obviously, precise execution and perfect timing are essential on the part of both players when performing the material in the duet format.

For those working with the book without the benefit of a second player snare drum parts one and two can be practiced as individual solos for improvement of basic reading skills. Or you could record one part on your phone while you play the other part live, thus playing the duet "alone." Conscientious practice of the material in snare drum duets will most definitely improve both reading and technical skills, regardless of the manner in which the book is utilized.

The musical notation for Duet 11 is presented in five systems, each consisting of two staves labeled SD 1 and SD 2. The time signature is 6/8. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, dynamic markings, and articulation marks. The first system starts with a key signature of one sharp and a 6/8 time signature. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and triplet markings. Dynamic markings include *p* (piano), *f* (forte), *mf* (mezzo-forte), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *ff* (fortissimo). The duet concludes with a final system featuring a key signature change to one sharp and a final flourish.

mp cresc.

ff

mf

ff dim.

pp

Snare Drum Duets
25 Duets for Two Snare Drummers

by Ron Spagnardi



The Carmine Appice Motherlode

By Donn Bennett

Drummer, singer, songwriter, soloist, band leader, author, educator, innovator... It's nearly impossible to describe Carmine Appice's massive influence on the drum world. He sits near the top of *Rolling Stone* Magazine's list of the Top 100 Drummers of All Time, and his *Realistic Rock Drum Method* is the most popular drum book ever written. During his career, he pioneered the use of double bass drums, gongs, tympani, Chinese cymbals and electronics on the drum set.

As a founding member of Vanilla Fudge, Cactus, KGB, Beck, Bogert and Appice, King Kobra, and Blue Murder, and as a featured member of Rod Stewart, Ozzy Osborne and Ted Nugent's bands, Carmine was more than just the drummer. Appice put his unique stamp on each band's sound and image. His over-the-top solos were a highlight of every live performance. If you didn't know who Carmine Appice was at the beginning of a concert, you DEFINITELY knew who he was by the end. At 78 years old, Carmine is going as strong as ever, still touring regularly with Cactus and Tonight's The Night, which is his tribute band that includes other Rod Stewart band alumni.

Over a career that spans seven decades, he's endorsed Ludwig, Slingerland, Pearl, Premier, Mapex, and



ddrum drums, and Paiste, Zildjian, Sabian, and Istanbul Mehmet cymbals. With that many endorsements on his resume', Carmine has amassed

a staggering arsenal of drum gear. A couple years ago Carmine made the decision to clear out his collection and asked for my help in getting some of his prized gear back into the





hands of drummers who can play and enjoy it. According to Carmine, “Drums were made to be played, not packed away in some dark locker.” We started the first phase of the project a little over a year ago, putting dozens of his prized instruments into the eager hands of drummers all over the world. Earlier this summer we began phase two by packing up his entire Los Angeles storage facility and shipping it to me in Seattle where we began cataloging and preparing everything it to be sold.

We received drums from virtually every period of Carmine’s career, from the cowbell from his first drum set in 1963, to modern ddrum signature series drums and prototype Sabian and Istanbul Mehmet cymbals. Here’s just a few of the items, and we will be putting everything on our website over the next month. Stay tuned for more...



Modern Drummer enjoys spotlighting 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 performances from the drummer and/or musicians in the band. This column is not restricted to any genre or 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.

Faces

Faces at the BBC: Complete BBC Concert & Session Recordings (1970-1973)
Kenney Jones drums
Rhino Records

For many drummers, drummer Kenney Jones was the second drummer (after Keith Moon) in the Who. But his exciting and influential drumming was first heard with the Small Faces band that eventually became Faces, the band also featured Rod Stewart and Ronnie Wood. Faces were a popular band that released many studio records, but their live shows were simply "a cut above." Live, the Faces excelled at an energetic and raw rock and roll sound. They were a very important rock band! Unfortunately, their sole live recording lacks the fire that the band was known for and had live. Fortunately, this has been corrected by this new recording, *Faces at the BBC: Complete BBC Concert & Session Recordings (1970-1973)*. This extensive box set includes several stellar performances of the Faces playing live at the BBC, and a Blu-Ray recording of a live BBC show. Rod Stewart's voice sounds amazing, and Kenney's hard-hitting drumming is raucous, exciting, and filled with fire. Kenney's very "English" groove, pushes the band to amazing heights. The drum sound on these recordings makes it seem like the drums are right

in front of you. This is simply the best Kenney Jones drumming on record! Unfortunately, some of the CDs from this box set contain some of the same songs, but for a devoted Faces fan, the different takes and versions isn't a detraction. For drummers, it is a fascinating and educational view into the different ways that Kenney Jones played these tunes. For the Faces casual

fan, the repeated tunes might be a distraction, but the excitement of the music will quickly dissipate any potential distraction. This is essential 70s rock and essential rock drumming, and these recordings cement the greatness of both the band and of drummer Kenney Jones. Check out Jones' loose groove on "It's All Over Now," and how his drumming and his amazing soloing guide the band through the different takes of the Temptations classic hit "I'm Losing You." The way Kenney Jones' drumming pushes the Faces hit "Stay With Me" and every one of their songs is a true rock and roll drum clinic.



Mandoki Soulmates

A Memory of Our Future
Leslie Mandoki, vocals, drums, percussion, udu drum
Simon Phillips (2 tunes) drums.
Inside Out Music

Singer, songwriter, producer, and (first and foremost) drummer Leslie Mandoki has been recording with musical legends for 30 years. This (his 15th recording) is some of his best work. His music is a unique blend of prog rock, jazz rock, and (for lack of a better term) pop rock music. The playing from the likes of Ian Anderson (Jethro Tull), Al DiMeola, Mike Stern, Bill Evans, and Richard Bona is exceptional. The compositions and arrangements on *A Memory of Our Future* are unique, fresh, and very enjoyable. Mandoki's percussion and drumming drive the music and leaves space for everyone to shine. This is not typical pop music or over the top prog or fusion. It is a fusion of both. Mandoki Soulmates is delivering heartfelt high-quality rock music comprised of wonderful compositions, integrity, and great musicianship from some of the best musicians in the world. One listen to "Enigma of Reason" will tell you all you need to know about Mandoki Soulmates and their new record *A Memory of Our Future*.



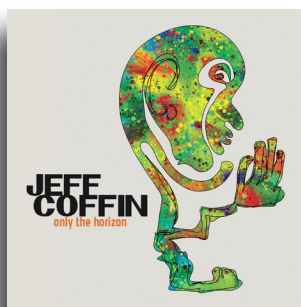
Jeff Coffin

Only the Horizon

Daru Jones (4 tracks) Keith Carlock, Derico Watson, Carter Beauford, Nate Smith (one track each) drums.

Ear Up Records

Saxophonist Jeff Coffin is best known for his work with Bela Fleck and the Flecktones and the Dave Matthews Band, but he has released some wonderful solo records along the way. His most recent solo record is called *Only the Horizon* and features some of the best drummers around (and some killer music.) Daru Jones' drumming on the first four tracks of this record is (hands down) some of Daru's best playing on record. His percolating groove builds the perfect foundation for Coffin to do his effervescent thing, you can hear this music smiling. And if "A Hat for My Beard" doesn't get you moving, check your pulse! "Bom Bom" is signature Carlock drumming, and what a joy it is to hear Carter Beauford mixing it up (away from The Dave Matthews Band) with Coffin and Bill Evans on "Picking Pockets." Derico Watson's groove on "Only the Horizon" is spacey and has a wonderful bounce, and Nate Smith tears it up on the African influenced "Yeli Geechee." This is a very cohesive and well put together record, with some wonderful grooves and leadership from Jeff Coffin.



Natsuki Tamura and Jim Black

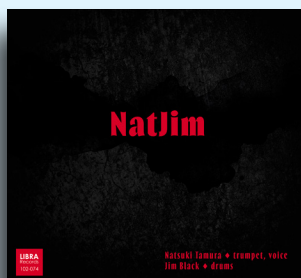
NatJim

Jim Black drums

Libra Records

I often refer to music as a conversation. But sometimes, the conversation can be hard to decipher. This is what makes duet recordings so valuable and interesting. When there is (only) two musicians playing you can really hear the musical conversation.

The history of drums and trumpet recordings go way back to 1955 with Roy Eldridge and Alvin Stoller (and maybe even further,) and continue through Don Cherry and Ed Blackwell. But here we are in 2024 continuing the tradition. However, what *NatJim* is doing much more than just continuing the tradition. Tamura and Black are having a real interesting musical conversation, and we are all just eavesdropping on the wisdom that they are dropping. The veteran



drummer Jim Black is one of the most interesting (and busy) drummers around; He comes from a drumming tradition that would include, Paul Motian, Ed Blackwell, and Joey Baron. Jim Black is furthering the sound of avant-garde jazz drumming, he is constantly pushing the boundaries, and creating new sounds and drumming approaches for us all to enjoy and borrow. Black's drum sound is BIG and wide-open, his percussive sounds add a lot to the musical texture, and his playing is full of surprise and is compositionally spontaneous. Listen to this pure conversation of this music and enjoy.

Shelly Berg

Alegria

Dafnis Prieto drums

Artist Share Music

Imagine a Chick Corea trio recording that you have never heard before, with the bass playing of Carlitos Del Puerto and the drumming of Dafnis Prieto expanding and contracting the pulse, and playing inside of a deeply harmonic and loose Latin influenced jazz framework. The Latin influences are not overt, but the playfulness and the rhythmic excitement is very present and self-evident. The music swings hard but is also expansive, slightly introspective, and creative (without having any pretense.) Now change the bandleader's name from the legendary Chick Corea to the lesser-known Shelly Berg, and *that's* what you have in *Alegria*. Yes, I know that's high praise, and let's be clear, that comparison comes from me, *NOT* Shelly Berg. But that's what I hear in the music on this FANTASTIC record! Prieto and Del Puerto make an amazing rhythmic team, and Berg's piano playing and touch is gorgeous, and let's not forget Shelly Berg's wonderful compositions (not to mention Melvin Butler's guest saxophone on two tracks.) I could go on for days dissecting the entertaining intricacies of this recording, Shelly Berg's *Alegria* is an instant jazz piano trio classic!



Cactus

Temple of Blues, Influences and Friends

Carmine Appice drums

Cleopatra Records

Jim Stapley, Jim McCarty, the departed Rusty Day, Jim Caputo or the late Tim Bogert, and Carmine Appice are the real and original Cactus, and this is their first recording since legendary bassist Tim Bogert passed away. I'm sure Bogert would be happy to know that modern bass greats like Billy Sheehan, Bob Daisley, Rudy Sarzo, Phil

Soussan, Dug Pinnick, Tony Franklin, Kenny Aaronson, Jorgen Carlsson, and Marco Mendoza have stepped up in his absence to create another great Cactus record. But it's not just the bassists that helped the fellas build upon the infamous Cactus legacy. Guitarists Joe Bonamassa, Bumblefoot, Johnny A, Warren Haynes, Steve Stevens, Pat Travers, Ted Nugent, Vernon Reid, Ty Tabor, and Fernando Perdomo all answered the call from Appice and company. As you would expect, everyone's playing is amazing, but it's the cohesive nature of the record that is a real surprise. *Temple of Blues* sounds like a band of great musicians turned up to 11 in a room together, playing tight and powerful arrangements, and playing their asses off. The one constant on the record is Carmine Appice's production and mighty intense hard rock drumming. As any great drummer does, he raises everybody's game and makes everyone sound fantastic. This ain't no "special guests" phoning in the solos vibe-less record, this is a real rock and roll record, Cactus is back! (maybe they never really went away.)



Giovanni Guidi

A New Day
Joao Lobo drums
ECM Records

We all know what to expect from an ECM record and ECM drumming, but Portuguese drummer Joao Lobo brings a little bit more on pianist Giovanni Guidi's new record *A New Day*. Yes, Lobo has a beautiful sound, and he paints nice pictures with that sound. But Joao Lobo brings a grounded sense of groove to the proceedings that many others don't. The same could be said about bassist Thomas Morgan. And together they make this record special. They are a counterweight to Guidi, they are the yin to his yang. They gently move things along without interruption; gently supporting Guidi and saxophonist James Brandon Lewis with care and precision.



Franco Ambrosetti

Sweet Caress
Peter Erskine drums
Enja Records

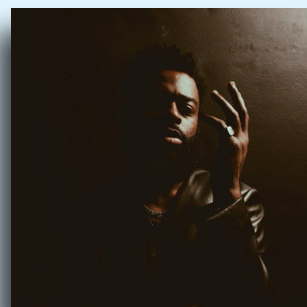
In this month's Jazz Insights column, Peter Erskine speaks glowingly about a recent recording session that featured arrangements and piano playing by Alan Broadbent. To complete the picture, we offer you a review of Franco Ambrosetti's beautiful recording *Sweet Caress*. This is the recording that Erskine was referring to. *Sweet Caress* also features John Scofield, Scott Colley, and an orchestra led by concertmaster Sara Caswell. Yet again, Erskine is the perfect choice for well-arranged and carefully orchestrated music. The testosterone filled "obvious drum highlights" are few, and they might sneak past the untuned ears, but the subtle drum highlights are many. And we can all look for that *magical* shaker part that Peter plays (and mentions in his article) that brought Alan Broadbent to tears. Beautiful arrangements, beautiful drumming, simply beautiful music created by one and all.



Jonathan Barber and Vision Ahead

In Motion
Jonathan Barber drums
Nelson Bello percussion
Self-Produced

Young New York City drummer Johnathan Barber has been a constant on the city's jazz scene since he was named best up-and-coming drummer in 2018 by *Modern Drummer*. His angular playing and composing straddles the line between the past and the future. His band now includes fantastic guitarist Andrew Renfroe which adds to the band's sound. Pianist Taber Gable's use of the Fender Rhodes and the Wurlitzer electric piano also adds to the modern sound of *In Motion*. The propulsive groove on "Giving" is angular but approachable, as is the overall feel of "When Love Calls." Barber and saxophonist Matt Knoegel wrap their lines around each other in an effortless way, while bassist Matt Dwonszyk holds it all together. *In Motion* seems to wrap everything that Barber is musically about into one nice and very enjoyable musical package.

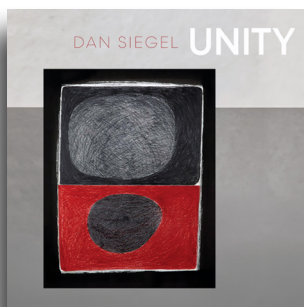


Dan Siegel

Unity

Oscar Seaton drums
Lenny Castro percussion
DSM Music

Smooth jazz mainstay Dan Siegel has been creating enjoyable music for a long time. His addition of young drummer Oscar Seaton on *Unity* is a welcome surprise. Seaton has been on the scene for a long time, and there is a good reason, he grooves HARD! Don't expect flashy solos, over the bar fills on *Unity*, but you do get a healthy dose of groove. Seaton has a tight and deep pocket that lifts this music. Seaton also leaves a good deal of space for percussion legend Lenny Castro to work his magic, they sound as one and are truly (excuse the turn of words) in *Unity*. Noted LA guitarists Rob Bacon, Alen Hinds, Mike Miller, Dean Parks, and Michael Thompson also coast effortlessly upon the time-feels that Seaton, Castro, bassist David Ginyard and Siegel lay down. *Unity* creates a unifying musical groove that is as natural as a smile on a summer afternoon.



its success, is drummer Jeff Hirshfield. He is one of those drummers that always makes things better. He is a jazz veteran that may be a little (unfortunately) ignored, but his contributions to jazz drumming should NEVER be ignored. That's exactly what he does on this recording. His subtle presence makes the music better which may be easy to ignore, but his strength is omnipresent and constant. All of the musicians involved on *What Times Are These* including guitarist Brad Shepik, trumpeter Jonathan Finlayson, pianist Luis Perdomo, and guest vocalist Theo Bleckman are neither hot young lions nor weathered older masters, but they are tethered and guided by Jamie Baum's compositions and concept and Hirshfield's experienced drumming. They all contribute to the whole marvelously. The combination of spoken word and Baum's flute is a nice light sound, and that lightness is a nice balance to this heavier concept of modern jazz music. This is a wonderfully light *and* heavy record.



Bria Skonberg

What It Means

Herlin Riley drums
Cellar Jazz Records

This is a very traditional jazz record. *What It Means* has deep roots in New Orleans. There are tunes written by Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, and standards like "Do You Know What It Means to Miss Orleans" and "Sweet Pea." Hence, Herlin Riley may be (or is) the perfect drummer for the project. But there are also nice versions of songs like John Lennon's "Beautiful Boy," Sonny Bono's "The Beat Goes On," (where Riley sounds very Higgins-ish) and Van Morrison's "Day's Like These." The result of the record sounds like a relaxing stroll down Bourbon Street. Riley covers it all with a sweet groove, especially on "The Beat Goes On," "Cornet Chop Suey," and Skonberg's own "In The House." Not too many musicians create music like this and make records like this anymore. They should, this is what started it all!



Phil Haynes 4 Horns and What?

The Complete American Recordings

Phil Haynes drums
CSJ Music

Phil Haynes is a stalwart on the New York Downtown Jazz scene, his acclaimed book (released last year) documented his deep involvement in that music. Haynes' band 4 Horns and What? is exactly as it describes; four horns and drumset playing Haynes' freewheeling compositions. Aside from Lenny Pickett's occasional band The Borneo Horns, and Joey Baron's Baron Down, I can't think of another band that is even similar to Haynes' 4 Horns and What? But (like those other two bands) it really works well! The musical conversation within the band is stark and out in the open for all to hear, and it might be an acquired taste. However, with all due respect to bassists, pianists, and guitarists, the spare instrumentation means there is no extraneous musical information surrounding and obscuring the conversation between Haynes and the various horn players. This double CD set is a reissue of the three classic CD's that this band released called *4 Horns and What*, *4 Horn Lore*, and *Live at B.A.M.* Haynes' drumming is a force of nature, his compositions are breathtaking, and his musical concept is truly original and unique. What more can you ask for from a musician?



Jamie Baum Septet +

What Times Are These

Jeff Hirshfield drums
Keita Ogawa percussion
Sunnyside Records

Kudos to flautist Jamie Baum! She has created a very original sounding musical project. And a major part of





HAND-PICKED VINYL



As the music world continues to see a resurgence in Vinyl (LP's,) Vinyl Me, Please (VMP) is curating and producing some of the best vinyl remasters and pressings around. They are scouring the history of recorded music for forgotten gems and negotiating with new labels to create pristine vinyl releases of classic and new music. Their records range from music recorded decades ago to the most recent and cutting-edge releases. VMP are doing the work of curating the history of music to help listeners and vinyl connoisseurs create a well-rounded and serious collection of high-quality vinyl-LP recordings. In their monthly Hand-Picked Vinyl column, the team at VMP will spotlight a couple of their newest vinyl musical masterpieces with significant drumming embedded deep within those little magic grooves of vinyl.

Ramones

Rocket to Russia

Tommy Ramone drums

Released in November 1977, just a little more than a year after their debut album, the Ramones' *Rocket to Russia* is a testament to the very thing art is not supposed to do, stay the same. In fact, their persona, let alone their first three albums, suggests practically zero progress at all — and that's the point. Zero. Nothing. Rinse and repeat, at best. Even with producers whose sonic vision varied greatly, their albums churn the same cauldron of loud and fast with perfectly sequenced "slow" songs that make the fast ones seem even faster.

The album landed right at the dawn of these debates about what punk was or wasn't. Those disputes raged not only in the corporate label and promotional worlds eager to monetize the trend, but also between fans themselves, even to this day, about authenticity.

Depending on your crowd, the Ramones' sound might be

harmless bubblegum pop or raw power directly descended from the fearsome thicket of noise The Stooges created, which is probably why the Ramones' reputation and legacy have only strengthened with time — they exist in the hard-to-reach space between the approachable and the radical. Listen to *Rocket to Russia* with an open ear, and its sonic reference points offer up new vistas of sound and desire each time. It's the paradox of how great art functions: singularly meaningful and yet radically open to meaning-interpretation. — *Nicholas Rombes*

Ramones

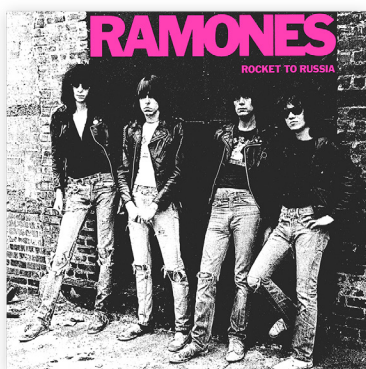
Too Tough to Die

Richie Ramone drums

The Ramones' *Too Tough to Die* is often positioned as a return to form for the band, but today, forty years since its release, their eighth studio album seems worthy of a far more radical categorization. In the musical landscape of the mid-1980s, the album was incoherent — not in a pejorative sense, but in how it reflected the paradoxes of its time.

Made without a steady compass, the album's incongruity became its center, and it holds. As Joey Ramone said in a 1988 interview: "Around '84, the world was changing drastically with Iran and Gaddafi and all this stuff. Things were getting scary. So, our songs started changing."

Echoing the surrounding instability, the Ramones created an album so layered, complex, and challenging that it can still be hard to pin down, even after four decades to ponder its songs. *Too Tough to Die's* legacy lives in its chameleon-like textures, moods, and vocal styles — from the lofty to the sneering, from the cynical to the sentimental. *Too Tough to Die* was a reminder that it was the Ramones who initially inspired and influenced the Sex Pistols, not the other way around. If the word "punk" could be claimed by anyone, it belonged to the Ramones. — *Nicholas Rombes*



J-Rod Sullivan's Janet Jackson Touring Kit

Photos by Jason Mehler



Drums: Pearl Masters Maple Gum Kit in Piano Black – 7X8 rack tom, 7x10 rack tom, 8x12 rack, 16x16 floor, 16x18 floor, 18x22 kick.

Snares: 6.5x14 Pearl Reference 20-ply (main), 8x14 Pearl Reference One (low), 5x12 Pearl Maple Gum (popcorn.)

Heads: Remo –snare drums: Controlled Sound Coated (Batter Side), Ambassador Snare Side (Resonant Side), Toms: Vintage Emperor Clear (Batter Side), Ambassador Clear (Resonant Side), Kick: Powerstroke 3 (P3) Clear with Impact Patch (Batter Side.)

Cymbals: 14" K Series Hi-Hats, 18" A Custom Fast Crash, 19" K Custom Cluster Crash, 10" A Custom EFX Splash, 10" A Custom EFX Splash over 10" Oriental China (Stack), 21" K Custom Organic Ride, 19" K Custom Hybrid Trash Smash, 14" Oriental China over 16" K Custom EFX Crash (Stack), 19" K Custom Paper Thin Crash.

Sticks: Vic Firth – Vic Firth Extreme 5A Dualtones.

Hardware: Pearl: DR513C – Icon 3 Sided Rack, CH1030 – Boom Cymbal Arms (x8), S1030 – Snare Stand (x2), H2050 – Eliminator Redline Hi Hat Stand, P2050C – Eliminator Redline Pedal with Chain, Roadster Multi-core Saddle Drum Throne.

Electronics: Roland TD-50X Sound Module, Roland RT-30K Kick Drum Trigger, Dauz 6" Drum Trigger Pad (x3), Roland RT-30HR Acoustic Drum Trigger (x3), Boss by Roland FS-6 Dual Footswitch, Radial Hotshot MD-1 Stage Mic Toggle.

Accessories: Airturn Tap Bluetooth iPad Page Turner, Drumdots Original, Empire Ears 3D Model, Hercules iPad Holder, Pig Hog Cables, Reunion Blues Cymbal Bags.





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Mickey "Cavs" Cavanagh - KGLW

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