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SEPTEMBER 2025



ABE CUNNINGHAM

The Speaker Wars
Stan Lynch

OF DEFTONES

Music City and Chicago Drum Show Pictorials

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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

The Drum Community

By Mark Griffith

In a world where community and *actual* personal connection is being devalued, *Modern Drummer* is proud to spotlight several drum community events in this (and last month's) issues. Nashville's **Music City Drum Show** was a rousing success where drummers from around the world met *in person* to celebrate drums, drumming, and drummers. *Modern Drummer* was proud to be a co-sponsor and are happy to say that for much of the show, our booth was an epicenter of excitement.



After the show, Yamaha's **A Night in the Pocket** was where drummers saluted and paid tribute to "The Pocket." (We spotlighted this event last month.) The **Chicago Drum Show** found itself under new leadership, but the result was the same. A great time was had by all. The clinics highlighted various aspects of drumming, and there was *almost* too much vintage, custom, and new gear to behold. In this month's "Jazz Insights," Peter Erskine discusses his teaching, the camaraderie, the personal connections, and why the 27th annual **Drum Fantasy Camp** in Los Angeles was so special.

Whenever I interview a drummer, meet a drummer at one of my gigs, or chat with a drum student, we inevitably mention the unique brotherhood of drummers. We have ALL had to deal with the challenge of practicing while not disturbing our neighbors and family. We share the process of schlepping gear off stage and loading our kits late at night in the snow, rain, and heat. We have played horrible backline kits, and we have gotten the blame (sometimes deserved, often undeserved) for tempos that have gone astray. We know the feeling of being the first to arrive and the last to leave. And we *always* help a fellow drummer carry his equipment. Let's face it, the drums are not the most *convenient* instrument to play. **But they sure are fun!!!!**

We drummers have made a commitment to our instrument and what we bring to music. Drummers make people move, they create smiles, and they bring people together. Almost all music relies on drumming to create a pulse and a groove, and the drum set is one of the only instruments that was created in the United States. The drum set absorbed different drums (and cymbals) from around the world in the 1890s, and drummers in New Orleans arranged them into the drum set, an instrument that *one* person could play. Read Tim Northup's "Collector's Corner" about the history of the bass drum pedal and sock pedal. Today, we enjoy the drum set's subtlety and power, study its evolution, push its limits, learn from our fellow drummers, and **have fun** playing music on the drum set.

Modern Drummer celebrates the **Drum City Drum Show**, the **Chicago Drum Show**, **Yamaha's A Night in the Pocket**, the **Drum Fantasy Camp**, and **ALL** the drum shows, drum camps, and drum shops around the world. They are the clubhouses and meeting places for our brotherhood of drummers and drumming.

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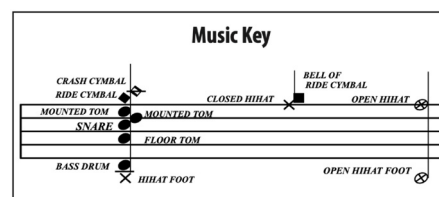
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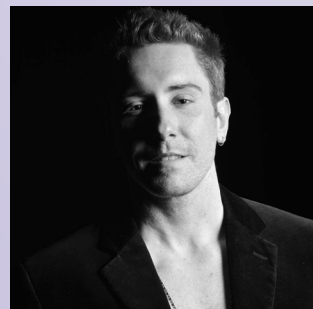


Satin Flame Memories and Inspiration

This month's Kit of the Month comes to us from Justin Ryan. It is a heartwarming story in which every drummer can relate. Here are Justin's thoughts on this very special instrument, "My Mother died when I was two years old. My dad Steven, lead singer and guitarist of the surf rock band Bustin' Surfboards began taking me to his concerts at an early age. I had found my favorite band and immediately wanted to play music and be part of a band.

Kevin, our friend, and drummer for Bustin' Surfboards played a beautiful, great sounding, 1960s Slingerland drum set. Kevin sadly died of a heart attack at a young age. Years later Kevin's wife Alexis called my dad and asked him if I wanted Kevin's drums. She knew how much I loved them. My entire life I wanted drums like Kevin's. I love them, I love the memories that come with them, I love playing them every day.

Justin Ryan's Purple Satin Flame Slingerland Drums are: 1960's Slingerland drums with two 20" Bass Drums, a 14" Snare Drum, 13" Rack Tom, 16" Floor tom, 18" Floor tom. He also uses: Remo Drumheads, Zildjian Cymbals, Vater Drumsticks, and a Roc-N-Soc Throne.



Drum Fantasy Camp in DTLA

By Peter Erskine

Photos courtesy of Peter Erskine and Steve Orkin

Now in its 17th year, Drum Fantasy Camp is owned and managed by Steven Orkin of Orkin Marketing & Management. Among other artists, Steven manages marketing for my buddies Dave Weckl and Steve Smith. The idea originated when Orkin started working with them; fans were writing in through their web sites asking how they could get lessons, etc. Orkin presented an idea to Weckl and Smith individually – suggesting that some kind of master class tour happen. Both were skeptical of the logistics, but both offered the idea of a centralized camp. They told the same story: they had both attended the Stan Kenton summer jazz camp when they were younger, hoping to work with Peter Erskine! I mentored Steve in 1973 but had left the band by the time Dave attended – he enjoyed working with Gary Hobbs, however.

The first Drum Fantasy Camp ran in South Orange, NJ, in 2007 and moved to Cleveland from 2008-2014 (thereafter locating in Chicago, then LA while dipping its toes into the international waters of Turkey and Cuba.) Over the years, a who's who of drummers have taught at the camp. In addition to myself, Weckl and Smith, the list includes: Dennis Chambers, Gavin Harrison, Horacio Hernandez, Jamey Haddad, Jojo Mayer, Thomas Lang, Chris Coleman, Dave DiCenzo, Virgil Donati, Keith Carlock, Will Kennedy, Aaron Spears, Mike Mangini, Benny Greb, Matt Garstka, Todd Sucherman, Billy Cobham, Simon Phillips, Mark Guiliana, Antonio Sanchez, Dafnis Prieto, Will Calhoun, Robert "Sput" Searight, Chad Wackerman, Gergo Borlai, Tony Royster, Gary Husband, Larnell Lewis, Bruce Becker, Pat Petrillo, Jason Gianni, Tommy Igoe, Bill Platt, Vic Firth and more. Whew.

Okay, that's the background. I'll let Steve Orkin describe the day-to-day activities of a typical camp. "Drum Fantasy Camp is a serious learning experience for drummers of all ages and

playing levels. A major differentiation point: the presence of a great band. The camp usually opens with a public large-group clinic taught by all four drumming instructors. Then, the instructors join the band for a public concert. The band features bassist Hagar Ben Ari (*The Late Late Show with James Corden/Pomplamoose*), keyboardist Stu Mindeman (Kurt Elling/Dave Weckl), singer Chrissi Poland (Christopher Cross/Michael Bolton), and guitarist Vinny Valentino (George Benson/Vital Information.)"

"Attendees spend a total of six hours with each of our four drumming instructors in a class of 20 (or less) over four days. Classes are a combination of lecturing and playing. In the evenings, attendees jam with the band. Everyone gets to sit in for a tune and watch their fellow attendees play. The instructors sit in as well, setting a great example of listening and communicating with the band on a moment's notice."

"Everyone leaves the camp inspired and filled with new ideas to work on at home. Drummers of all ages, musical backgrounds, and playing levels attend the camp. In 2025, male and female drummers from 12 countries and all over the United States attended. The age range was from 9 to 75. Some of our attendees are on a path to music school. Others have desk jobs or are gigging drummers in their hometowns. Some are simply looking for the inspiration to pick up the sticks after a long hiatus. All are welcome."

"There is a great sense of camaraderie at Drum Fantasy Camp. Attendees tend to become good friends - sharing information, cheering each other on at the "Jam Nights," and staying in touch after the experience. The camp feels like a family with many attendees returning year-after-year."



Thank you, Steve. I was pleasantly surprised to receive an invitation to teach at this year's camp after not having appeared for several years. My last camp was in Cleveland. DOWNTOWN LA proved to be way more convenient, and it offered me the opportunity to try something different from the three other camps where I've taught. Enjoying "home field advantage" allowed me to bring some items from my home studio including a half dozen high-hat stands equipped with 14" Zildjian hats, as well as a speaker system so I could utilize my play-along apps while demonstrating to the students. But first, the opening clinic and concert!

Steve procured the use of the music school with the best facilities in the greater Los Angeles area, and that's The Colburn School. Zipper Hall's excellent acoustics plus generous seating capacity provided for an excellent first day's experience. While it's always a joy to see Dennis, Gavin, and Dave, the privilege of speaking about our craft in a unified 'though occasionally disparate voice' allowed the fullest range of our combined experience to be relayed to our drummer audience. Each instructor's answers seemed to lead to the next teacher elaborating or supplying their own unique take on a topic.

First off, we started with a four drum set improvisation. If that sounds like an invitation to a migraine headache, I would not blame anyone for that assumption. But this began as an exercise in dynamics and listening. Young master Weckl graciously invited me as the old guy to start things off and I was glad to exert some possibly positive influence on things. Sooner or later, of course, the drumming reflected the exertion of some formidable technique ... not mine! My younger colleagues shined as bright as the LA summer sun.

We followed things up with the aforementioned Q&A session. The topic was wearing as many different hats as possible (being able to cover or play different genres and styles convincingly.)



We were able to pierce the dogma balloon of that quality being an essential component of a successful drummer's career path. I guess you could term this the "mythology of the complete studio musician." I'm not even sure such a career path exists in a meaningful way these days, but versatility is good in any aspect of life. The truth is that I spent a lot of time and worry trying to be able to play any and every style and to somehow do it as good or better than anyone else. This was not only part of my drummer's (necessary) ego, but it functioned as a sort of protective armor. When it was my turn to speak at the afternoon clinic, I relayed a story about listening to Jeff Porcaro's drumming (on a Michael McDonald track titled "That's Why") and weeping in my New York City apartment as the music played on my stereo. Why? Well, not only because I recognized Jeff's drumming to be perfection in that moment, but also because I realized for the second time in my life (years after I heard my first Buddy Rich album) that I would never be able to do that. I would never be able to play like Jeff Porcaro played. Which, I relayed, was oddly liberating, because as soon as I

stopped trying to sound like him, I was actually better able to play like Jeff for the same reasons he might have been motivated by, that is, "music," and not ego. This was the first time I had ever spoken about this in such a manner, and I felt newly liberated by this confession and recognition. It's always good to realize where you stand in the cosmic scheme of things. By not trying to stand in Jeff's shoes, I was finally able to find my own pair, a pair that ended up fitting me well.

For the opening concert, I decided to play three tunes from the Sly & the Family



Stone catalog. I was happy to honor the memory of the recently deceased Sylvester Stone as well as celebrate the drumming artistry of the band's first drummer Gregg Errico. What a groove-master! By choice, my kit (which I brought from home) was smaller than my teaching colleagues' kits in terms of the number of drums, cymbals, and bass drum circumference. I also chose to use less microphones on the drums, opting for two overheads, bass drum, and snare mics, versus every element being close-mic'ed. The result, I believe, was more believable in terms of the sound of those early Sly tunes. And, let me tell you, it was fun! The "house band" played great. As I mentioned on social media about bassist Hagar Ben Ari, "She's so good, the drums play themselves."

8th-note (or pick-up) to beats 1 + 3 is played in the open, NOT closed!

The highlight for me was the final class of the final day when I addressed an older drummer named Mike. I said that I thought he had played well but that he exhibited the same weakness I had noticed in just about every other drummer, and that pertained to fills. Every time a fill came along, the groove would stutter and/or suffer. That, plus the tendency for just about all the drummers to play the snare drum exclusively as a rim-shot generating device by playing both the head and the rim at the same time. BORING, just between you and me, but I only cautioned the drummers that playing such a band-width rich and band-obliterating rim shot would only serve to paint



So, a fun concert that all the drummers at the camp seemed to enjoy. Great. Now it's Sunday morning, and it's time to begin teaching my first three-hour class ... I'll have seven more of these to go by camp's end. It turned out that I felt as if I was learning more per class than the students were, even though I knew that I was teaching quality stuff. Seeing how a concept lands (or takes flight) is always instructive for a teacher. Exploiting the fact that the late great Neil Peart had come to me for hi-hat lessons made that topic very appealing for most of the students. Having several hi-hat stands available for their hands-on practice worked really well. The secret in playing the jazz ride rhythm on the hi-hat is to play the pedal heel-down and to lift or open the hats as soon as they're closed so that the swung

them into a corner dynamically and otherwise. Furthermore, (to be honest) Mike looked like another one of the balding older students, and it turned out, that Mike did NOT sit in and play during one of the jam nights. His reason? He said, "I suck."

"Okay," I countered. "First off, you do NOT suck. What do you do for a living?" He replied, "I'm a retired firefighter." I thanked him for his service, and then asked if he ever drove a fire truck. "I drove for ten years," he said with pride. "Alright ... did you ever think to yourself that you suck when you got behind the wheel of the fire truck?" And (of course) he answered, "No. That would put the lives of my team in danger." "Well ..."

The parallel is imperfect but good enough. By thinking

positively about what we do, we will do it better. And the point is not to do it better than someone else. The point is to do it better than we did it before. "Practice makes perfect." I'll actually settle for imperfect, but with a good beat. Once I got Mike up on the drum set and got him to focus on THE BEAT and not focus on the question of HOW GOOD AM I? His beat did indeed sound and feel as good as anyone's! Hint: simplifying a beat will usually make most beats feel good, and THEN you can build on top of that. Jumping in without really thinking about what you're playing to begin with, is like building a house on mud. In any event, my big lesson or learning moment was this: good teaching is as much about confidence building as it is anything else. I believe I'm doing this more and more. Practice makes perfect.

One of the things I most enjoy about the Drum Fantasy Camp is that it does not emphasize career-building. It concentrates on the fun and sheer experience of drumming. I pondered this, imagining that, instead of my being at a camp where I know what I'm doing (playing the drums for 65 years will do that,) I was at a photography camp. Would I be interested in learning how to monetize my photo habit? NO! I would want to be inspired and to learn the techniques, tools, and tricks of the trade from professionals who clearly love what they do, and can



For more information, contact Steven Orkin @ Orkin Marketing and Management

www.orkinmarketing.com | www.drumfantasycamp.com



explain the how-to with clarity, panache, and humanity. Steve Orkin's Drum Fantasy Camp does all those things and more. It brings a corner of the world's drumming community together, and it makes the world at large a better place. It turns fantasy into reality.

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



NEW & NOTABLE

Latin Percussion Announces New World Beat Instruments



Latin Percussion (LP®) is excited to announce LP® World Beat, a curated collection of family friendly recreational rhythm-making products. LP World Beat instruments have been developed in collaboration with effervescent artist, Mona Tavakoli with the lively aesthetic being adapted from her original artwork.

Inspiration for musical creativity and play has never been easier. The highly colorful and attractive LP World Beat Djembe, Ashiko, Tom Toms, Bongos, Frame Drums, Mini Toms, and Tube Drums are lightweight, durable, and weather-resistant! They feature non-slip rubber bottoms for in-play stability and protection of the instrument. These instruments produce bright, crisp slaps, and rich bass tones.

The percussion range also includes a light wood Shaman Drum with fitted rope netting, an Ocean Drum, which uses internal beads to produce calming wave-like sounds and a Cajon with a meranti body and soundboard for punchy bass tones. The ergonomic designs of the pre-tuned wood Tambourines and wooden Maracas make it simple to produce bright rhythmic sounds.

LP® World Beat accessories include a Drum Harness, which is perfect for holding Djembes, Ashikos, and other instruments. It has adjustable nylon straps and heavy-duty hooks. Mona Tavakoli commented "I'm thrilled to be partnering with LP in service of the next generation of rhythm makers with the World Beat collection! Whether you are playing solo or creating sound with your community, I hope these colorful drums give you a reason to make some noise and have fun!"

A passionate world of percussion awaits experienced and beginner recreational rhythm makers in the LP World Beat instrument range, where prices begin at just \$19.99. To find out more, please visit <https://www.lpmusic.com/>.

Drummer Jay Weinberg Takes Porter & Davies on Tour



Jay Weinberg, the multi award winning drummer of Suicidal Tendencies, is the newest member of the ever-growing Porter & Davies artist family. The company's tactile monitors allow every punch of the kick drum to pulse through a drummer's body, adding another dimension to the playing experience.

Weinberg, the son of long-term Bruce Springsteen drummer Max Weinberg, and Slipknot drummer from 2013 to 2024, is currently the drummer of Suicidal Tendencies and Infectious Grooves. He has received many accolades in the drumming world, more recently voted Best Metal Drummer 2022 by *Music Radar / Rhythm magazine*, 2022 Metal Drummer of the Year by *Drumeo* and 2023 Best Metal Drummer / #1 Rock Drummer in *Modern Drummer's Readers* poll.

Suicidal Tendencies are currently special guests on the Metallica M72 World Tour. They released their first original song in nine years, "Adrenaline Addict," to coincide with the band opening for Metallica. Infectious Grooves, the funk offshoot of Suicidal Tendencies, have two show dates in California in August. As a solo artist, Weinberg has been working on an album where he plays all the instruments, collaborated with different vocalists, and even did his own artwork.

Weinberg has been using his BC2 on tour and this is what he

says: 'The Porter & Davies BC2 has revolutionized the way I feel the impact of my drums, in the best way possible. As someone who loves to feel the rumble of a strong subwoofer on a tight rock club stage, I've often found it difficult to replicate that physical sensation on larger stages, without boosting my in-ear monitor volumes to compensate for the lack of impact. The BC2 tactile monitoring system gives me the low-end response I love to feel — no matter the stage conditions — allowing me to listen to my in-ears at safer volumes. Thank you, P&D, for this amazing device that allows me to feel more connected to my instrument than ever before!'

Porter & Davies are the world leaders in tactile monitoring. Their high-quality products are used by hundreds of top artists. To find out more about making music *feel* better go to porteranddavies.co.uk/.

Waves Audio InTrigger: an intelligent drum replacement plugin



Waves Audio, the world's leading developer of professional audio signal processing technologies and plugins, is now shipping InTrigger, a plugin designed to make drum triggering faster, easier, and more accurate. Its intelligent hit detection engine saves producers and engineers hours of manual tweaking, by handling ghost notes and mic bleed with exceptional precision, without manual threshold settings or tedious editing. This is smart drum replacement with a human touch, giving your mix both control and feel.

InTrigger's efficient two-step workflow simplifies drum replacement: in step one, the system analyzes the performance. You just need to click the Learn button and InTrigger's smart algorithm automatically detects and categorizes the drum hits. In step two, you assign a new sample. That's it. No more hours of tedious trial-and-error editing. *The result is an intelligent workflow for inspired rhythm, so you can stay creative, not corrective.*

The Humanize knob shapes each hit's envelope and dynamics,

so one sample reacts differently every time and delivers a natural, expressive feel across the song. You can also stack up to 8 sample layers, giving your drums greater depth and impact.

Additionally, to help you find the right sounds faster, InTrigger includes a license for Cosmos, Waves' AI-powered sample manager, integrated directly into the plugin with access to 1400 curated one-shot drum samples. This streamlines your workflow by letting you audition and organize samples in context, all within your session. A dedicated version, InTrigger Live, is also included for use in real-time performance environments.

Top producers and mixing engineers commend InTrigger's unmatched precision, intuitive workflow, and musical sensitivity, making it an essential tool for both studio productions and live setups. Producer/engineer **Joe Chiccarelli** (Morrissey, The Strokes, U2, Beck), remarks, "This is the most comprehensive drum sampler I've ever used. Where other drum replacers fall short in nuanced or dynamic performances, InTrigger preserves the drummer's intent—while letting you layer additional samples on top of the original hits."

Lu Diaz, mixing engineer and producer (DJ Khaled, Pitbull, Beyoncé, Jay Z), adds, "Wow, finally an intuitive sound replacer. I can't tell you how much time I've spent on live drums—either replacing sounds or layering. InTrigger not only saves me a ton of time, but its level of customization and detail is on another level! Love it!"

Koen Heldens, mixing engineer (XXXTentacion, Kanye West, Trippie Redd, Lil Wayne), notes, "InTrigger takes drum replacement and augmentation to the next level with zero-threshold hassle, no ghost note cleanups. Just dead-on triggering and a smart, effortless workflow that keeps me locked in and moving fast."

Jack Miele, producer, engineer, mixing engineer (Rod Stewart, Dr. John, *American Horror Story*, Zac Brown Band), states, "InTrigger is a true problem solver. It's precise without being clinical and integrates into my workflow seamlessly. After using every major drum replacement plugin, I love InTrigger because it actually suits the needs of modern mixing."

Key features include:

- Intelligent Hit Detection: Automatically analyzes the performance with a single "Learn" button, eliminating the need for threshold setting and time-consuming manual edits.
- Bleed Smart: Reduces mic leakage and prevents false triggers by using a highly effective Onset Gate.
- Humanize Control: Preserves the feel of the drummer's original performance by adding real-time variation to sample

playback. It adjusts tone and dynamics per hit to produce organic results.

- Integrated Sample Finder: Quickly browse and audition both the included sound library and your own samples using Cosmos, Waves' AI-powered sample browser. This new feature allows you to hear samples in context directly inside your session.

- Built-in CR8 Sampler: Shape and layer your drum sounds using the powerful CR8 engine, included within InTrigger for advanced sound design capabilities.

Whether you're fixing a snare hit, fattening up your drums, or transforming your entire groove, InTrigger provides a smarter, more musical solution. InTrigger has been added to the Waves Ultimate Plugin Subscription, which includes the comprehensive Waves plugin catalog (over 240 plugins) as monthly or annual subscriptions. It is also available for purchase as a separate plugin (perpetual license). InTrigger is included in the Waves Mercury bundle as well.

Sensaphonics expands dB Check Pro online firmware for headphone and IEM's



Sensaphonics, a leading designer and manufacturer of custom-fit in-ear monitors, earplugs, and pro audio electronics, has announced new updated firmware for the dB Check Pro sound level analyzer. The only device of its kind on the market that provides IEM and headphone end users with calculated at-ear real-time and average sound pressure level estimates (dBA SPL), the dB Check Pro provides a simple and unobtrusive way to help maintain proper hearing health in potentially damaging audio environments.

This latest firmware version 1.14 adds support for earphone models for newly included brands Alclair and FIR Audio, as well as adding new models from Westone, adding to the growing number of supported brands which include 64 Audio, Audio-Technica, Beyerdynamic, Etymotic Research, Fischer Amps, JH Audio, Sennheiser, Sensaphonics, Shure, Sony, and Ultimate Ears.

Additional models continue to be added based on end-user requests and feedback, while a recently implemented online update methodology streamlines the process of adding new updates to the over 170 models of IEMs and headphones from 15 major brands currently supported.

"Our continued success with the dB Check Pro has led to some excellent industry feedback and continued inquiries from musicians and engineers wanting to know how loud they are listening with their current setups," states Dr. Michael Santucci, Au.D., founder, and president of Sensaphonics. "The new, streamlined process which we have implemented for easy, online firmware updates helps ensure that end users will have near-instant access to the latest models and features to help protect their hearing, which is our ultimate goal." Find out more about the dB Check Pro sound level analyzer and get the latest firmware update at [Sensaphonics.com](https://sensaphonics.com).

Sonique Drums Announces Newest Authorized Retailer



Sonique Drums, a leading innovator in drum and percussion accessories, is proud to announce that Dale's Drum Shop of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, is now an Authorized Dealer of our full product lineup. This partnership brings Sonique's acclaimed solid shell snare drums and percussion gear—known for its quality, durability, and player-focused design—right into the hands of central Pennsylvania's drumming community.

"Drummers in and around the Harrisburg area now have a local destination where they can try, hear, and see the difference our products make," said Jeannie Shero, co-founder & CEO of Sonique Drums. "It's not just about having our accessories in stock—it's about having a trusted local drum shop where drummers can get expert advice, hands-on experience, and immediate access to all the high-quality drums and gear that Sonique Drums has to offer."

-Hands-On Access: Try out pro-level gear before you buy.

-Expert Support: Benefit from the knowledge and personalized service at an established drum shop of 43 years, who understand the needs of gigging and recording drummers.

-Immediate Availability: Skip shipping delays from online marketplaces and get the tools you need for your next rehearsal, recording session, or show—right when you need them.



Dale's Drum Shop is located at 4440 Fritchey St., Harrisburg, PA 17109 and drummers can visit in person, online at dalesdrumshop.com, or call (717) 652-2466 to learn more about current stock.

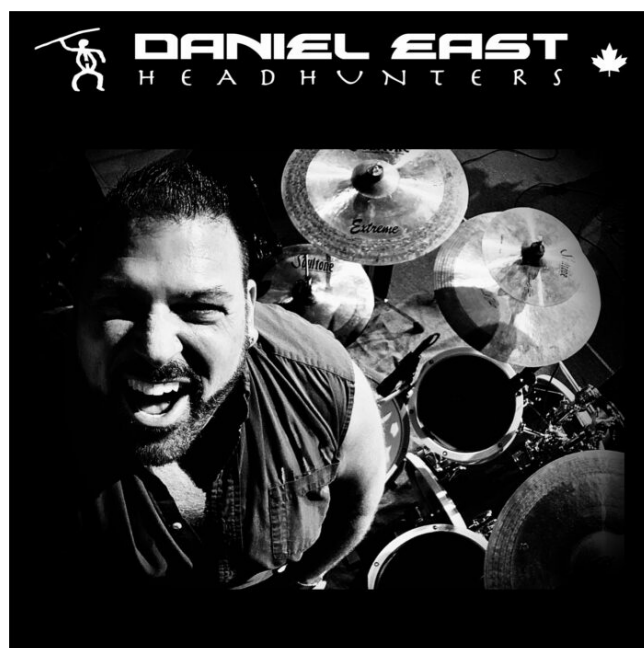
Founded in 2020, Sonique Drums is dedicated to crafting thoughtfully designed percussion accessories and solid shell snare drums; every product is designed and built for drummers who demand quality and reliability. Industry firsts, like the NATO family of continually adjustable throw-offs and the Poly Pro snare wire straps set Sonique Drums apart from the rest. You can find Sonique's snare drums and percussion accessories online at Amazon, Reverb, soniquedrums.com or at select drum shops across the U.S.

Headhunters Drumsticks adds Daniel East to their Artist Roster

Daniel East, recognized for his extensive career in live performance, studio production, international touring, and music education, has joined Headhunters Drumsticks as an official artist endorser. He brings a uniquely versatile voice to the Headhunters family. Known for his work across rock, pop, R&B, and blues, East has performed with acclaimed artists such as American Idol's Christina Christian, Alto Reed (Bob Seger,) and George Terry (Eric Clapton.) This alignment with Headhunters, known for its innovation and versatility, makes him an excellent fit for the brand.

East, who performs and teaches using Rock Maple sticks, Crossover II bundles, and Bullets brushes, describes these tools as "a game-changer in control, feel, and tonal variety - both live

and in the studio." His endorsement highlights Headhunters' commitment to drummers who demand nuance, creativity, and reliability in their gear. East emphasizes the importance of feel over hype, stating, "I spent years searching for the right sticks and nothing ever felt balanced or, if it did, they were discontinued after a couple of years. For me, this isn't about hype - it's about consistency and feel," he reports. "Headhunters builds tools that actually respond to how I play, not the other way around. That's rare." 🐾



PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

Drum Baffles: Out of the Cage with Less Bleeding

By Brian Hill

For any drummer who has had the experience of the clear, three-sided drum cage, Drum Baffles are here! No more cages! Matthew Schallmo of Drum Baffles has identified one of the main reasons why people need drum cages: The CYMBALS! Cymbals are the high-end, in-your-face sound that usually gets most of the complaints. *Modern Drummer* received a set of Drum Baffles to reflect on and see if they indeed help with the impact

the cymbal sound waves that hit the baffle and are generally reflected back in my face, to be reflected above my head in the direction of the overhead mics. The reverse effect of using the baffles is that they also “baffle” the stage volume somewhat so that the overhead mics get more cymbal and less stage volume, allowing the mic to have less gain and more cymbal. With this position, sitting behind the kit, I really wasn’t negatively affected by the baffle’s reflective properties.



Drum Baffles also allowed the drums to breathe in the room. The sound can still be felt while the high-end frequencies are more controlled. Because they are mounted on a cymbal stand, they are easy to move around, whereas the cage will really confine the user’s ability to adjust the kit or mics during a gig.

Drum Baffles also offers a heavy duty 32” circular, soft material travel bag. Each bag has internal cloth baffles to separate and protect the Drum Baffles. I found this large carrying case is also well suited to protecting gongs and other very large cymbals.

Drum Baffles are not only a well-thought-out approach to an old and persistent sound problem, but they look

and intensity of sound bleeding from cymbals that goes on in a playing environment.

The set we received was called the “Hybrid Bundle.” It consists of two 23” round baffles and two 30” round baffles, as well as a heavy duty soft carrying case. Each baffle is made of premium liquid acrylic that measures a full quarter inch thick. Most other sound baffles on the market are made of a lesser, pelletized acrylic product that is half as thick and are prone to bending and scratching. Drum Baffles’ advanced manufacturing process results in a superior product that looks like glass.

Each baffle is laser cut and etched with the logo; a process that also produces a clean, clear edge that makes the baffles stand out among the competition. To address the problem of cracking and breakage at the center mounting hole, Drum Baffles employs a heavy-duty rubber grommet to insulate the baffle from the cymbal stand mount.

Using Drum Baffles is very easy and convenient. Simply mount one on a cymbal stand and place it in front of your kit. I went with straight stands (although boom stands and arms work well, also) and placed the baffle at cymbal height in front and on the sides of the kit. One of the things that I really liked was that I could position the baffle where I needed it and I could adjust the angle of the baffle with no risk of the baffle bending.

Instead of a straight up and down position, I put the baffles at a slight upward angle. This kept

great and are not visually obstructive in any way. Even though they are extremely transparent to the casual eye, they can catch stage lights and throw that colored light in some visually stunning ways.

Drum Baffles have a very informative website that shows the several sets of Drum Baffles that are available. So, get out of the cage and stop bleeding! For more information, pricing, and a real lesson in the physics of sound, check ‘em out at drumbaffles.com.



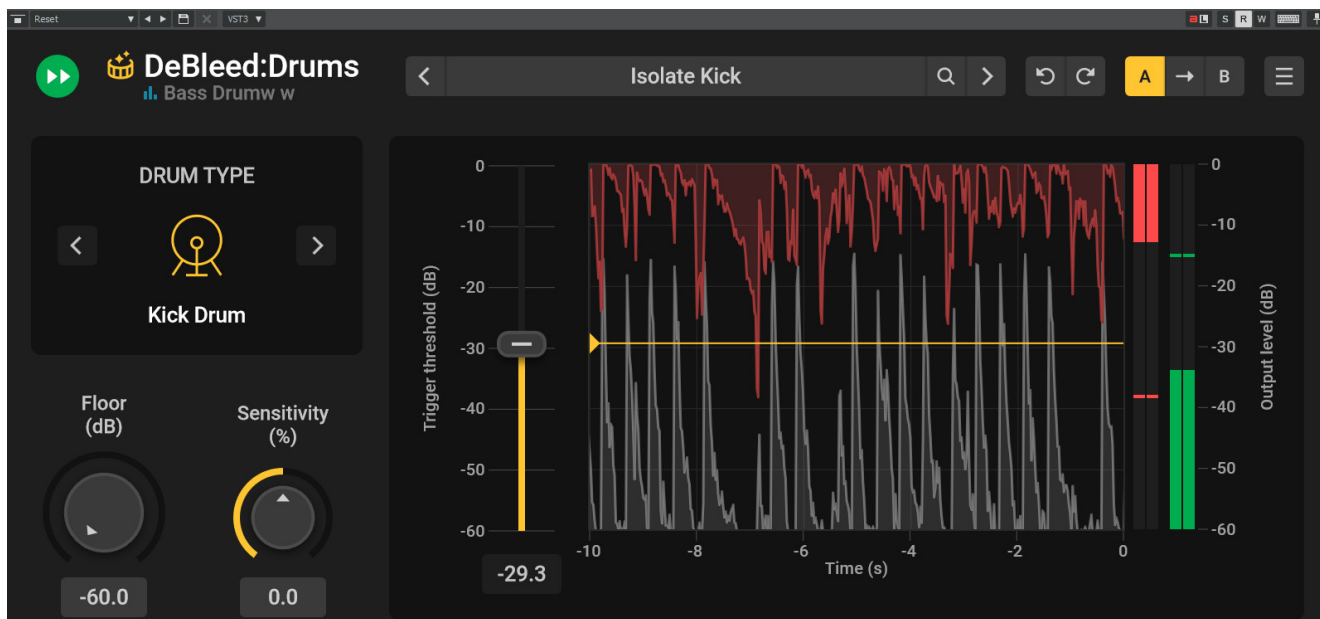
Acon Digital - Drum Production Suite

By Jason Mehler

Acon Digital has earned respect among engineers and producers with several flagship products in different areas of audio production. They've built a reputation for solving practical problems such as noise and unwanted reverb, while providing transparent, musical processing tools that hold up in professional workflows. Acon Digital's latest release leverages

to install. Simply download the installation file and run it. The suite is compatible with all major DAWs that support VST3, and AAX formats. The entire installation requires less than 100mb of disk space, although the user guide suggests you have 1gb of space available.

For this review, I'm running the 64bit PC version with



artificial intelligence (AI) to address two well-known challenges that engineers face when mixing drums: mic bleed and stem separation. For this month's Product Close-Up, I will dive into Acon Digital's Drum Production Suite, which includes the DeBleed and Remix Tools.

Battling the Bleed

When I learned about the solution that these tools provide, I had a flashback to the countless hours I spent in the late 90's and early 2000's experimenting and trying to get the perfect drum sound for my band's demo recordings. We did everything in-house on a shoestring budget using a digital recorder, and eventually a PC using Cakewalk. One of my biggest pain points was wrestling with bleed and phase issues. Through trial and error - and many abandoned drum takes - I learned the art of proper mic placement. But even with the best mic positioning, bleed was unavoidable and cleaning it up without destroying the natural feel of the drums was nearly impossible, at least for a novice engineer like me.

All that to say, those old "garbage" drum tracks are still sitting on a hard drive, packed with bleed and phase issues. For this review, I've decided to resurrect one of those old sessions to see if Acon's magic tools can finally bring them back to life.

Installation

The software is available for both Mac and PC and is a breeze

to install. Simply download the installation file and run it. The suite is compatible with all major DAWs that support VST3, and AAX formats. The entire installation requires less than 100mb of disk space, although the user guide suggests you have 1gb of space available.

The Tracks

As I alluded to earlier, some of my older recordings were done on a Roland 1680 digital recorder and later dumped into a PC. To save time during the migration to the PC, I pre-mixed the overheads with the hi-hat mic, which I ended up regretting. In the end, the following tracks were available to me: Kick, Snare, Tom 1, Tom 2, Tom 3, and Overheads L/R (Stereo.) Each of the tracks had bleed problems, and I could even hear guitars and vocals leaking in from the headphones. Time to give DeBleed a try!

Interface and Features – DeBleed: Drums plugin

One of the standout aspects of DeBleed: Drums is its clear and intuitive interface, which makes it easy to see exactly how the active plugin is working. A gray waveform shows you where your selected drum is present in the signal and the red waveform shows where mic spill is being removed.

The main controls are as follows:

- Floor (dB): This sets the maximum amount of spill reduction that is allowed, the default is -60db which allows the most reduction in mic bleed. If you want to remove less spill, you move the control closer to 0db.

PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

- Sensitivity (%): The sensitivity refers to the sensitivity of the drum separation, and higher values lead to more signal being detected. It is recommended to start at 0, because the AI is already trained in that range.

- Trigger Threshold (dB): The threshold value for the drum hit triggering. A higher value here would produce less of the selected drum sound. A lower value would produce more of the drum sound, but less DeBleeding effect.

On the top left side of the interface, there is a Drum Type selector with options for kick, snare, hi-hat, cymbals, and toms. This tells the AI what audio it should expect to hear and gets you right where you need to be for those instruments.

DeBleed comes with factory presets that serve as a starting point for specific settings. You can scroll through the list using the arrow navigation or click the field to reveal a dropdown list. You can even save your own preset for future use. There is also an A/B comparison feature to let you toggle between two independent sets of parameter settings. You can also undo or redo your settings changes.

Testing DeBleed: Drums

The first track to test was the kick drum. The raw track had a lot of snare drum and even some music bleeding into it. I added the DeBleed effect to the track and chose Kick Drum as the drum type. Without making any adjustments, it killed 90% of the unwanted bleed! I only had to adjust the trigger threshold to get all the way there. Game-changer.

With the snare drum track, I had the issue of the hi-hat, headphones, and cymbals music filling up the spaces between snare hits. Once again, the Drum Type setting got me to 90% and the trigger threshold sealed the deal.

The tom tracks were similar. Ultimately, all the drum tracks cleared up nicely thanks to the DeBleed: Drums plugin. For the overheads, I decided to try out the Remix plugin.

Interface and Features – Remix: Drums plugin

Remix: Drums can separate individual drum stems in real time. It uses artificial intelligence to split a combined track mix into six groups: Kick, Snare, Hi-hat, Cymbals, Toms, and Other. This allows you to remix each group to taste. The interface has a familiar look similar to a mixing board with individual faders for each group.

Mixer settings include:

- Stem Gain (dB): The mixer contains sliders that set the output level for each of the available drum stems in Decibels (dB).

- Stem Pan (%): You can control the stereo panning of the drum type outputs individually with the stem pan sliders.

- Solo (S) and Mute (M): Drum stems can be auditioned separately (S) or muted

completely (M) by clicking the respective buttons.

- Sensitivity (%): You can control the sensitivity of the drum stem signal detection independently for each drum type. The sensitivity refers to the sensitivity of the drum separation, and higher values lead to more signal being detected. Thus, positive values will increase naturalness at the cost of additional spill and negative values will reduce spill at the cost of possible artifacts.

Like the DeBleed: Drums plugin, Remix also has A/B testing and undo/redo features.

Testing Remix: Drums

I knew my overhead track would be a good candidate for the Remix: Drums plugin because as I said earlier, the hi-hat mic was pre-mixed into the same track which I regret because it was too loud in comparison to the cymbals. I added the Remix: Drums plugin to the track and adjusted the gain, threshold, sensitivity, and panning. The changes took effect in real time while the track was playing, and the audio quality of each individual stem was excellent. I finally had complete control of the mix. I was honestly shocked at the fact that I could remove cymbals and hi-hat completely from overhead mic track! Wonderful.

Conclusion

The AI processing of the plugins in the Acon Drum Production Suite delivers a natural sound quality throughout the range of adjustments made, and the near-real time response makes it easy to quickly isolate and shape your drum mix. Ultimately, the Acon Drum Production Suite offers an impressive blend of precision, speed, and musicality, that can bring your drum tracks back from the dead.

The Acon Drum Production Suite retails at \$119 and is well worth it. Check it out at: <https://acondigital.com/products/drum-production-suite>



Trinity Cymbals: 16" Brilliant Holey China

By Jason Mehler

Trinity Cymbals continues to build momentum in the drumming world, carving out space alongside other established cymbal manufacturers. I recently ran into the Trinity team at the 2025 Music City Drum Show in Nashville, TN. They had an impressive display of their cymbal line-up with an accompanying drum kit, giving drummers the chance to hear and feel the cymbals in action.

One set of cymbals that stood out to me was their Brilliant Series. Not only were they visually impressive, but they cut through the ever-present wall of noise on the busy drum show floor. I could actually hear them being tested from our Modern Drummer booth in the next aisle. For this month's Product Close-Up, I snagged a Brilliant 16" Holey China from the Trinity booth— with their permission of course!

Alloy & Build

The 16" Brilliant Holey China is cast from B20 bronze, a time-honored blend of 80% copper and 20% tin that has been the foundation of professional cymbals for decades. The cymbal smiths at Trinity fully lathe both sides and then apply precision hammering to fine-tune the pitch and sustain. Holes are drilled to dry out excess wash, giving the cymbal a fast response and a sharp, cutting musical voice.

First Impressions

Fresh out of my luggage from the drum show, the 16" Brilliant Holey China is a real head-turner. With its mirror-like finish, it could pass as high-end wall art, if it weren't destined to be played.

My test cymbal weighed approximately 823 grams. The cymbal is on the thinner side in terms of gauge, yet it feels solid and durable. On the top side, there are evenly spaced ping hammer marks and shallow tonal grooves. The cymbal's most obvious feature, however, is the set of 15 one-inch holes punched through the bow, arranged with precision around the bell in groups of three. The bell itself measures five inches across and is polished so cleanly that the tonal grooves are nearly invisible.

The underside of the cymbal is just as impressive as the top. Two inches from the edge, the profile curves to form the familiar lip of a classic China, with a smooth, gradual transition into the bow rather than a sharp break. The Trinity logo and cymbal model are stylishly etched on opposite sides, adding a clean, professional touch.

Playing the Cymbal

The first time I struck the 16" Brilliant Holey China I was caught off guard by its volume. It is anything but shy. I had to apologize to my dog for scaring the bejesus out of her. The cymbal is loud, assertive, and would probably cut through the heaviest metal mixes.

The attack is instantaneous – hit it and it explodes right away. It is sharp and articulate enough for fast, choppy playing

where each note needs to be clearly distinguished from the next. Having said that, even with the drilled holes taming the wash, the cymbal lingers longer than I anticipated, often calling for a quick choke to shorten its presence. Or you could just let it ring out and unleash its drama.

I tapped around the cymbal a bit, which revealed a few unique tones, worthy of experimentation with sticks of different sizes, densities, and tip styles. Beyond serving as a powerful accent

cymbal on its own, the 16" Brilliant Holey China also feels like a strong candidate for stacking.

Conclusion

The Trinity 16" Brilliant Holey China isn't just an eye-catching piece – it's a cymbal with real versatility. It's an ideal accent cymbal for rock, metal and any style that demands sharp punctuation, while its lingering sustain offers enough drama to let notes breathe when needed. Whether used as a standalone accent or as part of a creative stack, it'll add character and energy to any setup. The Trinity 16" Brilliant Holey China retails for \$220.98.

Check it out at: <https://trinitycymbals.com/products/trinity-brilliant-holey-china-16>



Lightweight Drum Hardware

By JR Frondelli

For a different view on drum hardware, this is a chart of lightweight drum hardware, which is a popular subject with gigging drummers today, including myself. I compiled this list, including weights, models, and pricing, to help drummers choose lightweight hardware options, and in turn, save them some physical strain and hopefully prevent injury.

<i>BRAND/ TYPE</i>	<i>SERIES</i>	<i>MODEL#</i>	<i>WEIGHT (lbs)</i>	<i>MSRP</i>
<u><i>CANOPUS</i></u>				
Cymbal	Lightweight	CCS-1F	3.08	\$99.00
Cymbal (Jeff Hamilton model)	Artist	CCS-JH	3.96	\$144.00
Hi-Hat	Lightweight	CHS-1	6.17	\$214.00
Snare	Lightweight	CCS-2F	4.85	\$144.00
Snare (MULTI-USE)	Lightweight	CCS-HL	5.72	\$149.00
<u><i>DW</i></u>				
Cymbal (straight-ULTRALIGHT)	6000	DWCP6710UL	3.31	\$119.99
Cymbal (straight-LIGHT)	6000	DWCP6710	5.95	\$159.99
Cymbal (boom-ULTRALIGHT)	6000	DWCP6700UL	3.53	\$129.99
Cymbal (boom-LIGHT)	6000	DWCP6700	6.50	\$169.99
Hi-Hat (ULTRALIGHT)	6000	DWCP6500UL	3.53	\$139.99
Hi-Hat (LIGHT)	6000	DWCP6500	8.26	\$229.99
Snare (ULTRALIGHT)	6000	DWCP6300UL	3.09	\$129.99
Snare (LIGHT)	6000	DWCP6300	6.34	\$159.99
<u><i>GIBRALTAR</i></u>				
Cymbal (straight)	8000	8710	6.34	\$84.99
Cymbal (suspended)	8000	8710SC	7.87	\$134.99
Cymbal (boom)	8000	8709	6.61	\$104.99
Hi-Hat	8000	8707	8.31	\$149.99
Snare	8000	8706	6.61	\$94.99
Snare (extended-height)	8000	8706EX	7.53	\$94.99
Snare	8000	8713UA	6.50	\$109.99
<u><i>LUDWIG</i></u>				
Cymbal (straight)	Classic	LC25CS	5.20	\$99.00
Cymbal (boom)	Classic	LC35BCS	6.10	\$119.00
Hi-Hat	Classic	LC16HH	6.90	\$159.00
Snare	Classic	LC21SS	6.60	\$129.00
<u><i>PEARL</i></u>				
Cymbal (boom)	150	BC150S	5.42	\$229.00
Cymbal (straight)	150	C150S	4.80	\$211.00
Hi-Hat	150	H150S	6.30	\$385.00
Snare	150	S150S	5.18	\$211.00
Snare (extended-height)	150	S155L	5.50	\$184.00
<u><i>ROGERS</i></u>				
Cymbal	Dyna-Matic	RDH10	5.68	\$89.00
Hi-Hat	Dyna-Matic	RDH7	7.05	\$145.00
Snare	Dyna-Matic	RDH6	5.82	\$89.00
Tom	Dyna-Matic	RDH13	6.48	\$115.00
<u><i>TAMA</i></u>				
Cymbal (straight)	Classic	HC52F	3.20	\$125.00
Hi-Hat	Classic	HH55F	5.10	\$217.00
Snare	Classic	HS50S	3.11	\$125.00
Throne	Standard	HT130	7.70	\$142.00
<u><i>YAMAHA</i></u>				
Cymbal (straight)	Crosstown	CS3	3.30	\$166.00
Hi-Hat	Crosstown	HHS3	4.80	\$235.40
Snare	Crosstown	SS3	3.30	\$174.00

FEATURES

Flat base. Geared tilter. Nylon joint bushings.
Flat base. Gearless tilter. Noiseless pipe system. Nylon joint bushings.
Direct-pull. Tripod swivel base. Adjustable tension. Ball-bearing pull-chain connection.
Flat base. Gearless tilter. Cushioned basket grips. Folds to 13".
Tripod base. Geared tilter. Includes extra pipe section for seated or standing playing.

Flat base. Gearless tilter. Adjustable cymbal seat. Aluminum leg base.
Flat base. Gearless DW TechLock locking tilter. Adjustable cymbal seat. Aluminum leg base.
Flat base. Gearless tilter. Adjustable cymbal seat. Convertible boom/straight.
Flat base. Gearless DW TechLock locking tilter. Adjustable cymbal seat. Convertible boom/straight.
Flat base. Direct-pull. Leg tips w/integrated spurs. Aluminum leg base.
Flat base. Direct-pull. Delta bearing footboard hinge. Adjustable spring tension. Leg tips w/integrated spurs. Locking clutch.
Flat base. Gearless tilter. Vintage sliding basket design. Cushioned basket grips. Aluminum leg base.
Flat Base. Geared tilter. Aluminum leg base.

*(Minimum Advertised Price- Gibraltar)

Flat base, low mass. Gearless tilter. Key Lock on folding mechanism.
Flat base, low mass. Gearless tilter. Key Lock on folding mechanism. Curved, overhead arm for cymbal suspension.
Flat base, low mass. Gearless tilter. Key Lock on folding mechanism. Convertible boom/straight.
Flat base. Direct-pull. Adjustable tension. Dual front spurs. Minimal footprint.
Flat base. Geared tilter. Key Lock on folding mechanism. Basket holds 10"-15" drum w/metal hoops.
Flat base. Geared tilter. Key Lock on folding mechanism. Basket holds 10"-15" drum w/metal hoops. Height range: 25.5"-40.5"
Flat base. Ultra-Adjust ball tilter. Key Lock on folding mechanism. Basket holds 10"-15" drum w/metal hoops. Ideal for toms.

Flat base. Gearless tilter. Nylon joint bushings. Floating rubber feet ("Acculite").
Flat base. Gearless tilter. Convertible boom/straight. Nylon joint bushings. Floating rubber feet ("Acculite").
Flat base. Footboard hinge speed bearings. Front and heel spurs.
Flat Base. Gearless, dual-axis tilter. Nylon joint bushings. Floating rubber feet ("Acculite").

Convertible Flat/Tripod base. Gearless tilter.
Convertible Flat/Tripod base. Gearless tilter.
Flat base, swiveling. Direct-pull.
Convertible Flat/Tripod base. Gearless Uni-Lock tilter.
Convertible Flat/Tripod base. Gearless Uni-Lock tilter. Height range: 23.75"-35".

*(Minimum Advertised Price- Rogers)

Swan-leg tripod base. Fine-gear tilter.
Swan-leg tripod swivel base. Spring tension adjustment.
Swan-leg tripod base. Gearless tilter.
Swan-leg tripod base. Ball tilter. Custom 12"-13" basket.

Flat base, Fine gear tilter, Solid 9mm dia. upper section.
Direct-pull. Flat base.
Single-braced tripod base, Gearless tilter, Sliding basket adjustment, Memory lock.
Double-braced tripod base, Pipe & clamp height adjust, 13" dia. seat.

Aluminum channel tripod leg base. 2 or 3-tier use. Offset micro-gear tilter.
Aluminum channel tripod leg base. Direct-pull.
Aluminum channel tripod leg base. Gearless tilter.

Abe Cunningham

By Mark Griffith

After five (long) years, the Deftones are back with a new record called *Private Music*, and Abe Cunningham is back with more groove than ever, and even more cool snare drum sounds to make us drummers drool. We sat down before the band left for their next leg of touring North America and Canada to talk about the new record, producers, playing Neil Peart's drums, snare drums, drummers, influences, and hear about a *very special guest* that came out to their show in New Jersey. Abe Cunningham is a modern groove master (and a self-confessed drum nerd) who loves to talk music, drumming, and drums. *Private Music* combines all of that (and much more,) and is one of my favorite records of the year.



talks about Private Music... and much more!



MD: The new record *Private Music* was produced by Nick Raskulinecz who has a pretty cool history with drummers since he produced *Snakes & Arrows* and *Clockwork Angels* for Rush and has a long history working with Dave Grohl and the Foo Fighters (among many others.) How is working with Nick different from working with Terry Date who has produced Deftones a lot in the past?

AC: Terry is big into engineering and is a sound wizard, and Nick is a song guy. Nick is an engineering wizard too, but Terry Date is in there carving every little frequency. He's much more of an engineer, and he (pretty much) leaves everything else up to the band. Of course, everyone's got an opinion, but Terry works quite a lot with the sounds, and keeps quiet a lot with the song writing unless something isn't gelling or gets weird. Whereas Nick is a song guy. He knows every microscopic part and every molecule of these songs and this record. That really frees us up to be free and creative. While we were writing, he would suggest different ideas of ours that would fit together. Nick is a sonic wizard; but he could do it *all* if he wanted to, but he has an engineer do these records with us. We have a neat way of working with Nick and we had always hoped to do a third record with him. So *Private Music* is the trifecta, we did two in a row with him, took a break and did another record with Terry, and went back to Nick for this one. It's a different beast, but it's so much fun to make records with both Nick and Terry.

MD: Deftones have worked with a lot of producers over the years including Bob Ezrin, how do the producers affect the records that you make?

AC: We have worked with Terry for a long time, we've learned so much from him, he's family, I talk to Terry all the time. Nick is that way too. But those are two different styles of producing, it became a joke that Terry would quit on every record. We would piss him off and his glasses would get all fogged up, but we love each other.

When we were working with Bob Ezrin, we were in the most horrendous shape as a band. We were breaking up, there were many other distractions, we were in bad shape physically, it was awful. Bob Ezrin is a strong personality as well; it wasn't a good pairing at the time. But to Bob's credit, the record we made is really cool, I love that record, but we had a really hard time making it, and that was *completely* on us. Working with Bob was cool, I'm not trying to slag anyone, that was very much our fault, and then it all collapsed.

When we did *White Pony*, it was our third record with Terry, and we took meetings with other producers. We actually took a meeting with Jerry Harrison from Talking Heads; he almost produced that record. It's always cool to see what other people bring, but there's a comfort level. If you can work with the same person, get new sounds, and take it somewhere else, that's cool.

MD: How is the new record *Private Music* different from the last record *Ohms*?

AC: *Ohms* was produced by Terry Date and (like I said) Terry is family to the band. We did five records with him. Sonically, the way he records is his style, and those are his sounds. We originally got Terry to produce our first records because we were so stoked about Soundgarden, Metal Church, and Pantera



Photo by Clemente Ruiz

It's always cool to see what other people bring, but there's a comfort level. If you can work with the same person, get new sounds, and take it somewhere else, that's cool.

back in the day. When we first got signed, the label had us make a wish list of who we wanted to produce our first record, and Terry was our number one choice. We loved the sounds he was getting with those bands, but we didn't really get that until the second record with him, because we were all more comfortable and everyone was more open at that point. *Ohms* has got the signature sound that we developed with Terry. His way of getting drums tracks is a trip. We hadn't made a record with him in a while and he asked, "How are we doing this? Do you want to record with a click? (Which is something we never did with him.) On *Ohms*, certain things had tempo maps, it was nice to you know that we had that as an option. But *Ohms* was all live with no click or anything which is a trip, but it was cool to reinforce and know that we can still do it like that.

MD: Since we are talking about engineering your records, how do engineers find enough room in the mix for your huge drum sounds? Because sonically, there is so much going on. But although there is so much happening, they all seem to find

We originally got Terry Date to produce our first records because we were so stoked about Soundgarden, Metal Church, and Pantera back in the day.

enough space for your big drum sounds.

AC: Wow, what a great question. Terry Date would always have a spectrum analyzer on the top of the board. He taught us all about sonic real estate and frequency, he taught us about trying to carve out sonic space. We're a very heavy guitar and bass band, that's the foundation of the Deftones. But there's only so much sonic real estate, and we didn't know that. That was

Terry would always have a spectrum analyzer on the top of the board. He taught us all about sonic real estate and frequency, he taught us about trying to carve out sonic space.

a huge learning experience on our first record. Of course, so many drummers want their drums to sound huge like Bonham. But Jimmy Page did not have a huge guitar tone, and Zeppelin wasn't a huge sounding band, but all together they were massive, and that was a huge education. Getting everything to fit and carving out space for different things is tough, but it's something that we have become conscious and cognitive of over the years. Of course (guitarist) Stephen [Carpenter] has started tuning lower and lower over the years too, sometimes we have to say, "Dude, you better watch it, you're taking up too much real estate, *let's go outside and have a little talk.*" It's pretty funny, we try to fit everything in sonically. It's definitely a task that (thankfully) I don't have to worry about.

Actually, I'm way into engineering, I've learned a lot over the years, there's always so much to see and you must keep your eyes open. We're not really a "studio" band, so we don't get that many opportunities to go in and spend a month or more in a studio to do these records. But I love the history of the older studios, over the years we've been lucky to be able to record in some of the great studios that are still around. When you are recording in those places, you hope to knock a bit of the dust off the walls and hope that mojo comes to you. Those old rooms have the great consoles, great mics, cool old reverb rooms, and there is so much history in those rooms. Sadly, a lot of them are vanishing.

MD: How did the writing for *Private Music* come about?

AC: We wrote this record a little differently. When we all lived in Sacramento, we used to go into our studio-room called The Spot and hang out, jam, and write new tunes. Over the years, we bought a bunch of gear and put skateboard ramps in and made it into a funky club-studio with a bunch of pretty good gear. Now, we get together with Stephen down in LA and rent a room and write. We usually have a couple months, so we go and bash it out. But, as we've gotten a bit more curmudgeonly in our ways over the years that hasn't always worked too well for us, because we're all living in hotels in LA while we're writing.

This record's whole writing process was put

together so we could do it over time. We weren't living in hotels or being hounded by anyone, the label and management were very cool, but it wasn't like we *had* to make a record. We have developed and earned some

trust over the years, especially with the label. They let us be and we come up with something cool. We wrote *Private Music* over about a year's time, but we probably spent a month's time writing over that year. We did one writing session for about a week down in Joshua Tree. It's really great to get out the desert with no one around. That one was a very fruitful session, we

were there for about five or six days.

Then we took a month off. Then we did two more writing sessions at *Shangri-La* in Malibu, we were living there so those were fruitful sessions too. So, the music for the whole

record was written in about a month and a half, but that month and a half was spread over a long time, so we were able to have a nice work-life balance.

MD: Let's talk down the tunes from the new record which is really good. I will have to warn you that I know you are a snare drum guy, and I am too, so we're going to have to talk about what snare drum is on each track as well.

AC: COOL!!!

MD: "My Mind is a Mountain" is slow and sludgy, and very Black



Photo by Clemente Ruiz

The mood of a tune usually comes from the guitar tones. With that tune, we were trying not to pollute things and cloud things up. There are a lot of single notes in that, it's not just chugging, but that lends itself to a slower tempo and letting the tune breathe and do its thing.

Photo by Clemente Ruiz

Sabbath-ish, how do you conceive those slow tempos? Both the snare and bass drum sound on that track are killer.

AC: We had some great experiences touring with Ozzy and Sabbath a few times, they were always very nice to us. "My Mind is a Mountain" was one of the first songs that we wrote, that was the mood that day. The mood of a tune usually comes from the guitar tones. With that tune, we were trying not to pollute things and cloud things up. There are a lot of single notes in that, it's not just chugging, but that lends itself to a slower tempo and letting the tune breathe and do its thing. We're huge sludge fans and huge Sabbath fans (of course), but we don't ever have preconceived song ideas. We just sit and jam, and if something is sounding good at that moment, we'll stick with it. For better or worse, our songwriting is a collaborative, it's throw it against the wall and see what sticks kind of thing.

When we're writing, anyone can start a song. It might start with a beat, a riff, a good cup of coffee, a beautiful day, or a nice dinner. Or a song might start with nothing, whatever it takes.

The snare drum on that track was my 90s 6.5" Bell Brass Tama. I had a couple of those with me, and Nick brought a Gretsch Bell Brass as well. The whole kit that we used on the record was a bit of a Frankenstein kit. Nick has some old kits that Neil Peart gave him, because Nick produced those last few Rush records. Nick has one of Neil's dressing room kits. The kit that I played on this record was my normal Tama Starclassic kit with my 16x22 bass drum, 8" and 10" rack toms reversed, I used my 16" floor tom, and

Nick brought this great 15" DW floor tom that was Neil's. There was just something about this floor tom, it's the star of the show, and it's all over the record.

MD: I love 15" floor toms, and 15" snare drums. I've got a bunch. How did you hear the differences between the Gretsch Bell Brass and the Tama Bell Brass snares, or did you just have them tuned differently?

AC: No, they were all pretty much cranked, Bell Brass snares are killer snare drums and they're all gonna sound great. But on several songs the Gretsch had something poking out in the mix that was just right. We had them all right there, and we would pop each drum up. But Nick's Gretsch Bell Brass sounded great for a lot of things, but on that song in particular, it was just right.

MD: How do you choose snare drums and snare sounds for each track?

AC: We'll start with whatever drum was up from the last song and we usually start there. You'll know pretty quickly if it's the right drum or not. Maybe the tempo of the song will lend itself to something a bit more cranked up, the tempo of the song might require a longer note from the snare. But usually, if whatever drum was up on the last song is still hanging in, we'll crank it up and give it a give it a shot.

MD: Do you have to crank it up because it is detuned from the previous tune?

AC: Sometimes there a weird, detuned spot, so we will crank it

up. Back in the day, we would have a studio tech or a buddy of mine named John, who was a tuning wizard, come in on the records to take care of that. But with Nick as the producer, he would come in and run back and forth tuning all the drums.

MD: Is Nick really drum attentive from working with Neil Peart?

AC: Nick is “everything attentive,” he knows each song and the record on the most molecular level. The band knows things on a more topical level, but Nick was way in there, documenting everything and every sound. That really frees us up to relax and get to it. But Nick is a drum nerd just like you and me.

MD: On the slower and sludgier tempos, are you feeling them in half time where the backbeat is on 3, or are you feeling them in normal time and the backbeats are on 2 and 4?

AC: I think I’m usually feeling them in half time. It’s funny, the first time I was working with Nick on *Diamond Eyes* he was right there pushing me to play sixteenths on some parts to keep it going. I had to say, ‘Nick, I love that you’re so into this, but you’re driving me crazy!’ I (kind of) hurt his feelings. Nick’s a sweetheart and he is so down for the cause, but I would naturally just wanna lay back and let it be sloshy. If you’re getting that slosh thing going, it doesn’t make sense to change it. Over the years, I see his point, but when he’s not there I do what I want.

MD: But are you feeling the backbeats on 2 and 4 in “normal time” or are you feeling the backbeats on 3 in halftime?

AC: It depends, I’m usually feeling the backbeats on 2 and 4, but

on “My Mind is a Mountain” there’s a point where it gets pushed. I remember thinking that the next time around the push would feel right. I came up with that because it needed to go somewhere different, without taking it anywhere too far away. That was a simple and natural change which made it just a push and a cool change.

MD: “Locked Club” is the second track, and another great snare sound. This tune is also slower. How do you choose snares for different tracks?

AC: That snare is a DW 4x14 Brass on Brass. We had a plethora of drums in my “quiver” to choose from, and that sounded right on “Locked Club.”

When we play or record, we all hover over the “Nuclear Red Button.” We’ve been together for so long, we know exactly how to go for each other’s throats by “pushing that button,” we could implode any second as a band, so knowing that is a deterrent.

There’s also a 3.5x13” piccolo snare that’s all over this record. It was Neil Peart’s little snare that was set up high to his left. We used the hell out of that drum on this record. That little drum was dying because with Neil it never got played much, but it sounds great on a few songs on this record.

MD: The snare sound on “Ecdysis” is unique, is that Neil’s 3.5x13 DW?

AC: Yes, that’s it! We had it *disrespectfully cranked up*. It was just screaming, dying, and praying for the takes to be done, the



drum was just looking up at me as if to say, "Are you done yet?" We used that drum on "Infinite Source" too. The sound of that drum was just perfect, but I was hitting it pretty damn hard.

MD: The tunes on this record are (mostly) pretty short. Was that a conscious effort?

AC: Yes, that was conscious. We did a lot of trimming as we went along. Normally, we don't write a ton of songs, we write just

writing process?

AC: When we're writing, we're all there. I'm there from day one until the end. It was Stephen and I a lot on the first couple of records. But it takes the whole band to write the record. Songs are written when we're jamming, that has always been the way that we do it. When we did *White Pony*, Chino had started playing guitar a lot, he sort of learned to play in front of the

world, and that became a point of contention between him and Stephen, but it also helped us make some of our coolest music.

When we're writing, anyone can start a song. It might start with a beat, a riff, a good cup of coffee, a beautiful day, or a nice dinner. Or a song might start with *nothing*, whatever it takes. "House of Flies" (from *White Pony*) was written around a little (sort of) sample kind of thing that Frank had heard on a record. It wasn't an *actual* sample; it was just a record that he had been playing. But generally, writing is a band thing. Songs are usually not written in the whole, everyone is free to contribute, that's the way we work. Get in the room and just hash it out.

MD: How much of your snare drum sound comes from post-production (effects, samples, layering)?

AC: There might be a little gadgetry going on here and there, but the core of the snare sounds are right there in these drums. They are recorded beautifully.

MD: What is the difference between how Terry records drums and how Nick records drums?

AC: Terry is a minimalist in terms of miking. On our record *White Pony* with Terry, there was never a bottom snare mic. Terry would use an SM-57 on top, and sometimes a combo of a 57 and Neumann KM-84, but never a bottom mic. But he would get some insane ghost notes and articulation. Terry's a minimalist. He would set up some nice room mics and some nice overheads, but not a bunch of frills and not a bunch of "fun mics." And I love the "fun mics."

With Nick, there were mics everywhere! Tons of fun mics, killer crush mics, smash mics facing glass... *everything*. We had Neumann 87's on all the toms, Nick brought some special mics with him too. I never know *exactly* what was going on

in there, and I'm sure there's a few samples here and there, but at the core is definitely each of these different snare drums, and you can hear it.

MD: "Souvenir" has a nice cross-stick groove, and a groove that really fits and propels the tune, in a Ringo-ish sort of way.

In the singles world we live in today, we still try to make complete albums. Hopefully people can listen to this record in a good listening environment with some good speakers or good headphones and they will hear things on the third, fourth, or tenth listen that they didn't hear the first time around.



Photo by Clemente Ruiz

enough. Of course, for our first record we had a bunch because you have your whole life to write your first record. Since then, we have been in the write, record, tour cycle. But for this one, we had a lot of extra tracks, and we were trimming the fat as we went along, trying to make it more concise.

MD: When the band is writing what are your contributions to the

AC: It was time to play that sort of groove. That tune is more ambient, it really comes down low. It almost has a little bossa nova-ish kind of feel. However, I cheated on that; it was *not* a legit bossa nova. "Souvenir" has a lot of space, but the chorus is really strong. The beat is very simple, just on the ride and the toms, but it's very locked in. The nice thing is that when it comes back around the second (and longer) time, the groove brings it home.

That is a snare from my first drum set. My dad was a bassist, but my stepdad played drums. When the drums became my thing, my stepdad gave me his beautiful 1981 Ludwig white cortex set with the triangular modular hardware. I still have them, but the snare was an 8x14" Coliseum Chrome over Wood. It's a beautiful drum, it was my backup snare in the 90s. But in the early 90s, the snare cable broke on a gig. I was wearing a pair of Converse Chucks, so I ripped out the shoelace from my Chuck Taylor's and we used that to hold the snares on. Since then, I've changed the heads on that drum but that little shoestring is still on there. You'd be surprised how some things last.

MD: You and (bassist) Fred Sablan have a strong hookup, but you have played with many different bassists in this band. How have you developed a groove with each of them?

AC: Chi was our founding bass player, and we made a lot of cool music together. He had a different style of playing and we didn't always gel. Early on, I would always play to Stephen. I wouldn't even have Chi in my monitors. He was right next to me with a big old SVT so I would hear him, but he had a different rhythm and a cool style. When Sergio came into the mix, he was one of my favorite bass players from the band Quicksand, who we all loved and still love. Chi was a finger player and had a way more flowing kind of dub-ish approach. Whereas Sergio played mostly with a pick. That definition changed the way we wrote our riffs, and we started trying different things. Now with Fred coming into the mix, he is helping to bridge those two styles and being very conscious and aware of those two different styles. He respects both approaches, he plays with a big groove, and he adds his own thing while being himself, it's a beautiful thing. But we don't think about it too much.

MD: The drive of the groove on "cXz" is relentless. That is what I always think of when I think about the Deftones. How do you keep the intensity so high on tunes like that?

AC: We were jamming in Malibu in the most beautiful setting, and everything was reflecting the beauty of the setting, and everything was getting kind of chill. We needed something that

was going to pop us out of that chilled out feeling. "cXz" is very manic, forward feeling, thrusting feel. When we were recording "cXz", I wanted to break it down a bit, but the guys were saying, "Don't let up! Keep it up!" There's a simple tom part and a simple change but I couldn't lose that manic intensity.

MD: Talk about the importance of not breaking down a groove, and just letting it build.

AC: Deftones have been together since 1988. We've been a band a long time. When we play or record, we all hover over the "Nuclear Red Button." We've been together for so long, we know exactly how to go for each other's throats by "pushing that button." We could implode any second as a band, so knowing

I love Levon Helm and sometimes I'm coming from that style, those sounds, his placement, and his space.



that is a deterrent. But nothing makes me happier than when I look around at my guys and there's they're stoked and smiling. It's not always like that, you're guessing a lot. Especially when you are writing, and the drums are generally laid down first, you're building the foundation. A lot of time the drums are coming first, and everybody is looking at me. So, when I stumble

on to something, and it doesn't have to be anything wild, it's just something that feels good, and those guys smiling, I know we're on to something, and that's the best! That song is the Gretsch 6.5" Bell Brass snare.

little instrumental parts and segues help create that flow, there's one of those on this on this record. Those type of details are a huge part of making a complete record and that's something we're all way into!

There's a lot to be said about physical attributes, how we hit, where we hit, and our intent. Intent is a huge part of sound. What's your intention?

MD: The groove on "Milk of the Madonna" is another classic Deftones up-tempo and in-your-face groove. And the snare drum sound is (for lack of a better term) more "normal."



Photo by Clemente Ruiz

MD: "I Think About You All the Time" is as close as the Deftones get to a ballad. And the big gushy, low-pitched, snare fits the tune perfectly.

AC: That's the Gretsch 6.5 Bell Brass again, I used that on a lot of this record. We don't venture into 3/4 or 6/8 much, but that tune has got a beautiful swing to it. In the singles world we live in today, we still try to make complete albums. Hopefully people can listen to this record in a good listening environment with some good speakers or good headphones and they will hear things on the third, fourth, or tenth listen that they didn't hear the first time around.

MD: That's how I define *great music*. Great music is music that reveals itself to you over time and repeated listening's.

AC: I just got the vinyl master not too long ago, (*Private Music* is coming out on vinyl and cassette) and I flipped it over to Side B and "I Think About You All the Time" started the second side of the album, that's such a nice way to come back in.

MD: I'm glad that you brought up how records are sequenced (the order of the songs.) There isn't much space between each tune on *Private Music*, was this done on purpose, and why?

AC: That's one of the most crucial parts that creates the flow of an album. Allowing the space to breathe between the songs. Whether it's a second, a half second, or a few seconds, that space is so crucial.

MD: It can really make or break a record.

AC: You want the record to flow. Sometimes we record some

AC: That was the Gretsch Bell Brass, we had probably retuned it for that song. It's nice to have the trust from my bandmates and from Nick. In this instance it's just knowing what sounds right. For instance, I love Levon Helm and sometimes I'm coming from that style, those sounds, his placement, and his space. Hopefully we learn as we go. There are many examples of less is more, don't crowd it, give the song some space, let the song do its thing, let it breathe, that is all so important.

MD: "Cut Hands" is one of my favorite tracks on the record. There sounds to be a few natural odd bars in there, and I love how it goes into 6/8 in the middle.

AC: That's the Gretsch Bell Brass snare. There is a cool little bar

of 3 or 6 in there. There's the short section in the middle, and there's a break. It comes in with a nice little slap across the face time signature change. Like you said, it's not out there, it's a tasteful little change-up.

MD: Are you feeling that in 3/4 or 6/8?

AC: I'm feeling 6/8 in that one section.

MD: Are the shell thicknesses different on the Gretsch Bell Brass and the Tama Bell Brass?

AC: No, I think they are both 3mm. Tama just released the 50th anniversary Bell Brass and people are talking about the difference in sound between the centrifugal casts and the old sand cast. You can drive yourself nuts with that stuff; I just know that they're really rad snare drums. I have four Bell Brass Tama snares. I also have a Tama Signature snare that is a 3mm shell (that isn't cast) but it's got the big two-inch holes cut in it. I used to play the Orange County Drum & Percussion (O.C.D.P.) Vented snares, and I was trying to get the best of those both worlds of the Vented snares and the Bell Brass. I have two Bell Brass snares from the 90s that we use. One still has the Bell Brass stick eater hoops. I also have a newer Tama Bell Brass with diecast hoops. You can get crazy with what sounds best. With the Bell Brass hoops the whole drum is breathing and living as one because everything is the same material, maybe that's what's making the Gretsch sound a little different.

MD: Maybe the diecast Gretsch hoops are choking the drum a little bit.

AC: They also have some sort of engraving on the shell too. God only knows why they all sound different, it could be the bottom head and how the drum is set up.

MD: The snare on "Metal Dream" has an interesting ring that cuts through the track, to my ears that sounds like a thick shell snare, but NOT a Bell Brass.

AC: You have good ears, that's a 6.5 brass Keplinger. We also had a steel Keplinger that didn't make any of the tracks, but this is a brass one. Those Keplinger drums have "a thing."

MD: It sounds like you change snares on the chorus of that.

AC: No, I don't think so. But there were a lot of mics set up so we could have changed mics for the chorus... I just remembered... I'll tell you what happened... This is one of the last songs we tracked, and this song used to be a lot longer, it had a bunch more parts, the way we chopped stuff out of it makes it almost like the whole song is a chorus. Those weird, dubbed out snare sounds came from the fact that we were running the snare through one of Chino's guitar amps and a through an Eventide H-9 Multi-Effects Pedal and scrolling through the presets on an iPad. We ended up tracking a bunch of stuff like that, that's what you are hearing on parts of that tune.

MD: Live, do you switch snares for different tracks like Steve Jordan does, or do you set up more than one snare. How do you replicate all these sounds live?

AC: Live, I use my Tama signature cranked up to replicate the classic Bell Brass sound. For the past couple of years, I've had an actual Bell Brass as my side snare. That snare needs to be a

The comfort level as a drummer and just (kind of) trusting myself... I think this record is when I'm starting to feel more comfortable, it takes a long time. It's a lifelong quest and it's always a work in progress, ALWAYS!!!

bunch of snare sounds from different records. To accomplish that, I have a little leather flap mute on it and I have it tuned down to sound like ass. You can tune the Bell Brass snares down really low; they are so adaptable. And you can really crank them up, but you never want to crank them *too much*. I have a trigger on it for the song "Cherry Waves." We tracked that tune with three very different snare drum sounds: a DW 4x14 Brass on Brass that is tuned really loose and rumbling. I had another cranked snare for the main two and four, and I have that sound on a pad to my left, and I have another snare sound for that song coming from a Roland pedal that is to the right of my bass drum pedal. We just sampled the sound from the record for that tune. Other than that song, I am playing all the snare sounds

from my two live snares. Sometimes it is hard to get all those different sounds from two snares, and I want everyone (and the drummers) in the crowd to be happy.

MD: Speaking of drummers in the crowd, I heard that you had a special guest at your last stop on this tour in New Jersey?

AC: Yes. The Zildjian guys called me and said that Bernard Purdie wanted to come to the show. They wanted to know if I could put him on the guest list. I thought they were kidding. His kids are fans, and Bernard came with his wife and two kids, I was blown away. Talk about someone who exudes joy when he's playing! They stayed for the whole show, he signed a copy of his book for me, and he just sent me some wine. He's one of the coolest and kindest souls, and one of my favorite drummers ever!

MD: What a cool story! The drum world is a very special thing.



Abe's snare drums for the Private Music recording sessions

AC: We are all lucky dudes to be playing this instrument. There is always something to learn.

MD: What drummers' snare drum sounds have made the biggest impression on you and your quest for your own snare drum sound?

AC: Stewart Copeland, that cranked up sound that he had, but his snare was not cranked that much, it's the way and where (the proximity) he hits it. That's a sound that I've loved forever. An extension of that would be Tim Alexander and his thing, he was influenced heavily by Stewart, and his snare sound is just perfect. I like when snare sounds are appropriate, that's something that I always gravitated towards. Having ripped it off

Where are you coming from as a drummer?

AC: My stepdad was a drummer so I'm coming from him. I grew up in Mendocino, CA about 150 miles north of San Francisco then I moved to Sacramento, so I was into the whole kind of Nor Cal-Bay Area thing. My mom was a chef, so I grew up in restaurants, in kitchens, and at gigs. I worked in restaurants all my life and I've owned a couple, but I always wanted to be in the kitchen where the music was. In the 70s I loved the music my parents listened to. I played along to a lot of Stevie Wonder, Motown, and The Beatles. The Motown drummers, Hal Blaine, Ringo, Charlie Watts, and Levon with The Band. That's what I grew up with.

Later, it was The Pretenders and Martin Chambers, Blondie and Clem Burke, Nick Mason with Floyd, Bruford and Alan White. Then it was Sabbath and Bill Ward, Mike Bordin from Faith No More, Phillip "Fish" Fisher from Fishbone, John Stainer, Omar Hakim, Mitch Mitchell, and I loved the African stuff that Ginger Baker did.

I've always been massively influenced by Stewart Copeland. Primus was huge at the time; we would see them in clubs in Sacramento. Tim Alexander is such an amazing drummer and he's pulled from everywhere too. Steve Smith, what a beautiful guy, of course there's those big arena hits with Journey, but everything he's done since is just amazing.

Then you get into the thrash scene of the 80s, I love Lars and Metallica, they are essential. Then there is Anthrax and Charlie Benante. Charlie and Scott Ian were huge early adopters of us, and they let us open

for them. Slayer and Dave Lombardo, John Paul from Clutch is one of my favorite drummers. I love Death Angel's Andy Galeon too.

Chris Franz from the Talking Heads, Pete Thomas from Elvis Costello and the Attractions, Tiki Fulwood from Parliament/Funkadelic, David Garibaldi and Tower of Power, Run DMC, Carlton Barrett, Sly Dunbar, the old Blues stuff of Freddie King and Albert King, Taj Mahal, it goes on and on... I listen to everything.

Gadd, JR Robinson, Manu Katche' and then there were the *machines*: the Roland 808, the SP 12, the Linn Drum, the Fairlight, and all the music that was made with the drum machines. I was caught in that element too. Some of those grooves, some of that crafted perfection, and even the weird swing that you could add was a trip. There were tunes that had programmed beats on the Fairlight that I really dug.

The first *Modern Drummer* I bought was in 1984 with Matt Frenette on the cover. As you evolve as a musician you try to lessen that as you figure your sound out for yourself and you get comfortable with yourself. But all those influences are always in there and you put it all in a grinder and make it your own thing.



When you are caught in that cycle of write, record, tour, write, record, tour... it's a brutal groove to get caught in.

for years, I'm finally thinking I might have my own version that I can feel good about. But I love big fat snare sounds too, I'm a gear guy.

Another snare drum sound that I love is Mackie Jayson from Bad Brains. Earl Hudson was their original drummer, but Mackie's a God and he played on the Bad Brains record called *Quickness*. That was a blueprint for me. I played his kit one time, and when I played his kit, it sounded like shit. It was all in the way that he hit it. When he played it, it sounded like heaven! There's a lot to be said about physical attributes, how we hit, where we hit, and our intent. Intent is a huge part of sound. What's your intention? When you're young you're so excited to hit every little thing, and it's neat to have all those things to hit, but then you figure out that your intent might be to pull it back and learn to just kick it.

MD: Where do you naturally hit your snare drum?

AC: I play with long sticks, and I hit rim shots most of the time, but I play the snare about an inch or two above (or across) the center of the drum.

MD: It might seem strange to hear the Deftones drummer mention drummers like Levon Helm, Stewart Copeland, and Bernard Purdie. Stylistically, you are a little tough to pin down.

MD: How long did it take you to hear and realize that you had developed your “own thing” at the drums? Has it happened yet?

AC: It takes a while, I’m 52 and I’m only recently really starting to get comfortable with my own playing, where I’m at, or where I’m *not*. That’s a huge point you’re making. The comfort level as a drummer and just (kind of) trusting myself... I think this record is when I’m starting to feel more comfortable, it takes a long time. It’s a lifelong quest and it’s always a work in progress, ALWAYS!!!

MD: Let’s get to the last track from *Private Music*. “Departing the Body” is my other favorite tune from the record.

AC: That’s another one of those kind of sludgy tunes, *Private Music* starts a bit sludgy and ends a bit sludgy. The record has very big thick guitar tones. That’s the Gretsch Bell Brass snare. I’m (kind of) always bopping to like the half-time feel, but that one’s got a lot of space in it too. It’s also got a little “spazz-out” section at the end when I get to have a little fun.

MD: I hear some more strong Sabbath influence on this tune.

AC: There is a lot of different musical influences in this band, there is a lot of music that we all dig collectively, and we have a lot of stuff that we listen to on our own. But seeing Ozzy and Bill Ward play in that final concert, and the fact that Ozzy just passed, that final show was so special. The Deftones were very lucky, the first time we ever did an arena tour was in ‘96 opening for Ozzy, Randy Castillo was playing drums on that tour before he passed away. I was around 22, wide eyed and bushy tailed. We were getting our own tour bus for the first time on that tour. The night before the tour started, we went to a strip club, and we saw Randy Castillo there. He was so kind and accommodating to us. Ozzy, Sharon, their crew, and the family were always so kind to us too. We would do a tour later with the original Sabbath, with us, Pantera, and Sabbath on their first reunion tour. We got to do a few good months together with the original Sabbath. Bill Ward was so gracious and understated; he was just an English gentleman sipping tea. These guys were Gods, but they were so genuine and good to us. I would get up in the morning and just watch them set up the stage in arenas, watching them build a stage, learning about the rock’n’roll biz, seeing what took to build a production was a total education. I saw how important it was to know everybody’s names on a big tour like that, especially when you’re the squirt on the bill. We learned from watching the connection that Ozzy, Sabbath, and Pantera had with their crowds. I learned to be cool, to get out of the way, be respectful, and be on time. Everyone wants to play the drums until they’ve got to lug them around all day. You



learn your place and get to see how different people do things. And realize that maybe one day, hopefully, you could be in that position too.

Now we just got done headlining this first part of our tour in the States, and now we’re doing the second leg of North America and Canada and the arenas are sold out, and I want to make sure I learn everybody’s name on this tour. We’re all there together, it’s important to make people feel comfortable. We were afforded that and it’s important. We’ve been at it a long time, and everything has ups and downs, but we’re very grateful.

MD: What drummers are you listening to today?

AC: Eloy Casagrande is amazing, that dude is a killer drummer.

He’s so tasteful and what a sweetheart too. I have also been listening to Aric Improta, Billy Rymer is killer, and John Stainer a lot, there’s just so many amazing players, I’ll think of 50 more the second were done with this interview.

MD: I LOVE John Stainer in Battles, especially that first record!

AC: Layers, textures, big snare sound, density, sparseness, Battles has it all. I’m listening to music all the time. But what’s weird is when I start my day I go to Apple Music and hit search, but then I ask myself, “What are you searching for?” And I just freeze up. It’s weird.

MD: Too many choices is both a blessing and a curse. So many of us shut down when we are faced with too many choices.

AC: Very true. I gotta stop that.

MD: The Deftones have been together for 37 years, how has the band evolved over the years? And how does that evolution appear on *Private Music*?

AC: We have *evolved* and *devolved* at times. A lot of life has happened

during that time, there was five years between *Private Music* and our last record. That’s the longest time we’ve ever taken to put out a new record. But we needed to take that time and live our lives. When you are caught in that cycle of write, record, tour, write, record, tour... it’s a brutal groove to get caught in.

Yes, it’s “the dream” and it’s cool, but it can be tough. As other things are introduced into everyone’s worlds, there are things that excite you and things that don’t. It’s nice to be on the other side of a lot of those. There’s been ups and downs in this band, as there is in life. There’s been marriages, divorce, birth, death, losing members, all of that happened to us. We’re grateful to be on the other side of a lot of that, to respect what we do, to respect the fact that we get to do it, we’re very grateful for that. People and fans have been patient with us through all this. There’s been some *squirrelly* years too, but we’re playing the best that we have ever played, and that’s a really nice thing.



Stan Lynch

Returns

with *The Speaker Wars*

Part One

By Mark Griffith

Drummer, songwriter, producer, Stan Lynch is back, but did he ever really leave? The last time many of us saw him he was departing Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers at the peak of their success. I thought he was crazy, I'm sure many others did as well.

Ever since, many of us have been longing to hear Stan's unique groove again. For a generation of us, he was our Ringo and Charlie Watts rolled into one. Stan would instantly shy away from this kind of praise and be more than a little embarrassed by such a comparison. Stan Lynch is one of the most self-effacing and humble drummers you'll ever meet, and you can hear the man in his drumming. Some of those legendary Tom Petty drum tracks are truly classic. However, since his departure from the Heartbreakers, Stan's drumming performances have been few and far between. Sure, Stan has played on a few Don Henley tracks, done tours with Bob Dylan, a track ("Sisters are Doing it for Themselves") with Aretha Franklin and The Eurythmics, a track with The Byrds, a few tracks with Jackson Browne, and a very cool record playing drums with Freedy Johnston. But we have all been waiting for much more, until now!

The Speaker Wars is Stan Lynch's new band, and their new self-titled recording is a terrific tapestry of artful songwriting, soulful vocals, and deep groove. It is magnificent music that combines R&B, Rock, Blues, Gospel, and Country with a classic Americana essence born in Florida, Texas, Memphis, and Nashville, all combined into one big American musical stew.

Stan and I spoke for a couple of days, and our interview dissected his entire career in music. During this first part of the interview, we talked about The Speaker Wars, drums and cymbals, his favorite drummers, creating drum parts, listening, his relationship with Don Henley, and recording. In the rest of the interview, which will appear next month, we discuss specific Heartbreakers drum tracks, the art of collaboration, songwriting, producing, his drumming roots, his departure from the Heartbreakers, and much more. But to begin, Stan was excited to talk about The Speaker Wars.



MD: How did your new band The Speaker Wars come about?

SL: During COVID, we all realized that if we're gonna work, we're gonna must all learn to work remotely. I had been getting together with Jon Christopher Davis for a while. We have been writing buddies for a long time, we did some stuff in Nashville and had been through that whole puppy mill, and we both had had a belly full of that. All along, I thought I was just writing for John, because John's a real good singer. I figured that we would just write some stuff, and that was it. He kept coming down here to Florida to write, and after a while John suggested that we figure out how to make a record and have some fun. I said, 'Oh man, a band? Are you kidding me?' But thank goodness,

a Gregg Bissonette Signature snare. They also made me a snare that was the same size shell as a small wooden Ludwig snare that I used to use. I liked that drum because it was very bright but not loud. They even made me a small 6" and 8" toms like I used to have with my Tama's. All the drums have a matching finish, and they sound great. Dixon has been very cool.

It was really cool because the last kit I played was my 70s Tama's and my old 60s Thermogloss Ludwig's, yeah, I'm *that* guy. Gregg says, "I'm gonna build you a kit, you're gonna lose your mind, it's gonna be great!" He was so cool. Dixon built the kit to look like an old like my old Ludwig's, but with a deeper bass drum. I couldn't believe it. Then I called Roger Johnson at Remo and



If you have a buddy or two in your life that just keeps sticking a pin in you and saying, "Let's play man! You gotta start playing your drums some more!" You're very lucky. I have a few of those friends...

he pushed me. If you have a buddy or two in your life that just keeps sticking a pin in you and saying, "Let's play man! You gotta start playing your drums some more!" You're very lucky. I have a few of those friends, and Jon got me to (reluctantly) go into my storage locker and pull out all my drums and that got me thinking about it.

Then one day, another one of those friends, Gregg Bissonette, called. I love Gregg. He said, "Wow you're playing again" And I said, "Well, I never really stopped, but yeah I'm playing." Then he hooked me up with Dixon Drums and he designed me a drum kit from the ground up, to his specifications.

MD: What are the sizes of the new Dixon kit?

SL: The bass drum is an 18x24, 10x12 tom, 16x16 floor tom, and

asked if I could buy some heads. Roger let me know I was still an active endorsee and took great care of me.

Then Zildjian called and said, "We heard you're playing again, let us tighten you up with some new 15" hi-hats." I got a lot of love. The cymbals I'm playing are K's. I used to use a set of Armand's and a set of Constantinople's that John DeChristopher hooked me up with back in the day and I kept everything they gave me. Now I'm using some new K's that sound amazing. I've been using The Beautiful Baby ride (without rivets) for a while, I don't use big cymbals, and I actually don't use a ride much anymore. A big crash for me is a 17, I'm not wailing on stuff, I'm hitting them hard, but I don't want to take the starch out the mix.

Speaking of keeping the starch in the mix, Kenny Aronoff taught

me a cool thing to do when you're playing open-handed and when you go for a fill you can keep that hat going with your left hand, and you don't lose the starch. He told me about that when he was playing on a session I was producing, I asked him about it and he said he does it because he needs to sustain that tension and not lose the drive, and he's right. That's a new style and a new way to keep that groove for me. I'm not trying to be super orchestrated, that'll happen as the band grows, right now I have a job to do and that's keeping them honest.

It is just so cool to come out of mothballs and meet these lovely people. That's what it comes down to for me. The whole experience of making music at this point in my life, if it's not with

certain points, Gregg would say, "Oh that's frozen finger, I know what you gotta do." Or Jim Keltner would tell me that it's all about your posture and how to get my ergonomics correct. All these guys have been so cool to me and I'm so fortunate. I am still discovering that Andy Newmark played drums on some obscure records that I have loved my entire life, and I can just call Andy and tell him that, I can go directly to the sources of my inspiration.

MD: I do that all the time; I am in a Jerry Marotta phase right now.

SL: Of course! And when you ask guys about certain records, they will recall a memory or a trauma. And that's a shared

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Lynch Damn the Torpedos Wilson Photo

experience. I can talk to Andy and say, 'Oh you got put through the ringer on that session, and you got your hat handed to you on that one. Yeah, I can relate.' I just love that I still get to be, and am still allowed to be, in the in this wonderful community of ours.

But it's fun to be in a rock and roll band with the guys in The Speaker Wars. The guys in this band have Gospel and R&B roots and everybody's younger than me. They have turned me on to some stuff, and sometimes I just stay in my lane. It's wonderful to have a great singer. I'm a drummer who always has the singer as my North star. The singer is my chart, whatever he does I'm going to go follow. Even if he goes down a blind alley and crashes

a bunch of cool guys, I'm going to go out back, grill a steak, have a little fun, and take a walk in the woods.

MD: I can't blame you, the drum community has always been a great community, and it's filled with wonderful people.

SL: I have been so fortunate. To stay in touch with great drummers and people like Gregg, Kenny, and Myron Grombacher has been amazing. They were the ones always calling and pushing me to start playing again. When I'm producing, I get to watch guys like Vinnie, Greg Morrow (another monster,) Kenny Aronoff, and Jim Keltner. I call them all when I need advice. These are guys that I've known since I was a boy and I have always found them to be the most kind, unboastful, warmest, people ever. Whenever I had a physical problem at

and burns, I'll be right behind him crashing and burning with him. I'm *that* drummer. That's what I always did with the with the Heartbreakers, if Tom was putting down energy, I was gonna floor it. If he was telling me to back down big fella, I eased up. I don't care what a chart says, if the singer doesn't sing it's not a mistake, and when he starts singing that's the top. I learned that from Dylan, we used to joke about the 13 bar Blues, Bob comes in whenever he comes in, and you can't say, "Well the chart says..." That's a bonehead move. The singer is the quarterback.

MD: It's like Elvin used to say, "Sometimes my fours *take a little longer*."

SL: Those musicians get better and better as you get older. I listen to an Art Blakey record now and it's a different experience

than from when I was 25. I'll admit it, I didn't get it. I knew he was good, but I go back and listen to records that I haven't heard in 20 years, and I wonder how I could have *not* realized the depth, integrity, and dignity in what's being played. Good God Art Blakey was great. I listen to Philly Joe Jones now, and I think, 'There's John Bonham.' Youth is truly wasted on the young.

MD: Speaking of "youth," you are one of the only drummers that

To stay in touch with great drummers and people like Gregg, Kenny, and Myron Grombacher has been amazing. They were the ones always calling and pushing me to start playing again. When I'm producing, I get to watch guys like Vinnie, Greg Morrow (another monster,) Kenny Aronoff, and Jim Keltner. I call them all when I need advice.

I can think of that didn't play more aggressively and unbridled when he was younger. You have always played like a mature drummer, why do you think that is?

SL: My goal in life, my dream, my life, my fantasy was to be in a great rock'n'roll band. That was the core of my being. This might sound sort of flippant, but being a drummer was only *part* of the equation. I wanted to be with those rock 'n' roll guys. I have only ever been in a few bands, I started playing really early, I learned the rudiments, I was probably about 10 when I started playing beats, by around 13 or 14 I could actually (kind of) play, but I didn't have a clue what a groove was. I started playing with guys in the garage and we learned covers. Fortunately, the guys that I was playing with were usually the older guys and they would have me be playing "Hold on, I'm Coming" by Sam and Dave. We weren't fixating on "Rat Salad" (by Black Sabbath) or "Moby Dick" yet. I knew those guys were amazing, but the guys in my band wanted me to play like Charlie Watts. I would be trying to be Keith Moon, and the guys would tell me to play like (the Rolling Stones song) "Memo from Turner" *that's* a drum groove, that's

It's wonderful to have a great singer. I'm a drummer who always has the singer as my North star. The singer is my chart, whatever he does I'm going to go follow.

Charlie Watts playing just brilliantly. Then I realized that when I played like that, the audience got a little bigger. I realized that the people were dancing and having fun. I played at a topless bar for three years, and if I didn't play a groove, the girls would come over to me and say we're not getting tips unless you play a unless you play a "get down" groove. So, singers became like strippers to me, I had to find a way to get them to move.

Give me a kick, snare, and a hat, and I'm halfway home. I've never really needed more than that. At times I've had a bigger kit than a four piece, but even on a four piece, I can get in trouble because I'll start to think if I hit all these things it's going to make it good. Tom [Petty] was so spiritual about his music, if the groove wasn't there, we weren't even close. Our records had mistakes; and I have the details to prove it. There are mistakes embedded in those drum parts because all Tom cared about was if we were singing and playing well together, he said it every day.

I got great advice from Denny Cordell, who was our first producer; I was struggling with a drum part, I was over playing like a kid would do, and he looked at me with that perfect British accent and a big spliff in his hands and said, "Stanley if you just put all that crap by the way, and just leave it away, they'll always

misinterpret you as tasteful." What he meant was if I wanted to be cool, I needed to stop struggling to sound cool, and then they would always think I'm the coolest. What a divine thing to say to a 19-year-old kid trying to make his first record. He was telling me to dig in. My goal for our first four records was to just do this (keep a groove and a pulse) for four minutes and keep the band on a balance beam for four minutes. We were cutting live on 16 tracks.

Groove and feel were two words I just kept hearing from the band, because they were all a little older than me. But as a teenager, I didn't

know how to quantify that. Then Denny Cordell took me to a Bob Marley and the Wailers concert, and halfway through the show the entire audience was hypnotized, and he turned to me and said, "That's a groove Stan." Then he put me behind the wheel of his Daytona Ferrari, had me put it into second gear and gun it as we went under a bridge and said, "That's a feel Stan." I just said, 'Thanks for quantifying that for me Denny.' Jim Keltner was always around when we were recording those first few records, and there was always the thought that if I couldn't get the groove, Jim was right down the hall. But Jim was so sweet, and when Denny could see that I was struggling, he would tell me to go talk to Jimmy. Jim would get all big brotherly with me, and say, "There are 50 kinds of shuffles, and shuffles are hard."

Jim told me to put one hand behind my back when we were recording "Breakdown," because I was struggling. I thought he was winding me up and kidding. He told me that whenever you are struggling with a part to put one hand behind your back to help you figure out what to play. That's how the groove from "Breakdown" came about, I was a young drummer from Florida, what did I know about playing shuffles. I started playing it with one hand, and Jim was standing across the room, pointing

at me, and saying, "There's your groove." Jim will always be a Mt. Rushmore drummer to me, he always has been, and he always will be. He's the Picasso of drumming. Nobody plays like anybody, but in my mind, I would always ask myself, 'What would Jim do? What would Simon Kirke do? What would Charlie Watts do?' But in reality, you're never going to play like them, you're not supposed to, but at least you can have that North Star that tells you to go *there*. Thank God those guys created the template for the rest of us.

MD: Was Al Jackson one of those North Star drummers for you as well?

SL: Absolutely! But I didn't really know his name, but I knew that girls loved Al Green records! Then the guys like Henley and Danny Kortchmar would pull me aside when I had overshot the target. I was always very fortunate to have older guys around me to reign me in, and turn me on to music, all the guys in the Heartbreakers were older than me too.

MD: What were some of the things that the "older guys" turned you on to?

SL: [Tom Petty bassist] Ron Blair would listen to weird stuff like Lattimore and all kinds of funk. Benmont and I shared the same

love of British rock like the Faces and the Stones because we were closer in age. Tom had great taste, he loved Elvis and he turned me on to DJ Fontana. Tom went all the way back to Otis Redding, he was *that* guy, like I can tell you are. Living in Florida in the 60s, there was only one radio station in our town, and it played everything, you got Frank Sinatra and Roy Orbison on the same station. It was all happening, music was just music, it wasn't even rock'n'roll, I grew up listening to music, and it transported me! I had nothing else to offer the world, except that I wanted to be a guy in a band. Tom used to tell us, "Take care of the music, and it will take care of you." I've been very lucky to be in the room when good things were happening, and not to be thrown out of that room.

MD: Let's talk about the new record because there is a lot to talk about. On The Speaker Wars tune "It Ain't Easy," you are leaving the hi-hat out in some sections, where does that instinct come from?

SL: I saw Simon Kirke did that on the Free song "Mr. Big." He would alternate the hi-hat and the snare drum. Then when I saw him play live, I saw that he was playing both hands on the hi-hat and the snare. And I thought that was pretty manly.

MD: How do you decide to leave the hi-hat out?

SL: I wish I could tell that it's a premeditated thing and thought out. When I play a tune for the first time, my first thought is always, "Man, I don't wanna screw this up." There's a little fear every time I pick up a drumstick, I've learned to enjoy it, but

...when he starts singing that's the top. I learned that from Dylan, we used to joke about the 13 bar Blues, Bob comes in whenever he comes in, and you can't say, "Well the chart says..." That's a bonehead move. The singer is the quarterback.

there's probably some imposter syndrome still in me.

MD: That term comes up so much in my interviews, it's rampant in the artistic world, and must be one of the most common illnesses in the world.

SL: The opposite of imposter syndrome is pathological narcissism.

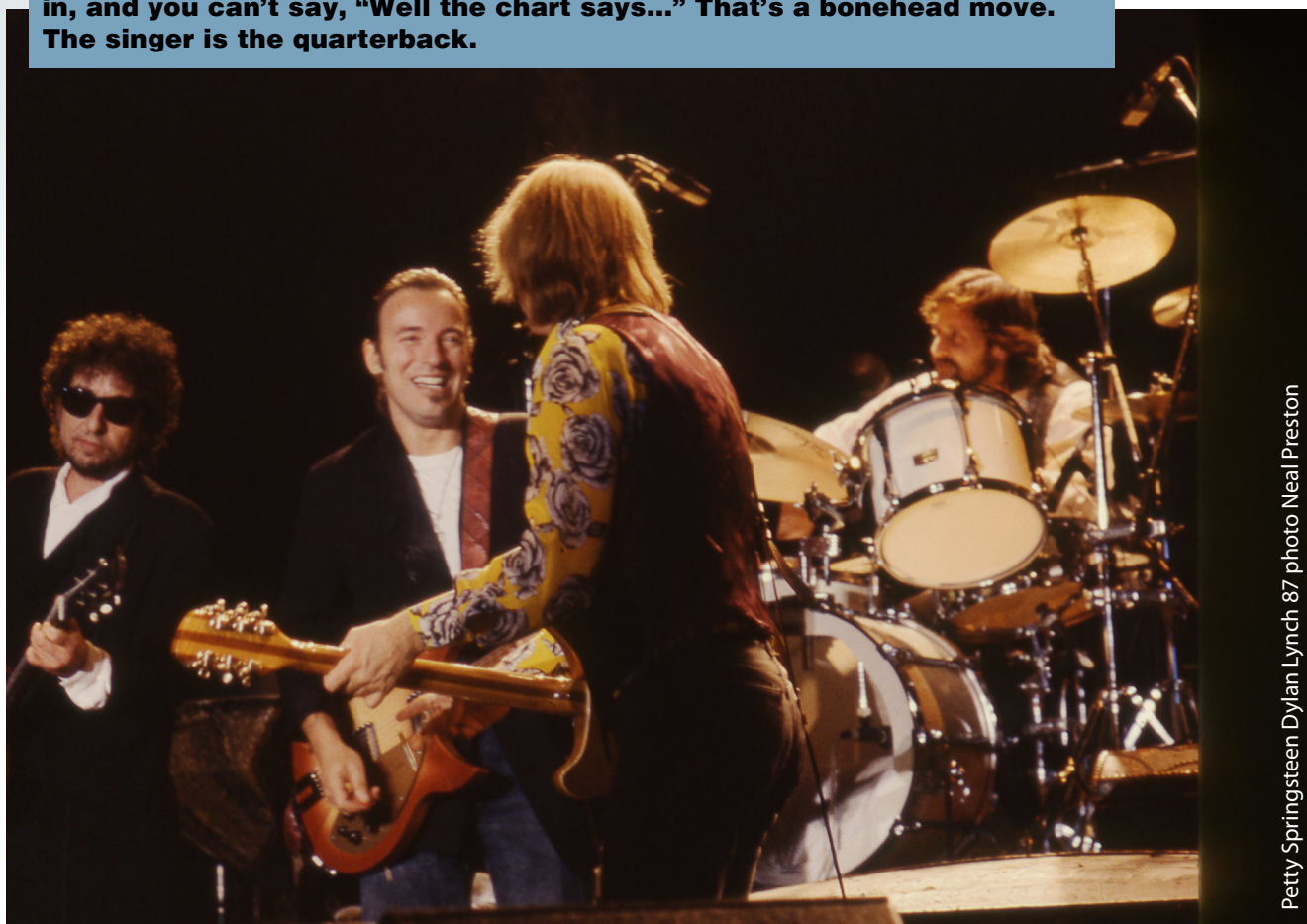
MD: That's another epidemic, but that term could *never* describe you.

SL: I'd rather walk into a room quietly than loudly and boastfully. To me, first thing is the song. The song is the star, and if there's a song then there is also a singer, even better. I learned this from playing with Dylan for a couple years. If you don't know what to do as a drummer, then don't do anything, because a great song doesn't even need you, just walk away.

MD: On "Leave Him" you almost do that.

SL: When we were doing this record, we weren't trying to make some big artistic statement. On "Leave Him" I played a bass drum and hi-hat with my foot, and I played a light brush pattern at one point, I knew that that was going to be OK. On my best days, I listen before I play. I used to think that when the guitar starts, I start playing the drums before I even knew what the song was doing, and before I even heard the whole song. Now, courtesy of some of the great drummers that I've watched play on sessions, the first thing I do is listen. If there's a song, if there's demo, I listen to it first. Some of the greats will just chart it and ask if a

part is etched in stone, or is it open for interpretation?



Petty Springsteen Dylan Lynch 87 photo Neal Preston

With The Speaker Wars, if somebody has a song, whether it's mine or Jon's or the band's, the first thing I do is listen to the damn song, repeatedly. There's a certain obvious nature of doing this. If you're listening, you don't just go in and think I'm gonna play my drums, and you're gonna love it! Sure, that *could* work.

But when I hear a song like "Leave Him," I hear an Everly Brothers song, that's what it reminded me of. This is another problem I have, most of the people I'm trying to please, my gallery of

greats are musicians who are no longer here, they're gone. With "Leave Him," in my mind, I'm playing making a demo for The Everly Brothers. I generally pull from references of people who are no longer with us, but I love them. You listen and you play to your strengths. My strength is that I'm not particularly technical, Tom taught me that if the guys in your band don't turn around and give you the "fart face" you're probably doing the right thing. If they don't notice you, you're doing a great job.

My goal in life, my dream, my life, my fantasy was to be in a great rock'n'roll band. That was the core of my being. This might sound sort of flippant, but being a drummer was only part of the equation.

MD: Transparency...

SL: It's weird, I remember when the guys in the band would turn around and all be

looking at me. At first, I thought they were digging me, and then I realized, no they're not, they're looking at me and wondering what is wrong with you, why are you trying to sell us *that*? Drum parts must come from listening. On a lot of The Speaker Wars record, I wasn't trying to stamp it as "me," I was playing for the singer and the songs. I was falling back on my old job, and my lane is pretty small.

MD: That's what you've been doing your whole life, and I think that's a very important lane, and that lane is on full display on "Taste of Heaven." The groove is HUGE, and the song sounds like something you and Don would have written together. I know you are singing lead on "Taste of Heaven," should it be a surprise that your singing voice (especially on that track) sounds very Henley-ish, you even have similar speaking voices.

SL: Well, that's the highest compliment you could give me. Obviously, Don is a huge influence in my life, I met Don early in my 20s, and then we met again and started working together in the early 80s when I was in my 30s. Don is the big brother I always wanted. I always wanted that in in the Heartbreakers and I never got it. Those guys already had little brothers. Don didn't mind me always asking questions. He thought I was *fairly entertaining*, and he taught me about the importance of the job at the vocal microphone. I took it for granted because I was always in a band with a good singer. But Don threw his elbows out when



Such damn the tennados Photo unknown

he was at the mic, and I'd never taken notice of that. He taught me a lot about how to work with other people. In the ensuing years, when I treated everyone with that kind of respect, it was almost a shock for some people, but in my opinion, when you're at the microphone, you get that kind of respect from me.

But with all that being said... Jon should have been singing "Taste of Heaven," and ultimately Jon WILL be singing it. That is usually what happens when I make a demo with me singing. I sang that one and I played some version of it for Jon, and I asked if this is a song for the band, and I took his word for it. I told him that he ought to be singing it, but he forced me into it. Our keyboard player, Jay Ellis Brown added some cool stuff at the end.

MD: That's a great snare drum sound, do you remember what

Give me a kick, snare, and a hat, and I'm halfway home. I've never really needed more than that. At times I've had a bigger kit than a four piece, but even on a four piece, I can get in trouble because I'll start to think if I hit all these things it's going to make it good.

drum is on that?

SL: I think that's the Acrolite. That's an Acrolite in a small, very tight little room, I'm probably beating the crap out of it, and I think it's two ribbon mics, a bass drum mic, a snare drum mic, and that's probably it. Remember, when I was laying down these drum tracks, I just wanted to present these as songs. Then Jon would step in and say, "I'm calling this one, this is your drum track." I would have been happy to do them again but thank goodness they didn't let me. Because I would have recorded

Groove and feel were two words I just kept hearing from the band, because they were all a little older than me. But as a teenager, I didn't know how to quantify that.

each track 20 more times and probably sent it to Bissonnette to have him overdub on it. I'd love to know what Kenny Aronoff would do on that tune. But Jon forced me to just walk away.

Kenny and I crossed paths one time when Mellencamp called me to do a few tracks and Rick Rubin called Kenny to lay down a Petty track. It was right at the end of Kenny's tenure with John, and right after I left Tom. Kenny actually wrote the "Dear John" letter that he never sent with me at his side. I had just been through the same thing with Tom. I couldn't be available to do tambourine overdubs because I had started doing some other things. Kenny and I got a huge laugh over the fact that we were crossing paths.

MD: The bass drum sound on "Taste of Heaven" was a little different, it was pillowier.

SL: Good ears, that was my Tama kit. That drum set doesn't have a front head and it did have a pillow. That was the kit that I used on all the Petty records. I used that kit on "Taste of Heaven" and "Trader's South," which are the two songs that I sang.

MD: "Never Ready to Go" has another great snare drum sound.

SL: That was a Shure 57 on the snare drum through a Trident console into ProTools, and I don't even remember what my plugins are (if there were any.) I didn't use any reverb; I'm running straight pipes.

MD: Maybe it's because my ears are so accustomed to hearing over-processed and huge snare sounds that when I hear a "normal" snare sound, to me it sounds "different."

SL: I agree, it's funny I'll do the opposite thing. I'll think that I need to get a snare drum sound that sounds HUGE or whatever it is the *soup de jour* snare sound of the day. So I'll try all these plugins and compressors and use them. Then I come in the next morning, and it sounds like I'm playing underwater, and it sounds like shit. Then I mute all the plugin channels and think, 'There it is.' What you're experiencing on this record is what happens when you plug a 57 into a good console and you turn it on. Then you go bang on some good drums and they're honking, farting, and buzzing... What's old is new again.

MD: On the breakdown section of "The Forgiveness Tree" it sounds like you might be playing the backbeats together on the snare drum and tom, and I hear that as a sound that is quintessential Stan

Lynch, where did that come from?

SL: You're always trying to put a little extension on your snare drum, *to make it go to 11*. If I use the floor tom on a back beat with the snare, it's like I'm adding a little value to the backbeat.

When we were doing *Damn the Torpedoes* with Tom, it was the first time that (engineer) Shelly Yakus actually put expensive microphones on my toms. Up until then, for the first two records I didn't even have mics on my toms. They were done with one overhead, a kick mic, and a snare mic. Those first couple of Petty records were really crude, we had *maybe* three or four mics. When we got to the Sound City phase of our career, Shelly looked at

my drums at rehearsal and he took a pencil and circled a spot on my tom-toms. I asked him what he was doing, and he said, "I'm looking at your impact zone. I'd prefer not to see it any bigger than a silver dollar. That tells me how expensive of a mic I can use. If you're impact zone is bigger than a silver dollar you get 421's, if you're smaller than a silver dollar you get the Neumann's, and if you're really good you get the Telefunken's. I noticed that Jeff Porcaro always got Telefunken's because his impact zone was the size of a nickel. After the record was done, Shelly congratulated me and said, "For a live guy you're not bad. You're no nowhere near the rim and the microphone. That's when I had good microphones for the first time in my life, and my tom toms were actually mic'ed. I remember hearing my toms for the first time and realizing that they had actual sonic value. It was new to me to hear them on the record. If you use the toms correctly, they are a joyful noise, and you don't have to hit them fast or a lot.

"The Forgiveness Tree" was cut right off the floor. We cut it in a living room in Dallas. It was a friend's lovely old Ludwig kit, and the snare drum was dry as a bone, which is usually not my thing. But I thought that maybe it would work on this tune, and we threw it down pretty darn fast. It was kind of open and we filled it in. My natural inclination was to make it kind of odd, I wanted to back into the room quietly with a cigarette. As I was listening to Jon singing the vocal, and I liked the words, "When angry

words are spoken, two hearts get broken, love has disappeared," I thought, 'That's a story, I don't know where you're going with it, but I'm intrigued.' As a drummer, I thought that maybe I should stay intrigued. As the song was written I just let the guy unroll his story and not make it about the drums.

MD: That song is the perfect tempo, it's not fast and it's not slow.

Nobody plays like anybody, but in my mind, I would always ask myself, 'What would Jim do? What would Simon Kirke do? What would Charlie Watts do?' But in reality, you're never going to play like them, you're not supposed to, but at least you can have that North Star that tells you to go there.

You did that a lot with Tom, he seemed to do songs at a lot of in-between tempos.

SL: Someone put down my drumming years ago saying I was only good at playing the mid-tempo Blues. I remember thinking, 'That's cool, at least I'm good at something.' Every drummer has a natural BPM. When I sit down at a drum kit, that's how I play. To me, a fast song is Free's "All Right Now." I always hated drummers that sounded desperate and frantic. That's the thing that I loved about Mick Fleetwood's drumming, he could play fast, but it never sounded frantic. That was also what I loved about the Motown drummer's or Al Jackson's playing on Wilson Pickett's "Land of 1000 Dances." When Charlie Watts and Ringo played fast songs, they never looked or sounded frantic, and it was swingin' like Cab Calloway.

MD: On "When the Moon Cries Wolf" the bass drum sound seems bigger, is that the new Dixon drums?

SL: That was Rob Jacobs, he a great mixer, he did a lot of the Don Henley records, I love Rob. When I sent the track to Rob, it didn't sound like that. But he asked if I would mind him opening it up, because the song is really aggressive. When he sent it back, Jon wanted more! That's part of being in a band, that probably wasn't my natural instinct, but when you have two guys that are younger than you, and they hear something aggressive, you just let go and go with it. They were enjoying it, and it didn't seem to get in the way of the vocals. That's all Rob and Jon Davis.

MD: On "Trader's South" you sound very Keltner-ish.

SL: Really? Thanks, I'll take that. Honestly the thing I was trying to imagine there was Levon Helm. I worked with Levon Helm a couple times, and I was thinking what would Levon do? What was cool about this record was every track is a different sound. We didn't set up and make a record. When had a new demo, I would go ahead and record something. That track was on my old drums, which I have mixed feelings about. I was playing

Jimmy Lee [Keltner] told me that you can tell a drummer by the way he stops and starts, and I asked him to explain that. He said, "The greats don't really have to ramp up they just come in."

them that week to just put them away, that was going to be the last time I played them.

MD: One last hurrah.

SL: I wanted to play them one more time. It's a very fairly

deliberate track. I played the acoustic guitar part first to a click, then I sang a guide vocal, and then I did a drum pass. I asked Jon if it was a song, and he started to fill in and flesh it out.

MD: That tune also features another signature Stan Lynch thing. You are great at sneaking into a track, and not making a big grand entrance.

SL: Jimmy Lee [Keltner] told me that you can tell a drummer by the way he stops and starts, and I asked him to explain that. He said, "The greats don't really have

to ramp up they just come in. He was citing the Wrecking Crew and Hal Blaine. He was saying on some of those songs Hal Blaine would just appear. If you wanted him to announce himself, he would. But you never felt him stop and start. John Bonham was one of the best in the world at that. He would stop and leave you right at the precipice of the cliff's edge. Then he would just come back in. I've been trying to figure out how to do that forever, and by my 90th birthday I'll have that figured out.

MD: "Sit with My Soul" has an interesting drum part. You're

On my best days, I listen before I play. I used to think that when the guitar starts, I start playing the drums before I even knew what the song was doing, and before I even heard the whole song.

playing a cross-stick every fourth bar, and the percussionist is playing the tambourine on the backbeat of every other bar. It creates this nice eight bar loop-groove. Did you consciously spread out the backbeats?

SL: Jon came up singing Gospel music, when he brought in this tune, he had such a reverence, he was so convinced that this was an important song to sing for the people that are gone; that made me think a little like Keltner, 'Well the drums aren't going to be that important, you probably don't even need me here, but how can I support this? I was hitting a double headed bass drum with a hand mallet (orchestral style,) because that sounded appropriate for the song.

MD: This band is one of the first times I've heard you play with a percussionist, and you two sound great together.

SL: Steve Ritter (the percussionist) is a great percussionist, and great drummer, and a great singer. We're probably closer in age than anybody else in the band. He's played in a million bands and has always been a working musician in Texas. He has a very different style than me. He's much heavier, he hits a lot harder, and he has a thicker sound than me. That snare sound on "The Forgiveness Tree," that's his snare sound. He can play a lot more styles than me, he's got great time, and he loves to sing and

play percussion, so this is a blessing for me. I imagine we will change chairs at some point, we haven't gotten there yet, but it's coming!

It's fun when you don't have to sell a chorus. Having a percussion player to sell a chorus is amazing. I can play a big fill going into the chorus, and then the percussion player can come in with the tambourine for the chorus. Sometimes he hits the crash cymbal

after I play a big fill, or sometimes he'll play a big fill with me. It's just nice to have a dialogue that sets you free.

MD: Are you guys gonna tour with this band?

SL: I would love to, that's the dream. I hope we can get enough traction. I have a show on Sirius Tom Petty Radio, and we're

It's fun when you don't have to sell a chorus. Having a percussion player to sell a chorus is amazing. I can play a big fill going into the chorus, and then the percussion player can come in with the tambourine for the chorus.

getting some spins. And with your help, we can let the world know that we're working. But it's hard, I make no bones about it, it's called the music business and I have told everybody I'll handle the music and you deal with the business part, because

I would love to put this band on a bus and go play some gigs, that would be wonderful.

how it works is beyond anything I can understand. I would love to put this band on a bus and go play some gigs, that would be wonderful.

MD: Someone should put The Speaker Wars and The Immediate Family (with Russ Kunkel, Lee Sklar, and Danny Kortchmar) in a bus and create the best double bill of recent history.

SL: From your mouth to the music God's ears, that's a great idea!

MD: Tell me about the other guys in The Speaker Wars.

SL: Bassist Brian Patterson is a great dude. He's a BASS player, that's what he does, he doesn't want to be anything but a bass

player. Four strings is enough. I just asked him (for my security) to play a Fender bass because I know what they sound like. A Fender bass and an Ampeg amp and he's cool. He's another great singer and is as tough as a \$2.00 steak. He's a Texas boy. Everybody in the band is pretty salty, but you can take them anywhere. Brian and Jon have good chemistry together,

and Steve Ritter has good chemistry with everybody. They've all played together, it's almost like I'm the new guy in their band, they all have a background


together.

MD: That's why you guys sound so good.

SL: In a manner of speaking, I'm "the infection." I'm the one that's always saying, "You don't have to work that hard!" When everyone is strumming the same chords at the same time, I'm the one saying, "Please stop." They're used to using a certain kind of muscle from playing clubs, and I'm

more used to a concert muscle. Jay Michael Smith is a great guitar player, he's the young guy. They're all just good dudes. We just rehearsed for a couple weeks to play a gig and I watched their intelligence curve increase exponentially. All through the rehearsals I was thinking, "This is going to be great!"

MD: And it is! The Speaker Wars are one of the better bands and records that I have heard this year, and for a long time.

SL: Thanks, that means a lot. 



2025 Chicago Drum Show

Story and photos by Bob Campbell

For over three decades, the Chicago Drum Show has been the heartbeat of the global drumming community—an unmatched gathering spot for those in search of the finest, rarest, and most innovative vintage, custom, and modern drums, cymbals, percussion instruments, and related gear.

The show is more than just a gear expo; it's a celebration of rhythm and craftsmanship—a place where drum history is preserved, stories are swapped, and lifelong friendships are kindled over a shared passion for all things drums.

Honoring Tradition, Embracing the Future:

This year marked a historic turning point for the Chicago Drum Show. After decades of visionary leadership, founder/owner Rob Cook officially passed the torch to Johnny and Brian Drugan of *Drugan's Drums & Guitars*, ushering in an exciting new era for this iconic event.

Johnny and Brian Drugan knew they were taking over the stewardship of something special. With a deep respect for the show's rich legacy, the Drugans kept the familiar vibe intact: same iconic venue (Kane County Fairgrounds, St. Charles, IL), same trusted format, and that unmistakable Chicago Drum Show energy that generations have come to love. Their thoughtful approach paid off as the 2025 Chicago Drum Show shattered attendance records and buzzed with excitement.

With over 180 booths filling the floor, this year's show featured a powerhouse gathering of the drum industry's biggest names and boldest independents. Longtime favorites returned in full force—Craviotto, Chicago Drum Company, Drugan's Drums & Guitars, GEWA, GM Designs, Gretsch, Guitar Center, Humes & Berg, Ludwig, Paiste, Pearl, Sonor, Steve Maxwell Drum Shop, Zildjian, and many more—including respected collectors like Joe Luoma, Joey Boom, Chuck Scalia, and Randy Rainwater & Bun E. Carlos.



Adding fresh energy to the mix were a wave of first-time exhibitors, each bringing their own creative spark: Brass Lasagne Percussion, Quijano Cymbals, the newly revived Slingerland Drum Company, and Voxel Percussion, turning heads with their unorthodox approach to materials and design.

New and notable:

Austrian Drumheads – blending modern innovation with a vintage vibe, Hans-Peter Kirbisser introduced the world's first two-ply calf drumhead; delivering a controlled, focused tone with a warm, fat attack and minimal overtones.



Humes & Berg – marking nearly a century of craftsmanship, Humes & Berg unveiled their striking 90th Anniversary Enduro Pro 6.5x14" snare cases—a bold blend of artistry, form, and function; each case features a vibrant finish and a numbered



Vintage & Notable:

Drugan's Drums & Guitars – One of the show's most iconic pieces came courtesy of the Drugan brothers: a historic 1990 Yamaha Rock Tour Custom kit in black sparkle finish, famously used by Matt Sorum during Guns 'n' Roses' legendary 1991–1993 *Use Your Illusion* tour.

Square Lake Percussion – A true vintage gem made waves at the show - a 1928–32 Ludwig 5x14" Mottled Sepia Standard Model snare—one of only two known to exist. This exceptionally rare drum found a fitting home in the collection of renowned vintage drum authority Mike Curotto.

Joe Luoma – Among the most captivating pieces on display was a unique and original Billy Gladstone black lacquer snare drum, complete with Gladstone's renowned three-way tuning system— with the personalized nameplate, "Hal Wasson, Mar. 2nd. 1953".



Pre-Show Event:

On the early evening before the official start of the show, a new event premiered - the Indie Cymbal-smith Summit. This was a wonderful opportunity to meet, question, and sample products from eight independent cymbal-smiths from around the world: Dave Collingwood, Paul Francis, Ryan Hayden, Matt Nolan, Mariano Quijano, Timothy Roberts, Dave Sagurton, and Steve Seifried.

Clinics:

Jessica Burdeaux—Chicago-based drummer for *Covet*, *City of Mouth*, and *Friend of a Friend*, and a widely followed content creator—took the stage on a 4-piece Ludwig kit to perform, share advice, and reflect on turning her

drumming passion into a full-time career, thanks in large part to using social media as a digital resume.

She emphasized authenticity and consistency, urging drummers to set clear goals and stay true to their voice. One of her earliest goals? To become more versatile. That journey led her into rhythmic exploration and a pivotal realization: "Studying African rhythms kind of flipped everything I knew about drums and music on its head. It absolutely changed the



anniversary badge.

Slingerland – made their debut at the Chicago Drum Show, displaying several stunning Radio King Limited snares with steam-bent one-ply shells and two prototype Slingerland outfits: a Black Diamond Pearl Radio King with three-ply shells and a Lunar Blue Studio King with five-ply shells.

Sonor – showcased a sampling of their awe-inspiring 150th Anniversary special releases, a tribute to their long-standing heritage of innovative craftsmanship and excellence: an 8 x 14" Signature cast bronze snare drum with 24-karat gold hardware (limited to 100), and Signature Series Limited kit (13-ply beech with gorgeous Bubinga veneer, only 50 available.)

Steve Maxwell Drums – just released a beautifully crafted reproduction Rail Consolelette, featuring a 9.5mm L-arm and 2-in-1 hex /drum key in two classic mounting option: two-hole style to fit 40s-60s era bass drums from Camco, Ludwig, Leedy, Gretsch, and Slingerland, and four-hole Ludwig style for late 60s – 70s drums.

Quijano Cymbals – a welcome newcomer to the show, Belgium-based Mariano Gabriel Quijano shared examples of his Turkish tradition-inspired custom cymbals: Signature ("complex, intense, upfront,") Heritage (nuanced, evocative, light"), O.A.K. ("one-of-a-kind" creations,) and Corteza ("super-dry, dark, fast decay") – an exciting addition to the boutique cymbal scene.

way I approached rhythms.”

To demonstrate, she broke down a 12/8 African clave exercise, shifting accents across triplets—a challenging mental and physical drill for any drummer. She also performed “Bronco” by Covet, packed with shifting meters and infectious grooves.

Jessica provided practical insight on using click tracks, recovering from onstage mistakes, and building mental toughness. She offered this kind advice, “When you’re practicing, remember—you have something unique to offer—even when you’re playing the most basic beat. It’s easy to be hard on yourself, but don’t forget to celebrate the little wins.”

Makaya McCraven—acclaimed drummer, producer, composer, and visionary bandleader took the stage with a setup as inventive as his approach: a hybrid electro-acoustic kit pairing a classic 5-piece Ludwig with Sensory Percussion triggers and an auxiliary snare. This fusion allowed him to effortlessly blend sampled textures with the raw nuance of live drumming.



Makaya offered an inside look at his creative process, where improvisation, technology, and collaboration meet. “Technology has always been part of my toolbox,” he noted. “Many of my records begin with live improvisation—then I rework those moments through sampling and electronic production to sculpt something new.”

Throughout the clinic, Makaya unpacked his compositions, spotlighting layered clave-inspired grooves and polyrhythms like 5/4 over 3/4, 7/8, and 11/8. His message? Rhythm lives in the body, not on paper. “Odd meters shouldn’t feel like a math problem. The pulse is what grounds us—it should feel natural and groove.”

Timothy Roberts (Reverie Drums, Timothy Roberts Cymbals), discussed his journey from drum making to cymbal smithing, emphasizing the unique, hand-made nature of his instruments. The kit he played at the clinic was the first that he personally built, adorned with various handcrafted cymbals.

He explained the manufacturing process of cymbals, highlighting the use of B20 bronze (80% copper, 20% tin) for its sound quality. Timothy contrasted his traditional methods with mass-produced cymbals, noting the latter’s reliance on machines. He stressed the importance of sound customization, suggesting that drummers should consider their specific needs and environments when choosing cymbals. Timothy also touched on the versatility of handmade cymbals, highlighting the depth and complexity achievable through handcrafting.



Timothy shared that, “I like vibey things, imperfect sounds. My aim is to make instruments that inspire connection with music, encourage creative expression, and feel great to play.”

Sitting behind a stunning silver sparkle 5-piece Ludwig kit, **Carter McLean**—known for his work with *The Lion King* on Broadway, Charlie Hunter, Norah Jones, and as author of *Concepts & Creativity*—took clinic attendees on a deep and personal journey through his professional evolution.

In a rare and special moment, Carter performed several pieces from *The Lion King*—the first time he’s done so in a clinic setting—breaking down the parts and sharing the nuanced thinking behind his interpretations. He played with incredible fluidity, sense of touch, and great musicality.

Throughout the session, Carter emphasized the value of strong technique, especially the importance of developing weaker-hand control for shuffles, ghost notes, and consistent backbeats. He demonstrated focused exercises using singles,



doubles, RLL/LRR stickings, and synchronized hand motions to develop tone and timing. "Slower is often harder than fast," he noted, "because every detail is exposed—you've got to keep it clean, even, and locked in, especially at lower volumes."

He encouraged players to balance technical growth with musical purpose, and to remember, "Don't take yourself too seriously—just take the music seriously. I encourage everyone to take more chances on the drums and not be nervous to mess

thoughtful insights, and practical wisdom. A world-class drummer and in-demand educator, Elitch has performed with an eclectic list of top-tier artists including The Mars Volta, Justin Timberlake, Miley Cyrus, Killer Be Killed, The 1975, and Weezer.

But it's not just his playing that has earned global respect—Dave is widely considered one of the foremost experts in drumming technique and body mechanics, with over 25 years of teaching experience under his belt. From elite players like Tomas Haake, Tré Cool, David Garibaldi, and Gregg Bissonette, to top educators and working drummers, Dave has helped artists "get out of their own way" by mastering the art of motion, efficiency, and injury prevention. His philosophy? Eliminate wasted energy so creativity can thrive—and your body can keep up for the long haul.

He's the force behind two acclaimed online courses—*Getting Out of Your Own Way* and *Staying Out of Your Own Way*—which have become go-to resources for drummers looking to level up their technique while staying healthy and pain-free.

Dave's clinic wasn't just about chops—it was about unlocking potential, playing smarter, and making sure your drumming journey lasts a lifetime.

All told, this year's show hit all the right notes—an energizing celebration of drums, community, and creativity. As the weekend wrapped, show organizers Johnny and Brian Drugan shared their vision for the future: "Growing the show's audience and diversifying the event is a top priority to us—to ensure a bright future for this notable event that we all love. We're already looking forward to next year."



up."

Chicago-based drummer, educator, and author **Rich Stitzel** brought a deep and thought-provoking energy to the clinic stage, showcasing his globally acclaimed educational system, DrumMantra - a program that has transformed the practice routines of hundreds of drummers in over 40 countries.

Armed with a lovely vintage (1967) four-piece Yamaha drum kit, companion slideshow, and a scannable QR code granting access to a 65-page guide, Rich delivered far more than a clinic—it was a full-on drumming master class.

Centering his presentation around Six Key Elements - timing, reading, coordination, polymeters, phrasing, and groove - Rich broke down structured practice at its core. He emphasized the power of subdivisions, explored the difference between polyrhythms and poly-meters, and offered this clarity: "Polyrhythms are different grouping of notes with different subdivisions that resolve at the same time, and polymeters are different groupings of notes with the same subdivision that resolve at different times—polymeters allow for rhythmic perception, or viewing rhythmic structures from various vantage points."

With a focus on repetition, breath control, and mental clarity, Rich encouraged players to train their minds as much as their hands. He shared precise, practical exercises to fine-tune internal timing and elevate coordination, making it clear that musical growth requires intention, structure, and discipline.

The session served as just a glimpse into the depth of DrumMantra. For many in the room, it was a powerful call to change—to adopt a smarter, more musical approach to becoming the best version of themselves behind the kit.

For the final clinic of the show, **Dave Elitch** took the stage behind a beautiful DW kit, offering some serious chops,



Mark your calendars: the **35th annual Chicago Drum Show** returns May 16–17, 2026, at the Kane County Fairgrounds.



2025 Music City Drum Show

Photos by Alex Klufft





Breslow Drum Co.



Breslow Drum Co.



Odery Drums



Centent Cymbals



Remo display



Vintage Rick Marotta Yamaha set



Vintage Ludwig 70's Vistalite



WFL III Snares



Slingerland Gene Krupa replica



Reverie Cymbals



Cami Loops and Jules Mascia



Tracy Broussard, Jake Sommers, Jim Riley, Cathy Rich, David and Carolina Frangioni and Gregg Potter



WFL III



Zoro and Quinton "Q" Robinson



Johnny Keefe, Richie Martinez, Jake Sommers



Sonor 30th Anniversary Drumset



Chris Stankee, Jake Sommers, Shannon Larkin, Dylan Wissing



Brian LeVan, Chris Hart, Donald Barrett, Bruce Jacoby



Jay Weinberg Clinic



Gregg Bissonette and Ray Luzier



Diril Cymbals



Shannon Larkin and Jeffrey Kelly



Dylan Wissing Clinic



SJC Drums



Xcel drumsticks



Scorpion Percussion team



Yamaha Drums



Jessica Rickey, Felipe LaVerde, Ray Luzier, Carolina Frangioni



Anton Fig and David Garibaldi



Zoro, David Frangioni Gregg Bissonette



Bill Gibson Elena Bonomo Paul Leim and Otis Brown III



Max and Jay Weinberg



Tonewings Team



Chris Brady / Aquarian Drumheads



Modern Drummer team with Shannon Larkin



Jessica Rickey at the Modern Drummer table

"Regatta de Blanc" by The Police, drummer Stewart Copeland

Transcription by Marc Atkinson

There are certain drummers whose sound is so distinct; you only need to hear a few bars to know exactly who it is. Stewart Copeland is one of those players. His snare tone, phrasing, and high-energy feel are instantly recognizable— and impossible to fake.

This month's transcription digs into "Regatta de Blanc," a track that showcases Copeland's unique ability to blend reggae influences with punk intensity. Recorded between February and August of 1979 and released in October of that year, the track is a great example in how to effortlessly build a groove while

maintaining high energy. Stewart delays emphasizing beat one until just before the chorus, creating an off-kilter tension that drives the song forward without ever feeling unsettled.

His use of ghost notes, rimshots, and tight hi-hat control show off some of his signature hand technique, and the space he leaves is just as important as the notes he plays. This is a perfect study in how to inject personality, restraint, and fire into a groove—all while dancing around the grid in true Copeland fashion.

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108 *FADE OUT*

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

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



James Brown, Afrobeat and EDM: The Power of Rhythm

By Chris Lesso

James Brown changed the face of music by turning his band into one giant drum. His concept was like the ancient African drum circle brought into the modern day, with everybody in the band locked into their own perpetual patterns. Each piece was stripped down to its rhythmic elements, then thrown back into the music with flair. He used repetition to evoke the manic trance that only he could. Playing these grooves is a deceptive challenge. The beats look easy on paper but executing them with consistent energy and sustaining that energy with a light touch takes Jedi type concentration. These grooves demand nothing but unwavering kick, snare, and hi-hat for what feels like an eternity. Many drummers can play the notes, but few catch the discipline and the focus. This is 'relaxed intensity' in motion, giving it your all while at the same time, surrendering to the flow.

"Music is the weapon of the future." **Fela Kuti**

Right around the time James Brown was reinventing modern music, Fela Kuti was in Africa adding a different twist on the same concept. Inventing a new style of music called Afrobeat, he took the African roots concept of stacking and repeating rhythms to create a musical force of nature, deeply infused with heavy funk breaks and cutting grooves. However, Afrobeat doesn't use backbeats (snare on 2 and 4,) this is another aspect of what makes its drive so unique. With a massive horn section and powerful chants, Fela used repetition at length to create a trance of vision and sound. His music is a striking flurry of music and movement, backed with a bold message of freedom. The power is in the approach, letting loose on long rhythmic jams that throw away any recognizable "verse-bridge-chorus" song forms. The musical identity comes from rhythm rather than melody, a percussive wave gives the music momentum. Fela Kuti and the Afrobeat movement boiled together dance, visual art, improvisation, and attitude, and it was all backed by non-stop hypnotic rhythms. Music was the message, and the message was freedom. The massive entrainment pulls everyone into its orbit. The power that Fela's music possesses to shift our state subtly and sometimes violently is profound.

When Paul McCartney traveled to Africa in 1973 to record a new Wings album, McCartney witnessed a mammoth performance by Fela and his band. The performance moved Paul so much that he wept openly on the spot. He later called it one of the most life changing musical moments of his life. Paul McCartney wasn't the only one traveling directly to the source. Wanting some new influences outside the norm, legendary drummer Ginger Baker became so enamored with the Afrobeat


sound and way of life, that he packed up his bags and left. He drove over 2000 miles across the Sahara Desert to meet Fela (as seen in the raw documentary *Ginger Baker in Africa*.) and jam with his newfound friends. Fela and Ginger hit it off, and the moment is captured in the album *Fela Kuti with Ginger Baker LIVE!* Listening in, we hear waves of rhythm that pull us in, while dangerously and unpredictably speaking straight from the heart. Other drummers like Tony Williams and Stewart Copeland have made the pilgrimage too, looking to immerse themselves in a higher plane.

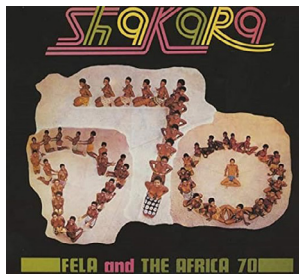
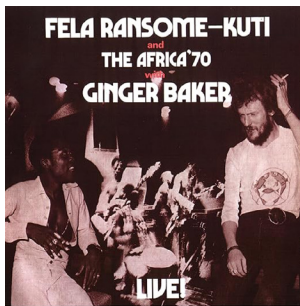
"We are lighting up the desert sky with a fire that will burn for the rest of our lives." **Christy Ann Martine**

On a desert field in the middle of a hot oasis, EDM artists trek from around the world to the *Burning Man Festival* to use these same tools of entrainment to move the masses. The surreal temporary village is surrounded by a made-up world of wild self-expression. Days of visual art, sound camps, and captivating beats in the desert transport attendees to another plane, which is exactly what they're there for. EDM, trance, and hyper creativity surround everybody in this fleeting fabricated world. It's not "one thing," but everything coming at you all at once that adds up to entrainment and flow. For decades, this and other festivals have been a destination for DJs that are attracted to the singular vibe of personal transformation through rhythm.

There's a long connecting line from the African drum and dance ensembles of ages past to the modern era of James Brown, Afrobeat, and EDM. From bare hands beating polyrhythms on animal skins to cutting-edge MPC technology of today is a long ride to take. The power of rhythm to shift

our state has a new impact that was unimagined in times past. Now it's come full circle, where the very machines that started imitating drummers have spurred real drummers to mimic the machines and bring the human element back. Music in this form lives without boundaries using pure sound as its playground, reverberating us down to our very molecules. When I'm at my most creative, I'm merging my raw acoustic drums into this algorithmic world. It is much more than the average and typical "bass, guitar, vocals" band. EDM and DJ culture has zero sound or rhythmic limits. It's the best of both worlds where groove meets entrainment and vibrates the world.

By opening to the force of entrainment, shifting states, and bending reality through drumming, you are light years ahead of those who have no idea about the power of drumming and rhythm. We're the ones that transform through beats, bold expression, and environment. Use this power as a force for good and know the depths of what you're tapping into. We can access this flow any time through a black hole focus and by tuning in to the signal and deleting the noise. The way is wide open to now create a future with your drumming footprint. 



Progressive Drumming Essentials: Syncopated Double Bass the Easy Way

By Aaron Edgar

Progressive Drumming Essentials is a collection of articles originally written for *Modern Drummer* magazine. They are exactly what the title says, PROGRESSIVE drumming essentials. This series of articles, and the book that contains them all, represent a great deal of material that Aaron constructed over the years for his own development, he credits them as being a large part of finding his voice on the drums.

The book, *Progressive Drumming Essentials*, is organized into six sections (Fundamentals, Odd Subdivisions, Rhythmic Tricks, More Odd Subdivisions, Polyrythms, and A New Perspective on Polyrythms.) We will be excerpting Aaron's articles in our Rock Perspectives series for a new generation of

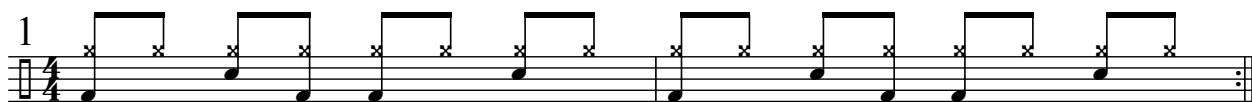


drummers to learn the *Progressive Drumming Essentials*.

Aaron Edgar says in the introduction to his book, "I believe that learning music is a journey. You'll find greater depth of understanding when you dig deeper into the material. Once you've mastered what's on the page, modify it! Make these ideas your own and explore your own creativity. Treating these lessons in this fashion, while striving to internalize the rhythms against a steady pulse, will ultimately free you to integrate any rhythm or concept into your playing in a natural way. I sincerely hope you have as much fun with this material as I do!" We couldn't agree more, let's get to work!

When I began working on double bass, I was inspired by drummers like Gene Hoglan, Raymond Herrera, and Thomas Lang, all of whom seemed to have a never-ending supply of creative parts. I'd spend every waking moment figuring out their ideas and working them into my playing. From this, I stumbled on a simple concept that can be applied to even the most basic 8th-note rock grooves to turn them into heavy, syncopated double bass patterns.

We're going to use a two-step process. First, we'll take a basic 8th-note rock groove (Exercise 1) and add "e" and "a" with the left foot (Exercise 2). The bass drum notes from the basic groove will fill the spaces between the hi-hat notes, and the result will be a syncopated double bass groove, as shown in Exercise 3.



The first step toward mastering this concept is focusing on the left-foot placement. We can do this by playing the right hand on the floor tom instead of the hi-hats. You'll end up with a 16th-note roll that goes back and forth between the floor tom and bass drum. To further solidify this, try turning the pattern into a groove by placing the snare on beats 2 and 4.

In Exercise 4, the right foot plays on beat 1 and the "&" of beats 2, 3, and 4. Exercise 5 adds offbeat 16ths on the left foot. Examples 6–13 explore the concept a little bit further.



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6

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13

DOUBLES

In Exercise 14, there's a 32nd-note double figure with the bass drum. Be sure to phrase this strictly as 32nd notes. If you get lazy, it can start sounding like a triplet.

14

Exercise 15 demonstrates playing doubles with the left foot as well.



ODD-TIME EXAMPLES

Here's where things get interesting. Let's see what happens when we apply this concept to a 7/8 time signature. Be careful not to flam the snare at the end of the pattern, as it lines up with the left foot.



Exercise 17 is in a 9/8 feel. Pay special attention to your left hand, as both buzzes and ghost notes line up with the left foot. Watch your dynamics!



Next we're going to move the right-hand pattern from Exercise 17 to every third 16th note. Make sure you've got the previous exercise completely internalized before trying this. Keep in mind that the left foot is still playing consistent offbeat 16th notes. Focusing on playing the left foot smoothly can help you even out the entire pattern.



When you play an odd time signature based on 16th notes, your leading foot will switch naturally every bar. This means you'll need to learn to play offbeat notes with the right foot as well. Let's take a stab at 15/16 using this concept. You might want to isolate the second bar before trying the whole example.



For Exercise 19, I like to switch my hands, as well as my feet, every bar. If that's too challenging, you can continue leading with whichever hand is easiest in both bars. Crashing loudly on beat 1 of each bar can help you feel how the pattern repeats to solidify the transition.

Since fifteen is divisible by three, we can again replace our 8th-note hi-hat pattern with every third 16th note—except this time it will fit evenly into each bar, which will make the transition sound less choppy.



While we're diving further down the rhythmic rabbit hole, let's channel the quintuplets we spent so much time on in the last chapter and modulate Exercises 19 and 20 into quintuplets.

The next exercise places quarter notes on the hi-hat while phrasing the previous kick-and-snare pattern as quintuplets. There are a lot of empty partials here. Be sure to count ("ta, ka, din, ah, gah"), and try to play accurately. It will be helpful to program quintuplets into your metronome.



Last but certainly not least, the right hand is going to play a five-over-three polyrhythm across the previous kick-and-snare pattern.



Make sure to practice Exercises 21 and 22 into and out of more ordinary 3/4 grooves, to ensure you're able to play them in context. It's easy to lose sight of how these patterns fit musically when they're isolated.

This lesson is a prime example of how I write grooves and parts. I never take something I enjoy playing at face value, and I find it inspiring to dig deeper into the rhythms that excite me. I always say, "Modify, modify, modify." You'll usually come up with something you like just as much, if not more.

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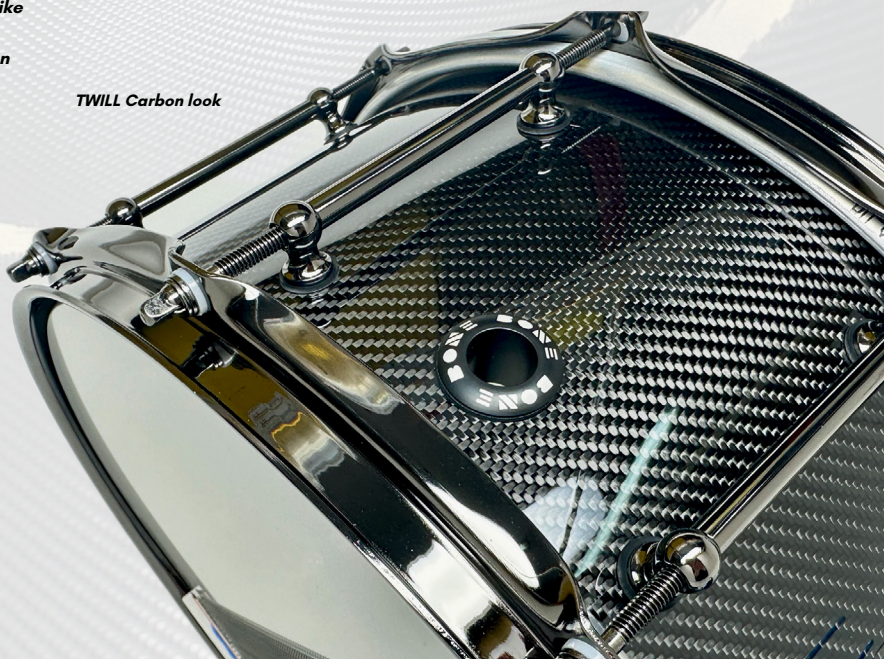
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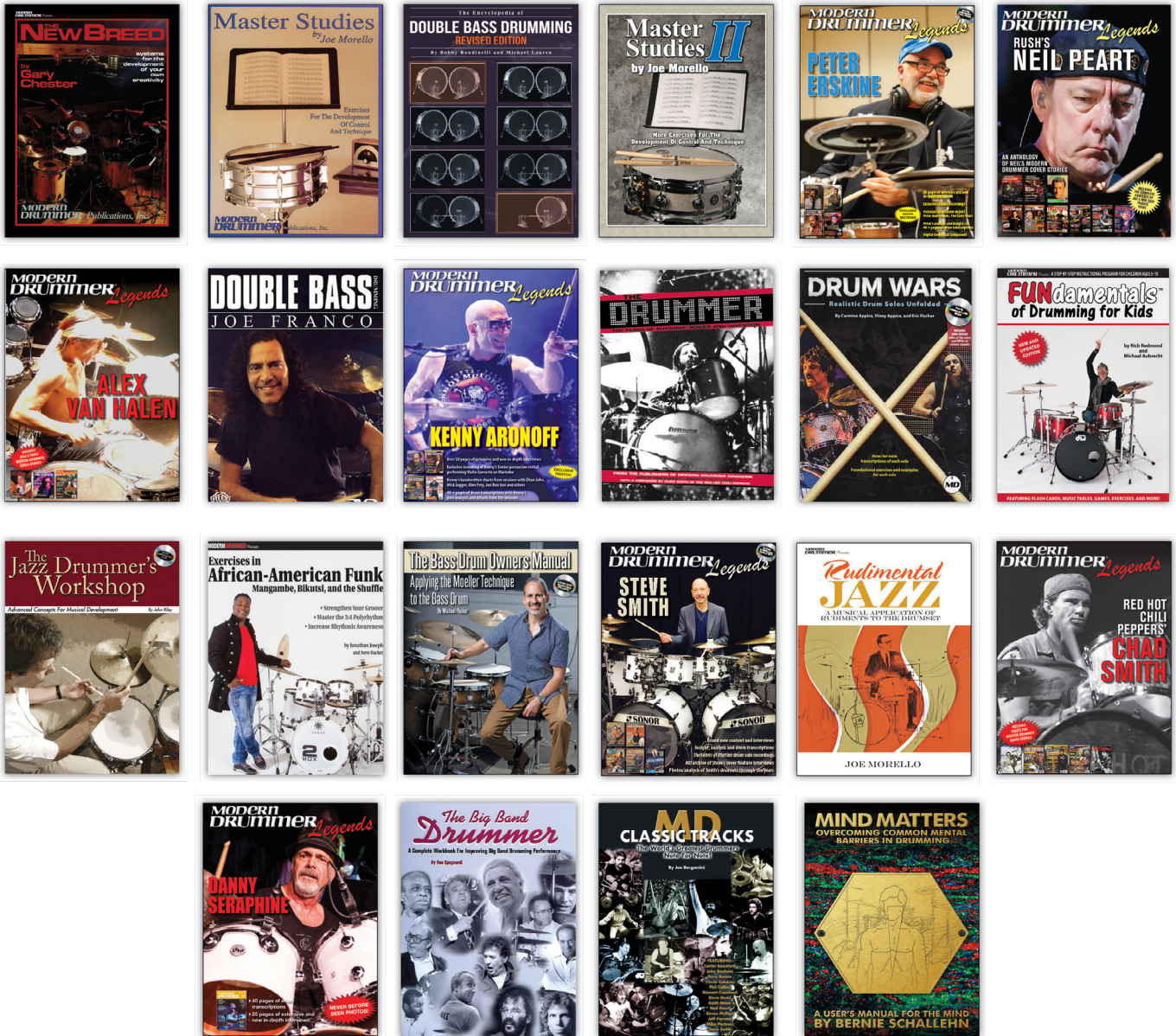
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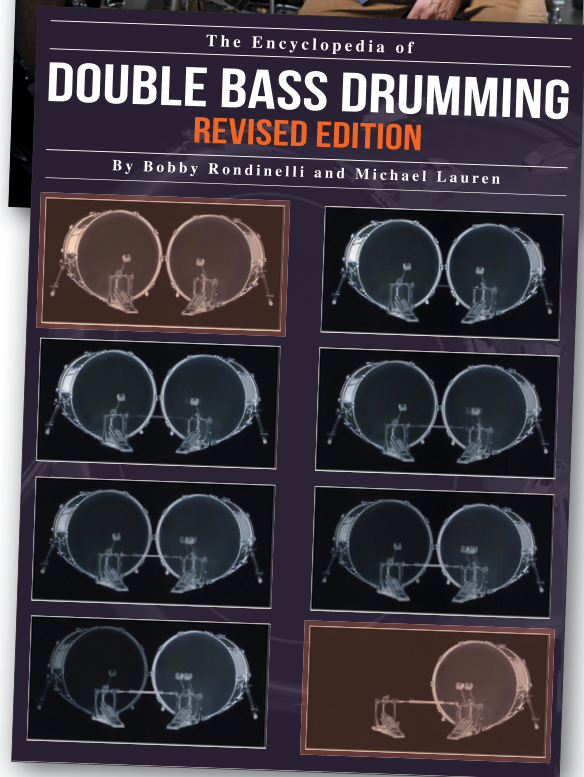
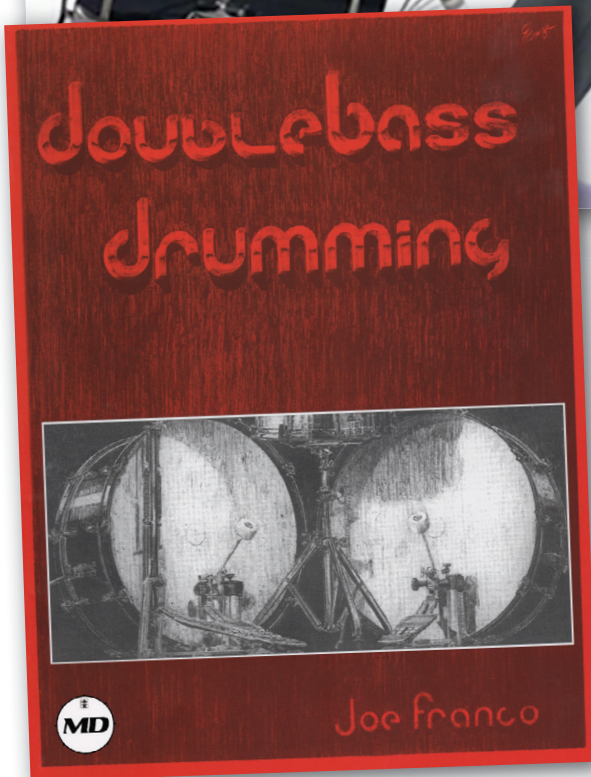
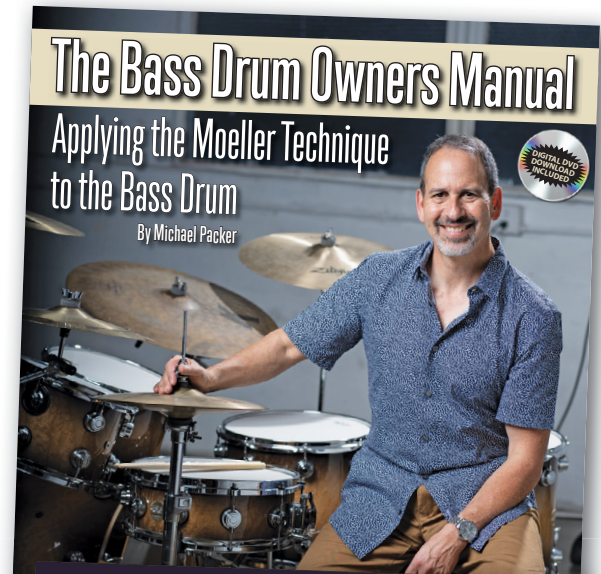


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The New Breed: Reading, Melodies

By Gary Chester

Gary Chester's groundbreaking book *The New Breed* is legendary. The book, and Gary's teaching methods are deeply intertwined, it is a *lifelong* commitment of dedication, study, and development. Gary Chester's Systems, Reading Exercises, Advanced Systems, Advanced Reading Exercises, Composite Systems, Grooves, and Applications are creative and advanced ways to learn.

Gary Chester was one of the most famous drum instructors in drumming history. He took his extensive musical experience from playing drums and percussion on hundreds of sessions in the New York recording studios and turned them into his own drumming systems. He taught these systems to many drummers in his own teaching studio and many of his students earned their own success in the world of music.

The Systems in *The New Breed* will help you to develop your coordination and reading ability, and will give you a greater awareness of time, all of which will allow you to be part of the "new breed" of studio drummers. They are, "Systems for the development of your own creativity."

The previous two months contain Gary's 39 basic patterns, called Systems, the two pages of reading material [printed this month] are to be used as the melodies for each system. It will also help to revisit Gary's advice (from *The New Breed*) for practicing these systems and reading pages.

"Start by memorizing the system, being careful to play the correct instrument with the correct hand or foot. You will not be playing the melody yet but be sure to notice where you are eventually to play it. Play the system many times, striving to make it feel as good as possible. While you are playing the system, seeing the click pulse (quarter notes.)"

After you have memorized a system, turn to the first two reading pages [presented this month] and play them as the melody of the system, on the instrument that is specified with each system. After you can play both pages from beginning to end comfortably, proceed to the second set of melodies, and practice them the same way.

It is not intended that you rush through any of this material. Do not proceed onward until you have achieved total mental and physical independence and awareness with each system.

To aid your awareness, you should learn to sing each part that you are playing, in addition to singing the click pulse. In other words, while playing the complete system with the melody, sing 1. the click pulse, 2. the melody, 3. the snare drum line, 4. the cymbal line, 5. the hi-hat line, etc.

When singing, it helps to sing a sound that resembles the particular instrument, and to sing it as rhythmically as possible out loud. For example, the bass drum part might sound like "boom," when you might sing the hi-hat part with a "chick" sound."

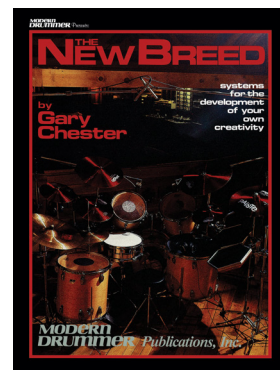
I-A



Three staves of musical notation in bass clef, featuring eighth and sixteenth note patterns.

I-B

Eleven staves of musical notation in bass clef, continuing the rhythmic exercises with various note values and rests.



Rhythm Vocabulary Development Series Part 6: Navigating 9/8

By Michael Packer

While often considered an “odd” meter due to its asymmetrical structure, 9/8 offers a fertile ground for rhythmic exploration and creative expression. Commonly encountered in Balkan folk traditions, progressive rock, and contemporary jazz, 9/8 provides both predictable symmetry and the potential for metric disruption through varied subdivisions. For drummers seeking to expand their rhythmic vocabulary, mastering this time signature involves more than memorizing groupings—it requires a deep internalization of pulse, phrasing, and accent structure to develop fluency and versatility across musical contexts.

Rethinking the “Odd” in Odd-Time

At first glance, 9/8 looks like an extension of a compound meter—three groups of three eighth notes. But unlike 6/8 or 12/8, 9/8 is more versatile in its phrasing potential. In Western classical music, you might encounter a consistent 3+3+3 feel. But in modern drumming contexts, 9/8 thrives when subdivided creatively:

2+2+2+3 – Forward-moving and danceable. Suggested listening: “Blue Rondo A La Turk,” by Dave Brubeck

3+3+3 – Symmetrical and flowing

3+2+2+2 – Slightly unbalanced, full of tension and release

2+3+2+2 – A twist on the familiar

4+5 or 5+4 – Great for fusion grooves or complex fills

Each subdivision changes the location of natural accents—and that’s your key to building vocabulary. The feel is not just in the count; it’s in where you *place* the emphasis.

Exercise: Count It, Feel It, Clap It

Here’s a great exercise to internalize the pulse:

- Count out loud in different groupings.
- Clap the downbeats of each group.
- Use a metronome with an accent every three eighths—

or better, program your own click that reflects your chosen grouping.

This builds comfort and freedom in the meter which is needed to improvise with intention.

Phrasing in 9/8: Space, Voice, and Motivic Development

Although 9/8 contains nine evenly spaced eighth-note pulses per measure, a musically sophisticated approach resists the temptation to articulate every beat. Instead, effective phrasing in 9/8 should mirror the principles of spoken language—where syntax, pacing, and inflection create meaning beyond individual words. Similarly, rhythmic phrasing should employ contrast, space, and motivic clarity to convey musical intent.





Drummers can cultivate expressive phrasing by integrating the following techniques:





- **Economy of Gesture:** Use rests and silence to shape phrasing, allowing space to enhance tension and release.
- **Motivic Development:** Introduce short rhythmic ideas and evolve them across bar lines, reinforcing structure through variation and repetition.
- **Subdivision Flexibility:** Shift between groupings of 2s and 3s within the same measure to create rhythmic contrast and forward momentum.





By viewing 9/8 not as a rhythmic constraint but as a flexible framework for creative expression, drummers can expand their vocabulary while deepening their sense of time, form, and voice.


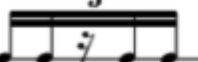

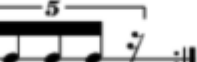
Now, let’s revisit the concept of “filling” the space of a note. In 9/8, your measure contains nine eighth-note spaces. Some of these spaces might naturally feel like eighth notes (two sixteenths), dotted quarters (three eighths), or even triplet groupings.





Below are rhythmic ideas you can use to fill the spaces:

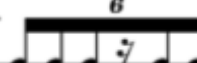



9.  10.  11.  12. 

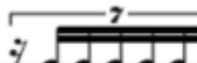

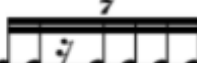
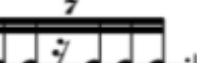
13.  14.  15.  16. 

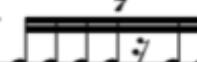
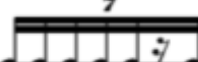
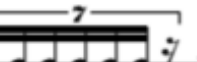

17.  18.  19.  20. 

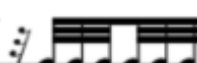



21.  22.  23.  24. 





25.  26.  27.  28. 

29.  30.  31.  32. 

33.  34.  35.  36. 

37.  38.  39.  40. 

41.  42.  43.  44. 

45.  46.  47.  48. 



Cultivating a Personal Voice in 9/8

To fully engage with 9/8, it is essential to move beyond a purely analytical understanding of the meter. Rather than treating 9/8 as a numerical construct to be solved, approach it as a rhythmic language to be internalized and articulated with nuance. True mastery comes from expressive control of your vocabulary.

Strategies for developing an individual voice within this meter include:

- **Dynamic Shaping and Articulation:** Employ varying

degrees of touch, accents, and dynamic contrast to create musical ideas from the underlying pulse.

- **Extended Phrasing Across Bar Lines:** Experiment with grouping permutations that transcend the single measure, creating long-form ideas that ebb and flow organically.

- **Reflective Practice:** Record then critically evaluate phrasing, cohesion, and musicality to inform future development.

Below are sample rhythmic ideas, grooves, and fills for you to explore:

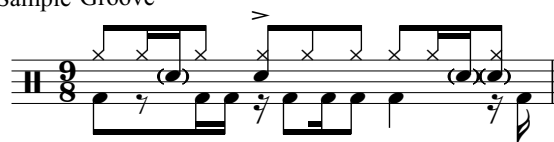
Sample Grouping



Sample Rhythm



Sample Groove



Sample Fills



Conclusion: Embracing the Process

Developing fluency in 9/8 may initially be tough and uncomfortable at first, but that discomfort is a natural and necessary part of growth. Every accomplished drummer has navigated similar terrain—uncertain phrasing, uneven subdivision, and imperfect execution. What distinguishes those players is not innate talent, but grit and perseverance, thoughtful repetition, and a willingness to remain engaged with the process.

In today's digital culture, where drumming content is often presented in its final, polished form, it is easy to overlook

the hours—often years—of deliberate practice that precede the performance. The curated clips rarely show the gradual evolution of an idea, the discarded attempts, or the incremental improvements. Mastery in 9/8, as in any musical context, is the result of sustained, reflective effort.

Don't strive for instant mastery. Instead, focus on consistent discovery and exploration. Experiment with variations and allow yourself the space to grow into the meter.

Stay with it. The process itself is the reward—and the improvement.



The History of the Bass Drum Pedal and Sock Pedals

By Tim Northup

As a drum collector I quickly became fascinated with early bass drum pedals and how they evolved over time to what we know today as the modern-day bass drum pedal. The bass drum is the driving force of our musical experience, but it is the bass drum pedal that makes this experience possible. But how did these crude looking contraptions come into existence, evolve, and help the drummer keep the time for the band?

In 1909, William F. Ludwig and his brother Theobald applied for (and were granted) a patent for an improved and modern version of the bass drum pedal. This was the first bass drum pedal that you could fold up and put in your pocket, and was the first mass produced modern drum pedal. It was produced from 1909 to 1922. This pedal was made entirely of iron and steel in a time when many pedals were made of wood and leather and were cumbersome in design and use. In 1923, Ludwig further improved the pedal with a one-piece footboard, which was faster and offered more control. Ludwig continued to lead the way and make history with many improvements in the bass drum pedal models over the years.

It is interesting that Leedy made the first manufactured pedal in the overhang pedal, but did not have a "modern" folding pedal until 1916 with the Leedy Fraser Pedal. The Fraser Pedal looked very similar to the Ludwig 1909 pedal, in fact, all Leedy's future pedals looked similar to Ludwig's pedals as they improved over the years.



Let's begin back in the 1890s. It was around this time that bands were squeezing into orchestra pits. The need of a snare drummer, a bass drummer, and a cymbal player was abandoned for the new position of one drummer doing the job of three; and the drum set was born! It was obvious that the snare drum and cymbals could be easily played with drumsticks, but there was a need for some sort of foot-operated bass drum beater. Drummers came up with all sorts of inventions for a bass drum pedal. Most of these early pedals were handmade in the workshops of drummer's homes, and were generally made of wood, with a spring and a cloth or leather wrapped ball for a beater.

Dee Dee Chandler, a New Orleans drummer, is credited in 1894 with creating the first known pedal attached to a bass drum. He created it so he could play both the snare and bass together without the need of another drummer. Before this, the drummer *could* play both instruments with a method called "double drumming." Double drumming was achieved by playing both the bass and snare with sticks (held in the drummer's hands.) However, this limited the kind of rhythms the drummer could play. Chandler's invention was very crude, but similar to what became Leedy's Overhang pedal. Northup Drums Museum is fortunate to have two original Leedy Overhang pedals in our collection. They were produced from about 1900 to 1925 and incorporated a pendulum-type beater hanging from the top of the bass drum hoop with a spring attached. A crude wooden hinged footboard was attached to the beater rod by a leather strap. The overhang pedals even featured a "clanger cymbal attachment." This helped create a popular sound in music of that time period. While this pedal accomplished its intended purpose, it was unfortunately slow to respond. The Overhang pedal was phased out by new designs that could keep up with the quickened tempos of ragtime, the popular music of the day.

The vintage bass drum pedals and foot operated contraptions (traps,) such as Sock cymbals and Low boys, that are pictured in this article are all on display in the Northup Drums Museum collection. The oldest pedal in the collection is the Leedy Overhang pedal made around 1900. It has a wooden footboard and pendulum type beater. It features a striker on the beater arm to play accents a cymbal, this arm can be turned on or off. Most bass drum pedals from 1900-1940's had a cymbal striker on the pedal. Ludwig even designed some strikers that could be activated with a lever on the side of the pedal. These pedals did not survive very well over the years because the cast white metal parts tended to break or wear out quickly.

One interesting Ludwig design had a striker and a dampener behind the cymbal that could be activated by pulling the pedal upward with your foot or heel to quickly muffle the cymbal. This was probably used in theater work. The





of Ludwig's Duncan Pedal, shown here with a bass drum pedal of the same type with Ludwig silver paint. Ludwig's earlier foot-operated-cymbal offered from 1926 to 36, was known as the Charleston or "snowshoe" pedal and looks like it was made in a home workshop! It was made from two boards shaped like a foot, with a spring hinge, and a cloth strap to keep it together and on your foot!

Our other very rare foot operated instrument is the Duplex After Beat, offered in the 1928 Slingerland catalog. This was a pedal that operated a set of brushes that would strike a 14" calf drumhead. It did not sell well and was discontinued by the next catalog. Only a few of these are known to exist.

Northup Drum Museum has two versions of this rare pedal in the collection, and one is pictured in this article.

Established in 1903, Walberg and Auge of Worcester, MA manufactured a lot of the hardware for the major drum companies for many years. Walberg and Auge also invented some of their own bass drum pedals. They were very simple and primitive. These included their Skeleton Pedal, which was used on bass drum pedals, lowboy sock cymbals, hi-hat stands, and was still in catalogs through the 1960's. The Northup Drum Museum (NDM) has a variety of these early pedals and sock cymbal contraptions in our collection and on display for drummers to play.

We have several other interesting early pedals on display, some are made of cast iron, and some are made of aluminum. They were manufactured by companies such as JW Pepper, Wilson, Duplex, and G.A. Smith (who made the heel pedal.)

The Northup Drum Museum has a display that shows the evolution of the Ludwig pedals, starting with the 1909 pedal through the Speed King and even the Ludwig ghost pedal from the 1970's. Most drummers are very familiar with the Ludwig Speed King pedal. Originally designed in 1937, the current Speed King design (from 1950) has changed very little and is possibly the most iconic drum pedal and most popular pedals of the 20th century.

The next photo shows a variety of Leedy and Slingerland pedals including the first production Leedy Fraser Pedal 1916. Slingerland did not get into the drum business until 1928, but their Epic pedal footboard design must be one of the most elegant and beautiful of all the drum companies. The Slingerland Duncan Pedal is

a type of "sock cymbal," made of cast aluminum, designed by Roy Duncan, and produced from 1932 to 36. Ludwig experimented with a version of this pedal, but as far as we know, it is uncatalogued. However, a few examples have been discovered. NDM has a pristine example

As we can see, the bass drum pedal has come a long way in 100 years. The last photo shows this evolution from a 1911 Walberg and Auge Presto pedal to a current production Drum Workshop DW5000 pedal, one of the most popular pedals of today. Look how far we have come. To see and play some of these historic and early bass drum pedals and sock cymbals, visit the Northup Drums Museum. www.northupdrums.com



Modern Drummer enjoys spotlighting new recordings that have the drums at the center of their sound. These recordings might be drummer-led, or just include a high-quality, special, or unique drumming and musical 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!

Finally George

Painter

Todd Sucherman drums
Zoumr Records



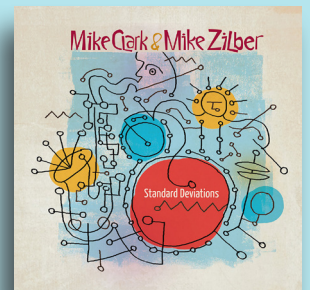
Finally George is a progressive rock band led by multi-instrumentalist Finally George (George Hahn). Todd Sucherman is the drummer on this (and past) Finally George recordings including 2018's *Life is a Killer* and 2021's *Icy Skies*. This newest release, entitled *Painter* is a drumming and musical feast. The compositions are ethereal, reflective, and inviting, reminiscent of early Genesis and Pink Floyd. George's vocals are reminiscent of David Gilmour's voice, the strings on "My Way to You" are a nice touch, the choir on "Painter," "Something New" and "Sunrise" is simply beautiful, and the drumming on everything is over-the-top spectacular. Not to mention the fact that the drum sound is absolutely fantastic. The absolute drumming standout track is "Why" which features Sucherman completely blazing. In "Child of the Universe" Sucherman is playing double drums (with himself) Genesis style. Finally George is world class music, and *Painter* is a great record. If you are a fan of progressive, well-crafted music, or just a lover of GREAT drumming. This (and the first two recordings) is a must have!

create on "Beantown," and the way that Shaw and Fields stroll on top of the in-the-cracks rolling groove. Dyson's transparent accompaniment on "Distant Images" and "Gina's Ascent" lets the listener focus on Shaw's beautiful melodies. "Baldwin's Blues" is a little more traditional, and Dyson's intro is spectacular. "Tamir" is the drumming highlight of the record. Dyson rumbling drums drive the arrangement, and creates the glue that holds everything together. Jaleel Shaw and Joe Dyson are a very good rhythmic pair.

Mike Clark & Mike Zilber

Standard Deviations

Mike Clarke drums
Sunnyside Records



Mike Clarke is one of the greatest drummers alive. We often focus on his signature funk and fusion drumming, but Mike Clarke is a fantastic jazz drummer and has a legendary pocket. With a quartet of saxophonist Mike Zilber, pianist Jon Davis, and bassist Alex Claffy, Clark lights up the music with excitement and magic. Zilber has been reimagining jazz standards for a while. None of his past recordings have been as good as this. Clark's aggressive 1960s jazz approach on "Beatrice" and "Footprints," and his loose broken swing on "I Get Along Without You" and "Green Dolphin Street (*Redolphined*)" are just amazing and are MUST listens! Check out how Clark starts his solo on "Beatrice." The swingin' roadhouse shuffle on "Blues for Chambers" is one of the best shuffles I've heard in a long time, you can just feel the recording studio light up with excitement. Both Zilber and Clark put *their thing* on John Coltrane's "Cousin Mary," and what a nice ride cymbal and beautiful touch from Clark. "Turnaround" collects all the above into one package. Clarke's world-famous funk makes an appearance on Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah (Secret Chords and Holy Doves.)" This is a very enjoyable record, Mike Zilber has never sounded better, and this is some of Mike Clark's best drumming on record.

Jaleel Shaw

Painter of the Invisible

Joe Dyson drums
Changu Records



Jaleel Shaw is a young veteran saxophonist that cut his teeth in the band of Roy Haynes, and drummer Joe Dyson is building a strong reputation in the jazz community with Pat Metheny. Can you think of a better pairing of young musicians? Shaw's music explores, and Dyson's drumming supports that exploration with quiet intensity. Dyson is of a new generation of jazz drummers that explore with a muted dynamic of extreme intensity. Their swinging accompaniment emanates from percolating rhythms that bubble right under the soloist, creating a sizzling bed of support. Listen to how Dyson enters on "Contemplation," he almost sneaks in under the radar, gently prodding Shaw and pianist Lawrence Fields. Dyson's solo that concludes "Contemplation" keeps that percolating feel before he gently exits the arrangement. Dyson and bassist Ben Street have a similar way of attacking the music. Listen to the groove they

Dom Salvador

24

Leo Costa drums
Gibi dos Santos percussion
Jazz is Dead Records

Brazilian Pianist, vocalist, and composer Dom Salvador is a musical legend. His talent has gone rater unappreciated and as a bandleader he is under-recorded. This self-titled recoding features the also underappreciated drummer Leo Costa, whose authentic Brazilian feel fuses Samba, Bossa Nova, Funk, and Samba Jazz. Producers and instrumentalists Adrian Younge and Ali Shaheed Muhammad have built their Jazz is Dead label around collaborating with, and featuring these types of unappreciated artists. Their recordings are modern examples of lush music drenched in 70s esthetic, and Dom Salvador's recording is no different. It is heavy on groove and Brazilian vibe, with strong tunes such as "Os Ancestrais" and "Musica Faz Parte De Mim." The grooves on "Minha Melanina" and "Safira" are amazing. Salvador is a one-of-a-kind musician, who thankfully is now getting more attention.



Rick Estrin and the Night Cats

The Hits Keep Coming
Derrick "D Mar" Martin drums
Alligator Records

For his fifth record on Alligator, Rick Estrin and the Night Cats continue to take no prisoners. Estrin is a strong singer and an outstanding old school harmonica player. Drummer Derrick Martin plays the music well, never drawing overt attention to his playing; instead he is supporting the music with strength and power. LEGENDARY Bassist Jerry Jemmott appears on six tunes and brings a strong groove to the proceedings. Martin proves that playing drums in a blues band isn't *only* about playing shuffles, it's a true art form. Listen to Martin's big pocket on "The Circus is Still in Town," "911," and "Somewhere Else." His brushwork on "Everybody Knows," "Diamonds at Your Feet," and "I Ain't Worried About Nothin'" is perfect, and his rolls on "I Finally Hit the Bottom" set up the breaks perfectly. But the way that Martin drives the bluesy funk of "Whatever Happened to Dobie Strange?" is what it's all about!



Vladimir Kostadinovic

Iris

Vladimir Kostadinovic drums
Criss Cross Jazz

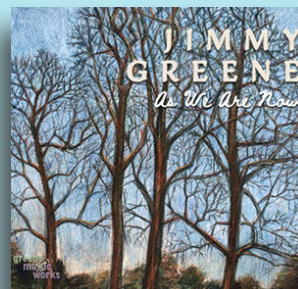
For Serbian drummer Vladimir Kostadinovic's third record as a leader, he has taken a huge step forward. The rhythmically adept melodicist from outside Belgrade has combined all the music from his background: Serbian Folk music, Fusion, and hard driving New York jazz in this set of (mostly) original compositions. Kostadinovic is a wonderful and modern composer, and his drumming and composing reflect each other perfectly. Trumpeter Alex Sipiagin, saxophonists Chris Potter and Ben Wendel mix it up well with Kostadinovic, and vibraphonist Joe Locke and pianist Geoff Keezer lay down some thick harmonic terrain, while bassist Matt Brewer and Kostadinovic hold everything together. Kostadinovic doesn't sound like a European jazz drummer, he sounds very American, but with a touch of "something different." "Iris" is a great opener and Kostadinovic bashes through the knotty tune with aplomb. Joe Locke's "Is There a Heart in This House?" is propelled by Kostadinovic's relaxed backbeats. Kostadinovic's fiery playing hooks up well with Locke's playing on Locke's brilliant arrangement of "Airegin." Wendel and Kostadinovic push each other, and Keezer burns, before a brief closing solo from Kostadinovic on this wonderful closer that fades too soon and leaves us wanting more.



Jimmy Greene

As We Are Now
Jonathan Barber drums
Rogerio Boccato percussion
Greene Music Works

Saxophonist Jimmy Greene is one of the leading saxophonists of his generation. He has an original voice and concept that distinguishes him from his peers. The same could be said for drummer Jonathan Barber, this is what makes them a perfect team of tenor sax and drums. They compete each other's ideas and strengthen each other's concepts. Listen to how they play together on the opening track called "Praises" and "Impatient." Barber's patient groove of "Unburdened" is a breath of fresh air. In fact, this entire record seems very relaxed and unhurried in a unique way. "Flood Stage" drives a little harder, Barber, congero Gabriel Globus-Hoenich, and bassist Dezron Douglas create a nice groove on "Speak Low," and at the 1:52 mark the intensity briefly shifts gears. This is a nice recording.



Anat Fort

The Dreamworld of Paul Motian
Matt Wilson drums
Sunnyside Records

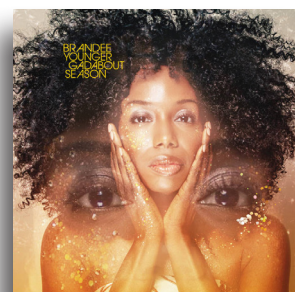
The legendary Paul Motian was many different things to many people. His drumming was iconic, but his composing is often overlooked. Motian often wrote in a very skeletal and sparse way, leaving the musicians plenty of room for interpretation. Pianist Anat Fort played with Motian, and has chosen 11 of Motian's songs to interpret for her new record, and she does them justice. This is beautiful music. Onetime Motian sideman, guitarist Steve Cardenas also sounds strong throughout, Gary Wang plays bass, and drummer Matt Wilson has the difficult "assignment" of playing drums on this record. Motian's drumming is singular, and his songs (might) evoke Motian's "one of a kind" approach. However, that would be problematic because Motian's drumming is so uniquely Paul Motian, anything else seems insincere. Wilson definitely drew a tough task on this session, but he does the job with care and respect. His playing is best on the songs "Umh Hum," and "Prairie Avenue Cowboy." Wilson's minimalist playing on Motian's classic "It Should've Happened a Long Time Ago," hits the target. This was a challenging undertaking on all fronts, and everyone paid a fitting tribute Motian's music and to the great Paul Motian.



Brandee Younger

Gadabout Season
Allan Mednard, Makaya McCraven, Ele Howell, drums
Impulse Records

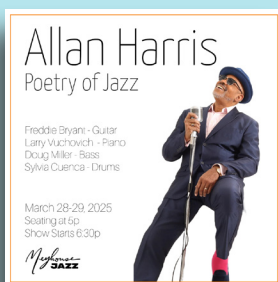
The harp is not a common instrument in jazz or popular music. However, that should not prevent you from checking out this beautiful recording, which also includes the terrific drumming of Allan Mednard (on most of the tracks) with Makaya McCraven and Ele Howell on one track each. Bassist (and producer) Rashaan Carter has helped create an exquisite soundscape of a record, and vibraphonist Joel Ross makes a mighty contribution to one track (I wish he was on more of the tunes.) Pianist Courtney Bryan creates a nice contrast on two tracks, but this entire recording is about the interesting trio of Younger, Carter, and Mednard. Carter and Mednard lay a perfect foundation for Younger's exploratory music. Check out "Breaking Point," "Unsweet Corners," and "Discernment." But the standout track on the record is "BBL," listen to how Mednard and Carter's gentle strength move it along.



Allan Harris

The Poetry of Jazz
Sylvia Cuenca drums
Live at the Blue Llama, Love
Productions Records

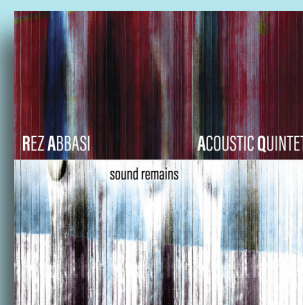
This is a relaxed and very enjoyable live recording featuring vocalist Allan Harris. Harris reads classic poetry before many of his tunes, which creates a wonderful and original presentation. Harris has a smooth, modern Lou Rawls meets Nat Cole sound to his voice. The band (propelled by Sylvia Cuenca) starts with the driving shuffle of Gamble & Huff's "Groovy People." "Weary Blues" follows with a funky groove anchored by Sylvia Cuenca, bassist Jay White, and Harris' guitar playing. Cuenca's relaxed swing on "Midnight Sun" is perfect. Alan Grubner's violin adds a great deal to the sound of the band, but the groove is all Cuenca. Nina Simone's "Sea Line Woman" is preceded by Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise," and neither has sounded better since the originals. Harris' own "Time Just Slips Away" is preceded by Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken" and is a wonderful conclusion to a beautiful and chilled out recording. Thankfully musicians like pianist John DiMartino, drummer Sylvia Cuenca, bassist Jay White, and violinist Alan Grubner have the ears and the taste to let the beauty evolve naturally around them.



Rez Abbasi Acoustic Quintet

Sound Remains
Eric McPherson drums
Hasan Bakr percussion
Whirlwind Records

Rez Abbasi's new band is his Acoustic Quintet, and I love everything about it!!! I love the fact that Abbasi is playing entirely acoustic guitar, I love the entirely acoustic instrumentation and element of this band, and I love their music. Percussionist Hasan Bakr and drummer Eric McPherson provide a musical magic carpet for Abbasi and vibraphonist Bill Ware to fly upon. Ware sounds fantastic on "Questar." McPherson can be mighty and strong, but with Abbasi's band he finds a very nice gear in which to drive this music. McPherson and Bakr are a great team, listen to "Spin Dream" and "You Are." On "Spin Dream" bassist Stephan Crump finds his place within the harmonies of Abbasi and Ware and the rhythms of McPherson and Bakr. The song "Purity" is a complete surprise, but a very pleasant one. This is a very adventurous yet very accessible music, and the band plays Abbasi's music very well.



Gonzalo, Chris, Eric, Larry

First Meeting: Live at Dizzy's Club

Eric Harland drums
5 Passion Records

Supergroups are often problematic, and sometimes boring. But when four musicians listen, meet on equal terms, and explore music together, the problems *can* evaporate, and the results *can* be very exciting. On this record, that is *exactly* what happened when Cuban pianist extraordinaire Gonzalo Rubalcaba, jazz iconoclasts Chris Potter and Eric Harland, and uber-talented bassist Larry Grenadier met with the inspiration of producer Jason Olaine. Following on the success of the *Monterey Quartet* (which was the same band except with Dave Holland instead of Grenadier,) this band's *First Meeting* was originally planned as a one-off. However, the alchemy and the spirit of exploration of the music took over, and everything was thankfully captured by Gonzalo Rubalcaba's 5 Passion label, and now there are more bookings. 5 Passion has been releasing interesting records for some time, this is their 17th release. Thankfully, this is a two CD set because the shortest of the six songs is 13 minutes long. The band is really exploring and giving each other the time to develop their ideas. The opener of Chick Corea's "500 Miles High" is a perfect meeting place and launching pad for this collective. The band explores every corner of Chick's classic composition. Harland's "Eminence" is a rumbling adventure with an amazing crescendo. The band takes its time dissecting Dizzy Gillespie's "Con Alma" only to get to a final rhythmic vamp and some outrageous trading. Harland's multi-directional drumming and Grenadier snaky bass lines sound fantastic together intertwining throughout, especially on Potter's "Oba" and Rubalcaba's "Santo Canto." This live recording is a huge rhythmic buffet, and everyone gets ample chance to eat.

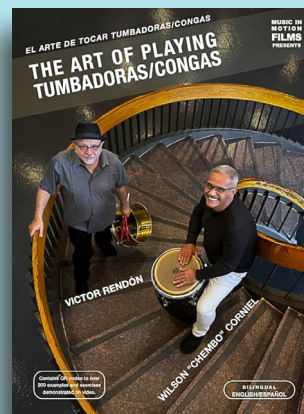


The Art of Playing Tumbadoras / Congas

By Victor Rendon and Wilson "Chembo" Corniel

Music in Motion

Firstly, to avoid any confusion, the word "tumbadoras" is the proper name for the congas. There have been many well written books on the world of Latin rhythms and their application to the drum set, but I have not seen many books this well written on the foundations of Latin Rhythm as applied to the tumbadoras / congas. Furthermore, I haven't seen a good new book on this subject in a very long time. Finally, we have a superior book on playing authentic congas in a traditional Latin band setting. Both Victor Rendon and "Chembo" Corniel are master musicians and master educators, and they present this subject in a well presented and well laid out manner. Dan Thress and Music in Motion has been releasing very high-quality instructional drum books for a long time, and this one is no different, (their Billy Martin and Mokhtar Samba books are excellent!) *The Art of Playing Tumbadoras / Congas* starts with a very good chapter on the basics, including clave, tuning, and the basic sounds. After that, there are chapters on Tumbao, Traditional, Cuban, and Puerto Rican rhythms. The notation, instructional pictures, recommended listening examples, and descriptions are stellar. And there are QR codes for over 200 video examples. The book is also bi-lingual in English and Spanish. They thought of everything! If you don't have the time to move to New York City (or Puerto Rico or Cuba) and study with a master conguero in person, *The Art of Playing Tumbadoras / Congas* is the next best thing to get you started.



Tif (Teddy) Lamson's Shania Twain Touring Kit

Photos by Jason Mehler



Drums: Gretsch USA Custom in Black Glass finish — 8x12 Rack Tom, 9x13 Rack Tom, 16x16 and 16x18 Floor Toms, 18x22 Kick Drum.

Snare: Gretsch Custom 6.5x14 Ridgeland Snare in Red Glass finish.

Heads: Toms Batter: Remo Emperor Clear; Toms Reso: Remo Ambassador Clear; Snare Batter: Remo Emperor Coated; Snare Reso: Remo Snare side Clear, Bass Drum Batter: Remo Powerstroke P3/P4 Clear.

Cymbals: Zildjian Cymbals: 16" K Sweet Crash, 15" K Fat Hats, 12" K Splash, 18" Cluster Crash, 18" K Sweet Crash, 22" K Custom Dark Ride, 20" K Custom Dark Crash, 17" K Custom Hybrid Crash, 20" Custom FX Lunar Crash by Stanton Moore.

Percussion: LP Wind Chimes, LP Cowbell, Meinl Bongos.

Hardware: DW Rack System, Tama Iron Cobra Hi-Hat stand, Pearl Eliminator Bass Drum Pedal.

Electronics: Roland SPD SX Pro, Roland RT-30HR Dual Trigger, Roland PD-8 Trigger Pad.

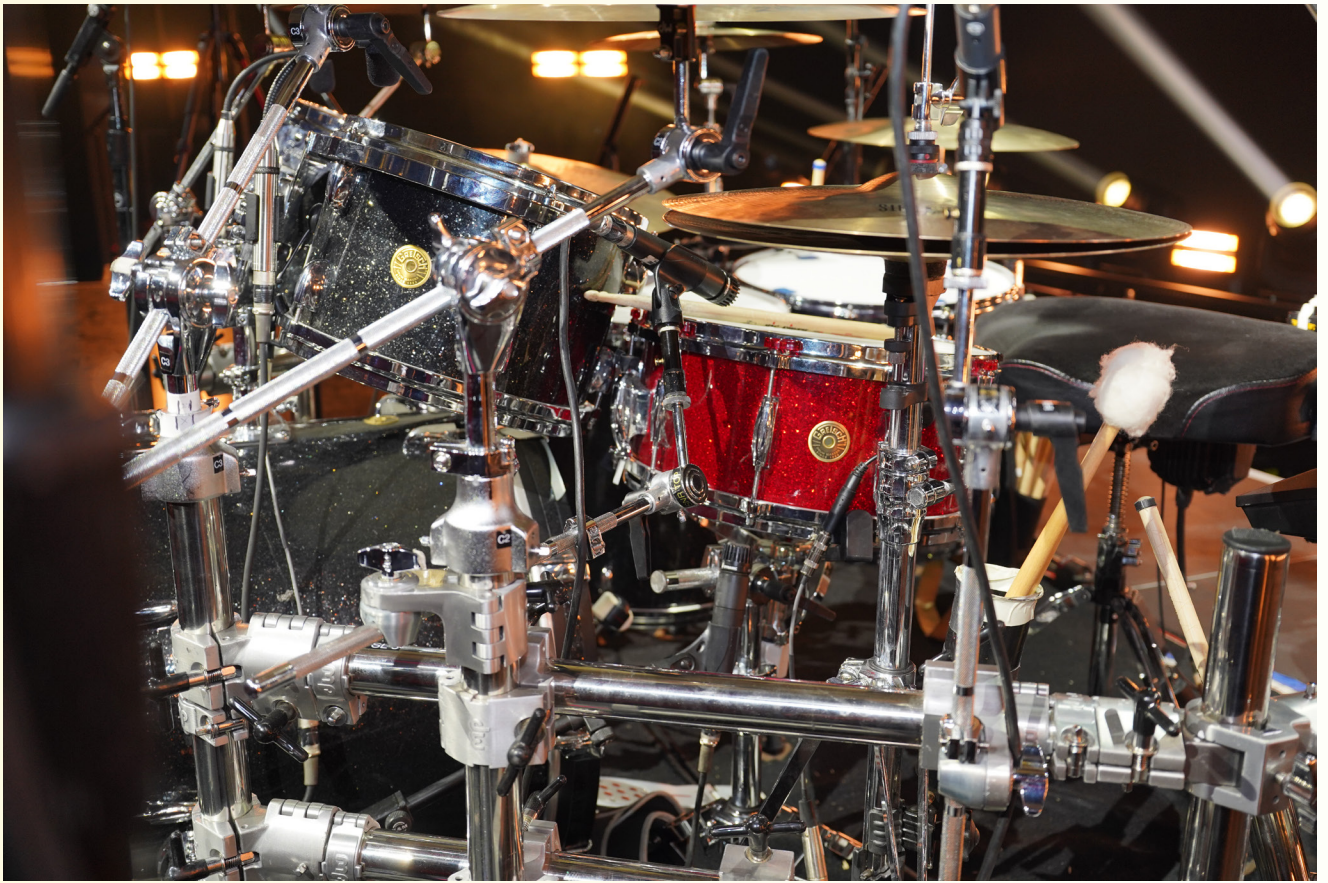
Drumsticks: Vic Firth Extreme 5B (Wood Tip), Vic Firth Extreme 55B (Wood Tip), Vic Firth T3 American

Custom Staccato Mallet, Dem' Sticks Zebra bamboo Bundles, Vic Firth Russ Miller Wire Brushes.

In-Ear Monitors: Jerry Harvey Audio – Roxanne.

Accessories: Vic Firth Caddy Stick Holder.







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Jimmy Chamberlin - Smashing Pumpkins



Max Weinberg - Bruce Springsteen

Mickey "Cavs" Cavanagh - KGLW

Mike Portnoy - Winery Dogs

Mike Wengren - Disturbed

Mikkey Dee - Scorpions

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