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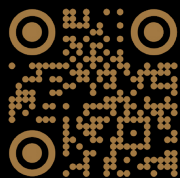


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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

"You can't be great, without the greatness of others."

By Mark Griffith

Anyone who knows me knows that I am a sports fan, and a lifelong Philadelphia Eagles fan, and I just *thoroughly* enjoyed the Super Bowl. With students, I often talk about the similarities of becoming great at playing a sport, and becoming a great drummer/musician, but there *are* differences. The main difference is that there is (thankfully) no Super Bowl of music or any creative art form, but there is greatness in both art and sport. Many of the regimented and repeated exercises, practice, and dedication are similar in both activities. Another similarity is that music is also a wonderful team endeavor (sport.)



I enjoy a great mantra and "coach speak," and the one the Philadelphia Eagles and coach Nick Sirianni used this year, "You Can't Be Great, Without the Greatness of Others," has really stayed with me with its application to music (and life.) While there are wonderful soloists throughout music history; even soloists are playing the music of great composers and learning from great teachers. Great musicians become great, with (and through) the greatness of others. Music (and life) IS a team sport, and we need the great support of those around us (family, friends, teachers, other musicians.) Furthermore, great drumming is usually surrounded by the greatness of others because great drumming doesn't exist in a vacuum, it exists within the context of a song, a recording, or a band.

Look at all the way's an athlete must interact within a successful team. It is virtually identical to how a musician must interact within a successful band. Look at how an athlete needs to perform within a "play." The phrase "do your job" is often used by coaches but being able to improvise within the parameters of "your job" (if needed) is a vitally important part of "your job" as well. Does this sound vaguely familiar?

As drummers/musicians we learn from every other musician we encounter. But don't restrict your learning to only musicians. No matter what the sport, great athletes and great coaches have a lot to offer as well. Talk and listen to a golf swing coach, a pitching coach, a basketball coach, a martial artist, or a football coach. Be open minded to the vast similarities between drumming and athletics, even if you have no interest in becoming an athlete. As a drummer, you'll never win a Super Bowl, but you will become a greater drummer/musician in the process of surrounding yourself with the greatness of others.

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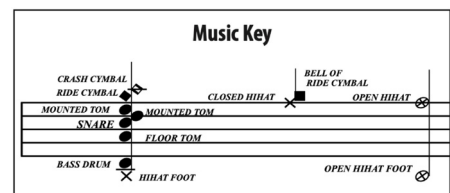
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Stefano's Sunburst Tama's

This month's Kit of the Month comes to us from Stefano Ashbridge. Stefano's kit is a Tama Starclassic Maple in Sunburst Fade lacquer. He plays with a large array of Zildjian and Sabian cymbals. The drum sizes are a 16x22 bass drum, rack toms in 9x10, 10x12, floor toms in 14x14 and 16x16. His snare of choice is an 8x14 Tama Artstar snare drum. Also included are 6", 8", and 10" roto-toms, his pedals are the original Tama Iron Cobra's, and Stefano uses a Roland SPD-20 pad.

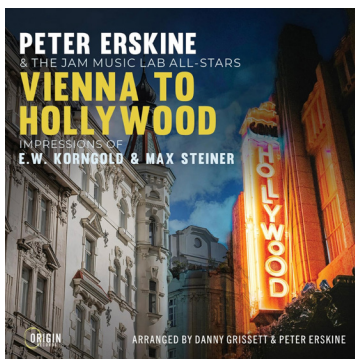


VIENNA TO HOLLYWOOD

By Peter Erskine

Album projects come in different sizes and shapes. Some albums are, literally, “straight ahead” and function like a snapshot capturing a moment in time, and since jazz is a music of the moment (or, in the moment), the essence of the musical message is both easy to convey and understand. On the other end of the spectrum, we have the concept or production album, where the music tells a story but not the whole story. These recordings take some work. Say hello to the latest album to bear my name, *Vienna to Hollywood*.

This particular project was borne out of a straight-ahead recording session in Vienna that never saw the light of day. I had traveled there while already in Europe to document the music of Joe Zawinul and Friedrich Gulda, a pianist and composer who was Zawinul’s mentor back in the day. Long story short, audio issues rendered most of the music below listening par. It happens. The poor trajectory of the album’s sound did not stop us from going to dinner that evening.



I’m going to quote from *Vienna to Hollywood’s* liner notes:

If you picture a table of fellows enjoying a dinner in Vienna, it’s easy to imagine plates of schnitzel and glasses of beer. It was during one of these get-togethers that I changed whatever subject was at hand by interjecting, “Hey, I have an idea ...” Jeff Levenson, the man who brings more ideas to life than anyone else I know, sat up in his chair and this encouraged me to continue: “Why don’t we record an album of the music of Wolfgang Korngold and Max Steiner, who were both from here, celebrating their gorgeous melodies, many of which are ripe for jazz treatment.”

The idea of jazz adapting or adopting film music is not new(s): Yusef Lateef recorded the “Love Theme from Spartacus” while Eddie Harris covered the title music from *Exodus* (composed by Alex North and Ernest Gold, respectively). Plenty of Broadway scores that found a second life on celluloid found a third life on jazz records including: *My Fair Lady* (Shelly Manne times two, first with Andre Previn and second with John Williams, both jazz pianists-turned-film composers, as well as by Johnny Richards); *West Side Story* (rendered by Stan Kenton, arranged by Richards, alongside Oscar Peterson’s trio version, among others); or my own album *Sweet Soul*, which covered William Walton’s “Touch Her Soft Lips and Part” from his score for Olivier’s *Henry V*. Not to mention, the recordings of songs from *Black Orpheus*. All to say, while not a new concept, the representation of Steiner or Korngold in the jazz world is noticeably scant.

“My home boy Erich von Korngold ...”

Going back quite a few years ... Joe Zawinul was alone on the vast Tokyo stage, surrounded by his synthesizer keyboards

and playing one of the loveliest melodies I’d ever heard. (I had ventured into the concert hall after Weather Report’s soundcheck, and this random moment brought me face-to-face with musical destiny.) “Joe,” I asked, “Is this a new piece you’re working on? It’s beautiful!” “Thank you, no,” he replied, “This was written by my home boy Erich von Korngold ... a Viennese cat.”

Fast forward four or five years, I’ve left Weather Report and am living the life of the jazz drummer in New York City, playing late night gigs, and coming back to my apartment weary and worn. I turn on the radio which is pre-tuned to the city’s classical music station, and I take notice of a dazzling piece of orchestral derring-do with solo violin soaring above the woodwinds, brass, percussion, and strings. Wow, what was that?

I wrote down whatever the radio host announced on a scrap of paper, and then fell fast asleep. The next morning, I eventually came across this paper on my dresser. Korngold Violin Concerto. Remembering how impressed I was, I decided to walk the many blocks from my apartment to a large record store in Greenwich Village. More triumph. I took the LP back to my apartment and sat down to listen. Wow (again!) Fantastic. Gorgeous. It almost sounded familiar. What happened next still blows my mind. when I put 2 + 2 together and realized that the theme of the concerto’s second movement was the same melody I heard Joe Zawinul play years before. I nearly fell off my couch.

Thus began my quest, scouting and looking for any Korngold music I could find. I searched while on a John Abercrombie Trio tour in Europe, I combed antique music shops in Berlin, I hunted while on a Gary Burton and Pat Metheny tour in the USA, I checked the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.— I was already braving music by William Walton and Gustav Mahler on my solo albums and even did a treatment of Steiner’s “Tara’s Theme” from *Gone With the Wind*, for my own Fuzzy Music label CD, *Standards 2, (Movie Music.)* Alas, no Korngold.

Enter schnitzel, beer, Jeff Levenson, and Marcus Ratka, who would prove instrumental in bringing together the formidable power and commitment of many musical souls, all of them associated with the JAM MUSIC LAB University in Vienna. The most important ingredient in all of this would be pianist and co-arranger Danny Grissett, who teaches at JAM, lives in Vienna but hails originally from Los Angeles.



It was exactly one year ago that I found myself back in Vienna, rehearsing this music that Danny and I had been arranging. Danny is a keyboard player and arranger/composer of the highest order. Me? I'm a drummer with *some* keyboard ability. It was actually Joe Zawinul who advised me to practice or work on composing at the keyboard while playing in difficult keys for non-pianists, (like the key of F# or Db,) but NOT in the keys of C, G or F. Why? Because those melodic and chordal habits from the easy keys will not work in these difficult keys ... BUT ... the occasional accidental habit (pun intended) might result in something so completely new and different in terms of your own harmonic vocabulary, that the happy accident will actually sound really cool. Teachable moment #1.

The other thing he did not tell me (because he could not have known at the time) was this: don't be afraid to check out YouTube! Now, us old-time drummers and educators can often be found railing against YouTube instruction or lamenting how a properly rigorous course of study is being eschewed in favor of a quick learning fix. You know what? Sometimes we don't have time to go back to school. Case study involves a charming piece of Korngold's music, composed for *The Prince and the Pauper* score in 1938, titled "The Boys Go to Play." On its own it is a frothy concoction of pre-war movie music. Hardly the stuff of jazz. But I heard in the piece the possible George Shearing sound treatment. For those readers who are not familiar with George Shearing, he was a British pianist (who happened to be blind) and his sound consisted of piano, vibes and guitar playing these parallel harmonies that went in and out of open and closed voicings. Instantly recognizable, but what is the voicing secret? EVERY music has a code or a secret, a formula if you will. And I decided to search YouTube and, sure enough, there was a pianist/educator who had a video dedicated to the topic.

I studied the video, made notes, and then put theory into practice. BINGO! This Korngold melody sounded like a George Shearing tune! I literally ran into the house from my backyard studio and excitedly told me wife, "Hey! I just learned something new!" Teachable moment #2: Old dogs CAN learn new tricks (if they want to.)

All the pre-production work involved choosing the music, deciding who would arrange what, and actually arranging the music. I envisioned the arrangements in such a way as to satisfy the jazz requirement of being music that swings, allows for improvisation, is a joy to listen to, while not offending any Korngold or Steiner fans out there. As you might imagine, fan bases can be protective of their idols. Dare we, or HOW dare we, re-interpret their music? However re-interpretations can be very good introductions.

My own introduction to the music of J.S. Bach came by way of The Swingle Singers, a shoo-bee doo-bee vocal group from France that sung Bach's compositions accompanied by a rhythm section consisting of bass and drums. Not pure Bach, but good enough to inspire me to choose an album of Bach's music as played on the classical guitar ... which led me to "Switched on Bach" by Wendy Carlos ... which led me to pure Bach. Meanwhile, my introduction to Richard Wagner came by way of a Stan Kenton big band recording of his music. Imagine an Afro-Cuban version of "Ride of the Valkyries." Pretty soon, I ventured to purchase my first Beethoven LP, and I was off to the classical races. If this album proves to be a gateway for even one listener to the musical delights of Korngold and Steiner, I will consider all this a success.

But Wait, There's More...

I needed a drumset. Tama came through with a 4-piece Star Classic kit that was perfect in every way. Speaking about my youth, I've ended up using the same drumset configuration that served me well in high school: 14x20" bass drum, 8x12" mounted tom and a 14x14" floor tom. You'll notice that I did not say "kick" drum. Why? Because a bass drum is not a kick drum, it is a bass drum.



My 4.5x14" signature "Jazz" snare provided all the snap, depth, and flexibility I could have wanted. I'm a Tama fan, and the drums made all my musical choice's good ones. The first tune on the album shows off the drums beautifully. Guess what? It's an Afro-Cuban version of Korngold's main theme from *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. My arrangement quotes from Woody Shaw's tune "Zoltan" on the Larry Young album *Unity* that featured Elvin Jones. When I quote my influences, I do them with the honor and courtesy of being as open and obvious as possible. Percussionist Brian Kilgore overdubbed congas to complete the picture.

The studio in Vienna was terrific even though it was a 4-story walk-up. The musicians were top-notch, all of them either professors or students at the JAM Music Lab University (plus a few LA studio musician friends). My thanks to director Marcus Ratka for his involvement and support. Think of JAM as the Berklee/New England Conservatory/New School/Thornton/Frost school of Vienna. My involvement began during the pandemic lockdown by way of Zoom masterclasses. I taught them the ways of Louis Hayes, and there's been no looking back. EXCEPT to this magical era of music from the 1930s, '40s and '50s.

This passion project has become my favorite album in many years. It represents a culmination of everything I know and everything I love. If music can swing AND make the listener smile AND bring a tear to the eye while touching the heart, *Vienna to Hollywood* represents my best take.

"All right, Mr. DeMille, I'm ready for my close-up."

Here are the musicians who brought this fever dream to life: Herwig Gradischnig, tenor sax; Thomas Gansch, trumpet; Bertil Mayer, harmonica; Bob Sheppard, flute; Judd Miller, EVI; Andreas Varaday, guitar; Thatiana Gomes and Fabricio Pereira, bass; Flip Phillip, vibes; Brian Kilgore, percussion; Alyssa Park, violin; Danny Grissett, piano; and a string quartet from the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra. Produced by Peter Erskine, Jeff Levenson and Marcus Ratka. *From Vienna to Hollywood* available on Origin Records.

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



NEW & NOTABLE

NEW SNARES FROM DW, NEW COLORS FOR DWe, SENSAPHONICS CELEBRATES 40 YEARS OF IEM INNOVATION, SABIAN MIKE PORTNOY MAX COLLECTION, NEW IEM'S FROM BEYERDYNAMIC, LP SIGNATURE MARTIN COHEN CONGAS AND BONGOS.

Drum Workshop, Inc. (DW) introduces the Limited Edition DW MFG True-Cast Snare Drum built in collaboration with longtime DW artist, renowned drum educator, and session player Dave Elitch. These snare drums offer a unique and powerful voice that's dynamic and distinct.

The 7 x 14" sand-cast, seamless bell bronze drum shell is machined with 45-degree bearing edges and a precision snare bed. The shell also features a concave inner wall, graduating from 5mm at the edges to 3mm in the middle, which enhances attack and focus.

This beefy drum delivers fat, low-end punch that does not choke out at any tuning while producing slightly darker tonality. The snare is fitted with True-Cast counter hoops, Mini Turret Lugs, Mini MAG throw-off, and True-Pitch® tension rods, all machined from 100% brass to exacting standards.

Assembled in DW's legendary California Custom Shop, each drum is capped with a 20-strand True-Tone® snare wires and Remo® Ambassador single-ply snare heads branded with the



DW MFG logo. Only 100 of these handcrafted snare drums will be produced. Each will include a DW MFG flight case by Calzone and a True-Cast certificate of authenticity. To find out more about the Limited Edition DW MFG True-Cast Snare Drum please go to <http://www.dwdrums.com/>.

Sheila E. Collector's Series® ICON™ Snare Drum

DW salutes "The Queen of Percussion" with the Sheila E. Collector's Series® ICON™ Snare Drum.



A groundbreaking and GRAMMY-winning percussionist, Sheila "Sheila E." Escovedo rocketed to fame through collaborations with Prince and her solo catalog, starting with her seminal 1984 album, *The Glamorous Life*.

Sheila's Icon 5.5x13" drum is built with a handcrafted 12-ply HVL™ North American Hard Rock Maple shell, finished with an outer veneer of Birdseye Maple. The striking exterior is decorated with Sheila's name written backwards in gold leaf in her original signature style. Also inlaid are a flutter of laser-cut butterflies crafted from dyed Basswood (blue, red, and purple), Pearwood (black), and Poplar (orange). The snare produces slightly higher tonality with a classic punchy and warm character.

This limited-edition drum is fitted with premium gold and patented DW hardware, including the MAG throw-off™, True-Pitch®, TP50 tuning rods, True Hoops®, and more. Only 250 units of this incredible snare will be made, each with a deluxe DW carrying case and a certificate of authenticity signed by John Good. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of each snare will be donated to the charity nominated by Sheila. To find out more

about the Sheila E Collector's Series® ICON™ Snare Drum please go to <http://www.dwdrums.com/>.

New DWe Colors

Drum Workshop's DWe is the first-of-its-kind wireless, convertible acoustic-electronic drum set introduced by Drum Workshop, Inc. in 2023. In 2025, DWe will have a wider choice of shell finishes with the release of Diamond Nebula, Laser Blue Metallic, and Limited-Edition Exotic Santos Rosewood.

DWe's fully convertible, handcrafted drums are built using the finest 100% American Maple 333 shells DW's factory in California, U.S.A. DWe offers an authentic playing experience that seamlessly blends acoustic and electronic drum elements to support the diverse needs of modern drummers.

The new DWe colors for 2025 are available in February. They will include a new Diamond Nebula FinishPly™ wrap which reflects a glowing rainbow of interstellar colors. The rich, luminescent finish really pops under the stage lights of any musical setting. The polished Laser Blue Metallic lacquer finish



has an eye-catching, icy fluorescence, which dazzles when overhead lighting bounces off its shiny surface. Finally, the stunning Hard Satin Natural finish of the Limited-Edition Exotic Santos Rosewood offers a striking natural wood grain that is streaked with reds and browns. Available in five and seven piece complete bundles, only 40 of these kits will be produced. To find out more about the DWe kits please go to <https://www.dwdrums.com/dwe/>

Sensaphonics Addresses the Impact of Sound Exposure on Musicians

Sensaphonics, a leading designer and manufacturer of custom-fit in-ear monitors, earplugs and electronics designed to achieve safe, high-resolution audio in mission-critical applications, is celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2025. As the only custom in-ear monitor manufacturer founded and operated by a practicing audiologist, Sensaphonics stands uniquely positioned to deliver



safe, high-fidelity audio solutions for professionals in high-SPL environments.

Founded in 1985 in Chicago, IL, by Dr. Michael Santucci, Au.D., Sensaphonics began solely as a musicians' hearing clinic,

focusing on audiological evaluations, hearing conservation education, and recommending the use of foam earplugs (the only hearing protection available at the time.) When it became apparent that musicians were averse to using the foam plugs, Dr. Santucci trialed wearing the plugs himself while playing his trumpet. The issues were immediately clear; the foam plugs had poor fidelity and were too occluding to be practical for music performance. This experience led Dr. Santucci to collaborate with Etymotic Research Inc. to develop the first custom high-fidelity hearing protection: the ER-15 filter embedded in medical-grade silicone. The result was a hit among users, and Sensaphonics began its evolution from a stand-alone

hearing clinic to a pro-audio company driven by the mission of hearing health.

In the early 1990s, Dr. Santucci turned his focus to a different type of technology emerging in the music industry: the in-ear monitor (IEM). He recognized that existing IEMs used round diaphragm drivers, which required venting in the earpieces to pump in adequate sound. This caused the listener to crank up the volume of their in-ear mix to hear clearly over environmental ambient sounds, increasing their risk of hearing injury in the process. In response, Dr. Santucci developed the first IEM with balanced armature drivers in custom silicone earpieces (the ProPhonic IV.) The result was increased isolation from environmental sounds and improved bass response, both of which allowed musicians to listen to their mix at a lower, safer level. The ProPhonic IV was first used on tour in 1992 by musicians and sound engineers for The Grateful Dead and word of its superior audio clarity and physical comfort quickly spread through the music industry, where bands including Aerosmith,

Metallica, and The Rolling Stones were other early adopters of this new technology.

Continued advancements over the next several years helped popularize the use of IEMs and encourage the further refinement of safe-listening standards and practices. Today, the Sensaphonics portfolio includes a range of custom IEMs that have been developed and perfected to meet the various listening needs of music industry personnel, as well as workers in other high-SPL environments, all of which are made in a signature custom silicone material that is exclusive to the company. In addition to their highly popular 2MAX, 2X-S and 3MAX custom-fit IEM models, Sensaphonics has continued to expand the capabilities and usefulness of safety-conscious personal monitoring. One such development is the 3DME Active Ambient IEM system, which utilizes embedded binaural MEMS ambient microphones, allowing the user to mix-in ambient sounds to a comfortable level, as well as providing control of EQ, balance, and other processing via a Bluetooth® connected app.

Dr. Santucci's latest innovation, the TEC Award nominated dB Check Pro, has made further waves in the hearing health landscape as the only device available that can inform listeners as to how loud they are listening to IEMs or headphones in real time while offering suggested time limits on how long it is safe to listen at those levels based on NIOSH and OSHA guidelines.

As Sensaphonics begins its 40th anniversary celebration, it is notable that they remain the only in-ear monitor company to specialize in hearing health for musicians and run in-house a musician-focused hearing clinic. "This is really what I do, what I'm all about," states Dr. Santucci. "Since founding Sensaphonics, my life's mission has been working to protect and conserve hearing for musicians and people in other industries with high levels of noise or sound exposure. Our work here over the past 40 years is just the beginning of what I see to be a revolution in the awareness and education about hearing health in our industry. While we strive to safely enhance all forms of sound and communications, we also know that musicians and related personnel have critical special needs that require more than just a warning to use proper hearing protection. These artists need to keep their ears healthy to protect their lifestyle through regular hearing evaluations with a music audiologist, proper use of quality earphones, and using common sense protective measures when in potentially damaging environments. Sensaphonics provides a clear path to the tools and education needed to provide the ultimate IEM experience for all users." Visit [Sensaphonics.com](https://www.sensaphonics.com) to check out the latest product offerings, hearing health information, and more.

Sabian Introduces the Mike Portnoy MAX Collection

Sabian is proud to announce the release of no less than eight new products in conjunction with Mike Portnoy that coincides with Mike's touring duties with Dream Theater.

The new products are made up of:

- AA Bell Chimes in 6", 6.5", and 7" sizes, along with a set of all three
- AA MAXX Splashes – these are the updated versions of the original MAX Splashes, originally released in 2000, in 7", 9", & 11" sizes
- 22" HHX MAX Ride

"With Dream Theater back out on tour and Mike's drumming sounding better than ever, the timing was too good to be true to miss working with Mike on some new cymbals," says Sabian's VP Sales & Marketing, Stacey Montgomery-Clark. "Please excuse the pun, but he's a dream to work with and we're very proud of the new cymbals we're releasing today."

Adding further, Chris Stankee, Sabian's Global Artist Relations Director, "All of these new models are already part of Mike's set-up on the Dream Theater tour and there's no better demonstrator than Mike himself to show you how these new chimes, splashes, and ride sound."

The new AAX MAXX Splashes have a larger, raw bell and new shape, producing more volume and projection compared to the original versions.

The AA Bell Chimes are thinner than a cup chime or ice bell but thicker than a splash, with a number of ways of mounting them

INTRODUCING THE
MAX
COLLECTION

Mike Portnoy

7" - 9" - 11"
AAX MAXX SPLASHES

22" **HHX MAX RIDE**

6" - 6.5" - 7"
AA MAX CHIMES

either singularly or upside down on top of other cymbals. Crisp, clear, and well defined while also fitting in with any melody, these bell chimes are yet another sound innovation from Sabian.

Finally, the 22" HHX MAX Ride was Mike's vision of combining elements of the 22" HH Rock Ride that he played for many years, along with his more recent favorite, the 40th Anniversary Artisan Raw Bell Dry Ride. It is lathed on the bow to the edge on both the top and bottom and finished with an un-lathed HHX hammered bell, making this medium-heavy ride a true powerhouse cymbal.

Said Mike, "I wanted to talk about how much I love Sabian: I've been with them for over 30 years. They believed in me in the early days when I was just coming up. And their love and support to me has always meant so much. Obviously, the cymbals speak for themselves, they're so beautiful. The MAX Chimes, I love them, they just sing, they're absolutely gorgeous. ... The 22" Max ride – which is a work of art, absolutely beautiful, is clean and crisp, it sings, and the bell just cuts like a knife."

beyerdynamic Announces Four New IEMs

Hours of practice, intensive rehearsals – all for that one defining moment. That's why you need an in-ear monitor that optimally supports your performance. But which earphones are right for your instrument and area of use? The new DT in-ear series has the answer: four high-quality models each with its own specifically tuned sound signature – the DT 70 IE for mixing and critical listening, the DT 71 IE for drums and bass, the DT 72 IE for guitar and vocals, and the DT 73 IE for classical and keyboard instruments. The outstanding sound is made possible by the low-distortion, dynamic TESLA11 driver system. Combining this with a compact design, we offer four reliable in-ear monitors for stage and studio, handcrafted in Germany.

- Professional in-ear monitors for stage and studio
- Optimized sound for different applications



- High-resolution sound thanks to the low-distortion TESLA.11 driver system.
- Ideal fit and high sound insulation thanks to compact design
- Handmade in Germany.

Latin Percussion® Signature Martin Cohen Congas and Bongos



Latin Percussion is excited to announce the Winter NAMM 2025 preview of the Martin Cohen Signature line, a collection of limited-edition congas and bongos to pay tribute to LP's original founder. In a salute to LP's original congas introduced in the 1970s, the new 28" tall signature fiberglass congas come in traditional quinto, conga, and tumba sizes and feature modern innovations. The drums are outfitted with traditional rims and chrome-plated hardware, along with 5/16" tension rods and LP's ProCare shell protectors. The congas feature a vintage LP badge, and each comes with a notecard signed by Martin Cohen. "I am honored that the folks at LP are recognizing me in this way," says Martin Cohen. "I have been enjoying my endeavors with my Congahead business since selling the company over 20 years ago, but I have always felt attached to the brand. I am amazed at how far the brand has gone to be the world's leader and appreciate that the current LP team is recognizing my passion and life's work." The congas are limited to 600 drums in mix and match sizes, while 200 matching bongos are set to launch in April 2025.



PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

KickTone Microphone

By Jason Mehler

Last month I reviewed the KickPort Bass drum enhancer, which I found to noticeably improve my bass drum's tone. For this month, I'm testing a companion product from KickPort, the KickTone. It is a bass drum microphone that uses two internal diaphragms to capture both high and low frequencies. It also mounts directly to the KickPort, eliminating the need for a separate mic stand.

Specs and Features

The KickTone looks and functions like a reverse-speaker kick drum microphone, except that it also has a second coaxial dynamic structure, providing a wider frequency response of 20Hz to 10kHz. The KickTone has a high SPL of 175dB max and weighs 2.2lbs. The microphone can be attached directly to a KickPort installed in the bass drum's resonant head, or it can be mounted on a standard microphone stand using its 360° swivel mount. Once mounted, a standard XLR cable can be connected

to the KickTone's high-quality Neutrik XLR output connector.

Construction

The KickTone itself is built like a tank. With its metal casing and rigid mesh grill, you could probably toss it in your hardware case after every gig and suffer no damage beyond scuffs and scratches. The housing is secured by four screws, which was too tempting for me not to take apart for a peek inside. Removing the thick metal faceplate reveals a coaxial driver/diaphragm floating on rubber O-rings. The wiring is simple and clean. Overall, it's a well-crafted and solidly engineered piece of gear.

Testing the KickTone

Seeing as I already had the KickPort installed on my bass drum's resonant head, attaching the KickTone was effortless. It simply slid into place, secured by a curved slot that firmly grips the flared lip of the bell-shaped KickPort.

Once mounted and connected to my DAW, I began testing. The first thing I noticed, aside from a really nice tone, was a bit of a rattle. After some hunting, I discovered that the aggressive movement of the resonant head when striking the bass drum





was causing the KickTone faceplate to tap the KickPort surface. This was an easy fix, using a small piece of thin weather stripping between the two surfaces. Once the click noise was remedied, the sound was very pleasing. The KickTone delivers the snap, punch, and depth, typically achieved with a dual-mic setup.

One thing that occurred to me about the mic being mounted to the resonant head is that the mic itself is moving during

play because it is married to the movement of the drum head. This dynamic motion adds a unique, organic quality to the sound. Drummers who struggle with the consistency of their bass drum stroke might opt to use a mic stand rather than the head-mounted setup, as it is more forgiving of inaccuracies. Additionally, the head-mounted installation brings out more of a defined "note" from the drumhead, which may require some tuning and dampening adjustments to control.

When mounted on a mic stand, the KickTone is much more controllable. Its swivel mount functions smoothly and locks securely in place, allowing precise positioning around the drum including off-axis placement. I was able to dial in a great bass drum sound very quickly. With a fully mic'd drum kit, the KickTone supplies a full, cohesive bottom end that both contrasts and complements the rest of the drums and cymbals.

Conclusion

For me, a stand-out feature of the KickTone mic is that it moves with the drum head. Whether that's a benefit or a drawback depends on preference, but it's certainly a unique tool to have in your arsenal. The durability and convenience alone make the KickTone a worthwhile option for drummers on the go. Furthermore, the price is very affordable, compared to what you would spend to achieve a dual mic setup. If you are in the market for a new bass drum mic, it's worth consideration. The KickTone retails for \$299.

Check it out at: <https://www.kickport.com/kicktone>



X-Percussion ARC MK1 Trigger Pad

By Jason Mehler

X-Percussion ARC MK1 Pro Trigger Pad

Founded in 2020, Gruv-X LLC is known for its flagship product, the X-Click: a hand-crafted Crosstick accessory that mounts to the tension rods of a snare drum. In 2024, they released a single zone trigger that uses the same mounting style. The X-Percussion ARC MK1 is designed to bring your electronic instruments closer to where your hands already reside. For this month's Product Close-Up, I will be testing the ARC MK1.

Design and Features

The body of the X-Percussion ARC MK1 is crafted from aircraft-grade aluminum and is contoured to follow the shape of a drum. It has two chromed steel mounting brackets that are slotted to allow adjustment for various drum sizes. The playing surface is a poured black silicone. The cable for the ARC MK1 protrudes from the underside of the device and connects to a standard 1/4-inch trigger cable. The ARC is compatible with all popular electronic brands and boasts superior dynamic range and feel, as well as a vibration resistant technology.

The Setup

My first instinct was to mount the X-Percussion ARC MK1 to my snare drum, although I see how it can be even more useful on other drums. When I first received the ARC, I was also testing the Yamaha EAD system, which seemed to be a great match. The EAD provides separate trigger inputs that allow you to expand the system as needed. The setup took maybe three minutes from unboxing to playing.

Testing the MK1

The rubber pad of the MK1 has a nice feel with plenty of rebound when striking, much like a high-quality practice pad. There is low noise from the pad itself, however, since it is attached to the drum's tension rods, it does produce the expected natural resonance from the drum itself. In my case, it helped me identify a rattling sound produced by my snare throw-off, which I was able to fix quickly.

The triggering was flawless. From my understanding, there are multiple piezo-style triggers beneath the rubber pad, enabling consistent playability all the way to the edge on both sides of the bar without any dropouts or fluctuation in dynamics. The pad is very responsive to accents and ghost notes, making it great for velocity-based triggering such as switching or fading between different sounds depending on the striking velocity. Even though most modern drum modules have settings to eliminate crosstalk, I didn't experience any mis-triggering from the MK1 when striking my snare drum, which is a testament to its vibration resistant technology. I like the idea of having

a trigger attached to a drum because you never have to worry about additional hardware. Furthermore, you can whack the hell out of it and it's not moving. It's a trusty companion for your drum. If I had to suggest an area for improvement, my only concern would be the cable. While it is well-positioned, hanging straight down from the underside of the MK1, it may sustain some damage over time.

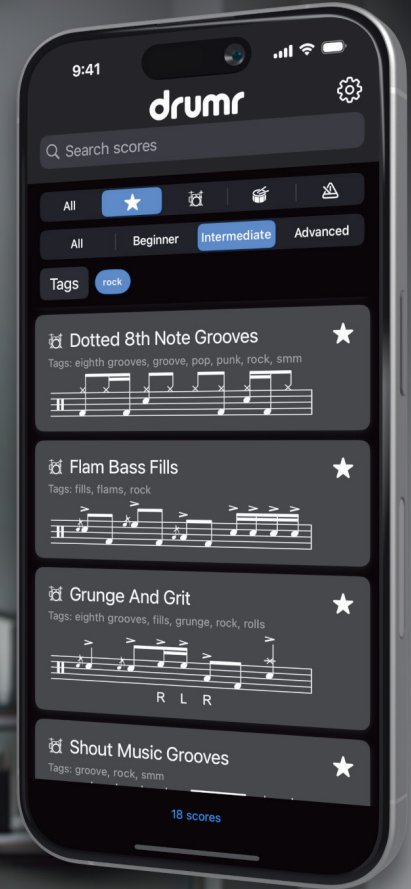
Conclusion

The X-Percussion ARC MK1 is a great tool for drummers who want to add electronic elements to their acoustic drums. Its low profile and minimal setup make it the perfect add-on, and its solid construction ensures durability. Overall, it's a worthwhile investment. The X-Percussion ARC MK1 retails for \$199.99. Check it out at: <https://x-percussion.com/collections/arc-mk1>



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NATE MORTON: THE DRIVING BEAT BEHIND *THE VOICE*

BY JOHN GLOZEK, JR.

It's been 26 seasons for the NBC hit show, *The Voice* and Nate Morton has been the driving beat behind every one of them. Self-taught from age five, Nate's formal drumset training began during middle school with Grant Menefee in Baltimore, Maryland. He continued his education in Boston, Massachusetts as a performance major at the renowned Berklee College of Music, studying with drummers such as Ed Uribe, Ian Froman, John Ramsay, and Ron Savage. Upon graduating in 1994, Nate taught and played locally in Boston until moving to Los Angeles in 1999, where he has since amassed live performance and recording credits that include Natalie Cole, Michael Bolton, Madonna, Miley Cyrus, Richard Marx, Paul Anka, Paul Stanley, Pete Murray, Pink, Paulina Rubio, and Thalia — among others. Nate was also the hard-hitting force driving the house band on the Mark Burnett shows, *Rockstar: INXS* and *Rockstar: Supernova*.

In 2010, Nate became the house band drummer on Bonnie Hunt's day time talk show, as well as performing with Cher for her string of appearances at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace. He cites Animal from *The Muppet Show* as his first and biggest influence. You read that correctly, he told me a puppet was his biggest influence.

Now, you can catch him grooving during prime time on *The Voice*. Nate and I talked about everything drums and even golf (which Nate does not play but his dad does.)



MD: Before we talk about *The Voice*, let's go back a few years. You graduated Berklee, and I saw on one of your Instagram posts that Sting, who was on this past season of *The Voice* handed you your diploma when you graduated. Tell us about that experience and a few other experiences at Berklee.

NM: I'll speak to that one first. Sting was an icon even back then. Obviously, he's an icon now. Not only was he an icon, but I was a fan. I was a big fan, and at that moment at Berklee, the opportunity to play with Sting would've been a dream gig. As I was graduating school, I wondered what would my dream gigs be? Of the handful of dream gigs, Sting was on the short list. In part, that's because at that time, he had already had so many phenomenal drummers involved in his projects. Obviously, Stewart from the Police, followed by Omar [Hakim], who is an all-time favorite of mine, followed by Vinnie [Colaiuta] and Manu [Katché] as well. The idea that he's put out so much great music with so many incredible drummers, and that I would get to shake his hand and have that guy hand me my degree was mind-blowing.

Not only that, but something that you don't see in the social media post is that there was a concert honoring Sting and Nancy Wilson, the jazz singer. They were our two honorary doctorate recipients that year. There was a concert put on by the students honoring them, playing the music of Nancy Wilson and Sting. I was blessed and fortunate to be the drummer chosen to play for that concert.

YES, ANIMAL FROM THE MUPPET SHOW AND THE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY MARCHING BAND WERE MY TWO EARLIEST DRUMMING INFLUENCES.

MD: What's the story behind the photos you posted on Instagram?

NM: One of the pictures that you see on Instagram is the night after the concert, the picture where I'm shaking his hand, where I've got our bro handshake going... that's from that night. At that moment, I was thinking, okay, game over — I'm done. Great, amazing. I got to play for Sting, I got to meet Sting. Going forward 30 years, full circle, I get to play with him on *The Voice*. In my head, I'm thinking to myself, look Sting, I made good! You gave me my Berklee degree, and 30 years down the track, I'm still doing this music thing... making a living doing it... playing and enjoying it and having a good time! So, it was very nice. [laughs]

It's like you asked someone advice about something, they give you the advice, then you put that advice to good use. You see them many years down the track, and you say, "Hey, look what I managed to do with that advice you gave me!" It feels a little bit like that. You gave me my degree, you sent me off into the world. Look what I've done with that degree you gave me or that experience you gave me. Does that make sense?

MD: Absolutely. That means you were pretty much a well accomplished player early on. Who were some of your earlier teachers and what did you learn from them?

NM: If I use the phrase, "my drum instructor," I am most probably referring to Grant Menefee. He is the first drumset instructor who I had private lessons with, starting somewhere around eighth grade and continuing all the way through high school, until I went off to Berklee College of Music. Grant was extremely influential and informative. He not only gave me the tools to be

well equipped and to face the musical challenges and settings that I might find myself in, but he was also the instructor who said to me, "I don't say this to a lot of guys, but if you really work your butt off at this drumming thing, you just might be able to make a living doing it." That was all I needed.

I dove straight in. I decided, I'm going to work my butt off at this thing! From a nuts-and-bolts perspective, Grant gave me a lot of insight into what I should expect to see at Berklee because he was a Berklee graduate. He gave me much of the material that I would later see when I enrolled. Thanks to Grant, at Berklee, when an instructor put something in front of me, I'd often think, oh yeah, this is quite familiar. I was very comfortable in that environment because Grant gave me the tools to know what to expect from it. In terms of other instructors, upon arriving to Berklee, I knew that I wanted to be a guy who felt comfortable with a wide array of genres. That was hardwired into my DNA from a very early age, literally from seven years old when my father gave me the KISS *Alive* album one Christmas.

MD: At seven years old your father gives you a KISS album?

NM: These are the records I got that Christmas — KISS *Alive*, Peter Dinklage *Where I Should Be*, Michael Jackson *Off the Wall*, and George Clinton *Uncle Jam Wants You*. That was around age seven. It was always (kind of) baked in that I wanted to be the guy who could be doing a pop gig, a Latin jazz gig, and a rock gig all in the same week. I wanted to be that guy.

When I arrived at Berklee, I sought out the Latin guy. I wanted to be

able to play Latin jazz. Who was that guy? Ed Uribe. I tracked him down, and for my first two semesters, he was my private instructor. Then I wanted to get my jazz chops together. Who was that guy? Oh, that's Alan Dawson's disciple, John Ramsay. So, I sought out John Ramsay and I spent two semesters studying with him. Additionally, I had private lessons with Ian Froman and Ron Savage, as well as classes with Casey Scheuerell, Jamey Haddad, and others. That's the way I approached my time at Berklee, and through that method, I had the opportunity to study with many great instructors.

MD: Being that diverse, who were some of your early earlier drummer influences?

NM: People think that I'm joking when I say this, but the first two influences on my drumming were the Tennessee State University marching band and Animal from *The Muppet Show*.

IF I USE THE PHRASE, "MY DRUM INSTRUCTOR," I AM MOST PROBABLY REFERRING TO GRANT MENEFFEE. HE IS THE FIRST DRUMSET INSTRUCTOR WHO I HAD PRIVATE LESSONS WITH, STARTING SOMEWHERE AROUND EIGHTH GRADE AND CONTINUING ALL THE WAY THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL, UNTIL I WENT OFF TO BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC.

Both of my parents went to Tennessee State University. TSU is an HBCU, which is not your conception of a "traditional" Sousa marching band. It is less a marching band and more of a dance party. I went to those football games with my folks, and the entire attraction had less to do with the game and more to do with the halftime show when the two marching bands would square off.

The other early influence in terms of an individual, and again, people think that I'm joking when I say this, was Animal from *The Muppet Show*. He was my earliest drumset inspiration. Yes, it was childhood thinking, but I was watching Animal and he was every bit as real playing the drums as any human being would be playing the drums. I saw in Animal someone who was hyperactive, highly combustible, extremely kinetic, and potentially destructive; all of which also applied to me. He was channeling all of that into the drumset, so I thought, maybe I could do that too! Yes, Animal from *The Muppet Show* and the Tennessee State University marching band were my two earliest drumming influences.

However, let me give credit where credit is due. The first album I ever owned was KISS *Dynasty*. I was seven years old. I played that record backwards and forward as a seven-year-old. I played to that record all day. I used to dress as a member of KISS. I would get my mom's fancy boots, and I would put those on, and I would make KISS costumes and walk around the house and be a member of KISS. The saddest thing about that whole thing, or maybe the best thing, is that there's no photographic evidence of it. It happened before everyone was walking around with a camera in their pocket, so there's no evidence of that. There are no pictures of me dressed as Peter Criss, but Peter Criss was an early influence.

MD: When you became a real drummer, more of an adult, who were your influences?

NM: The first drummer that I ever heard that stuck out to me was Neil Peart. That's the first time I heard music where the drums were featured. I don't want to guess what year that was, but that probably would've been somewhere in middle school. I would've been listening primarily to R&B radio, much of which was programmed drums, and then I heard Rush. I can't tell you the first place I heard them, but here's this drummer playing intricate grooves and complex fills, and I had this moment of thinking, "Is that allowed? [laughs] Are you allowed to do that? Is that a thing? Does that happen? I was studying with Grant at the time, and I walked into my lesson, and I told Grant, "I just heard the greatest drummer ever." He asked who? I said, "Neil Peart," and he replied,

"Ahh..." —as if to say, "Now your tutelage may begin."

MD: How did Neil influence you?

NM: As an instructor, you look out for those moments when the timing is right to share something with a student, someone discovers something, and then you can use that to say, 'Since you discovered *that*, let me share *this* (and this and this) with you.' In that case, the *this* and *this* was, Dennis Chambers, Dave Weckl, and Vinnie Colaiuta. That's when I really started to get much more seriously into the world of real virtuoso drummers. Neil Peart opened the door, and after walking through that door, I was introduced to a cavalcade of guys who blew my mind.

The first time I heard Dennis Chambers was in a lesson. Grant played me a song called, "The Nag," from John Scofield's record *Blue Matter*. We literally got into an argument because I said,



IT WAS ALWAYS (KIND OF) BAKED IN THAT I WANTED TO BE THE GUY WHO COULD BE DOING A POP GIG, A LATIN JAZZ GIG, AND A ROCK GIG ALL IN THE SAME WEEK.

WHAT IF PEOPLE THOUGHT, "OH YEAH, MAN, HE'S THAT BURNING FUNK DRUMMER, BUT THIS IS A ROCK GIG," OR "OH, THIS IS A JAZZ GIG." I WANTED AS MANY OPTIONS AND PLAYING OPPORTUNITIES ON THE TABLE AS POSSIBLE.

"Who's the percussionist?" Grant said, "What percussionist?" I said, "Well, you told me Dennis Chambers is playing drums, but who's the guy doing all that other stuff?" He said, "That's one guy." And I said, "No way!" That was my introduction into those guys. Omar Hakim, who is perhaps my all-time favorite drummer, was also introduced to me during that time period.

MD: Let's shift gears for a minute. You spent a lot of time on the East Coast, then there was the move to the West Coast. How and why did that happen? And when?

NM: I went to Berklee College of Music starting in 1991, I graduated in 1994, then I spent additional time in Boston playing with all kinds of bands. I was playing in a Calypso band that did weddings as well as in a rock cover band. I was playing jazz brunches, and I was also playing with Dale Bozzio from the band Missing Persons. That was a national act that I was doing.

At a certain point I thought to myself, I didn't start playing drums when I was five years old, practiced and put in as many hours as I had, all so I could settle down and be Boston's most in demand cover band drummer, *with all due respect to whomever is Boston's most in demand cover band drummer*. I just felt I had other things I wanted to accomplish.

At the time, there were four top musical destinations. One was New York City. I was not a diehard "jazz" and I had seen enough snow, so I had no desire to move to New York City. Second was Nashville, Tennessee. I did not have a burning passion to play 80% country music. I know there were many other things going on there, but I knew that Country would make up a large amount of my playing environment, so I kind of marked off Nashville, Tennessee. At that point Atlanta had a few artists that had come out, but I just didn't feel like the sample size was large enough. I wasn't convinced Atlanta was going to rise to the level of New York City or Nashville. Fourth on the list was Los Angeles, California. I had friends there and on my previous travels, I had enjoyed California very much... but if I'm being honest, I remember thinking, if I'm going to go somewhere where I have to suffer for my art, it might as well be somewhere that is 85 degrees and sunny every day. That put LA over the top.

MD: Before *The Voice*, you had a short a stint with Cher in Las Vegas, did an *American Idol* tour, and spent two years with Natalie Cole. Talk a little bit about those experiences.

NM: Let me take on each of those individually. In terms of working with Natalie, that was very much a musical education on the fly for me. As I previously mentioned, I wanted to be the guy comfortable in all sorts of situations, however, I'll be the first to admit, I was not a true jazz. I did not have a long list of experiences playing in big band situations. That said, I've always approached music and opportunities from a standpoint of 'default to yes.' If you call me and you say, this is an odd meter, Klezmer music trio with an emphasis on banjo and zither. I'm going to say, alright, sounds good. Let's do it, I'll figure it out. That was kind of how I approached Natalie. I approached it from the standpoint of, let's see how fast I can learn how to do these things to an acceptable level. We would do the soundcheck and maybe the soundcheck is two hours, then there would be a two-hour dinner break between soundcheck and the gig. During the two-hour dinner break, I would take my snare drum off the drumset, and I would go find a broom closet, and I would practice brushes on my snare drum for two hours between soundcheck and the gig. I did that every night because I wanted to show everyone, I know how to do this and that I could hang.

With the big band, I immersed myself in the genre, and I would listen to as much as I could. It sticks out that the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra was one of the records that I really enjoyed playing along to. I went to Macy's and bought a black suit. I thought I was slick. I bought a black suit with a black shirt and a thin black tie. I did the monochromatic thing, I put my dreads in a ponytail and I thought, I'm going to do this, I'm going to make this work, I'm going to fulfill this role at the highest level I possibly can. So, it was very much a musical education. The fact that I can swing in any regard today was affected greatly by the fact that I did that gig and I reflect on it whenever a big band arrangement is on the set list.

THE FIRST DRUMMER THAT I EVER HEARD THAT STUCK OUT TO ME WAS NEIL PEART. THAT'S THE FIRST TIME I HEARD MUSIC WHERE THE DRUMS WERE FEATURED... BUT HERE'S THIS DRUMMER PLAYING INTRICATE GROOVES AND COMPLEX FILLS, AND I HAD THIS MOMENT OF THINKING, "IS THAT ALLOWED? [LAUGHS] ARE YOU ALLOWED TO DO THAT? IS THAT A THING? DOES THAT HAPPEN?"



As a side note, sometimes people say to me, "Wow, you did those big band charts. Ooh, those big band charts... Those big band charts are challenging." I say, yes, they were challenging. At the same time, the even greater challenge, and the thing that struck terror in my heart, was when our tour manager would call and say, we have a couple of trio gigs or a couple of combo gigs, which would've meant drums, bass, piano, and Natalie. If you want to expose an inexperienced jazz drummer, put them in a jazz combo playing ballads with brushes for an hour and a half. It was challenging, but I did my very best and I'm really glad that I had the experience.

IF YOU WANT TO EXPOSE AN INEXPERIENCED JAZZ DRUMMER, PUT THEM IN A JAZZ COMBO PLAYING BALLADS WITH BRUSHES FOR AN HOUR AND A HALF.

Cher was one of the most fun tours I've ever done. I love the relationships I built with the guys in that band, many of which I still play with to this day on *The Voice*. Paul Mirkovich, my musical director, Sasha Krivtsov, my bass player, and Dave Barry, one of our guitarists, are family to me, and Cher is the first time the four of us played together. Cher is amazing. She's hilarious, easy to be around, self-deprecating, just a joy to work with. We did that gig at the Coliseum in Vegas for several years, so being in Vegas, we had the opportunity to exchange tickets with other shows in town. I got to see a lot of the *Cirque* shows, *Blue Man Group*, and a lot of things like that. Cher is one of the most down to earth

icons that I've ever been around, and that was one of the most fun gigs ever. It really solidified the relationship between Sasha, Paul, Dave, and me, and we've been fortunate that the Cher gig was (in large part,) a springboard to many of the other things that we've done since, including but not limited to, *The Voice*.

MD: You really led into my next question. I'm glad you mentioned those individuals, but I understand you didn't even audition for *The Voice* gig.

NM: Would you like to hear the long story or the short story?

MD: Let's go with the short story.

NM: The short story is, one of the most important words in my industry or in the music industry is "relationships." *The Voice* came about for me through my musical director, Paul Mirkovich. However, I did not meet Paul a month or two or three or even six before *The Voice*. I met and first worked with Paul in 2005 on a show called *Rockstar*. It was that meeting that led to this gig, that gig, this gig, that situation, that session, which ultimately led to me winding up in the drum chair on *The Voice*.

Relationships. It's not a story where I saw a sign on the wall—saying auditions for *The Voice*, and I walked in the door and I played, and a week later I was on tv. It could not be further from that. So, to anyone reading this thinking, how do you land in this situation or that situation, just know to place a high level of importance on the relationships that you create along your timeline in this industry.

MD: Now that you're on *The Voice* and have been on the show



for 26 seasons, the production of the show is quite extensive, and you have multiple drum sets, I understand you've named some of those drum sets.

NM: I do have several drum sets that have names.

MD: Do you want to throw a couple of those names out there and elaborate?

NM: There's a drumset that was inspired by my wife. I have several children, and when they were small, my wife was a baby wearer, which means that you wear your baby on your person and you use a long piece of fabric to wrap your baby to you, either in the front or in the back. She had a baby wrap, and the colors of the baby wrap were purple, pink, and yellow. If you look at the

TO ANYONE READING THIS THINKING, HOW DO YOU LAND IN THIS SITUATION OR THAT SITUATION, JUST KNOW TO PLACE A HIGH LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE ON THE RELATIONSHIPS THAT YOU CREATE ALONG YOUR TIMELINE IN THIS INDUSTRY.

sunset in LA, it (kind of) fades through a purple, pink, and yellow kind of thing. That inspired that drumset. It's a fade. It's ultimately a three-color fade, and it's purple, pink, yellow, and it's called California Sunset.

We have another drumset that we built because at the time, Pearl, my drum company didn't make a drumset that had a single lug in the middle of the floor tom with long tension rods. We wanted a very vintage throwback look, so myself and my drum tech at the time, Stevo Morrison built this drumset. We imagined it to look like if your grandmother had dated a drummer in high school, and that drummer had been drafted into the military, and upon being drafted into the military, put his drumset in cases and just left it at your grandma's house and went off to war. Then, because war is a hard time, unfortunately he didn't make it out the other end. He died in battle, but that drumset stayed with your grandmother. Then one day you're going through your grandmother's basement, and you find this drumset and you ask, "Grandma, where did this drumset come from?" And she tells you the story of how it came to be. So that's our vintage look, throwback drumset. We call it Grandma's Basement.

Our sparkle, magenta to eggplant, burst is called "Crandemonium." The natural maple Reference Pure is "Honey Nut Oh's." The red sparkle we call, "The Zoltan Kit", in honor of my friend Zoltan Chaney.

MD: All right, we'll leave it at that. I'm sure you have a lot more names with a lot more drum sets. You've also named your home studio The Garudio, what does that mean?

NM: This is my garage turned studio, my Garudio. If I had maybe turned my attic into my studio, then maybe that's my Atticudio. Maybe if I had taken over the living room and made that my studio, it would've been Livingrudio... I can keep going. [laughs]

MD: Tell me about a week in the life of Nate. Whether it's the "blinds" or the "lives" on *The Voice*. What's a week like?

NM: It's not easy to define a week in the life of production on *The Voice*, because given the section of the show that we're doing, whether it's blinds, battles, knockouts, playoffs, or lives... it could change. The general idea is band learns songs, band rehearses the songs with contestants, band does stage rehearsal

with contestants, band does stage performance with contestants. That's the general imprint. The place where that changes slightly is when you involve the coaches. During some of those, we have times where we'll have a day or two of reality where we're shooting with the contestants and the coaches are there giving their feedback.

MD: So, as an overview, how much time do you have to learn a contestant's song?

NM: How much time I have to learn a contestant song is reliant on what part of the season we're in. During the blinds, in the band rehearsal portion, we listen once, play it once, and move on to the next song on the docket for that day. We do this over the course of several days... maybe eighteen songs per day, until we've made it through, 150 songs or so. At that point, the next time we play the song is with the contestant. In our contestant rehearsal, let's say we're playing, "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me." That rehearsal is designated 25 minutes. If the contestant walks in and they kill it first time, we might say, that sounded great, we don't have to play it again, how about you? They might say, "Sounded great to me too." So that's one time through. Then we do about 15 minutes of stage rehearsal when we play the song three times, and then you see it in the blind auditions. There's a possibility that when you see a song in the blind auditions, that's the sixth time or seventh time that we've played that song with that contestant.

The opposite side of that is if we're playing, "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me" and the contestant asks, "Can it not be so piano driven?" In that case, we might spend all those 25 or 30 minutes working to make it into something that the contestant feels more comfortable with, in which case, we will spend more time playing that song.

By the time it finally hits the stage, we may have spent 45 minutes on that one song. Now, that's the blinds. As the season goes on, as the production grows, as the songs lengthen, we spend a little bit more time. But that's kind of the general idea behind it.

MD: It changes during the live shows?

NM: There are times in the live shows, especially when we have an A-list artist performing, and we're going to be backing them. Maybe we listen to the song that morning and run it as a band twice, then later in the day, we run it with the A-list artist twice,

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and then we play it live in the show. That happens as well. It's really all over the map, and there's no set-in-stone template. Essentially, what is the job that we must do? What is the task we need to achieve? How do we best and quickly achieve it? Let's do it, and then that's what happens.

MD: With all of that said, all the challenges that it entails, and certainly the different skill level of the contestants, how much of the production is done with a click track?

NM: Because the production relies on precision, I would say conservatively 95% of what we play is to a click track, and that's con-

servatively... It's probably more like 98.5%. In any given week, we shorten songs. If the song *must* be 1 minute 55 seconds, it must be 1 minute 55 seconds!!! It can't be two minutes and two seconds, *that's pretty close*. It can't be 1 minute 45, *that's really close*... If it's 1 minute 55, it must be 1 minute 55! Part of the way that we guarantee that is we play it to a click. That assures that we're going to be on the same tempo consistently, we're going to begin in the same spot and end in the same spot, so that all the pyro, cryo, camera angles, lighting, and choreography is ALL spot on. So, we play most things to a click. I would also add that even when it sounds like we're not playing to a click, we are probably playing to a click in the sense that the click is slowing down and speeding up, so it sounds conducted, but in all probability, it's to a click.

MD: You mentioned earlier that you're working on probably 150 songs at a time, but having been on the show for 26 seasons, that means you've played over 5,000 songs.

NM: That's a realistic guess. I think at one point someone added up and it was closer to 7,000 songs.

MD: All right. Some of them may have been a one and done. Some of them might've been repeated. Tell me the best part about working on the show?

NM: The best part of working on *The Voice* is that it's never boring. Every day is a new day. Every contestant is a new contestant. Every song is a new song. And when I say it's a new song, maybe we've played it before, but it's another opportunity to revisit that song, and it's another opportunity for a contestant to do a

MD: I think the other nice thing might be the fact that over the years you have played with so many icons in the industry, legends. Who haven't you played with that you would like to play with?



NM: Peter Gabriel. I believe that he is, in many ways, the quintessential musical [all caps] ARTIST. There you go. A short answer for you, Peter Gabriel. [laughs] At this point, I was fortunate to have an opportunity to perform with Sting. He would've been on the list as well. I'm assuming that I have to limit my list to people who are still among the living. If I didn't have to limit it to people still among the living, then David Bowie would've made that list, as well as Tom Petty.

MD: We've covered a lot. When you're not working on *The Voice*, you are also teaching. What are some of your teaching styles?

NM: I can encapsulate my teaching style this way. If someone comes to me and they say, Nate, I would like to take lessons with you. Then I assume a few things, or I assume that *one* of a few things is true. I assume that either: A. You've *seen* me do something that you want insight on. B. You've *heard* me do something that you want insight on. Or C. I *communicate* something in some way that you want insight on.

For teaching, my general jumping off point is looking at my own educational timeline and starting from a place that seems appropriate for what a player is after. That's my starting point, then I progress through my own educational timeline... I did this first, then I learned how to do this, then I learned how to do this... Then I learned that genre and that genre, and this is where or who I learned that from, and I do my best to disseminate that information in a clear way. Tied into that, is the idea that sometimes players come to me and say, "How did you come up with your approach to the way you played that song?" "Why did you play that fill there?" "How do I approach trash can endings?" "How do I approach being more creative?" In those types of scenarios, I merge off what would've been my path, and I merge into the lane they're asking about, then I do my best to share information in that lane.



flip on it. They say, "Hey, you know what, let's do this kick on the "and of three." Okay, cool. "Hey, let's switch this up on the bridge. Let's go reggae. It's a country song, but yeah, let's try reggae." Every day is a different day. It's never boring, and for a person like myself, the idea of doing the same thing every day, day in, day out for the same number of hours every day, clock in, clock out, is a certain kind of torture that I would not survive. So, for me, the best thing about the show is the fact that it's a different day every day.

MD: We've talked about when you were younger, *The Muppets*, playing with Cher, and *The Voice*. Looking towards the future, any chance of you sharing all your experiences through a drum instruction book?

NM: I have been asked about a book many times, and I've often-times said, "I'm not sure I have a well enough defined concept that would support offering a book." That being said, as I solidify or codify (if you will,) the things that I teach in my lessons over the course of time, it is sort of organically turning into a bit of a curriculum. So, at some point when that curriculum reaches critical mass, I might just turn around and say, "Look, I accidentally wrote a book," and I might make that something that is available for mainstream release.

MD: You and I have had several conversations before this interview, and one time you mentioned the quote that says, "Jack of all trades, master of none," but the actual quote is, "A Jack of all trades is a master of none, though oftentimes better than a master of one." How does that apply to your situation in your life?

NM: That applies to my situation in my life in this sense. For the longest time, I had considered the term "Jack of all trades" like, [rolls eyes] he's a Jack of all trades, a master of none. Historically, I think that has been considered a dig because not enough of us know the full quote. So historically, if I refer to myself as a Jack of all trades, master of none, it's sort of a tacit dig at myself, but I'm okay with that. I might not be incredible at anything, but I'm pretty good at quite a few different things.

I learned the rest of that quote because I was having a conversation with my friend Ian Martin, an exceptional bass player who asked, "Yes, but do you know the rest of that quote?" And I said, no, I don't think so. He shared with me the rest of the quote, and on a certain level, it was validating because I felt like it actually gave credence to the notion that there is value in knowing a little bit about a lot of things.

MD: In the conversations you and I have had, you've said you didn't want to be a jazz drummer. You didn't want to be a rock drummer, but you wanted to be a working drummer.

NM: During my time at Berklee College of Music, when I was surrounded by players my age, my peers, there were definitely jazz guys, there were definitely rock guys, there were definitely Latin guys, however, more specifically I wanted to parse all of the different genres and skillsets that a player can develop. I felt like my

best opportunity to be an employed guy was if I had some sort of grasp on a small amount of all those things. I didn't want to be so immersed in, for example, just funk. What if people thought, "Oh yeah, man, he's that burning funk drummer, but this is a rock gig," or "Oh, this is a jazz gig." I wanted as many options and playing opportunities on the table as possible.

I wanted to be well-versed in enough genres that people felt comfortable tapping me for whatever the situation may be. That was my goal, and it's funny because that inspiration and direction led me to play in many different bands inside and outside of school, and ultimately landing me on *The Voice* where all those elements might be required in one day. Sometimes I'm playing reggae, sometimes I'm playing country, jazz, polka, ska, R&B,

reggae.... All those things are getting tapped on this gig. So, as corny as it may sound, I feel like the cosmos have led me throughout my entire life to prepare me for a gig that I never knew existed. *The Voice* did not exist

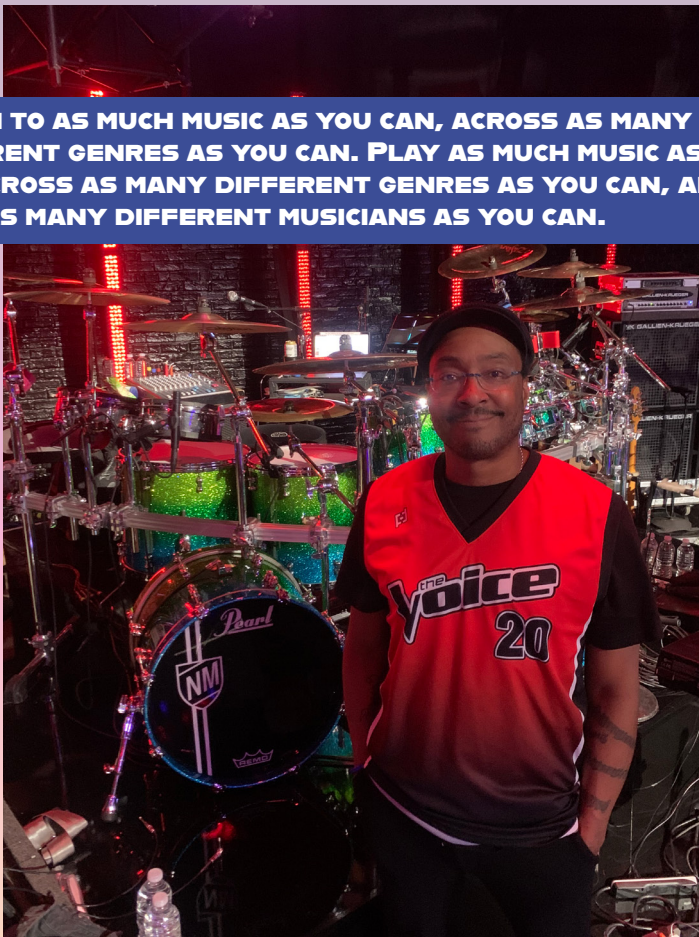
then. But I've been preparing all my life for it. Decades before *The Voice* existed, I started preparing for it, and then well down the timeline, here's this gig that requires you to do many different genres, and by the way, the set list changes every single week... and the contestants all change every single go round... and you're going to be playing on all these different drum sets. That seed was planted when I got the *Uncle Jam Wants You* album, that Peter Frampton record, KISS *Alive* and Michael Jackson's *Off the Wall*.

MD: I have one last question. What advice, regardless of their age, their skill level, or how long they've been playing, what would you

give to other musicians?

NM: Sometimes I'm asked what advice I would give to young players. I reflect back to once upon a time, not long after Berklee I reckon, I asked someone, an older, working musician, what advice he would give? I asked the same question to him, and he said, "Listen to as much music as you can, across as many different genres as you can. Play as much music as you can across as many different genres as you can, and with as many different musicians as you can. While that seems very simple, that's what I did. And that, in great part, has led me to where I am today.

LISTEN TO AS MUCH MUSIC AS YOU CAN, ACROSS AS MANY DIFFERENT GENRES AS YOU CAN. PLAY AS MUCH MUSIC AS YOU CAN ACROSS AS MANY DIFFERENT GENRES AS YOU CAN, AND WITH AS MANY DIFFERENT MUSICIANS AS YOU CAN.



JONATHAN BARBER: LEADING WITH CONVITON

BY MARK GRIFFITH

Since Jonathan Barber won Modern Drummer's Best Up and Coming Drummer in 2018, he has become one of the busiest drummers in jazz. He has been playing with Terence Blanchard, Christian McBride, Nicholas Payton, Jeremy Pelt, Jimmy Greene, and Pat Metheny among others. His playing approach is a unique open handed and all-encompassing combination of straight-ahead jazz, big band, avant-garde, modern contemporary odd meter jazz, Blues, funk, and church-gospel music. His band Vision Ahead just released their fourth record called *In Motion*, and he is the jazz drum professor at the University of Connecticut. Jonathan Barber is the personification of what a young, successful, jazz drummer is today.

MD: What is your drumming background?

JB: I got started around age four or five through my father who was a drummer. I grew up in the church like many musicians, and it's the typical story. My father is a drummer, and I would watch him play every Sunday. The beautiful thing about that experience was, at the time the church that my family attended used to rent out a YMCA for Sunday worship. That meant that we had to load the gear in, break down the gear, and load the gear out. So, at the tender age of five, I was my father's roadie and drum tech. I was really hands on and learned everything about the drums. I was fascinated by all the different pieces and how everything had its own function. As I got older, my father would start playing having me play one song, then two songs, and eventually my dad said, 'Alright you're the drummer now,' that was very cool.

MD: What else did you learn from your dad?

JB: On Saturday mornings, my dad would always be washing his car and blasting instrumental music like Yellowjackets, George Duke, Fourplay, Jeff Lorber, Weather Report, John Scofield's *Blue Matter* album, music that was really cultivated with melody and great drumming. I found out later that was listening to drummers like Dennis Chambers, Omar Hakim, Harvey Mason, and Will Kennedy. I didn't know their names at the time, but I had favorite songs, and all those drummers became my favorite drummers. My dad was self-taught and didn't know how to read music but he would always give me these metaphors and high level drumming mantras like: tell

a story, play from your heart, you never know who's watching you, even if you just touch one person in the audience you did great, when you play a solo start small and then build, make sure the pocket is there. He would really be adamant about those things and instilled a lot of knowledge in me.

MD: What's some of the Gospel music you grew up on and like?

JB: Fred Hammond. I love his records *Pages of Life* and *Purpose by Design* with drummer Marvin McQuitty. Even before that, Fred was in a group called Commissioned that was wonderful. My parents used to say that when I was a baby I used to wiggle every time they played a Commissioned record. I really like John



Photo by Ike Abakah

P. Kee, he seemed to always let his musicians stretch out a bit. I listened to Tye Tribbett and Israel Houghton in high school. Donald Lawrence is another guy that I that I've always admired but coming up it was always Fred Hammond. I love Calvin Rodgers, Terry Baker, and Sput Searight too.

I love Tony Williams' playing because (I feel) he's someone that church drummers can identify themselves under. Through Tony, you can (kind of) make the transition from Gospel into jazz. With Tony's approach, I feel like church drummers can identify themselves and see how to transfer those Gospel drumming skills over to the jazz language. It's a different touch and a different sensibility but playing in the church is transferrable to playing jazz. Unfortunately, sometimes people don't know how to make that transition. I can remember listening to Tony with Miles and I heard that in his approach. Of course, I like Roy Haynes, Max Roach, Philly Joe, Papa Joe Jones is honestly one of my favorites. I listened to Billy Higgins and Arthur Taylor a lot because those two guys that you know are pretty much on almost all the Jackie McLean records. They both had that swing and that swag!

ON SATURDAY MORNINGS, MY DAD WOULD ALWAYS BE WASHING HIS CAR AND BLASTING INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC LIKE YELLOWJACKETS, GEORGE DUKE, FOURPLAY, JEFF LORBER, WEATHER REPORT, JOHN SCOFIELD'S BLUE MATTER ALBUM, MUSIC THAT WAS REALLY CULTIVATED WITH MELODY AND GREAT DRUMMING.

I do remember you know this one video that really changed my life. It was a Hudson video compilation. The first drummer was Mike Clark playing duo with Paul Jackson, the second clip was Dave Garibaldi playing with Tower of Power, the third guy was Dennis Chambers playing with John Scofield, and the fourth guy was Chad Smith playing with Flea. I used to wear that entire video out. That video was a great barometer of what I wanted to do, that's what fusion is to me. I don't necessarily think of fusion as a certain kind of genre, fusion is infusing all these different aesthetics into one thing. Seeing the finesse of Mike Clark, seeing the groove out of Dave Garibaldi, seeing the power, precision, and creativity of Dennis Chambers, and seeing the pure and raw tenacity of Chad Smith. I loved it all! I remember seeing John Blackwell on the *Modern Drummer* DVD, it was so cool how he had that China in the back, that was his thing and something that you could identify.

MD: Can you talk about the relationship between playing in church and playing jazz?

JB: Playing in the African American Pentecostal idiom, everything is about ears and listening, nothing is written down. It's a different way of improvising, you just have to have great intuition and great listening skills. Of course, you are playing for a higher calling, but you're really serving the people. That responsibility always intrigued me.

As I got older, I got into jazz, and after my junior year going into my senior year that summer my mom said, "All right you're 16 it's time for you to get a job." That's when I got into jazz, she found a music camp that was held at the Artists Collective, it was founded by the late great Jackie McLean in 1970, and in 2006, I enrolled that summer camp. I instantly knew that this style of music was completely different from what I had been listening to and playing in church. That summer was really special for me, getting enriched by the culture of knowing the history of

this music and getting bitten by the jazz bug. I knew that THIS is what I want to do! Going into my senior year I knew I wanted to go to the University of Hartford because Jackie McLean also founded the jazz studies program at the University of Hartford. In the Hartford community that's the thing to do. You go to the Artists Collective and then you go to the University of Hartford it was a natural cultural bridge. I applied early, I got accepted, and you couldn't tell me anything in my senior year, because I knew I was going to college and I was going to be a jazz musician, those next four years really changed my life. Learning the history of jazz drumming, being around musicians that were advanced, at the time I barely knew how to read music and I barely knew who John Coltrane was. I had a lot of catching up to do, but during those four years I made so many advances because I was hungry for knowledge. There was such a great passion inside of me, I was just trying to be a sponge and trying to absorb everything.

MD: You were studying at Hartt with "EMac" (Eric McPherson,) who is a GREAT drummer, and (from what I've heard) a wonderful teacher.

JB: EMac is my mentor and one of my best friends. I studied with him for four years, that was life changing. His approach to music and life, again I wanted to be a sponge. Anything that he was doing, I was following along. I was going in New York to his gigs, and he introduced me to different musicians. Once I graduated, I kind of just hit the ground running, I started touring with the great trumpeter Jeremy Pelt because EMac handed that tour off to me because he couldn't do it and he said, "Call Jonathan Barber." Once I moved to New York it was playing with this person, meeting that person, going on tour, and just being in that community. Then I started my own band-project and now I'm trying to take that thing to another level, it's been a great journey.

MD: What did you study with EMac (Eric McPherson)?

JB: At my first lesson he took a piece of paper and said write these names down: Baby Dodds, Zutty Singleton, Sonny Greer, Chick Webb, and Kenny Clarke. He told me to research those guys, you had to know the history before you could even get to all the things that you had to work on. EMac was such an advocate for knowing the history, he has such a reverence for the drummers that came before him and the contributions that they made on this instrument.

We would do book stuff, but it never felt rigid. We were always taking something and maximizing it's potential. We would take *Syncopation* and come up with all these cool ways of flipping things around. We did a lot of the Wilcoxon rudimental solos stuff, and we did a lot of work with songs. He would have you learn the melody, learn the form, and play the melody on the drums. Then we would trade choruses, trade fours, trade eights, and trade comping phrases. He always encouraged other instrumentalists to come to the lessons, so we would be playing with a piano player or a saxophone player. He was not only very hands on, but he always found a way to apply things

in real time. We would take stuff and talk about how we could apply it to playing “Stablemates” or how we could apply it to playing a blues, or a drum vamp. A lot of times he would play these obscure rhythms and not explain what it was. You would

navigate it in real time as well. EMac made sure that you know how to be comfortable with being uncomfortable, that was very important, and that’s what I’m giving to my students today teaching at UConn.

PLAYING IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN PENTECOSTAL IDIOM, EVERYTHING IS ABOUT EARS AND LISTENING, NOTHING IS WRITTEN DOWN. IT’S A DIFFERENT WAY OF IMPROVISING, YOU JUST HAVE TO HAVE GREAT INTUITION AND GREAT LISTENING SKILLS.

have to figure it out and jump in. The beautiful thing about that was you were building your own intuition and building and trusting your ears. Those are skills that are so essential because you might have to learn something on the spot and retain and

MD: Being comfortable while being uncomfortable is so important in playing music, talk about the importance of that.

JB: That’s kind of my mantra. When it comes to being an improviser being in the moment is job number one, but “the moment” will always have you on the edge. When you are trying to be present and in the moment, sometimes things go according to plan and sometimes they don’t. When they don’t, you must have a level of acceptance, surrender and the creativity to keep going and keep moving forward.

MD: That’s improvisation, but so many people are not comfortable improvising.

JB: It’s definitely a muscle that must be used. But it’s like going to the gym. Of course, you may not do a lot of reps right away, but over time if you are consistent, things can be more comfortable. That will give you the confidence and the conviction to go forward. When I think of all the great improvisers, the things that I see right away is their comfortability in who they are, and the conviction in what they’re saying.

MD: Conviction has been my mantra for the last 5 years or so, what does that word mean to you?

JB: Conviction is being confident in doing, while not being concerned with a certain kind of result. Conviction is not based on results. And people can feel conviction. At the end of the day, the vibrations and the feeling of music will never go away. Those feelings are undeniable whether we are talking about Stevie Wonder’s *Songs in the Key of Life* or Michael Jackson’s *Thriller*.

MD: How did the school environment get you ready for the NYC Jazz Scene?

JB: I had some great teachers in school: Steve Davis, Rene’ McLean, Nat Reeves, they were all heavily involved in Jackie Mclean’s bands, heavily involved in his teaching, and



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his approach musically. Steve Davis actually gave me one of my first gigs in New York while I was still in school. Those guys all had a lot of gigs locally around town, and they would hire a lot of their students. I was fortunate to play with them and get that

MD: What type of stuff were you asking Kendrick Scott about?

JB: That was around the time I was getting ready to do my first album with my band Jonathan Barber & Vision Ahead, and Kendrick had his own band too. So I was just trying to pick his

I WANTED TO GO TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD BECAUSE JACKIE MCLEAN ALSO FOUNDED THE JAZZ STUDIES PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD.

“hands on” approach, and not just during ensemble time. That was learning in real time, and they were definitely real with it, they weren’t trying to pacify you, they knew there’s a certain level and a certain conviction that you had to have playing this music, and they let it be known in their own words.

My band Vision Ahead (pretty much) formed at the University of Hartford. Guitarist Andrew Renfroe, bassist Matt Dwonszyk, and pianist Taber Gable and me all met at the University of Hartford. We would shed together, play a lot together, and go to someone’s house and just play, play, play! Once we all graduated college, we all moved to New York together, and at one point Taber, Andrew, and me all lived together in New York.

There is a lot of synergy and community in playing with people over a long stretch of time. This year, my band has been together for about 15 years. School is about much more than playing in a practice room by yourself. It’s about going out and playing with people (your fellow students and your teachers.)

MD: When did you move to New York City?

JB: I graduated college in 2011, then I stayed home for about four years doing the trek back and forth between Connecticut and New York. Then I came to the conclusion that if I’m going to do this for real, be for real about this, and do it at the highest level, I need to be in New York at all times. That’s when I made the move to New York City in 2015.

MD: When you moved here, who were the popular young drummers on the scene?

JB: Kendrick Scott, Justin Brown, Marcus Gilmore, Tyshawn Sorey, and Jamire Williams were the guys to look up to and setting a high bar and standard of drumming and musicianship. At the time I lived in Harlem, and Kendrick Scott lived in Harlem, we were kind of close in proximity. A couple of times we would get some coffee and I just picked his brain about stuff. Kendrick always made time for me, he’s such a nice guy and always cool. But there were guys of the generation before that as well. Guys like Nasheet Waits, Lewis Nash, Ralph Peterson, and Gerald Cleaver. Those guys were older than Kendrick and those younger guys, I would follow them around New York and help them out if they needed drums or something.

brain about recording my band, ways to thrive on the scene, tuning, cymbal sound, endorsements... Regarding cymbals, I remember Kendrick saying that he was always going for something “lush.” He also told me to never be afraid to really invest in yourself. He drew an interesting analogy saying, “If you need to buy a coat, get yourself a good coat, because you deserve a good coat. Then people will see you wearing that coat, and think, that’s a high value coat, that must be a high value person.”



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MD: How long were you on the New York jazz scene before you felt comfortable?

JB: Because I was already playing with different artists like Jeremy Pelt from 2011 to 2015, I feel like once I moved to New York I just hit the ground running. I was already working a lot and because I had those four years of knowing people, knowing the spots to check out, and knowing who's who, I quickly became comfortable. At that time, I had such a drive and a hunger to be in New York. I love the fast pace, the drive, the grit, the intensity, and the urgency that New Yorkers have. At that point I was hungry! Around 2016 I started running the 1am jam

New York is not cheap, especially now. Musically speaking, you must be seen in the community, you have to be seen on the scene. After that, it's important to play with people, go to the jam sessions, but find a community of people that you enjoy playing with, or are interested in playing with you. That community grows and develops over time. In New York there's a lot of opportunity, you just have to be creative and proactive. You must create opportunity for yourself. I think it's important to seek out people that that know things that you don't know and be willing to learn. We're living in 2025, and a lot of knowledgeable people are passing on. But that knowledge has been passed down to today's generation of master teachers like

WHEN YOU ARE TRYING TO BE PRESENT AND IN THE MOMENT, SOMETIMES THINGS GO ACCORDING TO PLAN AND SOMETIMES THEY DON'T. WHEN THEY DON'T, YOU MUST HAVE A LEVEL OF ACCEPTANCE, SURRENDER AND THE CREATIVITY TO KEEP GOING AND KEEP MOVING FORWARD.



session at Smalls Jazz Club on Monday nights. We would play right after Ari Hoenig's band, so people had already heard a lot of drums, and it was, "OK Jonathan, now what are YOU going to do?" That was such a great push and Ari was always cool, he'd stick around and listen. I ran that session for many years, and I took it very seriously. We played the late set, and everyone would go there after their gigs, so just by traffic me and my band would get a lot of visibility and face time. I started to meet people like Jeremy Pelt, Wallace Roney, JD Allen, Nicholas Payton, Eldar, Mike Moreno, Terrace Martin, Marcus Strickland, Christian Sands, and I went on tour with all of them, then in 2019 I started playing with Pat Metheny. Through gigging and working, it just kind of caught on like fire.

MD: What would you tell a young guy today who was thinking of moving to New York City to become a working jazz drummer?

JB: Of course, the obvious advice is saving some money because

Nasheet Waits and Eric McPherson.

MD: Were those Smalls gigs in 2015 the beginning of your band Vision Ahead?

JB: Before that it was just the Jonathan Barber Quintet, and then I started calling it Jonathan Barber & Vision Ahead in 2017, and now we have released four records (independently,) and this most recent one called *In Motion*.

MD: Besides the drumming, your band also shows off your composing. You composed this entire new record. What is your composition process?

JB: To be honest, I think I was a late bloomer when it comes to composition. In music school you have writing assignments and stuff like that, but I was never really into composition when I was at Hartt. I was really into playing with people and developing my sound. When I started doing the Smalls gig, I was creating different arrangements of standards, and people in my band were writing music, and I thought that I needed to

start doing that, eventually I just started writing my own music. I remember attending a master class with the great Eddie Henderson and someone asked him what composition was, and he said that composition is just, “Command C and command V” I remember thinking that I’m gonna take that to the bank. It just started off with identifying what I like, taking bits and pieces of “isms” and aesthetics that I like, and trying to create a song with them. I compose at the piano, I’m a very frustrated pianist, so I compose at the piano. I remember writing my first song (called “Vision Ahead”) and it’s definitely all these “isms” of certain things that I liked. One of my favorite songs to play is “One Finger Snap,” I love the idea that it’s just a melodic line, so I wanted to create a line off that. The bridge is basically a Freddie Hubbard lick that Jeremy Pelt used to play a lot, part of the solo section one part is the changes from “Stablemates,” and I took the bass line from Michael Jackson’s “Rock Your Body.” As I learned to understand all these different “isms,” I started to build compositions on them. As they say, there’s nothing new under the sun. If you go deep into any composition, you can trace it to something. It might not be as direct as what I just described ideas can come from anywhere. I’ve played with some great composers like Pat Metheny, Terrance Blanchard, George Cables, and Mike Moreno. I have tried to borrow the lens from them. Composition is definitely a muscle that I had to work on, and I think it is growing stronger with each new record. When I listen to my first Vision Ahead record and compare it to the new one *In Motion*, I can hear the growth and the depth of the new compositions, and I feel like it’s only gonna get better, I’m very proud of that.

When I write I’ll either start with harmony or a melody, then I’ll listen to where the chords go. A lot of times I might just play a triad and play a bass note and then play a series of chords to just see where the motion comes goes. It’s building your ear and building your intuition to say, “I feel like it’s going here,” so I’ll try this chord (or these chords) then I’ll hear a melody, and wonder, “Should go here?” It’s kind of a domino effect. Sometimes a composition will come from a rhythm. On my record *Legacy Holder* I wrote a song called “29.” That comes from a drummer “ism” that I was playing. The bass drum is the bass line, and the snare is an ostinato in the high register that fills in the spaces between the melody.

MD: Let’s talk about a few tunes from the new record, talk to me about “Radar.”

JB: It’s about what my dad taught me, when you play, tell a story. I think a composition should do the same thing. I want my writing to tell a story. When I wrote “Radar,” the song gave me the idea of being an introduction to *something*; a movie, a show, *something*—It became the first track on the record because of that feeling. In the song, we have an intro, then it goes to the melody and then the solos, and the song takes its own shape. But I felt that it needed another section. Sometimes with compositions you must ask yourself some questions, and sometimes the next part can come from a question that you asked. I heard this thunderous 3/4 thing that went into the melody, but I didn’t know what was next. What spoke to me was to create something really staccato and choppy that would

CONVICTION IS BEING CONFIDENT IN DOING, WHILE NOT BEING CONCERNED WITH A CERTAIN KIND OF RESULT. CONVICTION IS NOT BASED ON RESULTS. AND PEOPLE CAN FEEL CONVICTION.

feature the drums without a solo. I like to create vamps and solo over them, so I wrote some drum hits and a vamp. A lot of listeners identify my writing and my playing with my approach to drum vamps, so I wanted to honor that for myself. That led to the silhouette of “Radar.”

MD: “In Motion” sounds to be thru composed, what is the form to “In Motion”?

JB: Great question. “In Motion” is basically all seven bar sections—stanzas that is what gives it that uneven feeling. When it comes to composition, I have a bunch of voice memos of me singing melodies over chords. I was going through my voice memos, and I had a bunch of these seven bar melodies over these chords, but I couldn’t decide which one to use, so Matt (my bass player) said why don’t you use them all. In the composition, we have the first melody, then seven bars of the rhythm section, then it goes to a different seven bar melody, and then another seven-bar melody at the end. Those combined three melodies make up the song. When it comes to the solo section, it is seven bars looped, but what makes it special is that we’re trading between the piano, saxophone, and guitar. And in each solo section we’re adding a fragment of the melody as a background phrase. It gives the song a whirlwind, “In Motion” feeling that creates a snowball effect that develops off the melody.

MD: What can you tell me about “Liberty”?

JB: I was thinking about the music industry and the state of songs. We’ve got playlists, social media, and 15 or 30 second clips everywhere. So, I just wanted to create a melody or a chant that people can sing along to, attach themselves to, and take home with them. Something that I could just play over and over again. Hopefully, at the end of a show that melody is in people’s heads. As a composer, I just wanted to create a simple, singable, melody.

...IT’S IMPORTANT TO PLAY WITH PEOPLE, GO TO THE JAM SESSIONS, BUT FIND A COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE THAT YOU ENJOY PLAYING WITH, OR ARE INTERESTED IN PLAYING WITH YOU. THAT COMMUNITY GROWS AND DEVELOPS OVER TIME.

MD: How did you start playing with Pat Metheny?

JB: In 2017, I got an e-mail from him, and I didn’t think it was real, then I got a phone call from him. Apparently, he had his eye on me for a few years. I started going to his crib and playing duo playing some his songs and some standards, that went on for about two years. I didn’t make that public at the time because I wanted to PLAY with him! That was a dream of mine. Then in 2019, he told me that he was going to do a tour playing the music of *Beyond the Missouri Sky*. Pat, bassist Darek Oles and me did two tours, Spring and Fall of 2019. We would go to different cities and do a trio gig one night, and the next day it was trio plus orchestra. We were basically playing the greatest hits of Pat Metheny. I’m so happy that he gave me that opportunity, we were supposed to do something in 2020, then that got canned because of COVID, and then he went in a different direction. But we still talk and there might be something on the horizon.

Pat Metheny is a hero of mine, and those 2019 tours were a highlight of my career. Playing with him, learning from him, and playing those iconic songs was amazing.

MD: Explain your open-handed playing to us. It's different from most open-handed drummers.

JB: When I first started playing drums, I played open handed, and I didn't really think anything of it. When I got to high

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school and I got into jazz band, people noticed that I played "differently." I wondered if I had done this all wrong. When I got into the Artists Collective, I was playing both ways. Rene' McLean stopped me and said, "What the heck are you doing?" I was comfortable playing open-handed, but I knew "the tradition" was playing the ride cymbal with my right hand. He told me, "Don't go by the *look*, go by the *feel*, play what *feels* good!" Then I started doing my research and saw that great drummers like Will Kennedy, Billy Cobham, Simon Phillips, Lenny White, and Carter Beauford all played open handed and are amazing. That just made me lean into it more, and today that is something that separates me. I just approach the drum set with my own approach to the instrument.

MD: Are you a naturally right-handed?

JB: No, I'm a natural lefty. I bowl with my right, and I write with my right, but everything else I do with my left hand.

MD: You play the ride with your right hand, play your hi-hats with your left hand, and you play a right-handed kit.

JB: Absolutely. If I play in church, I'm playing the ride with my right hand. But when I play jazz, I ride with my left hand. I *could* ride with my right, I am a little ambidextrous, but I also lead with my right hand, so I'm not all left hand driven. If you look at the drum set, when I play time with my left hand, I can let my right hand explore like the whole kit without crossing. This has allowed my right hand to be as "intentional" as my left hand. When it comes to soloing, I feel like my right hand is just as involved in the exploration of the set as my left. If you're left hand is on the hi-hat or ride cymbal you can move your right hand to the toms with that same motion, and sonically it's going to sound completely different. Sometimes I even set up completely lefty. It's all about unlocking your limbs to be expressive so each limb is not locked down to a primary function.

MD: What types of things are you teaching students at the University of Connecticut?

JB: Every semester their final exam is to learn three to five tunes. Their job is to know the melody and its inflections of the melody. It's one thing to know the rhythm of the melody, but inflections, dynamics, and phrasing of the melody is very important. They need to know the form you know and be able to solo over the melody and the form. Of course, we do Wilcoxon, different variations of *Syncoption* and *Stick Control*. It's not necessarily always by the book I'm always trying to flip stuff. I did something

called "rhythmatrix" with EMac, but I took it a step forward and it deals with groupings of twos and threes. It's basically different combinations of phrasing with twos and threes, where a dotted quarter note that represents a three and the quarter note represent a two. For example, you might have two dotted quarter notes and then five quarter notes which is basically two groupings of three and then five groupings of two. Then we apply it to comping, grooves, and rudiments.

MD: What some of the records (besides your own) that you are most proud of?

JB: Jeremy Pelt *Noir En Rouge Live in Paris*, JD Allen *Grace*, that one was sort of avant-garde, and there is a Jimmy Greene record that is about to come out that's really good!

MD: Let's talk gear, for a jazz drummer there is nothing more important than cymbals?

JB: My cymbals are Istanbul Agop, they are the greatest cymbals in the world! I was touring Europe in 2011 and we played in Istanbul, Turkey. I went to the factory, saw the guy's hand-hammering cymbals, and I was blown away. In time, our relationship grew, and in 2016 I became an endorser. They are



IF YOU'RE LEFT HAND IS ON THE HI-HAT OR RIDE CYMBAL YOU CAN MOVE YOUR RIGHT HAND TO THE TOMS WITH THAT SAME MOTION, AND SONICALLY IT'S GOING TO SOUND COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.

my sound, those cymbals are so special, it's undeniable, you can hear so much character and presence. I use all 20" cymbals.

MD: Like Elvin used to do.

JB: Exactly! Elvin Jones, Lewis Nash, and Eric McPherson. Those three guys gave me all the confidence to play 20" cymbals. It's that perfect timbre of a 20, sometimes 22's can be so dark, and the drone can be so low that it gets kind of lost. But 20" cymbals have a nice timber that you can lay into. Whether it's crashing an accent or a nice ride, I really gravitate to 20's. I use a 20" Special Edition Jazz Ride with three rivets, a 20" 30th anniversary, and a 20" Signature (with the green writing.) Those are my three favorite cymbals. I use ProMark Rebound 5a, and Evans Onyx two ply heads.

MD: You have some interesting aspects to your drum set as well?

JB: My drums are Ludwig, and I am playing Classic Maple's. Uli Salazar and those guys are incredible. My bass drum is a 12x20 and it's a double 45 edge, so it gives you that tone without sacrificing the low end.

MD: Why did you start using a 12x20?

JB: I played one at NAMM, and it's almost like the older Ludwig Jazzette that Roy Haynes used to play, which was a 12x18. I also have one of those too.

Another thing that was really cool when we built my kit is that we put different bearing edges on different drums. My 10" and 12" rack toms have a double 45-degree edge which gets that tone, I like my rack toms to sing. My 14" floor tom has a single 45-degree edge, which is the standard bearing edge. Then my 16" floor tom has a round over edge, which gets all the low end and all the punch. And of course, I'm playing Ludwig snares. Ludwig makes great instruments without being overtly glittery and too much bling. They're all about making a good

instrument to make really great music.

MD: And you are making some really great music too!

JB: Thanks! This was fun.



Photo by Ike Abakah

Rufus Taylor of The Darkness

By Mark Griffith

After several early gigs and tours with Queen related bands like the Queen Musical, Brian May, Queen (themselves,) and the great Jeff Beck; Rufus Taylor has been playing with The Darkness for 10 years and four records. With their new recording *Dreams on Toast*, the band is rising to a new level, and so is Rufus's drumming and songwriting. While his musical lineage (his father is Queen's Roger Taylor) is indebted to his father and Queen, Rufus' explosive drumming at the Taylor Hawkins Tribute Concerts showed that his drumming is highly influenced by his mentor and "big bro" Taylor Hawkins. After talking with Rufus, I learned that his personality and his look, are also highly reminiscent of Hawkins. Despite his drumming blood lines, Rufus is his own man and has his own career and drumming approach. We talked about his career so far, The Darkness' new record, his future musical plans, and what he learned from Taylor Hawkins.

MD: Being the son of a famous drummer can be a little intimidating if you are also a drummer, how did you start drumming?

RT: I started because the drums were always around the house

and were easily accessible for me. At two years old, I could just walk downstairs and smash around on the drums and think, 'Wow this sounds great!' That was definitely a big factor. I started taking drums seriously at about 12. My old man never pushed me into it, but he did introduce me to the music of a lot of great bands. There was a couple of bands that I was listening to all the time and when he heard what I was listening to, he would say, "Well, Jesus Christ this is just a cheap rip off of Led Zeppelin!" Then he would play me "Good Times Bad Times" and I would ask him how Bonham was playing it and he would show me. He was very useful with stuff like that. "Wipeout" was one of the first things I learned, that was a good bit of advice from him. He said, "If you can play "Wipeout" then you'll be all right," so that was one of the first things I learned.

MD: Along the way did he ever sit you down and teach you anything?

RT: That was kind of up to me. He always wanted me to do it for myself, he's kind of the same way.

MD: How did your drumming career start?



RT: I had a couple of bands in school, but then I got kicked out of school and I had to start working by the age of 16. That was another do it for yourself thing. I started working and my first proper gig was very kindly gifted to me by Brian May. He was doing a bunch of his solo stuff, a few Queen songs, and trying out Kerry Ellis as a new singer. He wanted to put a band together and he asked me to play "Defying Gravity" which Taylor Hawkins recorded the drums for, as soon as I heard that I said, 'I'll do it!' Then he asked me to do the tour. After that, there was a few years of doing some session stuff here and there mainly for friends. From there, I did three years with the Queen musical going around Europe and the UK. I did the audition anonymously, but I knew I could play the songs, and I knew how they were played. That was the best possible work experience for me, I was working my ass off every day, playing a three hour show every night, and travelling, I did that for three years. Then I did a charity show with Jeff Beck because he wanted to play with our band. He threw four Jimi Hendrix songs at me at the last minute with no rehearsals or anything. I've never experienced anything like that in my life. He offered me a job after that show, I couldn't believe it. I was going to his house a lot and doing a lot of studio stuff with him, we did a few charity shows together and we had a few really cool tours lined up with Brian Wilson, but they fell through at the last second, that would have been something! So, I did that for two years and then Brian May asked me to play percussion, sing backing vocals, and play some kit for Queen. I did that for five years. Every day I had to remind myself that this was not normal touring, and I should not get used to this. But it was great fun.

I've always tried to stay slightly away from my old man so I would not be associated with him and Queen all the time. But if I said no to that I would have been an idiot. We had great fun together, he showed me how the world worked. Then The Darkness happened in the last two years of the touring with Queen. There was a year and a half that I was doing both Queen and The Darkness at the same time which was insane. I would be doing a show with Queen in Russia then getting on a plane and heading to the next Darkness show. But going back and forth was too much and eventually I had to pick my home team which was The Darkness.

MD: How did you join The Darkness? They had a few drummers before you.

RT: It was Spinal Tap as hell! I was on a holiday in Australia with my ex-girlfriend at the time and I got a phone call out of the blue from The Darkness' guitarist Dan Hawkins. I had never met the guys before, but I've been a fan since their first few records. The voice on the phone said, "This is Dan Hawkins from The Darkness, is this Rufus? I said, "Yeah hey, I love you guys, how's it going?" He started right in and said, "Good mate, but we've got a vacancy around the back of the band." I said, "What do you need? And he said, "We we've got a show tomorrow night in London, we're doing eight songs from the new album, no one's ever heard them, do you think you could do it?" I told him that I

I did three years with the Queen musical going around Europe and the UK. I did the audition anonymously, but I knew I could play the songs, and I knew how they were played. That was the best possible work experience for me, I was working my ass off every day, playing a three hour show every night, and travelling...



was in Australia at the minute, so I'd need to leave immediately to even make the show. He sent me the songs and asked if I thought that I could pull it off. I knew I probably wouldn't get another chance, so I said, "Yeah let's do it!" He sent me the songs and I tapped the hell out of my knees on the on the 24-hour flight to London, I didn't sleep much on the flight (neither did anyone else in my cabin,) I arrived, met them for the first time, and we went straight to the gig.

MD: That was in 2015, and there have been four records since. What can you tell me about the new record *Dreams on Toast*?

RT: On all our previous records we've done the same thing. We say yes to too many festivals, and we have no time to write and

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record. Then the label gets on our case every day because we've got a deadline and we're always up against it. So we always end up booking a little writing trip for a week because we've got to remove ourselves from our homes to get anything done. Then we usually come back with 30 song ideas, and we turn them into songs. The last few albums have been a lot of Dan and I; we've been coming up with a lot of the arrangements because our rhythm guitar and drum approaches work very well together, we're very fast together and we have similar musical minds.

So that's how we've been doing it in the past. But for this one, we wanted to give ourselves the right amount of time for the writing and not piece them together in the studio. This time around we were determined to figure out the arrangements and lyrics and get the proper songs down before we walked into the studio.

MD: How has that style of "on the fly" writing affected your drumming performances on the records?

RT: I always come up with cool fills six months after the record has been released. I'm always thinking, 'Why didn't I do that on the record?' I was always playing on that day and in that minute, but we were determined not to do that this time.

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MD: The drum sound on the new record is huge, what are you using?

RT: I ordered a new DW Jazz series kit. On both Taylor Hawkins tribute shows I played Taylor's Gretsch kit and Dave Grohl's DW kit. Dave had a set up that I really loved. I loved the sizes of the toms, and I just loved how it sounded. I made up my mind that those were going to be my next kit. I found out it was a lovely three-piece DW Jazz series kit. Very simple but just beautiful sounding.

MD: There's a couple tunes where the snare drum sound is ridiculous when what snare are you playing?

RT: The main snare was my DW Classic custom, it's got a hell of a crack to it. That's the drum I tour with. But for each song Dan wanted to try a million different things. I usually tell them what drums I want to use, but like when it comes to the exact sound on the track, we would start to change the placement and positioning of the mics, the snare drums, and the room miking. We changed everything a million times before we got it right for each song, and that meant we did switch the snare drums a bit.

MD: What were the snares that you were using?

RT: There was a very deep old Ludwig snare that I used for the lighter sort of country stuff, but I put a towel over it, and I'd use a bit of that. I've got a custom VK (Van Kleef) snare, and I used that a bit too. But it was mainly the DW Jazz Series drums, the DW snare, and my Zildjian cymbals.

MD: Do you remember what snare you used on "Walking Through Fire," that is an amazing snare drum sound.

RT: I think that was the VK, that has a big crack to it. But I think Dan might have also layered another snare sound on it as well.

MD: Where did that falling down the steps fill at the end of "I Hate Myself" come from?

RT: I really love that song. Funny enough, Justin wrote that song eight years ago and he had already recorded a drum track with top session player Darby Todd. We had already recorded the



whole album, but we were doing four solo tracks that each of us wrote. I had already done mine; Frankie had already done his, but Justin hadn't done his yet. So he brought in "I Hate Myself" and said, "Let's just use this, I've already recorded it, and I want to keep the saxophone part." It was 195 or 200 BPM, and I told them to just throw on the track and I would play on top of it and

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get it done quick. But it kept coming to that end section and I was trying to come up with my own fills. I played it through a few times and was drenched in sweat, and it kept coming to that third fill. Frankie told me to do whatever I wanted, but I kept doing the same kind of stuff. Then I started thinking about the Faces song "Stay with Me," those kinds of fills kept coming into my head. I decided I wanted to play something like those Kenney Jones "Stay with Me" fills. I'll have a cowbell in there and make them a little funky and different, like the best fills from "Stay with Me." I told them to just give me five minutes to figure something out, I ran it a few more times, and then I nailed it.

MD: There is some stuff on this record that sounds a little like Queen, is that a coincidence, or just in the blood?

RT: That is coming from the guitar boys, that's not me, they are obsessed with Queen, and they love Brian. When they solo that influence really comes out. It always comes out as a tip of the

hat, instead of a rip-off.

MD: There's nothing wrong with tipping your hat to your influences.

RT: I agree, as long as it isn't on every song.

MD: I also like the hi-hat barks you put in that song, and on "The Longest Kiss" they add a lot.

RT: Those probably come from my old man. He does a lot of that stuff. The hi-hat stuff on "The Longest Kiss" was more of a precise ELO poppy vibe. There wasn't a lot of planning for those drum parts, but I'm happy with them. In all honesty, just because of how fun it is, I love "Rock and Roll Party

Cowboy." I don't care if it sounds dumb, sometimes the dumb riff is equally as good as it is dumb. "Rock and Roll Party Cowboy" just makes me smile.

MD: There is a lot of really country sounding stuff on this record, how did that happen?

RT: We were writing those songs together ages ago, I don't know where they came from... the first one was "Hot on My Tail" and that made us laugh so much. Musically, it was an interesting juxtaposition, and after we wrote it, we realized that it's really good, and we liked how it sounded. Justin and I had more to do with "Cold Hearted Woman," it's his words and one of my favorites on the record. I actually did all the background vocals for that one. We had a lot to say about that one, at the end we changed it a lot and simplified it. I think simple songs like that need to stay minimal and not too busy. It's so easy to



overplay and mess it up, but I think we got it right. That is one of my favorite tunes from this record. Songs that are in that realm always seem to hit me right.

Bob Dylan's "Don't Think Twice, It's Alright" is that kind of song (don't get me wrong I'm not comparing the two.) Every time I hear that song, it's just one of those things, every time I hear it I always want to hear it again.

MD: Did you grow up listening to much country or rockabilly

Taylor was my biggest inspiration and mentor, he was like my big bro...He meant the world to me, I met him when I was six, my dad introduced us, and I just thought he was the coolest person I had ever met. He instantly took a liking to me, the older we got, we just became like twins.



stuff?

RT: Yeah, I was quite a weird young kid. I had a cassette player with only Beatles, Elvis, and Tony Joe White tapes. When I started getting into the older country stuff my dad introduced me to Terry Reid, and that really opened my eyes. I fell in love with that world, those beautiful country songs opened my eyes. The older you get the more you learn.

MD: What is going on in "The Battle for Gadget Land"? The intro sounds very Foo Fighter-ish, and you sound very Taylor-ish on the half-time section at the end...

RT: That was unusual for us, it's like an EMO tune at the beginning. But I can hear how you would say that sounds like the Foo's and Taylor. Taylor was my biggest inspiration and mentor, he was like my big bro. So, there's definitely Taylor bleeding through me all the time. I figured that the middle eight was more Rage Against the Machine, but I see what you mean about the intro and the half-time stuff at the end.

MD: I know you and Taylor were very close, and we all miss him, can you talk to me about your big bro? What did you learn from him?

RT: What *didn't* I learn from that guy? He meant the world to me, I met him when I was six, my dad introduced us, and I just thought he was the coolest person I had ever met. He instantly took a liking to me, the older we got, we just became like twins. It was really strange. I would stay at their house in LA and all his neighbors would ask if I was his brother. He taught me everything, he used to check up on me every single day. Every day I would get a phone call from Taylor to show me a Van Halen song or something. He was always talking about this and that, keeping me on the ball, and keeping me on my toes as well. He helped me in a million and one different ways. He was a great big brother, great mentor, and he had the most beautiful style of drumming I've ever seen. When you watched him at full tilt, it was like watching the best ballerina do their thing. The fluidity, the power, it was like watching Messi. Losing him was one of the toughest things ever, he was family.

MD: What are some of your favorite Taylor Hawkins tracks?



thinking this is our generation's *Led Zeppelin IV*. That's how hard that record hit me. Have you heard the recently released live recording of Taylor playing with Sass Jordan called *Live in New York Ninety Four*? It's amazing!

RT: Oh my God, thanks for telling me about that, I didn't know about that, I'll get that straight away. That is so cool.

MD: I was in a band that played some festivals with Sass when Taylor was in the band, and I remember seeing him and being blown away.

RT: He was playing like a maniac back then.

MD: I know the record is coming out this month, are you guys going on the road as well?

RT: Yes, *Dreams on Toast* comes out March 28th, and we'll be going out on tour in UK this month, and in the USA and Europe later this year.

MD: What else is on the horizon for you?

RT: I've been doing lots of writing on my own and I'm kind of excited to get some of that out there soon.

MD: Is that going to be for The Darkness?

RT: No, I think we all want to do solo albums of our own, just separate from the band. I've been working on some stuff for the last couple of years, so I (kind of) want to give that a go.

MD: What does your music sound like?

RT: It's a bit different. There's a bit of country of in there. There is some Sam Cooke influenced soul vibe in there. There's some rocky (sort of) Muse-ish sounding stuff. It's an eclectic mix.

MD: We can't wait to hear it, and we can't wait to see The Darkness on the road!



RT: I love "Aurora" just because it's a nice song to play, it's just a lovely song.

MD: I know he loved that song too.

RT: Yeah, he did. I used to wind him up and tell him how much I love the song "Halo," because he didn't play on that. When "All My Life" came out, that just blew my freaking mind, I was thinking, "I need to do this!"

The first time I saw Taylor play live I was 12, it was the first time they ever headlined the Reading Festival. At one point he was playing "Monkey Wrench" and he started playing with just his right hand so he could point at me with his left hand and motion me to come over and sit right next to him on stage. That was the coolest thing ever, I sat and watched the whole show thinking, 'Yeah, I'm going to be *that* guy!'

MD: When I heard *Wasting Light* for the first time, I remember

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The Brecker Brothers "Some Skunk Funk," *Heavy Metal Bebop*, drummer Terry Bozzio

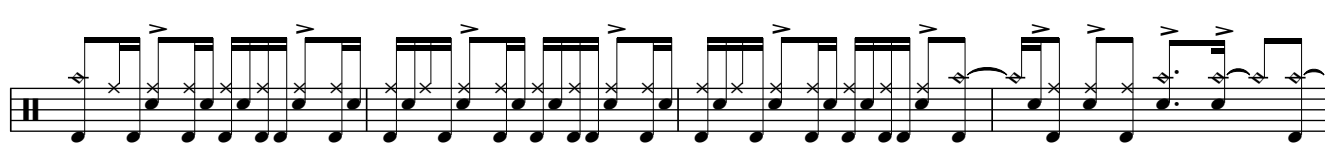
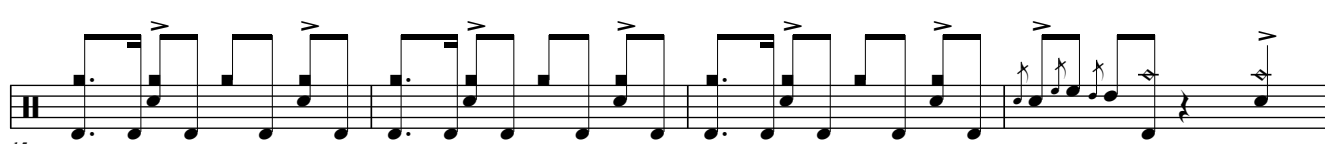
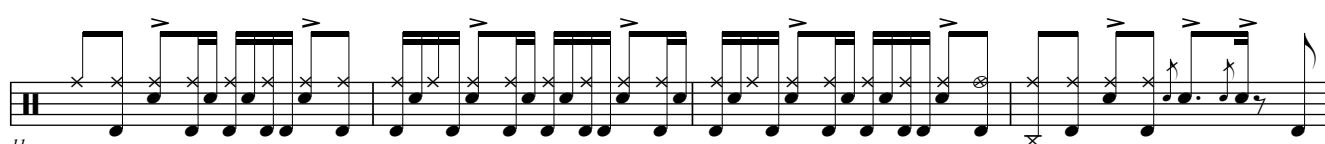
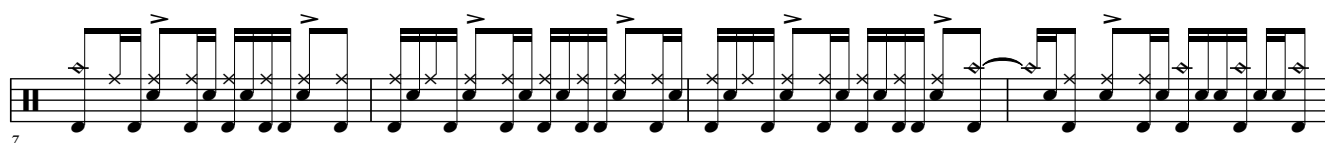
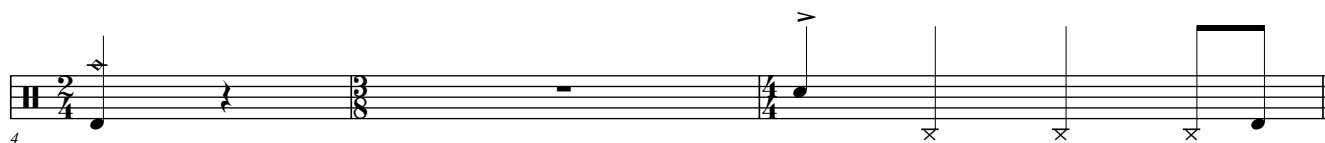
Transcription by Marc Atkinson

This month's transcription comes from The Brecker Brothers' classic 1978 recording *Heavy Metal Bebop*, a legendary live date from *My Father's Place* in Roslyn, Long Island, New York. In my opinion, this electrifying performance of *Some Skunk Funk* comes from one of the strongest bands the Brecker's ever assembled. Their energy is simply outstanding, the interplay between each musician is exceptional, and Terry Bozzio's drumming is jaw dropping and creative. All of this makes this performance a true standout and fitting of the perfect description, *Heavy Metal Bebop*.



This song is an absolute joy to play, and Terry's performance is a highlight of his incredible career. It's both inspiring and challenging, and sure to push your playing to new heights. *My Father's Place* also hosted another legendary performance just a year later, when Bill Bruford took the stage and recorded *The Bruford Tapes*. That's another great recording—and a future transcription—so stay tuned!

A quick note on the transcription: To maintain consistency with the melody, the outro has been written the same as the intro, even though it occurs at the end of the song and could be counted differently.



23

Musical notation for measures 23-26. The staff shows a series of eighth-note patterns with accents (v) and various rhythmic markings. Measure 23 starts with a double bar line and a key signature change to one flat. Measures 24-26 continue with similar rhythmic patterns.

27

Musical notation for measures 27-30. The staff shows eighth-note patterns with accents (v) and rhythmic markings. Measure 27 starts with a double bar line. Measures 28-30 continue with similar rhythmic patterns.

31

Musical notation for measures 31-33. The staff shows eighth-note patterns with accents (v) and rhythmic markings. Measure 31 starts with a double bar line. Measures 32-33 continue with similar rhythmic patterns.

34

Musical notation for measures 34-36. The staff shows eighth-note patterns with accents (v) and rhythmic markings. Measure 34 starts with a double bar line and a key signature change to two flats. Measures 35-36 continue with similar rhythmic patterns.

37

Musical notation for measures 37-40. The staff shows eighth-note patterns with accents (v) and rhythmic markings. Measure 37 starts with a double bar line. Measures 38-40 continue with similar rhythmic patterns, including a triplet in measure 38.

40

Musical notation for measures 40-43. The staff shows eighth-note patterns with accents (v) and rhythmic markings. Measure 40 starts with a double bar line. Measures 41-43 continue with similar rhythmic patterns.

44

Musical notation for measures 44-47. The staff shows eighth-note patterns with accents (v) and rhythmic markings. Measure 44 starts with a double bar line. Measures 45-47 continue with similar rhythmic patterns.

48

Musical notation for measures 48-51. The staff shows eighth-note patterns with accents (v) and rhythmic markings. Measure 48 starts with a double bar line. Measures 49-51 continue with similar rhythmic patterns.

52

SAX SOLO

Musical notation for measures 52-55. The staff shows eighth-note patterns with accents (v) and rhythmic markings. Measure 52 starts with a double bar line. Measures 53-55 continue with similar rhythmic patterns. Measures 54 and 55 are marked with a double slash (/ /) indicating a solo section.

56

Musical notation for measure 56, featuring a series of eighth notes with accents and a final triplet of eighth notes.

60

Musical notation for measure 60, featuring a series of eighth notes with accents and a final triplet of eighth notes.

64

Musical notation for measure 64, featuring a series of eighth notes with accents and a final triplet of eighth notes.

67

Musical notation for measure 67, featuring a series of eighth notes with accents and a final triplet of eighth notes.

70

Musical notation for measure 70, featuring a series of eighth notes with accents and a final triplet of eighth notes.

73

Musical notation for measure 73, featuring a series of eighth notes with accents and a final triplet of eighth notes.

77

Musical notation for measure 77, featuring a series of eighth notes with accents and a final triplet of eighth notes.

81

Musical notation for measure 81, featuring a series of eighth notes with accents and a final triplet of eighth notes.

85

Musical notation for measure 85, featuring a series of eighth notes with accents and a final triplet of eighth notes.

90

94

98

102

106

110

114

118

122

TRUMPET SOLO

Musical staff 125-128. The staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It contains a sequence of eighth and quarter notes with various articulations, including accents and slurs. Measure 125 starts with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, and C5. Measure 126 continues with eighth notes D5, E5, and F5. Measure 127 features a quarter note G5 with an accent, followed by eighth notes F5, E5, and D5. Measure 128 ends with a quarter note C5 with an accent. The staff concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Musical staff 129-132. This staff continues the solo with a similar rhythmic pattern. Measure 129 starts with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, and C5. Measure 130 continues with eighth notes D5, E5, and F5. Measure 131 features a quarter note G5 with an accent, followed by eighth notes F5, E5, and D5. Measure 132 ends with a quarter note C5 with an accent. The staff concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Musical staff 133-136. This staff continues the solo. Measure 133 starts with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, and C5. Measure 134 continues with eighth notes D5, E5, and F5. Measure 135 features a quarter note G5 with an accent, followed by eighth notes F5, E5, and D5. Measure 136 ends with a quarter note C5 with an accent. The staff concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Musical staff 137-140. This staff continues the solo. Measure 137 starts with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, and C5. Measure 138 continues with eighth notes D5, E5, and F5. Measure 139 features a quarter note G5 with an accent, followed by eighth notes F5, E5, and D5. Measure 140 ends with a quarter note C5 with an accent. The staff concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Musical staff 141-144. This staff continues the solo. Measure 141 starts with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, and C5. Measure 142 continues with eighth notes D5, E5, and F5. Measure 143 features a quarter note G5 with an accent, followed by eighth notes F5, E5, and D5. Measure 144 ends with a quarter note C5 with an accent. The staff concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Musical staff 145-148. This staff continues the solo. Measure 145 starts with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, and C5. Measure 146 continues with eighth notes D5, E5, and F5. Measure 147 features a quarter note G5 with an accent, followed by eighth notes F5, E5, and D5. Measure 148 ends with a quarter note C5 with an accent. The staff concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Musical staff 149-152. This staff continues the solo. Measure 149 starts with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, and C5. Measure 150 continues with eighth notes D5, E5, and F5. Measure 151 features a quarter note G5 with an accent, followed by eighth notes F5, E5, and D5. Measure 152 ends with a quarter note C5 with an accent. The staff concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Musical staff 153-156. This staff continues the solo. Measure 153 starts with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, and C5. Measure 154 continues with eighth notes D5, E5, and F5. Measure 155 features a quarter note G5 with an accent, followed by eighth notes F5, E5, and D5. Measure 156 ends with a quarter note C5 with an accent. The staff concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Musical staff 157-160. This staff continues the solo. Measure 157 starts with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes A4, B4, and C5. Measure 158 continues with eighth notes D5, E5, and F5. Measure 159 features a quarter note G5 with an accent, followed by eighth notes F5, E5, and D5. Measure 160 ends with a quarter note C5 with an accent. The staff concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

161

Musical notation for measure 161, featuring a single eighth note followed by a quarter note, with a repeat sign and a fermata.

165

Musical notation for measure 165, featuring a series of eighth notes with accents.

169

Musical notation for measure 169, featuring a series of eighth notes with accents.

173

Musical notation for measure 173, featuring a series of eighth notes with accents and a fermata.

176

Musical notation for measure 176, featuring a series of eighth notes with accents.

180

Musical notation for measure 180, featuring a series of eighth notes with accents and a fermata.

184

Musical notation for measure 184, featuring a series of eighth notes with accents and a fermata.

188

Musical notation for measure 188, featuring a series of eighth notes with accents and a fermata.

192

Musical notation for measure 192, featuring a series of eighth notes with accents and a fermata.

196

Musical notation for measure 196, featuring a series of sixteenth-note patterns with accents and sixteenth-note groups marked with a '6'.

198

Musical notation for measure 198, featuring a series of sixteenth-note patterns with accents and sixteenth-note groups marked with a '6'.

202

Musical notation for measure 202, featuring a series of sixteenth-note patterns with accents and sixteenth-note groups marked with a '6'.

206

Musical notation for measure 206, featuring a series of sixteenth-note patterns with accents and sixteenth-note groups marked with a '6'.

210

Musical notation for measure 210, featuring a series of sixteenth-note patterns with accents and sixteenth-note groups marked with a '6'.

214

Musical notation for measure 214, featuring a series of sixteenth-note patterns with accents and sixteenth-note groups marked with a '6'.

218

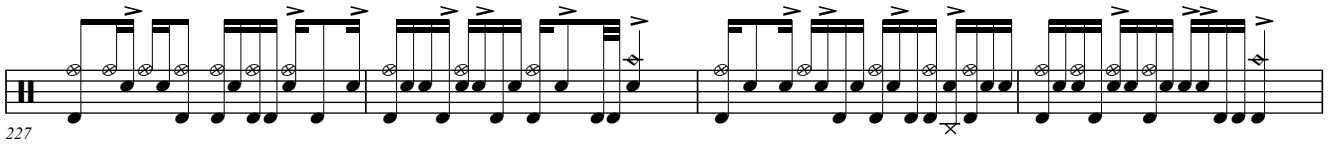
Musical notation for measure 218, featuring a series of sixteenth-note patterns with accents and sixteenth-note groups marked with a '6'.

221

Musical notation for measure 221, featuring a series of sixteenth-note patterns with accents and sixteenth-note groups marked with a '6'.

224

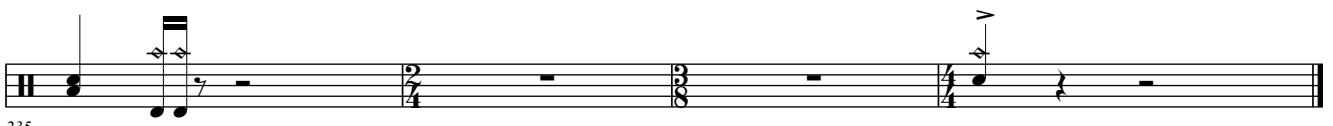
Musical notation for measure 224, featuring a series of sixteenth-note patterns with accents and sixteenth-note groups marked with a '6'.



227



231



235



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



Superpowers and Kryptonite

By Chris Lesso

The superheroes that we love all had to learn (sometimes the hard way) the discipline that comes with a superpower, that is knowing when *not* to use it. One of Chad Smith's superpowers is playing quirky fills in unexpected places. But when he was called to play on the Grammy winning album *Taking the Long Way* by the Dixie Chicks, he dialed it down for the gig and landed every fill cleanly on the one. Stewart Copeland is blessed with a manic energy, and when he plays, he can blast through tempos. In the early Police days when the band started performing their first 15-minute set, he burned through it so fast he left them with five minutes to spare. But when the Police reunited in 2008, he reigned it in by adding a click track in preparing the songs. With great power comes great responsibility. Know when to unleash your superpowers, and when to hold back.

No one can be everything to everyone. I'm not a fan of the word "impossible," but it really is impossible to be good at *everything*. Of course, we always want to work on our weaknesses, but zeroing in on what your heart tells you is really you, and letting go of the rest, is what I call "superpowers and kryptonite." Where do we fit into the big picture of the world? Drumming can show us our style and reveal what makes us unique. What's your superpower as a drummer and as a person? Do you drum with a big wide smile radiating joy for all to see? Or are you more surgically precise, inspiring others with your devotion to detail? Drumming can only reflect who we are. Our superpowers come naturally, and our work as drummers magnifies them. Traditional education ignores the magic within us that effortlessly wants to come out, but we can shine if we learn to get out of our own way.

On the flipside, what's your kryptonite? Is there a certain style of music that you're just not a fan of? Is there a band or drummer that everybody says you should like, but deep down you know you don't? In the comic world of *Superman*, kryptonite weakened him. Anything that drains your energy or doesn't spark joy is your own personal kryptonite. We need to rock the basics, and we must manage our weaknesses so they're not crippling. But we don't need to be everything to everybody, master of nothing and average to all. I'm not a fan of Prince, no matter how much everyone says he's a genius. I also don't like splashes, China cymbals, cowbells, or double bass pedals. (I like when others use them, just not me!) Instead of looking at who I am as a weakness, I turn it into a strength. My own sound is one of my superpowers. Instead of feeling bad because I "should" like these things, I flip it to let it grow into what makes me unique. I'm going to hone these differences a little more each day towards what I love about drumming and music, and what comes out on the other side will be a bit more of ME. What are your own superpowers and kryptonite?

We need awareness of each. It's a double-edged sword when the very things that make us great can also be what holds us back. Too much energy and enthusiasm can lead to distraction and impatience. Too much perfectionism can lead to overthinking and anxiety. Strengths and weaknesses can blend together, but it's what we do with them that matters. Always start with your superpowers, because those are the traits that make you, YOU. You may have an uncanny ability to hear what's happening in a song and mimic it (a superpower,) but

have a challenge reading notes on a page (kryptonite.) We'll never eliminate all our kryptonite's, but we can continue to work on them and turn them to our advantage by embracing what makes us unique. Self-awareness is the key, all the while expanding what makes us special to shine in the world.

TRANSFORM through DRUMMING! Start your journey today with your FREE intro training at chrislesso.net/LTRDRUMMING



MODERN DRUMMER

BEST SELLING DRUM TITLES WORLDWIDE



Encyclopedia of Double Bass Drumming: Fast Track Double Bass

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.

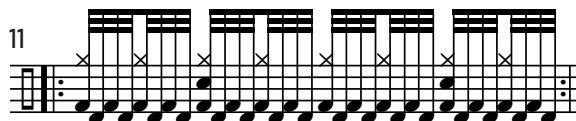
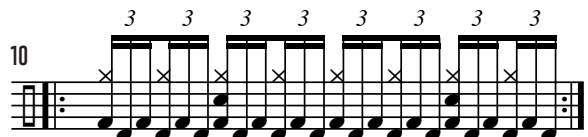
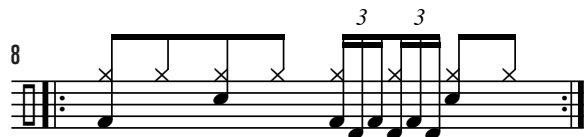
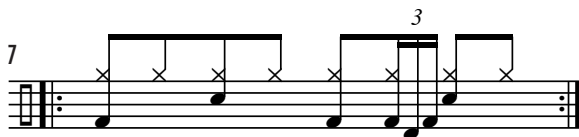
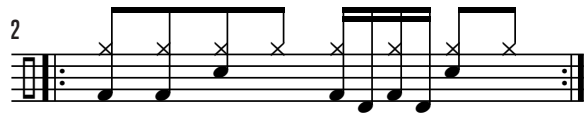
This month we will cover the basic vocabulary of double bass drumming. These are the beats and fills that every drummer with a double pedal or two bass drums should know. Welcome to “Fast Track Double Bass.”

• This chapter contains some of the most commonly played double bass licks.

• Just like any foundational technique, it’s a good idea to have these exercises “under your feet” to be able to apply them at will.

• If you’ve methodically worked through all the previous columns at this point, these should not take you long to master.

• Both the Beats and Fills sections should be practiced at many tempos and with a metronome or drum machine.



1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11



Master Studies II: Paradiddle Combinations

By Joe Morello

As a follow-up to Joe Morello's legendary *Master Studies* book, he released *Master Studies II* in 2006. Joe was a masterful teacher and helped many great drummers with their musicality, technique, and touch. Joe was also masterful at creating exercises, many of Joe's exercises were variations or outgrowths of his time studying with George Lawrence Stone, but many also came from Joe's own musical mind. *Master Studies II* is another wonderful book filled with the exercises that Joe developed for (and with) his students, it is also filled with wisdom from the master Joe Morello.

Arrow Notation Key

Full stroke Tap Down stroke Up stroke

Up and down arrows = Full Stroke
 Dash = Tap Stroke
 Down arrow = Down Stroke
 Up arrow = Up Stroke

This key is the same as used in the book *Accents and Rebounds* to show continuity in Joe's continuation of his teacher G.L. Stone.

Join Modern Drummer as we explore Joe Morello's *Master Studies II*. This month we will look at some wonderful paradiddle combinations that Joe created.

The following exercises are great for developing control. Practice each one slowly at first and remain relaxed at all times. Speed will come with slow, accurate practice. As your technical proficiency increases, you can increase the tempo setting on your metronome. These exercises can be played with or without accents.

1
 R L R R R L R R L R L L L R L L

2
 R L R R L R L L R L R R R L R R

3
 L R L L R L R R L R L L L L R L L

4
 R L R R R L R R L R L L R L R R

5
 R L R R R L R R R L R R L R L L



12

L R L L R L R R R L R R L R L L

R L R R R L R R L R L L R L R R

13

R L R R L R L L L R L L R L R R

R L R R L R L L L R L L R L R R

14

L R L L L R L L L R L L R L R R

L R L L R L R R R L R R R L R R

15

L R L L L R L L R L R R L R L L

L R L L R L R R L R L L L R L L

R L R R L R L L L R L L R L R R

L R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R

6

R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L

L R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R

7

L R L L L R L L L R L L R L R R

8

R L R R L R L L L R L L L R L L

9

R L R R R L R R R L R R R L R R

L R L L L R L L L R L L L R L L

10

L R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R

L R L L L R L L R L R R R L R R

11

L R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R

R L R R L R L L L R L R R



Duet 24

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 4/4 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 it is 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 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 can record one part on your phone and play the second part with yourself. Conscientious practice of the material in snare drum duets will most definitely improve both reading and technical skills, regardless of the way the book is utilized.

This month's duet is challenging. However, make note that the suggested tempo is slow, and you should begin working on it even slower. If this duet looks too difficult for you, try removing the grace notes of the flams and drags first, and get the rhythms in your hands and head. This is a good first step, it will make Duet 24 more digestible, and easier to approach. After you have comprehended the rhythmic phrases, add the flams and drags back into your performance. Have fun!

 = 76

SD 1

SD 2

f *p* *f*

p *mf*

mp

f

mp *f* *mp*

f *mp cresc.* *f*

This system shows a piano part with two staves. The top staff has a series of eighth notes with accents, and the bottom staff features triplet eighth notes. Dynamics markings include *f* (forte), *mp cresc.* (mezzo-piano crescendo), and *f* (forte).

ff

This system continues the piano part with two staves. The top staff has eighth notes with accents, and the bottom staff has triplet eighth notes. A dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo) is present.

mp

This system continues the piano part with two staves. The top staff has eighth notes with accents, and the bottom staff has triplet eighth notes. A dynamic marking of *mp* (mezzo-piano) is present.

f

This system continues the piano part with two staves. The top staff has eighth notes with accents, and the bottom staff has triplet eighth notes. A dynamic marking of *f* (forte) is present.

This system continues the piano part with two staves. The top staff has eighth notes with accents, and the bottom staff has triplet eighth notes. There are no explicit dynamic markings in this system.

ff

This system continues the piano part with two staves. The top staff has eighth notes with accents, and the bottom staff has triplet eighth notes. A dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo) is present.



The Rebirth of the Slingerland Drum Company

By Bob Campbell

For nearly a century, the Slingerland Drum Company has been a legendary name in the drumming world, celebrated for its groundbreaking innovations and unmistakable sound. From jazz pioneers to rock icons, Slingerland has been the go-to choice for some of history's greatest drummers, including Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Cozy Cole, Louie Bellson, Bernard Purdie, Carmine Appice, Peter Erskine, Gregg Bissonette, Tre Cool, and many more.

First introduced in 1936, the Slingerland Radio King revolutionized drumming, thanks to its innovative solid maple shell design and the enthusiastic endorsement of Gene Krupa. As Krupa's fame skyrocketed alongside the Benny Goodman band, so did Slingerland's reputation, with Krupa's presence gracing Slingerland catalogs for over three decades (1936–1967.)

The Radio King snare, particularly with the single-ply maple shell, became the holy grail for drummers, studios, and collectors alike. More than just an instrument, this unique drum defined several eras of sound as the design and music evolved, setting a gold standard that continues to influence drumming today.

After more than 50 years of success, H.H. "Bud" Slingerland—the grandson of founder H.H. Slingerland and the company's leader since 1954—made a pivotal decision in 1970: it was time to retire. Selling the company to corporate investors Crowell, Collier, and MacMillan, he set Slingerland on a new and uncertain path.

Over the next two decades, ownership changed hands multiple times, and as competition grew fiercer, sales began to decline. By 1986, the once-mighty Slingerland ceased operations. The company resurged in 1994, when Gretsch/Gibson acquired the rights, leading to a Nashville-based revival—but by 1998, Gibson shut down the facility, and Slingerland once again faded into history.

For years, Slingerland remained dormant—until a surprising

turn of events in November of 2019. In a heartfelt gesture, Chris Lombardi, President, and CEO of DW Drums, purchased the rights to Slingerland as a birthday gift for his father, Don Lombardi, the founder of DW.

Slingerland, the Next Chapter...

The reborn (DW) Slingerland Drum company made its public debut at the January 2025 Winter NAMM convention, marking a new era for this iconic brand. When Don Lombardi was asked why he chose to resurrect Slingerland, he replied, "Why not? Why wouldn't any drummer who appreciates the history of drumming want to be a part of that particular history. We're making history as much right now as we are honoring history. We're writing the next chapter of the Slingerland book."

Andrew Meskin (DW V.P., Sales) reflected on the journey from

acquisition to design to implementation: "Don Lombardi has always loved Slingerland. It's something he's been super passionate about. For example, when I first started working for DW in 2004, one of my first impressions was seeing one of Buddy Rich's Slingerland drum kits in the DW showroom."

Some have asked why DW took so long to launch the Slingerland brand. Andrew reflected, "At the time, we were as busy as ever with DW and Gretsch manufacturing. Around 2020, COVID hit, and some things had to be put on the backburner to cope with the situation. We decided that when we did put it (Slingerland) out, we wanted to be sure it was absolutely right. It took about five years, but we wouldn't have done anything differently. It took a long time to get every detail and part correct. We had all-hands-on-deck for the design: Don Lombardi, John Good, Rich Sikra and his R&D team, Connor Lombardi, Nick Dalton and his production team, and

myself. We weren't going to make a DW drum and dress it up as a Slingerland drum. For example, we borrowed about a dozen original Radio King drums from Jim Pettit and a few of my own and took them apart to study their construction. We took the best aspects the original 1930's and 40's Radio King and set out to replicate them. It was important to us that the hardware of our new Radio King's could be retrofitted to the old drums (to replace missing, broken parts.) So, we made sure the drilling pattern was identical to those eras. We intend to sell these parts separately for that purpose."



To



ensure Slingerland's revival was in the right hands, DW set out to find the right Brand Manager—someone with not just the experience, but the passion to do it justice. Their choice? José Medeles—renowned for his work with Revival Drums, expertise as an author and vintage drum collector, and most importantly, his deep love for Slingerland.

José shared his excitement about joining DW for this historic re-launch: “When I went down to meet with Don Lombardi, Chris, Yoshi from Roland, and Andrew Meskin and saw the Slingerland prototypes, I knew instantly—I had to be a part of this epic project. My passion for heritage drums, and Slingerland in particular, made this an opportunity I couldn't pass up. Everything DW does is fueled by passion, especially with Mr. Lombardi involved. We're not just celebrating Slingerland's legendary past—we're pushing it forward. We want to connect with drummers who already love Slingerland but also introduce the brand to a whole new generation.”

Slingerland – the Oxnard Era:

The unveiling of two prototype Slingerland drum kits and the new Radio King Limited snares sent waves of excitement through the drumming community. At NAMM, the kits on display were:

- The **Slingerland Radio King** with classic 3-ply shells (mahogany-poplar-mahogany.)
- The **Studio King** featuring 5-ply shells (maple-poplar-maple-poplar-maple.)
- The **first limited-edition Radio King snares** are being released in an exclusive run of 400 drums—just 50 in each size and finish. Available in two sizes (5x14" - MSRP \$1,899 and 7x 14" - MSRP \$1,999,) these stunning snares come in four classic finishes: White Marine Pearl Wrap, Black Diamond Pearl Wrap, Blue and Silver Lacquer, and Black and Gold Lacquer.

These new Radio King snares are clearly made with great attention to quality, detail, and sound – a true testament to Slingerland's legacy. Each drum was meticulously crafted to capture the essence of Slingerland's legendary sound, blending vintage authenticity with modern innovation. Here's a detailed run-down of the new Radio Kings:

SHELL: Steam-bent one-ply North American maple shells (Craviotto) 3/8" thick, maple re-rings and 30-degree bearing edges top and bottom.

HARDWARE: All nickel-plated hardware, double-flanged “stick chopper” brass hoops with the traditional “Slingerland Radio King” logo embossed into the top hoop; bottom hoop with drop-down, rectangular snare gates. Nickel-plated zinc lugs: small beavertail on the 7" and large center-mount streamlined lugs on the 5" snares. Three-point strainer (like the original Speedy strainer) with bridge. The bridge plate has two thumb-wheel adjustment thumbscrews reminiscent of the very first Radio Kings. (And speaking of attention to detail, even the



strainer arm and face of the snare bridge are embossed with "Slingerland U.S.A.") Harold Dodd v2-like tone control with double pad muffler, using a more substantial tone control knob and a backing plate connecting the two mounting screws and knob. (Very sturdy and tight, i.e., no unwanted sounds in the studio!) Tension rods are 12-24 thread with small early Slingerland profile heads and white nylon washers. Internal washers are nickel plated and embossed with "Slingerland-California" paying homage to the circa 1948 Radio King detailing while ushering in the Oxnard, California era. Chrome-over-steel snare wires, 20-strand, with mylar strap. Trademark Slingerland cloud badge reading "Slingerland U.S.A, Quality Drums."

HEADS: Remo coated batter and Ambassador hazy bottom head, with the added bonus of an additional calfskin batter head with modern aluminum flesh hoop (courtesy of Bovid Percussion) to truly get that warm, vintage sound.

CASE: Premium heavy-duty, padded, Radio King branded case with shoulder strap.



PERSONALIZATION: Don Lombardi hand-signed/numbered internal label and certificate of authenticity – surely to appeal to the collectors and emphasize the personal attention paid to each drum.

EXTRAS: late 1930s-40s inspired drum key (like the No. 970); additional shorter strainer arm for the 7" snares to satisfy those who wish for the arm to not extending above the top hoop.

Now that I have two of these drums in hand, and speaking as a vintage Slingerland collector, I cannot express how impressed I am with these drums. The nickel is just gorgeous and beautifully done. The cloud badge and beavertail or streamlined lugs are just so classic and immediately recognizable as Slingerland. The double-flanged brass stick-chopper hoops look and sound phenomenal. They have the beefiness of die-cast hoops but sound much more open and resonant. The hoops also allow for explosive rim-shots and articulate cross-sticking. I'm a fan of the snare bridges to keep the snare wires tensioned out from the edge of the shell and in parallel with bottom snare head (more sensitive, less choking.) The complete Radio King Limited snare package, including the premium bag, hand-signed label and COA, calfskin head, and vintage style drum key speak to a

substantial investment in time and energy by DW.

The 2025 Radio King snares use some of the best steam-bent shells in the world, from Craviotto. Not only was this a brilliant move by DW to incorporate as a sign of dedication to quality, but the choice aligned with the late Johnny Craviotto's early history and personal interest. In a 2015 interview, Johnny told me, "I got my first Radio King in 1974. I kinda got infatuated a bit with these drums... A year or two later, I was doing drum customizing and repairs... I began doing a lot of bearing edge work of course, and I was doing some re-wraps (you know, just general maintenance and repair work). Once in a while, these Radio Kings would come through the door. I was always really infatuated with the solid shell concept." So Craviotto Drums began from Johnny's love of solid shell Radio King's. I firmly believe that if Johnny were still with us, he would be overjoyed to be a part of this new Slingerland adventure and to come full circle as a contributor to the new Radio Kings.

Steve Maxwell (President – Craviotto Drum Co., Maxwell Vintage and Custom Drums, Fork's Drum Closet,) is quite thrilled to be associated with this endeavor, saying, "The hardware has been built to such exacting standards, and it's certainly much more heavy duty than the original. Everything has been done to perfection. They've (DW) done it as they should have, right on down to the internal washers where they had them stamped with the Slingerland name. I played Slingerland almost exclusively from all the eras up to the 1970s. I've always been a huge Slingerland fan. I'm so glad to see the Slingerland name being brought back the proper way and in the good hands of DW."

Andrew Meskin perfectly captured DW's vision for Slingerland, stating: "We truly are now manufacturing Slingerland drums. If Slingerland stayed active and didn't move between factories and owners, this is what we hope Slingerland would have been making today. Expect Slingerland to be a full line drum

company once again. There's much more to come!" With this bold revival, Slingerland isn't just back—it's ready to reclaim its place in drumming history. The legend continues...

Recommended Videos of the new Slingerland Drum Company:

"Slingerland Legendary Drums. Reborn" (Slingerland Drums, with Don Lombardi & José Medeles) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJOafzv-Ewo>

"Return of the Radio King and Slingerland Drum Company" (Steve Maxwell Drums, description and demonstration of new Slingerland Radio Kings and an original Radio King.) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJOafzv-Ewo>

For more info on Slingerland history, please check out these superb books:

- **GK: The tools that built the Gene Krupa legend by Brooks Tegler (DiggyPOD, Inc., 2021)**
- **The Slingerland Book by Rob Cook (Rebeats publishing, 2004.)**





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Pat Petrillo and his P4 Pad



John Otto Limp Bizkit 2024/2025 when they'll be opening for Metallica OC Percussion Tour Kit



Matt Starr and Seven Antonopoulos



Ludwig Stainless



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Ben Hinziger, Jonathan Sugarfoot Moffett,
Mike Robinson, Neil Daniels



Daru Jones



Rick Latham



Reggie Johnson, Kareem, Rashid Williams, Quinton "Q" Robinson



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Are you a young drummer looking to take your talent to the next level? The Neil Peart Spirit of Drumming Scholarship could be your chance to do just that. This annual scholarship is dedicated to nurturing the next generation of drummers, encouraging them to push their boundaries and grow as both musicians and individuals. Modern Drummer will start accepting applications for the next Neil Peart Spirit of Drumming award on March 1, 2025. All submissions can be sent to www.moderndrummer.com/neil-peart-spirit-of-drumming-scholarship/

1929 Ludwig Winter Scene, 1929 Mountain and Lake Gold Sparkle Trap Sets

By Tim Northup

This month we are featuring two 1929 Ludwig Trap Sets, both with original factory painted scenes on the bass drum heads. These are two wonderful examples of a working professional drummer's set from that era. These two sets also show different choices of accessories that would be available on 1929 drum sets.

Let's look at these two different looking drum sets in detail. The 1929 Ludwig Winter Scene Trap set has a 14x28 black lacquer bass drum with a bass drum pedal, cymbal clanger, and rare cymbal muffler. The muffler was activated by pulling your foot up to engage a muffler pad behind the cymbal. These were very popular in the vaudeville era and theatre industry. The bass drum has a double cymbal hanger attachment with a Ludwig sizzle cymbal, a Zenjian crash cymbal, a woodblock, a set of four tuned cowbells, and a 10" Chinese tom also attached to the bass drum. There is also a giant Chinese tom on a floor stand. The tom is 16x16 and even has the original Ludwig decal on it. Ludwig imported these Chinese toms from China and sold them through their catalogs with their name on them. The near mint condition 5x14 Ludwig snare drum is a Pioneer eight lug, black enamel, with original calf skin heads. The set also includes the very interesting Charleston "snowshoe" cymbal pedal, offered by Ludwig from 1926-1936.

The 1929 Mountain and Lake Trap set features a 5x14 Ludwig Super Sensitive nickel over brass snare drum and a 14x28 bass drum in gold sparkle finish, with a Ludwig bass drum pedal and clanger cymbal. Attached to the bass drum is a full trap table with four temple blocks, two crash cymbals, and a 10" Chinese tom. On the trap table there are some percussion sound effects of the day: a slide whistle, a cuckoo whistle, a slap stick, a Bock-a-da-bock hand cymbal, as well as a cowbell. To round out the set, there is an early version of the hi-hat with 10" cup cymbals. This would have been a standard professional early jazz set used in theatre, vaudeville, radio, silent film, speakeasies, and big band performances of the day.

The painted scenes of mountains, forests, and lakes on bass drum heads were common themes in the mid 1920's and 30's. For about \$12 to 15.00 added to the cost of the set, drummers could add a painted scene of their choice from the catalog. For about \$10.00, they could also add an internal blinking light kit to illuminate their beautiful painted bass drum head. This light also helped to keep the calf skin head in tune on moist days. It was a challenge for drum companies to learn to paint these scenes on calf skin and cow hide heads. Unlike painting on canvas, calf skin is ever changing with the humid or dry weather, and the skin is in constant motion. The factory artists quickly learned to "stipple" paint, this is the art of dabbing paint, verses using long thick brushstrokes of paint, which tended to flake off with movement. Painted heads were in fashion and shown in the catalogs until about 1940. That was when everything was changed by a very influential drummer named Gene Krupa. Krupa helped Slingerland create the very first modern style drum kit that we know today, stripping away all the "traps" and inventing a fully tunable tom-tom. Krupa also preferred a painted shield with his "GK" initials on the bass drum head instead of a painted scene head. That was the end of the era of

painted scenes.

Not only did the sets of the 20s and 30s look very different from today's sets, but the sets were played much differently than the modern kits of the later 1940's (and beyond.) In the 20s and 30s time was kept mostly on the snare drum, with buzz rolls and rim shots accenting what the performers were doing on stage. Small cymbals were meant for crashing accents, there was no ride cymbal, and the Chinese temple blocks and toms were played as sound effects. The drum set has come a long way, it has had many innovations in sound and look, these innovations have evolved into the modern-day drum set. Let's consider this month's trap set examples as important steppingstones to the modern-day drumset.

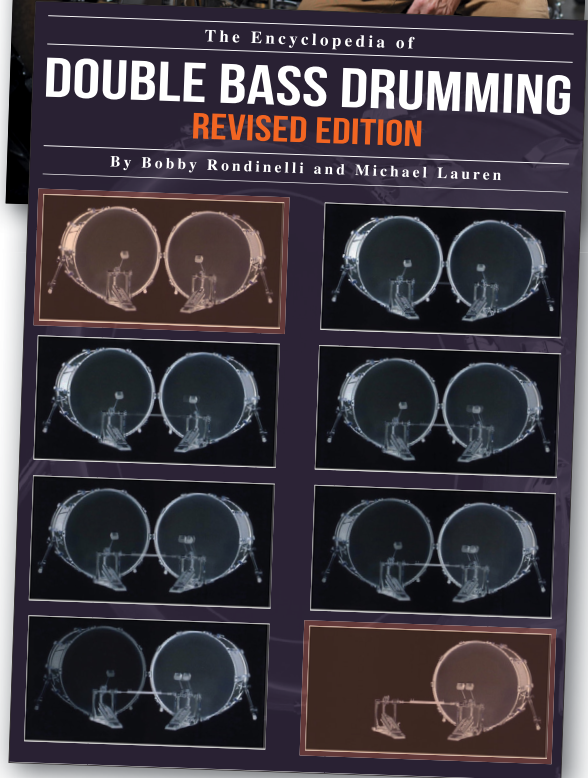
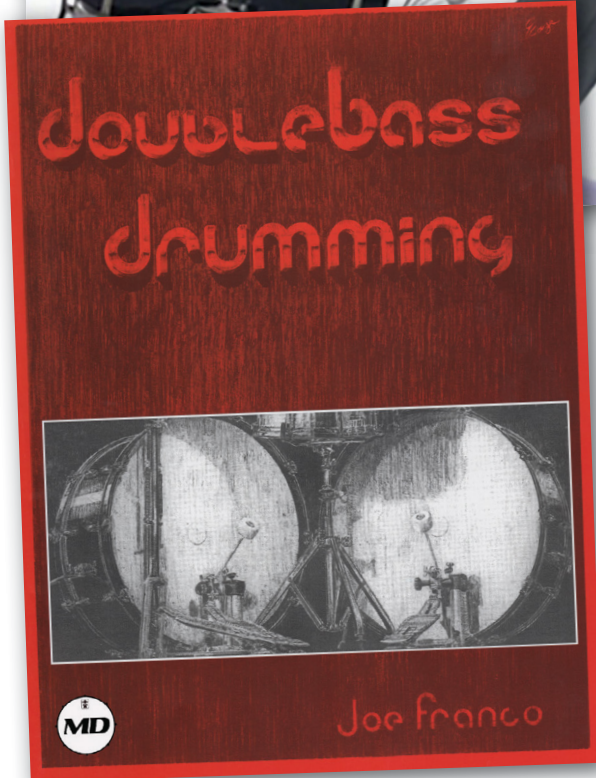
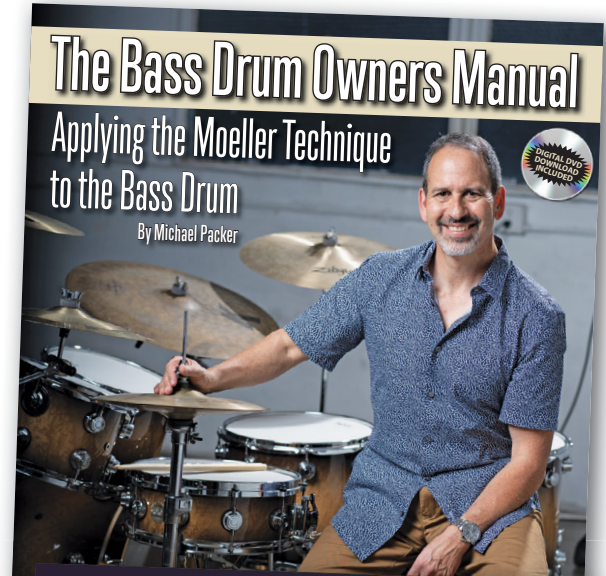
If you would like to experience playing one of these kits to see and hear how different they look and sound, plan your visit to the Northup Drum Museum in Oneonta, NY where you can learn about drum history and play these sets! Book your visit by calling 607-434-4769 and visit us at www.northupdrums.com



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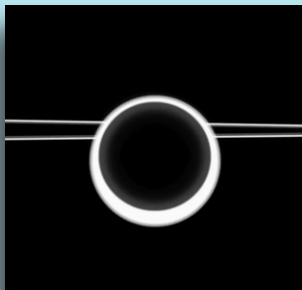
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Modern Drummer is spotlighting new recordings that have the drums at the center of their sound. These recordings might be drummer-led, or just include a high-quality, special, or unique drumming and musical performance from the drummer and/or musicians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

The Smashing Pumpkins

Aghori Mhori Mei

Jimmy Chamberlin drums
Martha's Music

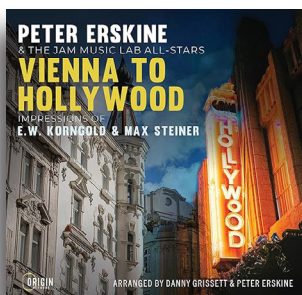


With over 120,000 tracks being uploaded to platforms like Spotify every day, it's hard to keep track of everything, even for the most ardent music fan. And with a band that has some legendary songs and classic albums, sometimes the new stuff can be overlooked, even for loyal fans. In my opinion that is exactly what happened to The Smashing Pumpkins' *Aghori Mhori Mei*. It could also be hard to predict what would be next, after the band created the three-part *Atum: A Rock Opera in Three Parts*. But that's what's great about GREAT art and music, you never know what to expect! In my opinion this is the best Pumpkins recording since *Zeitgeist*. Corgan's songwriting is as good as it's ever been, and Jimmy Chamberlin is playing his ass off! The orchestra on "Pentecost" and "Murnau" is a welcome addition. The drums and guitar are interacting like they did in the classic *Gish* era of the band, with Chamberlin pushing things to the edge, and Corgan holding on for dear life (in the best way possible.) The songs are all single worthy, without being trite, just give "Goeth the Fall" and "Murnau" a listen. All of this is to say that this is welcome listening for any fan of hard rock-metal-prog, or just great songwriting and unclassifiable drumming.

Peter Erskine & The JAM Music Lab All-Stars

Vienna to Hollywood

Peter Erskine drums
Flip Phillip and Brian Kilgore
vibraphone and Percussion
Origin Records



Hopefully you have already read Peter Erskine's column this month on the making of his new record, so I'll skip the backstory, and just say that this is the best recording that Erskine has done as a leader since *3 Nights in LA*. But it's a very different type of record, *3 Nights in LA* was a freewheeling blowing date, *Vienna to Hollywood* is a carefully planned and arranged recording project with Erskine and Danny Grissett writing some great arrangements of E.W. Korngold and Max Steiner music. As I said in Peter's Legend's book, (in my opinion) Peter has never done a bad record because he always gives the music exactly what it needs, and this project is no exception. The choice of harmonica on "Old Spanish Song," is refreshing, the wonderful arrangement choices on "The Boys Go to Play" and "Johnny Belinda" are impeccable. The magnificent drum grooves

on "Romance," "Tara's Theme," "Belle Watling," and "Johnny Belinda" are classic Erskine. Danny Grissett's lush arrangement on "Qrt. #2 in Eb," is top notch. And Erskine plays a creative and very unique drum solo on "Summer Place!" Lastly, the haunting sound of "Ghost Coda" captures Vienna (and tragically maybe some parts of LA right now,) for a bittersweet ending.

Jae Sinnett

The Blur the Lines Project

Jae Sinnett drums

J-Nett Music



The Blur the Lines Project is Virginia-based drummer, composer, bandleader, radio broadcaster, and educator Jae Sinnett's 21st album. It is a tour-de-force, jazz-rock recording featuring the music of Rush, Rare Earth, The Edgar Winter Group, Steppenwolf, Deep Purple, and Led Zeppelin. There have been quite a few jazz / jazz-fusion recordings lately of drummers arranging and recording the rock music that they grew up with, and I'm all for it. Music is created to be interpreted, ever since the Baroque period of classical music people have taken compositions and rearranged them for different ensembles in order to well... *Blur the Lines*. If Miles Davis could play a song ("Billy Boy,") from a nursery rhyme then a jazz quintet can interpret Rush's "Tom Sawyer" and Deep Purple's "Hush." Special mention must go to arranger-pianist Allen Farnham who arranged all the music except for Sinnett's arrangements of "Frankenstein" and "Immigrant Song." Sinnett's playing is "fusion-ier" than his more straight-ahead jazz drumming has been in the past. Saxophonist Ada Rovatti, who is no stranger to fusion from playing in the Brecker Brothers Reunion Band, sounds great throughout especially on "Frankenstein," as does Farnham is the tune's piano interlude solo. Sinnett's Sonor drums sound fantastic, his playing grooves hard, and his over-the-top drum solos are representative of each composition. This is a fun record, and a breath of fresh air.

Dayna Stephens

Hopium

Greg Hutchinson drums

Contagious Music



While Greg Hutchinson has been busy introducing himself to the rap and hip-hop world, it must be remembered that he is a world class jazz drummer, as is shown here on saxophonist Dayna Stephens new record *Hopium*. If you aren't sure a drummer can do both authentically? Listen to "Drive North to Find the Oranges Out West," and listen

to Hutch's beautiful drumming behind the different soloists. Listen to Hutchinson locking in with Ben Street's Charlie Haden-like bass playing on the adventuresome "Jump Start." Greg's unorthodox ballad drumming combined with Aaron Parks' piano makes the tune "Trust" and "Occasionally Cynical" very special. He steps up his elasticity and freer drumming approach on "Hopium," and "As Truth Rises Above Power." I must make special mention of how beautiful Greg's cymbals sound on the recording, he has a fantastic touch, a great ear for his instruments, and the recording of the cymbals is perfect. This is a very good record, and a surprising drumming performance from Greg Hutchinson, I've heard him play a lot, but never quite like this.

Nanami Haruta

The Vibe

Ulysses Owens Jr. drums

Origin Records



As Modern Drummer's Readers Poll winning Best Jazz Drummer, Ulysses Owens Jr. has already left his drumming mark, and he continues to show us why. He can bash and swing with best, but sometimes (as drummers,) our job is to offer the support that is needed to the leader and the gig. Young trombonist Nanami Haruta is a virtuoso from Sapporo, Japan; and this is her bandleading debut. She has won numerous awards and studied with the great Michael Dease. But to hire the rhythm section of pianist Xavier Davis, bassist Rodney Whitaker, and Owens could be intimidating for anybody. But not when they do their job of giving the leader the proper support and lifting the music. Less tasteful musicians could have done the opposite, but not here. Haruta sounds fantastic, and Owens and the rest of the rhythm section perform in a way reminiscent of Red Garland, Paul Chambers, and A.T. (or Wynton Kelley, Paul Chambers, and Jimmy Cobb.) Listen to them on Christian McBride's "Sister Rosa" offering a tune-long crescendo. Ulysses' patience and pace on the drum feature of "Easy Money" is amazing. His relaxed groove on "How it Goes" and "Jamerson's Lullaby" is inspirational. There are many reasons that musicians hire Ulysses Owens Jr., this record shows us only some of them.

Richard Baratta

Looking Back

Richard Baratta drums

Savant Records



Drummer Richard Baratta's story is unique. He is a musician who turned to a successful movie production career. Starting with Madonna's *Desperately Seeking Susan*, and including *Joker*, *Scorsese's The Irishman*, *Wolf of Wall Street*, and five *Spiderman* films. He has returned to his musical roots, and it isn't just a passion project, Baratta is serious! This is his fourth recording as a leader since 2019. This is a CD of rearranged rock tunes like "Purple Haze," which features Baratta's rolling and tumbling drumming behind Vincent Herring's saxophone, which would make Mitch Mitchell proud.

Baratta paints with some beautiful colors on the intro of "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," until the Latin arrangement of the tune enters from seemingly nowhere. Kudos to pianist-arranger Bill O'Connell for his interesting arrangements and playing. The shuffling groove of "California Dreamin'" harkens to the juke joints of years gone by. Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love" is the centerpiece here, O'Connell's Rhodes sets the mood, and Baratta's solo delivers the goods. The stop-time arrangement and the swinging performance of "Respect" are very cool, check out the trading and the half-time breakdown at the guitar solo. The second line arrangement of "You Can't Always Get What You Want" is the cherry on the top of a feel-good record that had me smiling and dancing throughout!

Michael Pallas

Gateway

Jonathan Barber drums

Nelson Matthew Gonzalez

percussion

Truth Revolution Records



Yes, this is trombonist Michael Park's record, and saxophonist Lomar Brown shares the front line and shines throughout. But the rhythm section of pianist Yeisson Villamar, bassist John Benitez, drummer Jonathan Barber, and percussionist Nelson Matthew Gonzalez steal the show! One listen to "Life on Mars" and "The Verdict" and you'll hear this amazing rhythm section in top form. Benitez and Barber sound as one, yet so do Barber and Gonzalez, and Villamar is never crowded out of the rhythmic proceedings. Amazing. The soloists of Pallas, Brown, and Villamar are pushed to amazing heights by the rhythm section led by Barber who makes nice work of a vamp on "One for the City." "Patient(s)," "Next Exit," "Gateway" and "Variant" introduce a electronica component that this group could (should) integrate instead of separate, because that would be really exciting. "Counterfeit Blues" is a spoken word with music masterpiece. "Today And Forever" is a beautiful ballad, and the rhythm section lets the horns sing. After listening, this record is not what I expected, it's much better! Keep going!!!

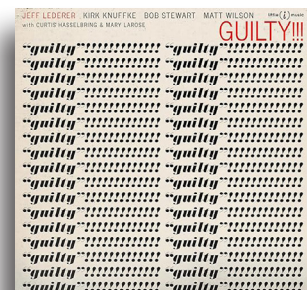
Jeff Lederer

"guilty"!!!!

Matt Wilson drums, gavel,

vocals

Little i music

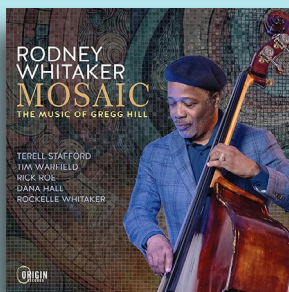


Looney-Tunes meets Mingus meets Dirty Dozen Brass Band, meets DJ Logic, meets Raymond Scott. That about sums up Jeff Lederer's "guilty"!!!! And playing an integral role in this musical story is the incomparable Matt Wilson. Matt doesn't only play the drums, he plays "happiness." And he brings both instruments to every recording and stage that he graces. While Jeff Lederer's new recording loosely tells the story of crime, the judiciary, and punishment, in a very humorous and avant-garde way; saxophonist Lederer has definitely hired the right drummer for the job. Matt Wilson brings the drums, cymbals, and his happy sense of humor closely in tow. There are a plethora of

samples and vocals that further illustrate and define this music, but I can't think of many other drummers who could play this music as well of Matt Wilson. I can't think of a better modern band to close out a set playing Mingus' "Fables of Faubus," and Ayler's "Truth is Marching In."

Rodney Whitaker

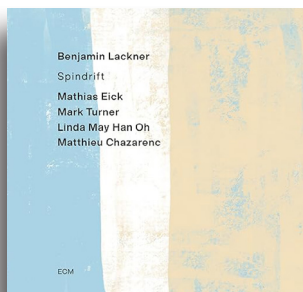
Mosaic: The Music of Gregg Hill
Dana Hall drums
Origin Records



Origin records is owned and run by a couple of drummers, and they have been putting out some very nice recordings, and here's another to add to the list. Rodney Whitaker is a world-renowned bassist, arranger, and professor of jazz studies. Gregg Hill is an under-recognized composer. Together they have put out three wonderful records, and this is number four. In Chicago, every musician knows Chicago drummer Dana Hall. He is doing the drumming this time around, and he is hooking up very well with Whitaker's bass playing, framing Hill's music with perfection, and providing a spark to inspire the ensemble of trumpeter Terell Stafford, saxophonist Tim Warfield, and vocalist Rockelle Whitaker (on four songs.) Hear Hall turn up the heat on the out-chorus of "Unknown Ballad." On "Moonscape" and "Ray Dias" Hall frames the tune to perfection. Hall makes "Sloe Gin Fizz" his own, listen to how he drives the soloists, and pay attention to the trading at the end. The unique lope of "Sunday Special" is a tricky endeavor, but pianist Rick Roe and Hall just slay it. This is a very good recording featuring an explosive jazz drummer that needs more attention outside of Chicago.

Benjamin Lackner

Spindrift
Matthieu Chazarenc drums
ECM



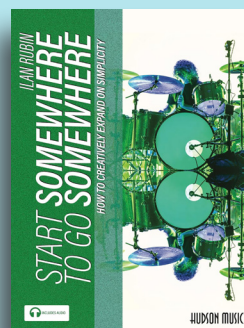
ECM records have a vibe and an air about (and in) them, and *Spindrift* is no different. But the difference here is bassist Linda May Han Oh. She drives this recording. Drummer Matthieu Chazarenc weaves around Oh's bass lines with aplomb, and saxophonist Mark Turner and trumpeter Matthias Eick provide interesting counterpoint to Oh's lines. Pianist Benjamin Lackner's compositions have created a nice "playground" for the musicians to inhabit, but Oh's musicianship and creativity subtly lead the way. Matthieu Chazarenc's drumming sounds wonderful throughout. But his playing on "Spindrift," "Mosquito Flats," and "Anacapa" is the best of the set.

Start Somewhere to Go Somewhere: How to Creatively Expand on Simplicity

By Ilan Rubin
Hudson Books

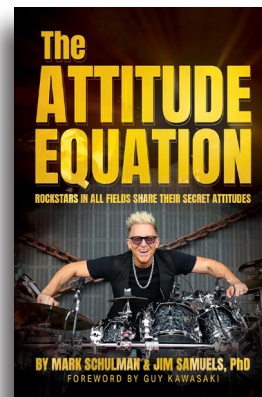
I love when a drummer releases a book filled with ideas that are unlike what you would think he would use to fill a book. And I don't like when a drummer releases a book filled with beats or fills. That "method" unfortunately removes the most exciting part of the

process, creativity! This book doesn't fall into those last two traps, and it fully satisfies what I love in good drum books. Simply put, I like Ilan Rubin's book for what it *is*, and for what it's *not*. In this book, Nine Inch Nails drummer Ilan Rubin provides a system for taking core drumming concepts and applying variations to them to create a vocabulary of fill and solo ideas for the drumset. And what are those core drumming concepts? The RUDIMENTS. And what rudiments does Ilan expand on? The ones we have all (hopefully) been playing since day one. Singles, Doubles, Drags, Flams, Flat Flams, Ratamacues and their variations, and all the variations of Paradiddles. He applies them to the pad and then to the set. Then he mixes them all up to create and orchestrate different ideas on the set. I especially like his Flat Flam sections. Which brings us to the subtitle of this book, *How to Creatively Expand on Simplicity*. There is no mystery, or special sauce here, just what the title says, *Start Somewhere to Go Somewhere*. And within the book, Ilan defines both "somewhere's" and shows you a path. There is creativity in simplicity, but this is not a "simple" book. It is a very helpful and very useful book that is not shrouded in mystery or magic. The mystery and the magic... That comes from YOU! There is something in this book for all levels of drummers. Kudo's and thank you Ilan!!!



The Attitude Equation

By Mark Schulman & Jim Samuels, PhD
Permuted Press



With hundreds of self-help books from "gurus" that you have never heard of who have yet to have any success other than writing a book about how *you* can achieve success, comes this new book by drummer Mark Schulman and Jim Samuels PhD. This is NOT one of those books. For those who haven't been paying attention, Schulman has had proven success touring with Cher, Billy Idol, Foreigner, Sheryl Crow, Stevie Nicks, Beyonce, and P!nk. Mark is following his first book, *Conquering Life's Stage Fright*. Samuels has invented such methods as SORTing, The Principals of Engagement, and Re-Minding. Together they present us with their ABC formula of *Attitude Equation*, the formula of $Attitude \times Behavior = Consequence$. They interview bestselling authors, business leaders, athletes and coaches, creatives, actors and hosts, and DRUMMERS!!! The drummers Schulman talks to are Kenny Aronoff, Gregg Bissonette, Dom Famularo, Hannah Ford-Welton, Thomas Lang, Stanton Moore, Nate Morton, Rich Redmond, Antonio Sanchez, and Matt Sorum. Schulman and Samuels talk to these drummers (and the other interview subjects) about how the power of attitude and taking greater control of your attitude and life. All the interviews are quite good, enlightening, and beneficial. These are high-quality lessons, and this is a very worthwhile book. While I am not a fan of self-help books, this book and these two men have had real success, they talk to other successful people, and have created an excellent and helpful book that everyone can learn from. Highly recommended!



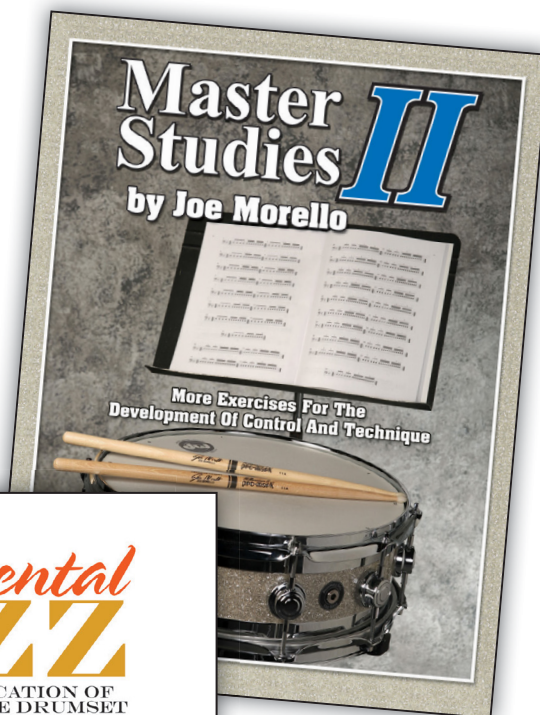
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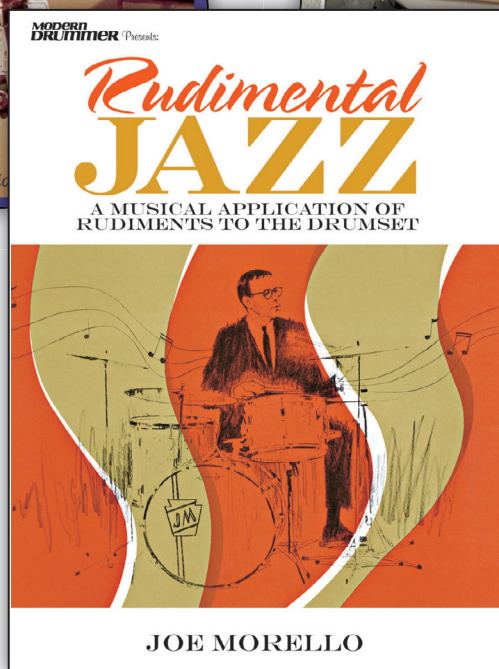
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Rudimental Jazz

The precursor to his two most widely used instructional books – Master Studies and Master Studies II – this book covers: techniques such as right and left hand grips, playing position, striking the snare drum & hi-hat and more; beginning exercises; drum beats; teacher's charts; graphic cutouts and more.

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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 our monthly Hand-Picked Vinyl column, the team at VMP spotlights a couple of their newest vinyl musical masterpieces with significant drumming and percussion embedded deep within those little magic grooves of vinyl.

Thin Lizzy

Jailbreak

Brian Downey on drums, percussion

When Thin Lizzy's *Jailbreak* was released on March 26, 1976, rock 'n' roll was at a fascinating crossroads. The old-school dinosaurs who led '60s rock — The Who, Led Zeppelin, The Rolling Stones — were still standing but limping along, already sounding like nostalgia acts to younger listeners.

The next generation of arena-rock groups — Aerosmith, Kiss, Black Sabbath — were grounded

in a more flamboyant, "party till you puke" sensibility that would soon be subsumed by the ascendent heavy metal movement. *Jailbreak* would prove as foundational to the future sound of metal as AC/DC's *High Voltage* or Motörhead's *Motörhead*, just as Thin Lizzy's no-nonsense musical approach informed the sensibility of punk. — **Steven Hyden**



Waylon Jennings

Honky Tonk Heroes

Richie Albright, Buddy Harman, Willie Ackerman on drums

On *Honky Tonk Heroes*, Waylon Jennings had no one else to answer to, and the joyful mess of the album testifies to the kind of magic that can happen when you finally cut a lifelong misfit loose. *Honky Tonk Heroes* isn't Jennings' first great album, but it was the first that captured his wild-hair energy instead of attempting to tame it. It belonged completely to him. It was so liberating that it would unleash a series of triumphs. This is

the birthplace of the iconic 1970s Waylon, the one who would go on to slalom across the rest of the decade on a series of increasingly



brilliant albums. Waylon Jennings transformed himself into the Waylon, the leader of a movement forever altering the perception of country music in America.

It is the rollicking sense of good humor that made *Honky Tonk Heroes* the first war whoop of the burgeoning outlaw country movement. That scene didn't really have a coherent name yet, just a few congregating misfits — Willie Nelson, Tompall Glaser — who began to suspect they didn't need to rein themselves in to succeed. Waylon was the pushiest, boldest, and most impulsive of the crowd, so, naturally, he led the charge. Before Waylon, the country outlaw was usually a grim, terse, figure haunting society's outskirts — Lash LaRue, Clint Eastwood's wandering gunman. But the top note of a Waylon song is always rueful and wry; whenever he's singing, you're among friends. No matter how wild the band grew, his bear hug of a voice kept things at an agreeable simmer. — **Jayson Greene**

Dolly Parton

Just Because I'm A Woman

Jerry Carrigan on drums

If Carl hadn't asked, it wouldn't have ever happened. Dolly Parton and her husband, Carl Dean, had been married — very happily — for a few months when it occurred to him to ask her a question. Had she been with men before him, he wanted to know? Parton was shocked. What did it matter? The men in her past had nothing to do with their present, or any woman's present. So she told Dean the truth, because that's what Parton always does, she tells the God-honest truth, even if it hurts.

Parton couldn't stop thinking about how unfair it all felt, and about the brutally clear double standards we so often applied to women in relationships, and out. Naturally, those thoughts ended up in a song: "Just Because I'm a Woman," the title track of her second album and her first as a solo recording artist for RCA Victor. "Yes, I've made my mistakes / But listen and understand / My mistakes are no worse than yours / Just because I'm a

woman," Parton sang to a classic, weeping country waltz.

Parton made her debut on the Porter Wagoner show in September of 1967, with their first

album, *Just Between You and Me*, released mere months before *Just Because I'm a Woman* — with the LP's names so similar in title, it's hard not to see them in conversation, as Parton's career had to be until she split ways with Wagoner in the '70s. But her profile and songwriting status was rising both with and without Wagoner, with Parton busy building the foundation of a career that would reach unparalleled heights in the years and decades to come; not because she was a woman, but not in spite of it, either. — **Marissa R. Ross**



Jack Lawless' Jonas Brothers Touring Kit

Photos by Jason Mehler



Drums: Gretsch USA Custom – 9x13 rack concert tom (not pictured), 8x13 rack, 16x16 floor, 16x18 Gong drum (floor tom with no bottom head), 16x24 kick.

Snares: Noble & Cooley Custom 6.5x14, Ludwig Black Beauty 6.5x14.

Heads (top): Remo - Clear Pinstripe (Rack, Floor,) Clear Powerstroke 3 (Gong drum, Kick,) Coated Controlled Sound (Snares.)

Heads (bottom): Remo - Clear Ambassador (Rack, Floor), Clear Ambassador Hazy (Snares), Ebony Ambassador (Kick.)

Cymbals: Paiste - Hi-Hat (top) 16" Formula 602 Classic Medium, Hi-hat (bottom) 16" Rude Crash/Ride, 20" Signature Full Crash, 20" Formula 602 Modern Essentials Crash, 24" Formula 602 Modern Essentials Ride, 18" Signature Thin China.

Sticks: Vic Firth - 5B American Classic, T1 General Custom American Timpani Mallets.

Hardware: DW- 9000 Series stands and pedals, Gibraltar Extension arms, DW Airlift throne.

Electronics: Roland - triggers (for gating,) RT-30H (Rack, Floor, Gong drum,) RT30K (Kick.)

In-Ear Monitors: JH Audio – Roxanne model.





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Jimmy Chamberlin - Smashing Pumpkins

Max Weinberg - Bruce Springsteen

Mickey "Cavs" Cavanagh - KGLW

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