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JOHN OTTO

Feeling Comfortable
Being Uncomfortable



Always Looking Forward

Allan Mednard

Bowling For Soup's

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STEAL THE SPOTLIGHT



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EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

The Social Groove of Change

Playing and creating music is a social activity. Both of this month's feature interviews state the importance of playing music *with people*. It's an important step in becoming a *musician* (not "just" a drummer.) Whether you are making beats with a DJ, shedding blast beats with a bassist, improvising jazz duets with a saxophonist, performing with a dance class, helping a songwriter workshop some new tunes, or playing time for your eight-year-old niece as she practices the trombone. The importance of playing music *with other people* cannot be over-stated, and it's *FUN!!!*



Thankfully, most of the states in the US, and Australia have recently restricted children's use of smart phones and social media, and hopefully many will follow suit. Therefore, many kids will have some more time and will need a new social activity to replace all that time staring at their screens. How about filling that time with the social activity of playing music?

But it's not just kids. Adolescents and adults need social activity too. We are spending too much time in our isolated little bubbles developing relationships with our *phones*. It's NOT healthy, and it's harming our mental health. For parents, *THIS* is the perfect time to join your kids in learning an instrument and opening a line of communication through playing music *together*. I'm sure you can agree on what Nirvana, Green Day, AC DC, or Beatles song you'd like to learn and play *together*. You do not have to be a genius, or a virtuoso to learn how to play a couple songs.

But it shouldn't stop there. Go out and hear some live music. Take the opportunity to be in the same room with a musician honing their craft and entertaining people. Go see a show with some friends, *listening* to music is a social activity too! I also suggest, taking your kids to hear some music as well. Let music bridge the generations and open a dialogue with your kids and your friends and allow music to make you ALL happy *together*.

We humans are social animals, we NEED interaction, and that interaction has become difficult and rare for many. Let music become the inspiration and the beginning of that interaction, music can be the fuel for developing and spreading happiness. Sharing, experiencing, interacting, and developing relationships does NOT happen inside your phone, nor does music, nor does happiness.

In 2026, let's allow music to heal us, help us, empower us, and improve us. Let the drums create the beat of change and inspire us to put down our phones and interact with the people around us and find and create happiness. Let the drums be at the center of our new relationships with music, people, and ourselves. Drumming lives within music, let music live within you. And with one giant groove, we can make the world a better place, one drummer at a time.

Mark Griffith

Editor-in-chief, Director of Content

Modern Drummer



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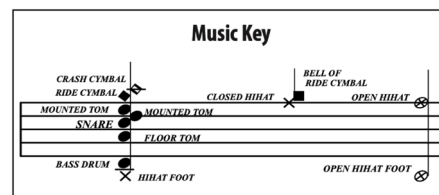
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KIT OF THE MONTH



Jenna's Drums with Some Southern Charm

After meeting drummer Jenna Kopitske at the Music City Drum Show in Nashville, we were excited that Jenna reached out to us to show off her kit. Jenna's Prizm Blue finish Pearl Export EXR Series Kit is beautiful. Her toms are 8x12", 9x13", and 16 x 16", and her 6", 8", and 10" Remo Rototoms round out her sound palette. Her snare of choice is a Pearl 5.5x14" Steel Shell.

Her tom heads are Remo Emperors, and she favors an Evans Calftone Snare Head. Her hardware is all Drum Workshop, including a DW 5000 Series Single Pedal, and a Roc-N-Soc Nitro Drum Throne is at the center of everything.

Her Paiste Cymbals are: (from R to L) 14" Signature Traditionals Medium Light Hi-Hats, an 18" Signature Mellow Crash, an 18" Masters Dark Crash, a 22" Masters Crisp "Rosie" Ride, and a PSTX Swiss Thin Crash 18".

We at *Modern Drummer* love seeing all of the different kit's that our readers are playing. Thanks for saying hello in Nashville, it's always nice to meet and talk to the readers. Thanks Jenna!

Steve Gadd, Sublimation in Action

By Peter Erskine

One would need to be the proverbial hermit living in a cave since the mid-1970s to have not heard the drumming of Steve Gadd. And one would necessarily be a grinch or a grouch to not appreciate the skill, power, and charisma of his drumming. Of all the drummers to have come along since the heyday of legendary jazz icons (say, from Art Blakey up through Jack DeJohnette,) it is my considered opinion that Steve Gadd has exhibited and exerted more influence and skill than any other drummer.

If you asked me to describe Steve's drumming in one word these past few years, I would have answered, "kinetic." The volcanic energy just beneath the surface has long been an identifying characteristic of his drumming power. But, just a few days ago, I witnessed a change in Steve's style. He brought forth an element that has always been part of his approach, something I considered as a brake or check of drumming ego. Serving the song. His bringing this admirable sense of restraint to such an elevated plane is not going to be easy to describe but I'll give it my best shot. In short: his sublimation was sublime.

What is sublimation? In chemistry, it is when a solid turns straight into a gas without melting into a liquid first. Dry ice is a classic example (going from solid carbon directly to CO2 vapor.) According to ChatGPT, "It takes specific conditions (usually low pressure or the nature of the material itself) for this to happen." I like this explanation, but it's the psychiatric term or context I'm interested in. Sublimation in this sense is taking a strong (often socially unacceptable) impulse, usually aggressive or sexual, and redirecting it into something acceptable or productive. It's considered healthy because it transfers raw impulses into something useful rather than suppressing them. *I'm onto something here.*

This moment of drumming selflessness took place at a memorial event celebrating Michele Ito — a remarkable woman who, among many roles, managed Steve's band. James Taylor was there with his band to help pay tribute to Michele who passed away from the complications of ALS in September. The audience was made up of friends, colleagues, and friends of

friends, and we were all there to remember Michele while thinking on life and loss. Of course, no one was interested to see or hear any apparent displays of musical virtuosity. That being said, Steve's drumming was so focused, so specific, so dynamically controlled, and so heartfelt that it may well have

been one of THE most virtuosic percussive performances I have ever witnessed.

The room was small, and the PA system was minimal. The drums were not amplified, as I recall. Steve chose to play with brushes for James' song. Every drum and cymbal spoke with a consistent voice, clear but never loud. The pocket or timing



of every beat was superb but never in your face. Steve has nothing to prove. And it's that confidence of a sensei or master musician that allows the music to flow most freely. Everyone in James' band, including bassist Jimmy Johnson, guitarist Michael Landau and keyboardist Larry Goldings, were all on that same page of controlled yet relaxed intention. My drum-centric point of view leads me to assert that Gadd was leading the way. I'm a big fan of James Taylor, both as an artist and as a human being. I could not take my eyes or ears off Steve, however...

Let's start with his hands. Relaxed. His wrists move just enough to create the necessary snap to produce the tone he hears in his head. His arms flow around the kit in a measured ballet of mechanical function. Each stroke is direct and to the point. There is no wasted motion, no playing for effect, and nothing out of place. In short: perfect.

Steve's modesty extends beyond the drum set, so I am certain that if he were to read this, he would shrug it off as excessive praise. Readers of this column know me well enough, *I think*, to recognize that I do not "give it up" so often or so readily for my drumming colleagues. Which, in itself, is a topic worthy of conversation: how many professions can you think of where competitors so openly share trade secrets while praising one another? Drumming is the best sort of club AND job description, *right?* Gadd is singular, however, in his selflessness. When it comes to others, the man just gives. I hope that he will not mind my turning this spotlight on him.



Some history. I first heard Steve Gadd when I was a sophomore in high school and our jazz band director took us to hear a concert by the United States Army big band, otherwise known as the U.S. Army Field Band Jazz Ambassadors. They were based at Fort Meade, Maryland, and this particular tour brought them to Traverse City, Michigan (my high school, located nearby, was the Interlochen Arts Academy). I was seated in the front row, right in front of the rhythm section. When the band began its first set, the drummer was good. His name was John Gates. He was playing alongside a percussionist whose *piatti* or crash cymbal technique immediately grabbed our attention: as soon as he crashed his two cymbals together, his elbows dropped, and he brought the cymbals down as opposed to the usual "Statue of Liberty" torch in the air sort of playing we were used to seeing (think of the cymbals forming large Mickey Mouse ears and you get the idea of how we played cymbals). We would later find out that this particular technique was taught to Steve by Professor John Beck at the Eastman School of Music. Anyway, back to this concert. The percussionist was good, but aside from that somewhat unique cymbal technique, nothing really stood out about his conga drumming or tambourine playing.

For the second set, the percussionist was now at the drum set; the two musicians had switched roles. Whoa. Everything felt VERY different.

The band was about to play "Cissy Strut," a tune by The Meters (who I was not yet hip to in 1970,) and a song that needed no introduction. But this Army drummer played an intro that, well ... speaking truthfully, it was one of two times in my life that I have ever jumped out of my chair with excitement, not knowing how else to contain or express my amazement. As I recall, three of us in the front row jumped up and began screaming. We were like teen-aged girls at a Beatles concert! *THAT was Steve Gadd.*

We ran up to him as soon as the concert was finished while he was attempting to pack up his cymbals, peppering him with questions like, "What's your name?" "Who ARE you?" "Where do you come from?" Steve was amiable and a bit overwhelmed by the attention. He mentioned that he played a bit professionally in Atlantic City, New Jersey which was right next to where I grew up. I then exclaimed, "My father told me about you! He came home from a jazz club one night a couple of years ago and said, 'I just heard the most amazing little Italian drummer tonight.'"

Not too long after this, I was professionally drumming as well, and two of my bandmates on the Stan Kenton Orchestra had been trumpet players in that Army big band. They told me some wild stories about Steve and basic training, but I'll save those for another time. It was also not too long after this that I began seeing and hearing Steve Gadd on albums or on the television, and then, suddenly, he was *everywhere*. And he was *amazing*.

When I joined Weather Report in 1978, it was thanks to Jaco

recommending me to Joe Zawinul and Wayne Shorter. Jaco had also recommended Steve to do some recording on the album that would become *Mr. Gone*. My first bit of recording on that album, in fact, was overdubbing to Steve's drumming on the tune "Young and Fine." The point I want to make now, however, has to do with Jaco's bubbling-over excitement to play me a cassette of the rough mixes of a new album he had worked on for a composer named Michel Colombier. Steve was playing drums, and I never saw Jaco more enthused or proud about something he had done than these tracks with Steve Gadd. The name of the album is *Michel Colombier*, look it up. I'm on a few tunes as well, but the tune "Layas" is the match-made-in-heaven paring of Jaco and Steve that proves to be the centerpiece of

the album. Be sure to fasten your seat belt, because it becomes quite extraordinary. For whatever it's worth, Jaco played with Alex Acuña, with me, with Tony Williams, and with Jack DeJohnette, among others ... and this track with Steve triggered his excitement more than anything else I ever saw.

And who among us has not seen Steve's mastery in full power and display as part of that legendary *Buddy Rich Tribute Concert*, especially when he drums alongside Dave and Vinnie? In a word: wow. In another two words: pure class.

Steve and I have crossed paths a lot over the years. I have followed him in some recording projects as well as some bands (Steps Ahead née Steps being the most notable one.) I consider him a best friend even though we've never had a meal together (the exception being a Zildjian banquet that was part of the *American Drumming Achievement Awards* event back in 1998,) or been to each others' homes. When my older brother passed away in 2015, I was working in Paris, France. I was with my wife, thankfully, but I was otherwise alone and far from home. Only one person called to offer condolences and some brotherly comfort, and that person was Steve Gadd. That's the kind of person he is. He is also one of the best joke tellers in the world. Again, *for another time*.

Steve's own life has been marked by more trials and tribulations than seem fair ... but no one has ever said that life is fair, *right*? He carries on as we all must. Somewhere in the journey of Steve Gadd, the man has found a musical peace that infuses his drumming with light and knowingness.

Condolences to Michele's husband Walt Fowler, daughter Chelsea and her extended family and friends. I would be remiss not to urge you, dear reader, to contribute towards supporting research to combat ALS. Learn more at alsnetwork.org 

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



NEW & NOTABLE

SJC Drums Marks 25 Years with Anniversary Kit and Snare

To celebrate 25 years of custom innovation, SJC Drums has unveiled a striking limited-edition 25th Anniversary 3-piece maple shell pack and matching snare drum, available exclusively at Guitar Center. Handcrafted in Southbridge, Massachusetts, these collector-grade instruments pay tribute to the brand's fearless creativity, punk roots, and uncompromising attention to tone. Only five shell packs and twenty-five snares have been built worldwide, each individually numbered and signed by the SJC crew.



The shell pack pairs 7x12" and 14x16" toms with a 18x22" kick, constructed from SJC's proprietary M5/M7 maple shell blend—5-ply toms for fast, cutting response and 7-ply kick for commanding low-end projection. 45-degree bearing edges ensure consistency and control across every setup, while Chrome Shield lugs, chrome hardware, and a custom XXV brass-and-chrome badge celebrate the company's quarter-century of craftsmanship.



The matching 6.5x14" snare features a 7-ply maple shell with 45-degree edges, chrome 7/8 offset tube lugs, and a Trick GS007 throw-off for precise snare response and stable tuning. Together, the kit and snare embody SJC's perfect blend of modern definition and vintage warmth, built for drummers who demand individuality and performance in equal measure.

Finished in vibrant pink glitter with a chrome inlay stripe, the set is both an homage to SJC's earliest custom builds and a bold statement of where the brand is headed. Each piece ships with a numbered certificate of authenticity, marking its place in SJC's 25-year story of handcrafted excellence.

Sonique Drums Expands KitFx™ with the Stage Pro Tension Rods

Sonique Drums, a leading innovator in drum and percussion accessories, is proud to announce Stage Pro tension rods, part of the Sfx™ family of accessories. Once reserved for Sonique's own drums, the Stage Pro stainless steel tension rods are now available to the public and OEM builders. The Stage Pro tension rods were created as a premium upgrade to die-cast, chrome plated tension rods that will rust, pit, and chip over time and may fit inconsistently from one drum key to another. It's yet another example of listening to what drummers want and responding with improved accessories for drummers everywhere.

Why This Is Great for Drummers:

- Universal fit - No need to swap out other parts
- Superior strength & durability
- Long-lasting finish
- Provides a less expensive upgrade option compared to competitors

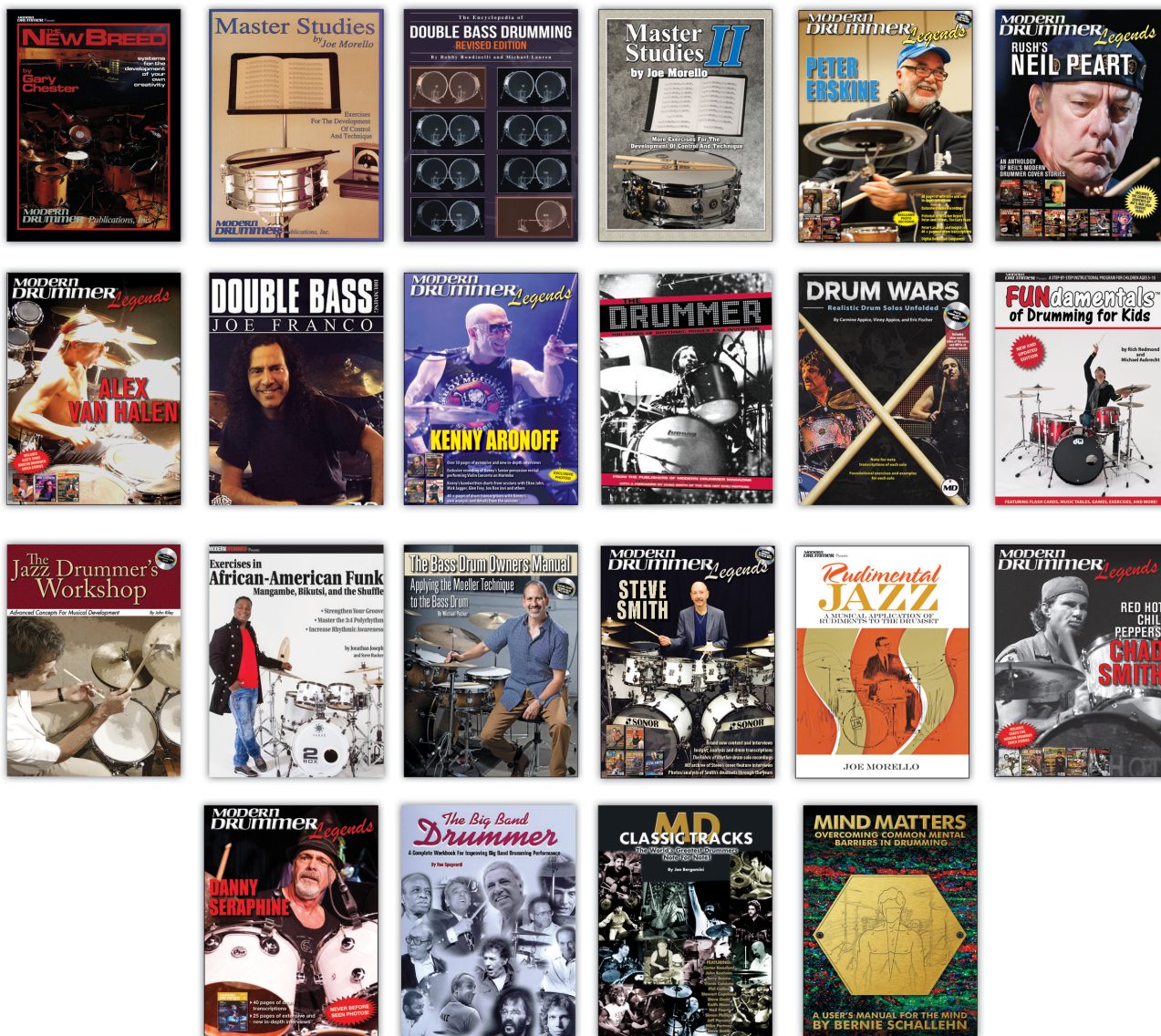
About Sonique Drums

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. Learn more at soniquedrums.com



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PASIC50 Celebration

Story and Photos by Bob Campbell

The Percussive Arts Society (PAS) is the world's largest non-profit, music-service organization whose mission is to inspire, educate, and support percussionists and drummers throughout the world. Each year, they host an amazing event known as Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC®). The PASIC50 was held in Indianapolis November 12–15, 2025, marking a milestone 50th year recognized as *The Greatest 4 Days in Drums and Percussion*™. PASIC50 united an extraordinary global community of performers, students, educators, creators, and industry leaders in a spirited celebration of rhythm, innovation, and musical artistry.



Matt Billingslea



JP Bouvet



Greg Clark Jr.



Gregg Bissonette

Strasbourg, the Santa Clara Vanguard Percussion Section, Kevin von Kampen and the USF Percussion Ensemble, Brett Dietz and Hamiruge – The LSU Percussion Group, Nikki Glaspie & Punkadelick, Jamey Haddad & Friends, the Jeff Hamilton Trio, and Dafnis Prieto and the Sí o Sí Quartet.

In addition, there were stellar solo clinics by **Stefon Harris** (4-time Grammy winning jazz vibraphonist and educator), **Christopher Rosas** (frame drum fundamentals, percussionist, educator), **Jeremy Wade** (bodhran, percussionist, educator, composer) and **Nancy Zeltsman** (marimba, PAS Hall of Fame member), just to name a few.

The drum set clinics were truly outstanding, featuring a

This historic 50th PASIC event drew a record-breaking crowd of more than 7,800 attendees, traveling from across North America and over 20 countries. Participants immersed themselves in an expansive showcase of concerts, clinics, masterclasses, workshops, panel discussions, and demonstrations—spanning every imaginable branch of the percussion universe. With more than 100 sessions, PASIC50 celebrated the vast spectrum of percussion, from drum set to marching, tympani to tap dancing, world, symphonic, marimba, electronic, and interactive styles—presenting a truly panoramic view of the art form.

A star-studded roster of artists illuminated PASIC50's stages, including notable groups such as: **Les Percussions de**



Marc Diecianni and Nick Costa



bevy of talented drummers from around the world - **Matt Billingslea** (Taylor Swift), **Gregg Bissonette** (Ringo Starr's All Starr Band), **JP Bouvet** (touring drummer, educator, author), **Greg Clark Jr.** (Stanley Clarke, Snarky Puppy), **Marc Dicciani** (Randy Brecker, Christian McBride, educator) and **Nick Costa** (drummer, educator, PAS Drumset Committee member), **Nikki Glaspie** (Punkadelick), **Brandon Green** (biomechanics expert,



fitness professional, and drumming enthusiast), **Greg Hersey** (percussionist, educational artist), **Glenn Kotche** (Wilco), **Mike Mangini** (Dream Theater), **Murray Piper** (Eric Johnson, educator, author), **Dafnis Prieto** (Grammy-winning and Latin Grammy-nominated drummer, composer, and MacArthur Fellow), **Wayne Salzmann II** (drummer, educator, author, composer), **Omar Hakim** (legendary touring/recording drummer with top artists including Michael Jackson, Chaka Khan, Daft Punk, and others),



Murray Piper



Dafnis Prieto



Wayne Salzmann II



Ash Soan

Isac Jamba (Brazilian touring/recording drummer, educator), **Ash Soan** (legendary recording/touring drummer, has recorded 60 Top 10 for major artists), **Dave Weckl** (Chick Corea, Dave Weckl Band), and **Rashid Williams** (John Legend).

PASIC50 also extended beyond the Indiana Convention Center to the wider Indianapolis community, where members of PAS and PASIC artists delivered master classes in local public schools, and the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra presented a special partner concert with renowned PAS percussionists, **Michael Burritt** and **Ivan Trevino**. On a larger scale, a rare performance of the musical piece, "Inuksuit", transformed White



Dave Weckl



Rashid Williams

River State Park into a living soundscape. Inuksuit is a modern classical, concert-length percussion piece composed by Pulitzer Prize and Grammy Award-winning composer, **John Luther Adams**, in which the performers are widely dispersed and move throughout a large, open area. With 150 percussionists spread across the park, audiences wandered amongst the musicians, allowing them to experience first-hand the largest performance of the piece ever staged.

The celebration wrapped up with a high-voltage finale by the band, Galactic, featuring **Jelly Joseph** and **Stanton Moore**. They unleashed their signature New Orleans funk for an exciting and memorable evening of music, later inviting other PASIC performers and presenters onstage for an exuberant closing jam.

"PASIC50 was an incredible experience and absolutely one for the record books," said **Joshua Simonds**, Executive Director of the Percussive Arts Society. "This was the largest PASIC event in its 50-year history. PASIC is open to anyone who enjoys music

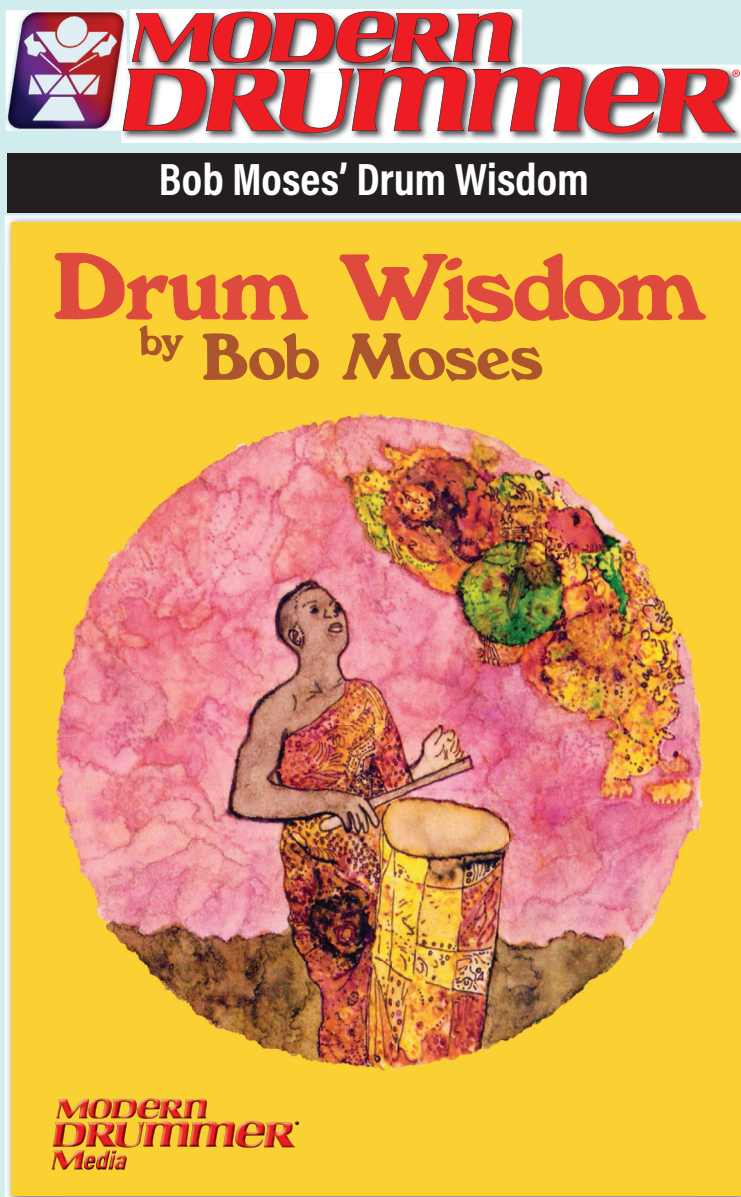
and the art form of drums and percussion. It's truly a music festival, a family reunion of sorts, where we are bringing the drummer and percussionist from the back to the front of the stage. Our community came together to learn, connect, and celebrate—from groundbreaking clinics to concerts that literally had people dancing in the aisles."

When asked to share some of his own memorable moments from PASIC50, Joshua responded, "In general, it's nice to connect to people who you haven't seen in a long time, like people you've been talking with online, but then the moment you meet in person, you both light up and truly connect in a personal way. Each time I see those smiles is just really great.

One special person that I got to meet was (the late) **Remo Belli's** wife, **Ami Belli**. Remo was not just the founder of Remo, Inc., but he also helped start this organization (PAS). So, Remo

and Ami were there from the beginning of PAS. We chatted for a bit. Ami told me wonderful stories about Remo and mentioned how she really enjoyed seeing all the old friends, artists, and students in the drumming community at PASIC and that meant so much to her. That was very special to me."

PASIC returns to Indianapolis next year. PASIC 2026 will be held November 11–14 at the Indiana Convention Center. Mark your calendars for another unforgettable celebration of the percussive arts. 



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UNBREAKABLE RHYTHM: My Journey through Music, Wellness, & Mental Strength

By Frank Zummo

Tommy Lee, drummer for Mötley Crüe and solo artist, says: *"The older I get, the more I actually realize, feel, and (sort of) digest, my sense of legacy and inspiration. To have inspired somebody this much, to have them achieve something for themselves is just overwhelming. That's how Frank makes me feel. He just makes me eternally happy. It's wonderful. It's beautiful. It's weird!"*

The whole point of my book is, if you're not a drummer or any kind of musician, you will still feel triumphant when you're done reading it. You will be inspired and fired up because we need more of that in this world!

A lot of musicians write books to share their stories, from their creative lives to their crazy tour tales to more scandalous moments. This is not that book.

From the beginning, my mission was seeing how these workshop events were saving lives first-hand, motivating, and inspiring people. I do five to seven events a year—a small amount compared to the sheer size of the world. I want to be able to have this message be around the world. That's why this is in a book: Because I can't be everywhere I want to be. The goal is to put what I do—and the message—into

a book to inspire people, motivate them, and supply them with the resources to get help. And then take all this stuff and intertwine it with stories of what I've experienced.

The kids at my events see pictures of me at these giant festivals in front of thousands of people and on TV, and they just think I'm a superhero. And I'm no different than any of these kids: I just had a vision and a path, and I stayed on it until it happened. That's what I'm preaching out here. There's no reason why they can't be up here if they stay on that same path. So, if I can relay that message and intertwine the amazing things that got me to this place, it would hopefully help instill people with some much-needed joy. I've been so fortunate to have this life and these experiences. And as a young kid who came from nothing, it's just crazy.

There's this great book called *The Art of Fear* by Kristen Ulmer. She was the world's most extreme female skier at a time where girls were not doing that, and she was trouncing the guy skiers. It's a book that I got into because I was having some issues with fear. It's a really well-done book because

The kids at my events see pictures of me at these giant festivals in front of thousands of people and on TV, and they just think I'm a superhero. And I'm no different than any of these kids...



Photo by Djae Berle

From the beginning, my mission was seeing how these workshop events were saving lives first-hand, motivating, and inspiring people.

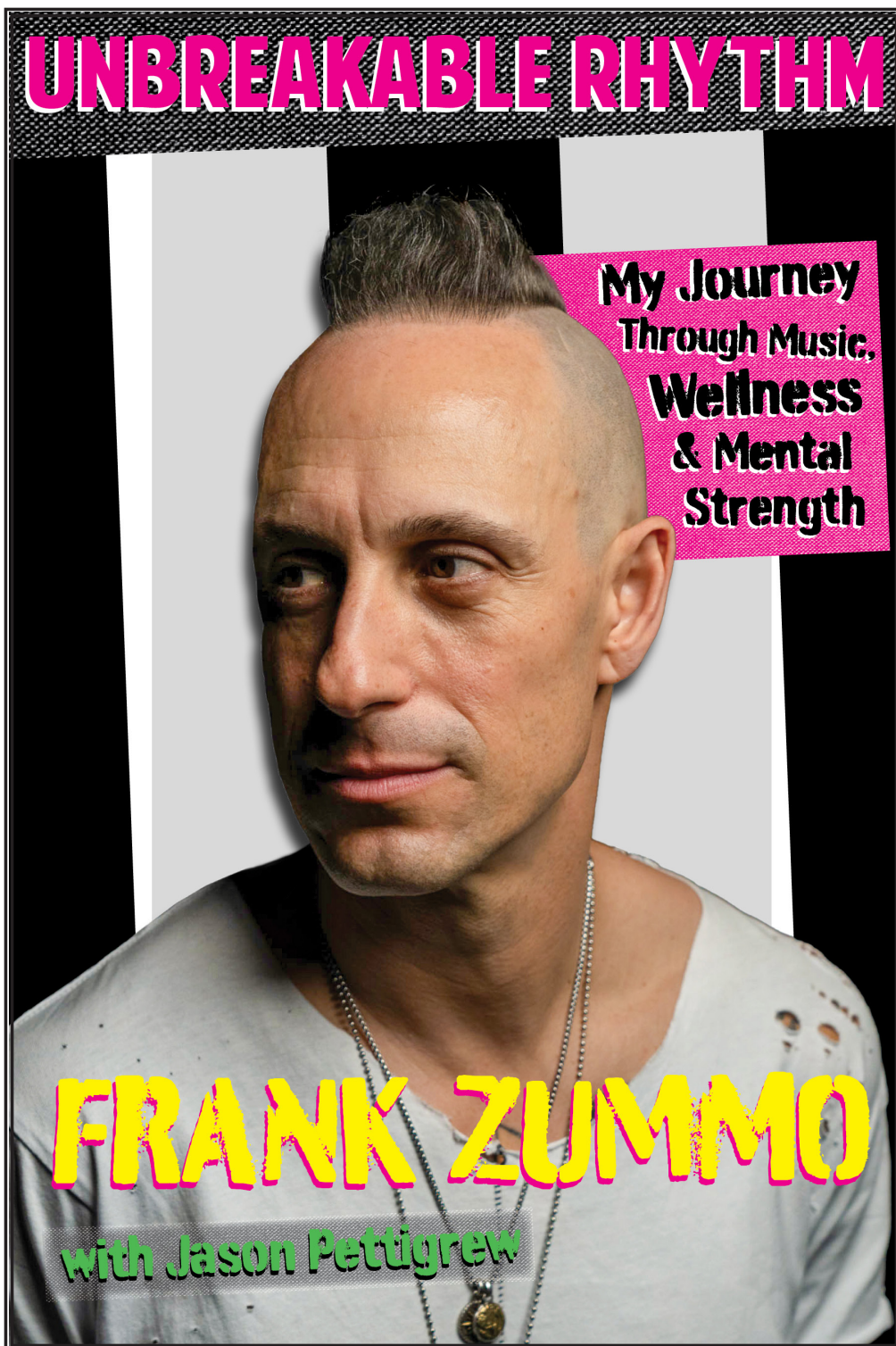
it talks about fear and her relationship with it. I'll tell the kids who come to my events about "having fun with fear tonight," because it's something that people simply don't do. They *think* about fear, and we're always being told "don't be afraid" or "no fear." And it's like, *no*. Shit is scary, and Ulmer's book talks about that, but it's also intertwined with all her great stories and experiences. Her book is not just a "look at me and all the rad shit I've done" book: I found it both very empowering and necessary. I've never skied in my life (and I never will,) but this book is *incredible*. It didn't matter that I wasn't a skier: The whole point of my book is, if you're not a drummer or any kind of musician, you will still feel triumphant when you're done reading it. You will be inspired and fired up because we need more of that in this world! There's just too much dark, negative bullshit.

I wish so many more people (that have way more visibility than me) would use their forums for good. Most band dudes post to their social media platforms how rad their life is. You know, posting pictures of their famous wives or hanging out with celebrities. What does that show the kids? Showing a kid that, "Oh, if you're a rock star you have to date a famous girl and post pictures of her ass in a bikini." *That's not what it's about.* The people that I look up to use their platforms to give back, motivate, and inspire. To me, that's what being a true artist—and just even a *human*—is about.

But right now, it's the day before the final Sum 41 performance at the Juno Awards, where we'll close the show with our last ever performance and then get inducted into the Canadian

Music Hall of Fame. My fear and anxiety are set to "stun." It's over tomorrow and the reality of what's next is here!

This is an excerpt for Frank Zummo's Book, **UNBREAKABLE RHYTHM: My Journey through Music, Wellness, & Mental Strength**, published by Modern Drummer Publications.



PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

Evans Accessories: Gels, Rings, Patches, and Keys

By Brian Hill

Our friends over at Evans (by D'Addario) sent us a box full of fun to check out that included their Overtone Damping E-Ring Pack; Damping Gel EQ and Mini EQ Pods; Bass Drum EQ Patch; and an assortment of Drum Keys that included their new Pull Cord Drum Key.



This review has been several months in the making as I really wanted to give these items a real good run before I made any conclusions. The E-Rings and EQ Pods made their way around my Drum Studio Lab just to see how they affected different drums and heads. For each solution, I found several willing drum and head combinations that made the drums sound better!

I really liked the way the E-Ring damping rings worked as they eliminated most of the unwanted overtones from “ringy” heads with a shorter sustain and really “mellowed” the drum and head out. The sizes provided were 10”, 12”, 14”, and 16”. These sizes covered the snare and toms and are available in different size assortment packs. The rings are about an inch wide and made from a 7mil film. To me, they act like an “acoustic gate” as they float on the head. With the E-Ring, you can cut them to create a custom sound for each drum or tape pieces back together for something different. They are easy to use, and they stay on the drum head!

The EQ Pods came in two different size packs. There are three different gel sizes: Mini, Medium, and Large. The Mini EQ Pods Pack contains 12 Mini Pods and two Medium sized damping gels. The regular pack of EQ Pods contains six medium and two large damping gels. They come in a ready-for-travel metal case that fits easily in your gig bag. EQ Pods are totally reusable and long-lasting. They stick to the drumhead and stay there until you take them off and put them somewhere else. The EQ Pods will help to eliminate unwanted overtones and really mellow the head out giving you a very pleasant sound from heads that ring too much. They even work on cowbells!

The Evans EQ Patch for kick drums is a real “no-brainer!” Simply place it on the impact strike zone of the kick head and use it to extend the life of the head from your constant attack.

Made from flexible non-slip Aramid Fiber, it will also provide better tone without changing the sound of the head.

There were three different drum tuning keys that came in our fun box. They included the Evans Magnetic key which utilizes a magnet in the tuning slot which grips the tension rod. It even stays in place upside down while tuning resonant side heads. The key is big and beefy and feels good in your hand. The Drill Bit Drum Key is an attachment for a drill or screw gun to swiftly deal with tension rods. Both keys are nicely engraved with the Evans logo.

Evans flagship drum key is the Pull Cord Drum Key. This is the larger of the keys and looks like a futuristic tool. I bet you ain't seen one of these before. Based on the idea of getting the tension rods in or out of the lug as quickly as possible, it uses a very clever “Pull Cord” design. The idea reminds me of a compromise between a ratchet and a screw gun in motion, only smaller and even more convenient.

The Pull Cord Drum Key has three female tension rod receptors (like a regular drum key) for a tension rod. The main receptor works like any drum key. The difference lies with the other two lateral tension rod receptors. There are two arrows on each side of the key pointing in a single direction. To remove a tension rod, simply break it loose with the standard key rod receptor, place the receptor with the red ring side up, aligning with the upward aiming arrows, and pull the cord a few times and the rod comes swiftly out of the lug. To reverse the play, set the tension rod in the lug, place the white side ring of the key downward aligning with the arrows, and pull the cord a few times and the rod will seat itself and you're ready to tune your drum.

Evans has come to represent real quality in all things they do. I would recommend any or all these clever and realistic solutions for any drummer who enjoys quality and the art of percussion. For pricing on these and other clever solutions and accessories by Evans, check your local drum store or check 'em out at **Daddario.com**



Yamaha Recording Custom Snares: Birch and Brass, Wood and Metal

By Brian Hill

Yamaha Recording Custom Snares are considered by many to be some of the finest drums made for recording or live use. The attention to detail in any of Yamaha's Recording Custom drums is second to none! The folks at Yamaha sent *Modern Drummer* some of the new Recording Custom Snares to check out in several different sizes, including some Birch Wood Shells, and some Solid Brass Shells. We'll start with the wood drums.

We received two Yamaha Recording Custom Wood Snares, one in 5.5x14" in a beautiful Classic Walnut finish, and an 8x14" in the Solid Black finish. Both Recording Custom snares had a 6 ply / 6mm thick all Birch shell and bearing edges of 45 degrees with a centered and reinforced vent hole. The chrome counter hoops for the birch drums are a light weight 1.6mm, triple-flange style, along with ten newly designed one-piece chrome-plated lugs.

The snare wires are 25-strand steel with an optional (and included) Steve Gadd style 10-strand for the 5.5" drum. This 10-strand snare style is really a 14-strand snare with four of the inner snares removed. The snare strainer is a heavy-duty Q-Type Strainer with DC3 type snare butt. Remo Ambassador coated batter and clear snare side heads round them out. A sound control ring is included with the 5.5x14" drum to tighten it up a bit.

The Yamaha Recording Custom Brass Shell Snares came to us in three sizes: 5.5x14", 6.5x14", and 6.5x13". All the brass shells are 1.2 mm thick and feature an outward center bead for strength. The bearing edges are 45 degrees along with an off-centered, reinforced vent hole. Chrome-plated counter hoops are the 2.3 mm Dyna Hoop triple-flange style, along with ten newly designed, one-piece chrome-plated lugs (except for the 13" drum, which has eight one-piece chrome lugs.)

A heavy-duty Q-Type Snare Strainer is standard on all three sizes as well as the DC3 type Butt. The snare wires are 25-strand steel for the 6.5x14" and 20-strand steel snares for the 5.5x14" and the 6.5x13" drums. Remo Ambassador heads are standard, and I must say that the brass shell with contrasting chrome-plated hardware is a nice look!

These drums sounded and performed great. They responded extremely well to all normal tuning ranges and were extremely easy to tune. I found some very good soundbites online that should help get anyone who's interested in these drums started. I began by tuning them all to an 85psi on the Drum Dial, to hear a fair representation of the shell sounds. Both the Birch and the Brass had a nice warm timbre, but the brass shells were a bit brighter than the birch.



PRODUCT CLOSE-UP



The birch 8x14" drum had an extra deep sound comparatively, but the 5.5" drum was also warm and clean with a nice depth. The sensitivity was great on both drums as the snare sound came through nicely. The snares-off sound was deep and rich with no unpleasant overtones.



The brass drums were also very clean sounding drums with a great snare sound and no unpleasant overtones, and the tuning was responsive at all normal tensions. Yamaha says that using an outward facing center bead makes these brass drums offer a "more open sound" with a "crisp, articulate performance." Indeed, my ears hear it the same way. The sound of brass snares is very musical (as are all the Recording Custom Snares) as brass is considered by many to be a very musical and resonant metal. Brass also has a unique penetrating sound quality. A sound control ring was also included on the 5.5" drum to help mellow it out!



Overall, it would be difficult *not* to recommend any of these Yamaha Recording Custom Snare Drums. Birch or Brass, Wood or Metal, which one is up to you! They're fantastic drums. Both shell materials offer a nice crisp attack with clean, warm, sounds. They look great, they sound great! There is plenty of information to be found online or in your local music store. Prices will vary depending on which style and size you choose, but these are not cheap drums. It's all about quality here. Check 'em out at **Yamaha.com** or anywhere quality drums are sold.

Keyner Drum Key

By Jason Mehler

How many drum keys do you own? After more than 40 years behind the kit, I've accumulated more than I can count. Across the endless variety of sizes, shapes, and materials, they all seem to share one common superpower: the ability to vanish precisely when needed most.

The Keyner from DrumKeep seeks to change the odds when it comes to lost drum keys. Billed as the planets only carabiner drum key—and potentially the last key you'll ever need—it's designed to always stay within reach. Let's take a look at the Keyner Drum Key.

The Design

The Keyner is a die-cast metal drum key with a patent-pending design that immediately sets it apart from other drum keys. Rather than sticking to the familiar square key formula, the Keyner incorporates a carabiner-style frame—turning one of a drummer's most important tools into something you can actually clip, carry, and keep track of. A carabiner is a spring-loaded metal clip, originally developed for mountain climbing, that has since evolved into a common way to secure keys, gear, or bags—offering quick access while helping prevent accidental loss. In this case, that design choice means the Keyner can live on a belt loop, stick bag, backpack, hardware case, or key chain, all within reach, and far less likely to disappear.

Review

The Keyner's smooth design with rounded edges and a matte finish, gives it a very friendly feel. Being made of die-cast metal, it has a substantial, reassuring weight—heavier than a cheap stamped or hollow drum key. The overall build quality feels closer to a high-performance wrench than a



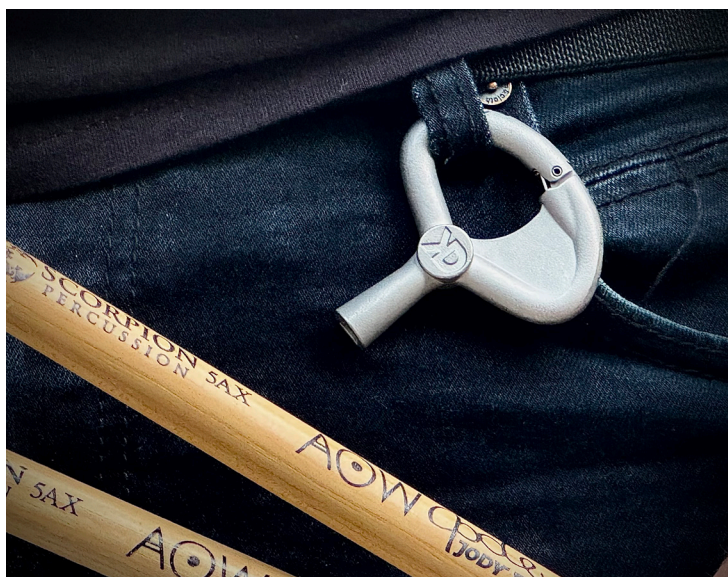
disposable accessory.

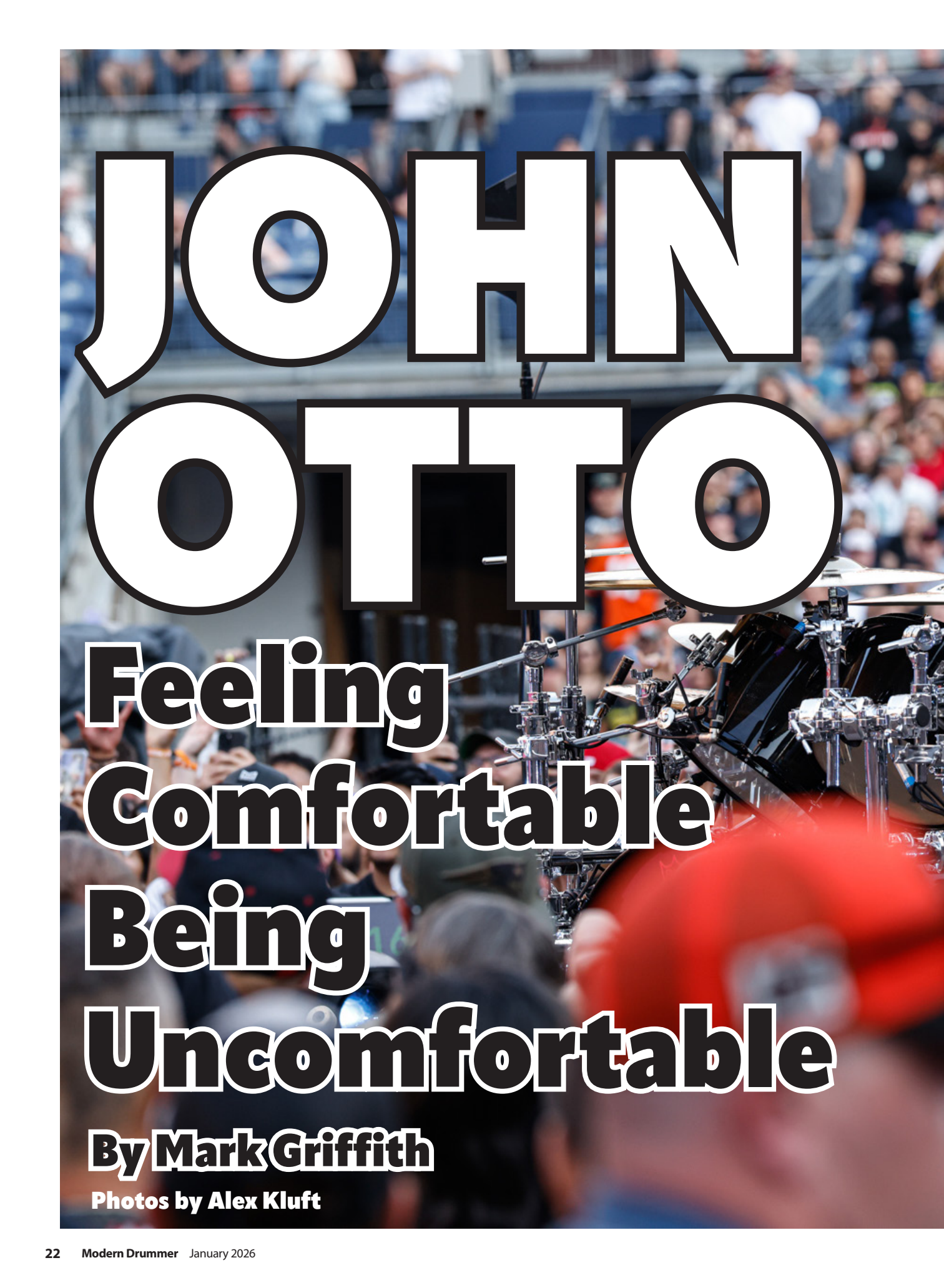
As a drum key, the Keyner delivers. The socket end has a solid thickness that feels more than capable of handling even the most stubborn tension rods, with no sense of flex or compromise of the metal. The design also incorporates a clever thumb tab that makes quick adjustments smooth and effortless. If you need more leverage than your fingers can provide? It may be an unintended bonus of the design, but the carabiner loop in the center happens to leave enough clearance to slip in a drumstick for extra leverage. This is not something I "officially" recommend, but it's far safer than the old two-drumstick clamp-and-twist method that has claimed its share of pinched palms and fingers.

As a carabiner, the Keyner is just cool. The spring-loaded gate is stronger than you would expect, and it locks into place better than those standard bag-holder type clips. It is durable and feels like it would last forever, even if used as a primary keychain, or a clip to hold a heavy payload of bags. It could *probably* even support the weight of a human, which I will NOT try, and neither should you!

Conclusion

I've had the Keyner for a few months now, and I love it. It accompanies me everywhere I go, and I've been the quickest draw at our *Modern Drummer* Rundowns when someone asks for a drum key. The strength and utility of the Keyner make it a must-have for any drummer, even if you already have a bucket full of drum keys. Go get one at: <https://www.drumkeep.com/>



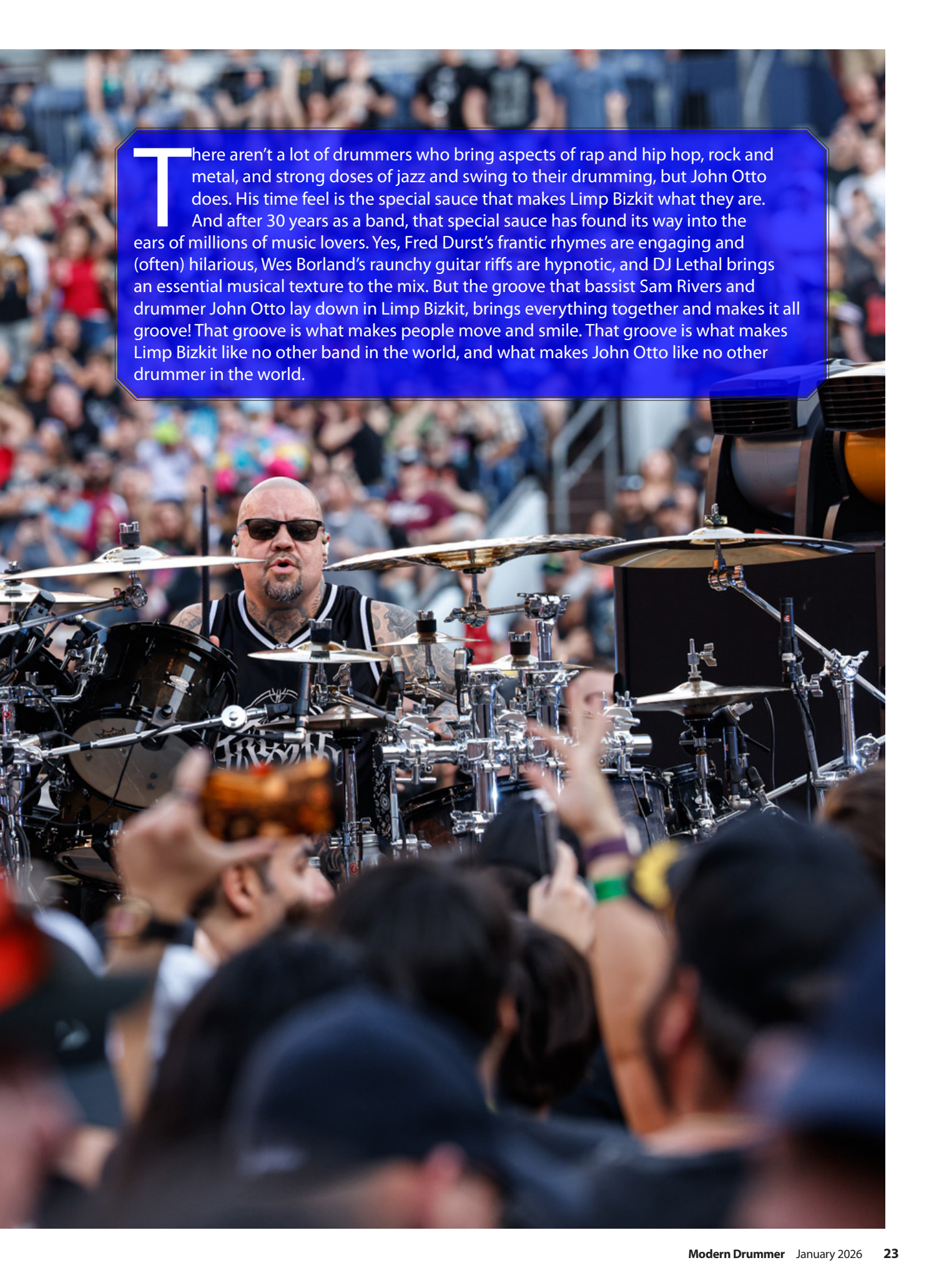


JOHN OTTO

**Feeling
Comfortable
Being
Uncomfortable**

By Mark Griffith

Photos by Alex Kluft



There aren't a lot of drummers who bring aspects of rap and hip hop, rock and metal, and strong doses of jazz and swing to their drumming, but John Otto does. His time feel is the special sauce that makes Limp Bizkit what they are. And after 30 years as a band, that special sauce has found its way into the ears of millions of music lovers. Yes, Fred Durst's frantic rhymes are engaging and (often) hilarious, Wes Borland's raunchy guitar riffs are hypnotic, and DJ Lethal brings an essential musical texture to the mix. But the groove that bassist Sam Rivers and drummer John Otto lay down in Limp Bizkit, brings everything together and makes it all groove! That groove is what makes people move and smile. That groove is what makes Limp Bizkit like no other band in the world, and what makes John Otto like no other drummer in the world.

MD: How did you get started playing music?

JO: I discovered rap and hip hop about the time I started setting up pillows and wanting to have a drum set, I was in 5th grade. I had a drum pad and I started studying with a local guy named David Trotti. He was a drum corps guy and was teaching at our high school. That's how I first started playing drums. I joined the school band and that forced me along. But then I heard Sir Mix-A-Lot's "My Posse's on Broadway," LL Cool J's "I'm Bad," and Run DMC put out *Raising Hell*. Run DMC took it over the top for me, that was that was my introduction to hip hop. Once the 90s hit, that was the golden age for hip hop (for me.) When Rakim hit, he changed the way people rhymed. He is the guy who made rap phrasing what it is today. When The Pharcyde came out that really got me, I liked their sound a lot. I didn't know the old

But then I started going harder into metal with Metallica, I think the *Black Album* hit when I was 13 or 14. I went through their whole catalog and really fell in love with Metallica. I loved their song structures, the riffs, and Lars. I really liked Soundgarden a lot, I liked the Red-Hot Chili Peppers and that was right around when "Under the Bridge" and "Otherside" came out. Then the whole Pearl Jam and Nirvana thing hit right when I was in high school and I thought, 'What the hell is this?' There was just so much going on in music back then, it was amazing!

MD: Coming up in Jacksonville, Florida, what was the music scene like?

JO: There was a real exciting scene in Jacksonville back then. There were a couple of coffee/music places, and there was a big art scene developing. We had all different kinds of bands, punk



As a drummer, you can sit in the practice room all you want, but until you start playing with people, it doesn't matter. ... Playing with people is how you really turn into a musician, develop an understanding of what your role is, and how to be creative. When Limp Bizkit formed and we started doing shows, there was no social media and no cell phones, just pagers. The experience of putting on our own shows and being proactive helped us get attention.

school rap like the Sugar Hill Gang and Grandmaster Flash, but Fred [Durst] did. He was in a breaking crew when he was young,

MD: When did the metal influence come along?

JO: I ran the gamut with metal, I was listening to Testament, Pantera, and a lot of the Zach Wylde and Ozzy stuff. I listened to some of the hair bands like Skid Row and I liked Mötley Crüe.

bands, metal bands, more rock style bands, guys playing jazz, everything. There was a famous alternative club called Einstein A Go Go that had underage shows, and lots of bigger bands played there, I remember seeing the Pixies there. Down in the beach area there was a few different metal clubs that would do underage shows. I don't know if there's much of a scene there anymore because I haven't lived there in a long time, but during

my time there it was it was a very creative and inspirational scene.

It was interesting because I had a couple of friends in my neighborhood who were musicians. Sam and I got into music together, we we've done *everything* together. We made our own bands, but we had nowhere to play, because we were too young. However, a local Episcopal church/school called Saint Andrews had a hall that we could rent, so we started a band night at the church, and we invited all our friends that we knew from hanging out. We created a little music scene where young people could get into live music. There were a few bands, one was called Technicolor Yawn, and Wes was in a band with his brother called Krunk. Wes and I ended up going to art school together, and that's how it all started.

MD: Talk about the importance of being part of a scene.

JO: It's massively important! As a drummer, you can sit in the practice room all you want, but until you start playing with people, it doesn't matter. I'm a big believer in that, you have got to have experience playing with people, and the more people you play with, the more you learn and develop who you are, and how you can adapt as a musician; instead of *just* being a drummer. Playing with people is how you really turn into a musician, develop an understanding of what your role is, and how to be creative.

MD: How did playing with other people help you develop as a drummer?

JO: I had people over to jam a lot and that was awesome. Playing with other people gave you something to work towards. We would start a band and have a gig coming up, and that gave you an incentive to get better. That transformed music from being a hobby to something with a goal. All that makes you want to practice on your own more and all those elements work together. Playing with other people developed a camaraderie

and we all supported each other, it was a positive endeavor that was fun. I also studied privately which was a tremendous help for me. I learned from my teachers and my peers.

Eventually some of those bands started playing in local bars, and I started getting hired to do other gigs. My mom had to escort me to a few of those gigs just for liability's sake, because I was still in high school and underage.

When Limp Bizkit formed and we started doing shows, there was no social media and no cell phones, just pagers. The experience of putting on our own shows and being proactive helped us get attention. Therefore, when we did our early shows at the local places, we had amazing turn outs because we were already in the mode of doing flyers and getting the word out like a street team. We drew people from colleges and high schools and that really created a massive buzz in Florida. That's what ultimately caught the eye of the people that got us on the circuit, and it snowballed from there.

MD: What were you working on with your early drum teachers like the infamous Jimmy Glenn Sr.?

JO: My mom was a college professor for many years, and she heard about Jimmy from the band director. Jimmy Glenn Sr. was a no-nonsense guy. He was a was a big band dude and a Tri-State Rudimental Drumming champion from New Jersey back in the old days. He grew up with Buddy Rich and Louie Bellson, he *knew* Ted Reed. Every Saturday morning at 9am my mom would drive me to the other side of the county to Jimmy's apartment for drum lessons. As soon as he opened the door, a huge rush of Pall Mall cigarette smoke came out of his apartment. He had a practice pad kit, and he immediately asked if I read music. My mom had started me on piano when I was seven because my grandmother played piano, so I could read a little bit. He started me off on my rudiments, but he said, "You're going to learn them *for real!*" I remember having my

As drummers, we all have our favorite licks that become our vocabulary. But then you start to realize that this is a language, and I've got to practice more to broaden my language skills.



arms out too wide and this dude was straight smacking my arms down while he had a cigarette hanging from his lips. He started me off learning how to swing with the basic swing ride pattern, four on the floor, and the hi-hat on two and four. He said, "You're not doing anything else until you get this pattern swinging." Then he had me read and play *Syncopation* with my left hand, while I kept swinging. That was my introduction to jazz drumming. I really grew to love jazz, especially when I would see people playing jazz. I had grown up playing rock, so jazz was a foreign thing, I was always wondering, "What are these dudes doing?" Jazz is a different kind of thing, it's a different kind of independence.

In junior high, I joined the Junior River City Band which was directed by Rick Kirkland. Jimmy Glenn had taught Rick Kirkland when he was young, and Rick ended up playing for Ray Charles and teaching jazz at UNF (which is one of the greatest jazz colleges in the country.) When I tried out for that band, I played some sambas for Rick, he immediately asked me who taught me those sambas, and when I said 'Jimmy Glenn,' he said, "You're the guy!"

I started getting with people and playing different styles, and that was important! I started getting together with the saxophone players and just playing sax and drums because there weren't many bass players that were available to walk basslines.

Jimmy told me, "We're done. You've been great. It's time for you to leave the nest. I transitioned to study with Rick, and he took me under his wing. That's when it really got crazy because I went to Rick's place, and he said, "Get on that drum kit, we're going to battle," and I just got torched! At our lessons, we would talk, and he would help me with all sorts of things, then he would just torch me for 30 or 40 minutes. But it was the best way to learn because eventually I got tired of getting torched.

MD: At that point, what were your shortcomings, what was torching you?

JO: Everything! Feel, vocabulary, and my ability to improvise and not repeat the same licks over and over. As drummers, we all have our favorite licks that become our vocabulary. But

then you start to realize that this is a language, and I've got to practice more to broaden my language skills. I've got to start doing things that make me very uncomfortable. Rick taught me about being uncomfortable and being OK with it. He also taught me how to develop a practice routine, which is very important. With Rick, I was going through the books, and I was playing, but then I went over to the Arts School, and I found people that were *really* playing jazz. I started getting with people and playing different styles, and that was *important!* I started getting together with the saxophone players and just playing sax and drums because there weren't many bass players that were available to walk basslines. That was fantastic. It was just so different. I recently found Neil Champagne's CD entitled, *Visions of Giants* that I played on when I was 17, it's all jazz standards.

MD: As you listen to yourself playing jazz when you were 17, what do you hear?

I hear the ability to be present and be a part of whatever the other musicians were saying, and most importantly I was trying to enhance whatever they were saying. We were trying to create something together...

JO: I hear my ability to *listen* to the people that were improvising and my ability to play *with* them. I hear the ability to communicate with the other musicians instead of just hitting a couple of passive notes on the head of the song. I hear the ability to be *present* and be a *part* of whatever the other



musicians were saying, and most importantly I was trying to enhance whatever they were saying. We were trying to create something together, which is truly the point of improvising (in my humble opinion.) My swing was “decent.” I hear what I *thought* I was doing, and that I *thought* it was a little better than it *really* was. I would love to play some jazz again, and make it better, I don’t think that desire will ever go away.

MD: I love that you just said, “I was trying to enhance whatever they were saying. We were trying to create something together.” ALL drumming is (of course) about your hands, feet, coordination, etc. But it’s really about your ears, and your ability to listen and hear what going on around you.

JO: Yes, it is, I agree 1000%!

MD: What music were you listening to at that point?

JO: I dove into music. I started getting into other styles of music through the encouragement of my mentors. I started listening to Jack DeJohnette, Elvin Jones, and all different kinds of sax players. I was listening to big bands because I was trying to understand the *proper* way to set up kicks and hits in the charts that I was playing with the River City Big Band. I was always in the big band at school, but eventually I got more into the small group and quartet stuff. I got a trumpet fake book and started using that to see the heads of the songs and help me learn tunes. I was doing a lot of listening. Then I found Peter Erskine and all kinds of other guys like John Scofield, Pat Metheny, Joe Lovano, and Bill Stewart was playing with all of them. I also found Chick Corea, which led me to Dave Weckl and fusion, like I said, I was listening to everything! But at the same time, I was listening to Pantera’s *Far Beyond Driven*, lots of metal, and rap stuff too. It was an interesting time, I was bumping Method Man and Wu Tang Clan one second, listening to Pantera, and going to a jazz gig that night.

MD: How did all those things inform each other?

JO: All those different styles of music had different ingredients that I liked. I took different aspects from all of it. Then, when I got together with my guys, we used all of it. It all came out creatively

and that’s really what made our sound. We forged our sound from all those different influences. You don’t realize it at first, but that’s what happens.

MD: I can still hear that “swing” in your time. How did that swinging time feel get into Limp Bizkit’s music at first?

JO: It got in there because that’s just how it is, that’s part of my sound, and it became a part of our sound as a band. It’s funny,



sometimes the band laughs at me and asks me to, “Try and play something *straight*.” But that’s a challenge for me.

MD: It’s like asking someone to change their thumbprint. How did the three musical ingredients of rap and hip hop, metal, and jazz come together in your head to create the musician that you are? Did you try to keep the different vocabulary’s separate, or

With Limp Bizkit, when Fred starting to rap and rhyme over certain verses, I immediately started thinking, 'How would somebody program a beat to this?' That gave me the idea to go "drum machine" with my approach for verses and put in a drum machine feel.

did you let them mix and meld?

JO: With Limp Bizkit, when Fred starting to rap and rhyme over certain verses, I immediately started thinking, 'How would somebody program a beat to this?' That gave me the idea to go "drum machine" with my approach for verses and put in a drum machine feel. Then, for the heavy choruses, I'm reaching into my rock and metal bag and really making sure the groove stays solid. All along, I wanted to bring in a bit of jazz stuff to the verses to add some finesse in certain spots to augment the sound.

MD: How much improvisation is there in a Limp Bizkit performance?

JO: Quite a bit, especially live. On "Living It Up" we start with the middle section and start jamming, but we keep the same kind of a groove. On most nights, Sam and I will start it, and he will keep the groove going while I start doing *whatever*. On some nights, something cool and crazy happens, which is great. On some nights, things don't really happen, and that's fine too. When things don't happen, it can be because of many reasons.

Not too long ago, during a show I looked to my left and the clamp that holds my (legless) hi-hat stand was wide open, and my hi-hat stand was just leaning against an arm holding a splash cymbal. I looked over at my tech and motioned him to come here NOW! I looked nonchalantly at my hi-hat stand, as he said "WHAAT!" I was thinking, 'We're not improvising tonight boys, I've got my arms tied behind my back.' So, some nights the improv will go great, and some nights it won't. It all depends on what is

happening.

On our earlier records, there was quite a bit of improvising, we did a hidden track and an outro that was completely improvised. On the first record we just went for it and didn't really think about things, it was more of a vibe thing. When we write songs we don't improvise as much, but we have hundreds of hours of recordings with us jamming. But when we're hunkering down and making songs, I don't know if there's much improvising. However, when we're playing live, I might play a verse a little differently, or try some different stuff, there's no rules.

MD: Are you expected to play parts exactly as they were on the original recordings?

JO: No.

MD: How did your background in improvisation (and jazz) help you when it came to improvising in Limp Bizkit?

JO: Musically, understanding jazz has helped me *NOT* have to think about parts. I can feel when things are going to happen, I'm sure you understand what I'm talking about. I can innately feel 4, 8, 12, 16, or 24 bars. If someone says, "Take a 16-bar solo!" I can just feel that. When I was at art school playing in concert band, you had to count 300 bars to play one timpani roll; you start learning how to listen for cues, *because who wants to count 300 bars*. I know that had a role in developing and shaping how I hear. But my jazz background got me to the point where I can just feel things without worrying about too much. The best way of putting it is that it makes me feel much freer when I'm playing.



Remembering Limp Bizkit Bassist Sam Rivers

By Mark Griffith

Shortly after John and I talked, we learned of the tragic loss of Limp Bizkit bassist, Sam Rivers. Modern Drummer sends our condolences to John, the entire band, and Sam's family and friends. A few weeks later John and I talked again, because it was important for John to talk about and remember his lifelong best friend.

JO: Sam was my best and oldest friend forever, we grew up together in Florida, and we've known each other since we were four years old. Along with a third friend named Davis, the three of us were inseparable. I called Sam's parents Aunt and Uncle, and he did the same, our families are very close.

Sam and I started our musical journey together, we both started playing guitar, then I got into drums, and he went to the bass. We had this thing together. We didn't have to talk about it, and we didn't have to look at each other. I will never be able to lock with anybody like that, we had a chemistry. We were together for so long in our lives, that we were almost like one person, and we played like that. When we were playing, we each knew exactly what the other guy was going to play, without even communicating. That was so special, I get goosebumps even talking about it in the past tense. He was my number one guy, and he always will be. Together, the two of us made such a big sound for our band. A lot of people have commented over the years about how we locked in on every kick and bass note, we were always together, it just sounded like one person. That will be missed.

Sam was the soul of our band, he was such a sweet guy, just a happy-go-lucky great dude, and a great musician. He taught me a lot about life, how to love, and how to be understanding. He taught me how to take it easy and not let the small things get in the way.

MD: You guys locked in together on everything, but were there any extra-special tunes that you played together?

JO: We would do an improvisational thing every night on "Livin' It Up." Basically, Wes and I would freestyle a little bit while Sam was holding it down, he turned into the drummer while I soloed over his groove. I would always end up flying over the bar lines and he just stayed with me. We would always come out of it at the same time, and it would never come off the rails. That was always a lot of fun.

MD: Like cats falling out of a tree, you would always just land on your feet.

JO: Exactly! Funny that you mentioned that because Sam was a cat guy. Another thing was that Sam's sixteenth notes were amazing; you can really hear it on our new tune "Makin' Love

to Morgan Wallen." His sixteenth notes are like the Mission Impossible theme, just relentless.

MD: Just like those Jaco Pastorius sixteenth notes, those relentless sixteenth notes must be a Florida bass player thing.

JO: This whole thing doesn't ever seem real. Alcohol is a killer, as someone who has recovered from alcoholism, I've seen it take people way too soon. But I don't want Sam to be remembered that way, because his musical thumbprint was like no other.

MD: Did Sam play a five-string for the entire time in Limp Bizkit?

JO: Yes, the entire time, he even played six-string for four or



five songs. He played a six-string for a while, but because of our tuning he went down to a five-string and stayed with that.

MD: What are the short-term and the long-term plans for the band?

JO: We have had Ecce Vandal (a newer group from Australia) opening for us. They're great musicians, and she's a great singer. Ecce's husband Richie Buxton (also known as "Kid Not") produces and writes everything with her, he's an excellent musician and a really good bass player. Since they were going to be on this tour already, we asked him to fill in and play bass with us. He's been rehearsing with Wes and Lethal and I, for the past couple of weeks, he's a sweet guy and an amazing bass player.

One thing that Richie has said is, "I've been practicing those sixteenth notes, but my forearms are killing me!" Like I said, Sam's sixteenth notes were awesome, and I loved locking in with that.

Nobody is ever going to sound like Sam, but Richie is playing and nailing all the parts. He's a legit player, and we are so thankful to him. After this tour is done, it's going to be tough because we're going to have to find somebody permanent, because Richie has his own career with Ecce Vandal.

We have put together a nice video tribute for Sam that we are playing before each show. Nobody is ever going to replace Sam Rivers, and no one is going to try, but I know that he would want us to carry on, and we all miss him deeply. I love him, and I think about him all the time. Thank you for letting me talk about Sam, it means a lot.

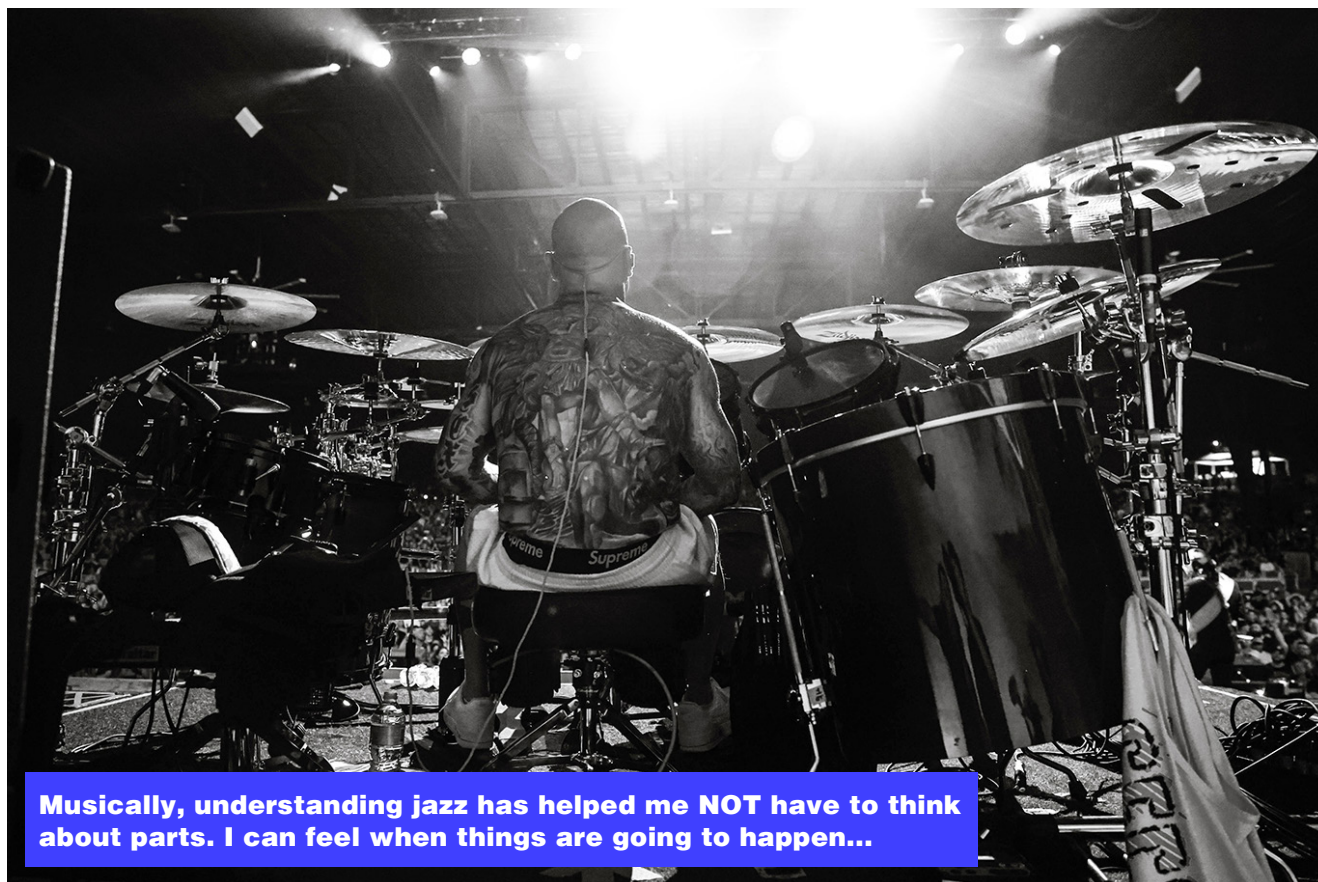
MD: The idea of improvisation is a very important musical (and life) skill, and it doesn't have to come from jazz. But since jazz leans so heavily on improvisation, that is where many musicians learn about it.

JO: You gotta be comfortable being uncomfortable, that's how you grow as a person and a musician.

MD: You were one of the first drummers to combine electronics and acoustic drumming (and sounds) into one set, which is now

design and production?

JO: I have been making beats with machines for a long time. I have MPC's, an SPD-12 and all kinds of stuff. Our DJ (DJ Lethal) is another one of my mentors, he's taught me a lot about recording, making beats, and sampling. We made the entire back lounge on our tour bus into a studio. Sam, Lethal, and I would ride together and jam, make beats, and create libraries of loops. Lethal and I probably created 1000 different kits of different sounds. We got to the point where each kit had



referred to as hybrid drumming. What were the early days of hybrid drumming like?

JO: In the beginning, the technology was a lot more difficult because of latency. There were also problems with the sensitivity of the pads, especially when we were playing live.

It was partly my fault because I should have gone to in-ears sooner. I wish I did, but I was old school. To make that change, I needed to be comfortable being uncomfortable for a while. Using in-ears helped everything in the band. Poor Fred was getting bombarded with sound standing in front of me. As things got louder, that would start triggering different hi-hat sounds and 808 sounds that I had on pads. It was difficult. To compensate for those mis-triggering issues, I started only turning on certain pads for certain parts of songs, it got a little funky. In the studio, 808 sounds have always been a staple for me. Now I substitute real higher pitched hi-hats and snares instead of electronic high hats and snares. I play a different set of hi-hats for different parts of songs. They're small x-hats that give a nice electronic hi-hat sound.

MD: How involved were you back then (and now,) with sound

different inflections from the hi-hat sounds. We spent a lot of time creating our own loops. Now I'm in the process of finally getting my setup really clean, I've got a lot of good preamps, I really want to start recording good sounding drums here at the house.

MD: How has having a DJ in the band, and learning about that DJ culture improved you as a drummer? DJ's and drummers are the biggest crate diggers around.

JO: You're right. Lethal taught me how to dig in the record crates, he got me into finding old records, sampling little pieces of stuff, putting beats to them, and making tracks. DJ Lethal is incredible, not only is he one of the most talented DJ's I've ever seen, but he plays instruments too. He's our second guitar player, but he's much better than a "second guitar player." He's also like our second drummer because we switch off playing beats. His ears are great, and his producing ear is amazing, he's his own thing, he's a musical weapon, he's the real deal. DJ Lethal is one of the most talented musicians I've ever known.

I've learned a lot from Lethal just being around him for the last 30 years. I'm still listening to House of Pain (DJ Lethal was the

Turntablist in House of Pain from 1992-1996) and it's amazing that now he's in our band. It's wild how the universe and everything works.

MD: What is one of the craziest things you've ever found through crate digging and used as a beat on a record?

JO: Lethal always told me about the importance of looking to the international records, because you don't have to deal with the copyright thing when you're sampling 1950s music from Bulgaria. I have found all kinds of cool and weird stuff, but nothing pops into my head right now. There's some wild old European and Russian 70s stuff when all those analog synths were being used. I found some stuff where I just wondered, *'Sound wise, what the hell is going on?'*

MD: If you are looking through Bulgarian music and you see drummer Salif Ali, you gotta check him out! He played with Ivo Papasov and he's ridiculous! I was talking to author-producer Joe Boyd about his book *And the Roots of Rhythm Remain* a while back, and he told me about him. He's like the Bulgarian Billy Cobham or Tony Williams. He's just amazing!

JO: I really like listening to Trilok Gurtu, he's a monster!

MD: Why are you no longer playing a double bass kit?

JO: I do have a double pedal, but the second bass drum just takes up too much space, and it's such a pain in the ass to get the positioning right.

MD: After 30 years of Limp Bizkit, how has your drumming evolved within the band?

JO: That's a good question. I think it's quicker and easier for me to decide on parts now, and it's easier for me to stick to those parts. Now, when we're writing, it doesn't take me very long to create and execute my parts. At the beginning, I was (more or less) thinking of the whole song... 'I'm gonna do *this* for this part, I'm going to do this for the chorus...' Now it's easier for me, I don't know exactly how to explain it.

MD: Are you (maybe) just thinking less?

JO: Sure, that's part of it. But there's a little bit more. I'm more decisive, and I'm not making things too hard for myself by playing unnecessarily. Taste wise, and with what we're trying to accomplish, it's a quicker process for me. But you get that way as

a band too, we all know how to work with each other to the best of our abilities, and in that way, all of us have evolved.

MD: When I'm recording, I am always thinking about (what I call) the plot line of the music. Where is the climax? What gear are we starting in? When and where does the song shift gear? When Limp Bizkit writes songs and you are creating drum parts, what are you thinking about?

JO: When we write, we'll hash out different stuff. If somebody comes in with an idea and the structure of a song, then yes, I'll think that way. But most of the time, and what we do lately is we'll have certain riffs, we'll jam on something, we'll get it down naturally, and then figure out the next part.

Once we get all that, I'm definitely thinking about where we're going, how we're starting, when are we starting to climb (and how much,) and where should this build. It really depends on the style of the song. But yes, I'm constantly thinking about the plot line of the music, for sure.

MD: Is the whole band thinking that way?

JO: Yes, because we're all gearing it around what's happening in the song. If Fred's gonna rap, what is he thinking, and what does he need from us? We're all thinking about that. If he's gonna sing

If the parts have a little push and pull that's what makes us a live band. Being a slave to the machine is what is wrong with music today. When you are a slave to the machine, something is missing, and we just won't do it.



or rap something, we need to support that. We can't be *going off* musically and we're all consciously aware of that. As a band, I think we all know how to play accordingly.

MD: With singers, we (drummers) must be hyper aware of tempo, because the singer must be able to get all the lyrics out comfortably, but with Fred rapping a lot of the time, are tempos just as important?

JO: Fred has got a great ear, so he's not too concerned about tempos. He's a hell of a musician, he dabbles in a little bit of everything. He plays guitar and a little bass. He and Sam do a bunch of acoustic jam stuff, and he's really good at structuring things. He listens to the entire gamut of music, he has hosted jazz nights here in LA at a couple of places, so we don't really worry about Fred.

MD: But there's a lot of words, and with all those words does exact tempo become an issue, just to get all those words out?

JO: No. But sometimes Fred will say, *"I feel like we're playing this a little fast."* So, when it comes to the rhyme stuff, I just try to stay right with him, I try to rap along with him so I can feel that I'm hitting the right tempos. It's tricky playing verses live with no click, especially when somebody's rhyming. You might think that

Learning how to roll with the punches and play through the worst situations, and just letting it flow over you like water. When you can take the mistakes and make them sound like you meant to do that, that's true musicianship and that's improvisation.

it feels *"here,"* but in reality, it feels faster. Sometimes I find myself having to hold back, you gotta force yourself to be calm, it's weird, but that's something that happens.

MD: Do you guys use a click live to keep the tempos consistent?

JO: No, we don't use a click live, but we do roll a click in the studio. But I always have them shut the click off until we figure out what we're doing. I don't want to hear what I call *"The Oppressor"* while we're trying to write. I keep the click off until we figure out what's happening and we're going for a good take. Then I put the click on, just for editing purposes because it must be precise.

MD: When you turn the click on, what do you want from a click?

JO: Eighth notes, for my OCD precise mind, there's too much space in a quarter note click for me. If we were going to have the click on a quarter note, I'd rather just turn it off. Using an eighth note click is how I grew up practicing. I could practice different time signatures without having to change the click. Now I just use an eighth note click so I can change time signatures if I need to.

MD: Live, do you count stuff off with a metronome, a drum machine, or anything like that?

JO: No, we're just flying by the seat of our pants (as they say.) But at the end of the day, that's what's good for us. If the parts have a little push and pull that's what makes us a live band. Being a slave to the machine is what is wrong with music today. When you are a slave to the machine, something is missing, and we just won't do it. So many bands are just playing live to a ProTools track.

Live, the really scary one is *"Nookie."* Lethal starts that with a beat, and then I come in with the heavy part into the verse, and there's no safety net. There's been times where something has cut out and I've had to come in with that beat, we've had some crazy shit happen live.

MD: You mentioned that you were reluctant to go to in-ears, but you finally did. How is it working?

JO: What we do as a band for monitors is we each have a mixer so we can control our own in-ear mixes, it's just like a headphone mix in a studio. If I need to turn up Lethal for *"Nookie"* I can. Then I can turn him down without involving a sound man. Everything was great until one of the last shows we did with Metallica on this last run.

Fred decided to start the show with *"Nookie,"* and I couldn't hear any guitar, but I was seeing the guitar channel in my mixer was lighting up. I switched to my backup in-ears, and it was exactly the same, it was a real *"Houston We've Got a Problem"* moment. I knew that it was probably the pack, but I played through it. At the next show my tech gave me his pack and I could hear everything, but I couldn't do my own monitor mix. I was trying to tell my tech how to mix my in-ears while I was playing the show. That was a nightmare, but the show came off fine. That was one of those things that you must get through. That's part of being a musician. Learning how to roll with the punches and play through the worst situations, and just letting it flow over you like water. When you can take the mistakes and make them sound like you meant to do that, that's true musicianship and that's improvisation.

MD: Did you ever solve the in-ear problem?

JO: Apparently my pack was shot or blown, and my cable was trashed. We played through a torrential downpour in Philadelphia, and the wire on my left ear was old worn and stripped, my in-ear pack got destroyed.

That was a terrible situation, when your cymbals get wet, they feel really heavy to play, and my China cymbals looked like lagoons. I felt like I was back at Jimmy Glenn's studio trying to play Limp Bizkit tunes on practice pads. But we got through it.

I think it was God's payback because earlier in the Metallica tour in Tennessee, it rained on Metallica, and we were all laughing. Then a few weeks later in Philadelphia, it rained on us and nobody else. I'm sure the Metallica guys thought that was funny. God has a sense of humor!

MD: I had a teacher in music school that told us that every stage

The New Breed helps you do things that you don't know that you can't do. Even though it feels like you're falling down the stairs, that's the point of the book. The New Breed makes you very uncomfortable to help you get better.

has gremlins, no matter who you are, or how big you are, you must deal with those gremlins.

JO: That is so true!

MD: Since you grew up as a huge Metallica fan, what was it like playing with them on this last festival tour?

JO: It's inspiring! They're starting to get up there, they're still having fun, and they're still doing it on the biggest level. And they are sounding great!

MD: What have you learned from watching Lars?

JO: When we did the *Summer Sanitarium Tour* with Metallica in 2003, Lars, Lethal and me went to Vinnie Paul's house, there's a picture of the three of us together, I wish I still had it. It was three generations, Vinnie, Lars, me and Lethal. I learned a lot from Vinnie Paul.

MD: Did Vinnie cook for you?

JO: No.

MD: He was one hell of a cook; in fact, they just released a cookbook called *Drumming Up an Appetite*. Vinnie's tech had all his old recipes, and they put it in a cookbook and sold it for a good cause. What did you learn from Vinnie?

JO: Vinnie Paul was such a nice guy! I used to talk to him quite a bit, I learned all kinds of stuff from him about the music business. Lars and Vinnie were my childhood heroes, so just to be in their presence was amazing for me. I was starstruck.

MD: Are you still playing your acrylic kits?

JO: I still have two acrylic kits, but I'm using my woods. I'm the last one standing with my Orange County Drums. I'm still rocking them, they're killer drums. I'm just so comfortable with those drums.

MD: There's a lot to be said for being comfortable and knowing your instrument. Over time, you know your drums and your hardware... No matter how much something else might be great, having that relationship with your instrument is important. What is your take on music and drumming today?

JO: Unfortunately, everybody sounds (sort of) the same. It's OK to be influenced by people, but you really should try to create your own kind of sound. I'm a big believer that everybody has got their own voice. It's weird, because it sounds oxymoronic or hypocritical; we're all influenced by something, and you want to use those influences. But there is such a thing as copying something too much. You have got to try to be original and explore and develop your own voice. That exploration is how you find your own voice. A lot of musicians today will just latch onto something and end up sounding exactly like somebody else. Then everything just sounds the same.

MD: What music and drummers are you listening to?

JO: I have a 90s and 2000s rap playlist for training. I have a heavy playlist with everything from 36 Crazy Fists to Megadeth to Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, and Living Color. I've been listening a little to Falling in Reverse and Spiritbox. Drum wise, I've been getting into Yussef Dayes, Vinnie Colaiuta's playing with Sting, and Peter Erskine's record *Sweet Soul*. On my music stand in my studio I have Gary Chester's *The New Breed*; I am going back to that after a while away from it. And I just discovered John Lamb's *The Anatomy of Drumming*.

MD: What prompted you to go back to *The New Breed*?

JO: Independence, there's a couple of things I need to work on. I'm trying to get my right hand as fast as my left hand. My ghost note (left) hand is running and it's like my right hand doesn't know how to run yet. I'm starting to see some weaknesses and things that I need to work on. *The New Breed* helps you do things that you don't know that you can't do. Even though it feels like you're falling down the stairs, that's the point of the book. *The New Breed* makes you very uncomfortable to help you get better.

MD: And don't forget the voice-singing aspect of *The New Breed*, that is one of the most important aspects of that book, and so many people forget about it.

JO: The guys in the band used to make fun of me because we would record a drum track and then we would solo it, and you would hear me grunting and singing along. I don't even realize I'm doing it. I guess that's my way of being fully engaged to the music.

MD: Elvin Jones did that too. There were some old recording dates that had to be scrapped because Elvin's voice was bleeding through too much, and it was live to two-track.

JO: Coltrane and Elvin are two of my favorite musicians. There aren't too many people who could swing like Elvin, he really did have his own thing.

MD: Is Limp Bizkit working on a new record?

JO: Yes, we are. We just recorded about four songs in Nashville. Right now, we're more about getting those songs out there because it's not necessarily about the record format these days.

Unfortunately, Fred moved to Malibu several years back and he lost his house in the fires, it was awful. We lost years of stuff that we had recorded, but we did have some backups and were able to save a little bit of stuff. But that's a good motivator and everything's great now. As a band, I don't think I think we've ever sounded this good. Everybody's grateful to still be doing this, and we're more inspired than ever.

Tragically, Limp Bizkit bassist Sam Rivers died shortly after our interview. Please read John Otto's sidebar in this interview about the memory of his dear friend Sam, and the hole that it has left in his life and the band.

It's OK to be influenced by people, but you really should try to create your own kind of sound. I'm a big believer that everybody has got their own voice.





ALLAN MEDNARD: ALWAYS LOOKING FORWARD

Queens native Allan Mednard is one of a *new breed* of New York jazz drummers, but he talks and thinks like one of the *old guard*. He has studied, paid his dues, and is building a reputation of responsibility and musicality. You can hear him playing and recording with jazz harpist Brandee Younger, bassist Ben Allison, trumpeter Jeremy Pelt, guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel, bassist Linda Oh, pianists Julian Shore, Simon Linnert, Glenn Zaleski, and many others. Allan's drumming is different enough that it stands out, while not being self-indulgent or ego centric. He is not a *chops meister*, nor is he a *minimalist*. He has a distinct voice on the drums, and isn't that what it's all about? His Haitian roots give his drumming a unique foundation, but his creativity behind the set implores us to listen.



Photo by Erin Patrice O'Brien

MD: As a drummer who was brought up in New York City, Queens specifically, how did that environment affect your drumming career?

AM: I started playing clarinet in middle school and I switched the drums in high school. I was playing old hymns at my mom's Haitian Baptist Church every weekend. My folks from Haiti so there's a lot of you know of that influence in my upbringing and playing. Playing drums in high school and church was the beginning of my "formal" education in music, and how everything works. I went to City College in Harlem and studied with Carl Allen. That was a big eye-opening experience. I graduated from City College in 2008. Since then, I've been freelancing.

MD: What type of things were you studying with Carl?

AM: With Carl there was a lot of fundamentals. Posture, sight reading, warmups, learning tunes and melodies, memorizing, and singing along to music, playing along with records without drums, playing along with records with drums, and doing stuff with a metronome and without. He would record every lesson at his house, and he would give you a CD and a carbon copy of what was written for your lesson. He kept one copy for himself, and the other copy was for you. That was great because there was never any confusion with what you should be working on. He must have hundreds of thousands of papers of student's lessons which is great because you get a really good idea of your pedagogy going forward.

MD: What type of stuff did he have you listening to, and what drumless records were you playing with?

AM: The main drumless (that I can remember specifically) were the Chick Corea and Gary Burton duo records.

Both of those guys have incredible time and were playing great tunes. I still go back to that stuff from time to time. Aside from the drumless stuff, during college I was listening to a lot of straight ahead and heavily improvised music like the AACM and the M-Base stuff. Obviously, I needed to check out all the

great drummers so I would go to the Central Library in Jamaica, Queens. They would let you could take out ten CDs at a time. I would figure out the tree, and see who played with who, listen to those ten CDs for a while, and then go back and pick up another ten. I would also go to the City College Library Archives because they had every issue of *Modern Drummer* and *Down Beat*.

MD: A lot of guys don't talk about the M-Base and the AACM stuff, specifically what drew you to that?

AM: The early Steve Coleman stuff like *Motherland Pulse* and some of the later stuff like *Weaving Symbolics* had these crazy clave's that I enjoyed trying to figure out. Still to this day I don't know a lot of it, but the drum grooves and the basslines just

captured me. A whole bunch of people that came through that collective including Dave Holland, Geri Allen, Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Marcus Gilmore, Ambrose Akinmusire, and Sean Rickman. What they were all able to lay down is captivating. It was definitely not the stuff that I learned in school, and obviously you want to learn the tradition. But for me, the most education I ever got was outside of school. Not to say that going to school is a downside or anything, but as soon as I graduated, I felt like so much more was open, accessible, and within reach. I encourage anybody who's in school, studying, and learning, to branch out and try to find new music because you never know what might help you grow as a musician and as a person.

MD: Explain what you mean by Steve Coleman's claves, because most people will only associate clave with Latin music.

AM: In the M-Base music, clave' is referring to a rhythmic pattern that is cyclical. In the M-Base stuff you can focus on one part, whether it's the bassline, drum groove,

or a piano part. You will hear a rhythmic cycle (or clave) in each part, but most of the time they're not all playing the exact same cycle. However, there will usually be a point in the music where everyone hits the downbeat together.

MD: Where all the cycles resolve and converge on one at the



Photo by Desmond White

My folks are from Haiti so there's a lot of that influence in my upbringing and playing. Playing drums in high school and church was the beginning of my "formal" education in music, and how everything works.

same time.

AM: After that resolution, the cycle starts all over. It's a very interesting exercise to try to figure out who's playing what clave or the rhythmic cycles.

MD: Since you have mentioned practicing with drum less recordings and M-Base, have you ever practiced with the Steve Coleman and Dave Holland duet record called *Phase Space*?

AM: No, the one that I love is the trio record of Dave Holland, Steve Coleman, and Jack DeJohnette called *Triplicate*.

MD: *Phase Space* is just Steve and Dave with no drums, it's like M-Base minus drums. It's a challenge because it's only sax and bass, so the clave can be hard to hear and a little slippery.

AM: I gotta check that out!

MD: You mentioned the AACM music, how did that music find you and hit you?

AM: I was fortunate enough to see a Roscoe Mitchell solo saxophone concert (in the early 2000's) at Merkin Hall, and it was incredibly inspiring. I started checking out more of the larger ensemble AACM music like Air with Steve McCall and Henry Threadgill's music like *Very Very Circus* with Gene Lake. I just like the freedom that they played with, there was no holding back. Some people don't like that, but I do. I really enjoy listening to a lot of variety of music with different timbres and textures. I like music with structure, form, no form, some form, or anything. And it doesn't have to be jazz, I like any music that has some freedom. I'm digging a lot of singer songwriters, indie rock, rock, pop, hip-hop, classical, *whatever*... Being a musical sponge is very useful as a freelancer. I also just read Henry Threadgill's autobiography called *Easily Slip Into Another World*. I'd definitely recommend it. It's a mega page turn, and the stories

are incredible. He's a real inspiration for a lot of folks because he's totally fearless. He does what he wants to do and does it at a very high level. He believes in himself, and he's gotten some recognition in his career, but it's hard to breakthrough.

MD: When you graduated from college and started to work around town. What were the things that you learned on the scene that you didn't learn in school?

AM: I am grateful for City College because they didn't sugarcoat the fact that this is a tough field to make it in, but even more guidance would have been welcomed. I have a laundry list of how schools can better prepare their students, no matter what the field. Schools don't emphasize time management and keeping your finances together enough. Making sure you have savings is important, and if you're in a city like New York, the importance of finding a rent stabilized apartment is huge. Even when you're in school you should be saving money, maybe set up an IRA because if you're going to be freelancing for a long time that's all on you. If you have a day job that's going to set up a 401K that's cool, but most musicians don't have that luxury.

I've heard that some schools have gotten better at this, but when I was in school no one talked about publishing and writing credits and making sure those things are negotiated before a recording. Unfortunately, a lot of that stuff pops up after you're done, and you're thinking, "Wait a minute, we did all this work, and you're getting all the credit..."

The whole psychological and sociological element of being a freelance musician is such a topsy turvy life, and you gotta take care of your physical health, your mental health, your spiritual health, your relations with family, friends, partners, etc. If I were able to design a full 360 music program, I would try to prepare the next generation to be able to function in the real world. A

lot of students now can play great, sight read well, but they have no clue how to operate in the world.

MD: I often think that there should

But for me, the most education I ever got was outside of school. Not to say that going to school is a downside or anything, but as soon as I graduated, I felt like so much more was open, accessible, and within reach.



Photo by Erin Patrice O'Brien

be a class in schools just called “scheduling.” Because the ability to create and keep a schedule is EVERYTHING!

AM: Agreed! As well as how to travel and how to be prepared for the gig. Schools teach the scales and the rudiments and then they send you out there on your way. As musicians, I think it’s up to us to pass the knowledge on and prepare folks. I’m not saying that I (or we) know everything, because we don’t. But we can help the next generation avoid the pitfalls.

Unfortunately, a lot of musicians in my class from college either stopped playing or quit, which is very disheartening to hear. But it’s a tough career, and it’s not for everybody. It’s totally OK to pivot, change careers, or take a break and come back. There’s no right or wrong way to build a career as a musician. There is a lot of great talent out here across the globe, and it is becoming tougher to get any acknowledgement as an artist these days. For me, it’s not really about “exposure” but the

positive acknowledgement feels good. In talking to peers, mentors, and elders I have had conversations about how today’s musical landscape is so different. Before, you would play with a mentor, or a mentor would recommend you to sub in someone’s band or ensemble, then you would play with other people and branch out and hopefully do your own thing or do the sideman route. Today, a lot of elders and mentors have passed away and/or not active, and there’s a long list of other issues, things have changed and are constantly changing.

MD: What were some of the first “bigger” gigs that you did that helped you start your career?

AM: Every Friday I would play the early set at St. Nick’s Pub. That was a great building gig to develop consistency. Slowly but surely, the later band started gaining respect for the earlier band, and they would come and check us out. There was a poet that we would play behind, sometimes we would play free, and sometimes we would play these great like Lee Morgan and Cannonball Adderley charts. That gig was a big learning experience. It helped me develop, build my repertoire, learn how to fine tune a set, and make necessary changes for the following week. It was a terrible paying gig, but I learned a lot. Early on I played the typical background gigs, and event gigs around town. In 2014, I started getting calls



I like any music that has some freedom. I’m digging a lot of singer songwriters, indie rock, rock, pop, hip-hop, classical, whatever... Being a musical sponge is very useful as a freelancer.

from some bigger names. I was subbing in Portugal for Gerald Cleaver (who is a huge inspiration) with Andrew D' Angelo and I met Ben Street and Aaron Parks. They introduced me to Kurt Rosenwinkel, and I started working with him in his band with some great bassists like Eric Revis and Orlando le Flemming for a couple of years. Those guys gave me a shot and that was my first big foray into the larger scene. All it really takes is for someone to give you a chance. Sometimes promoters see a list of musicians and they'll see a name and say we don't know this guy, you gotta get someone else. It was definitely a long process, and it's still a work in progress. You're always practicing and trying to rekindle the inspiration. Sometimes you take a little break and then you go all in.

MD: Kurt is a modern genius, what did you learn on his gig?

AM: Whether it's a specific arc of a tune, or a specific shape, undertone, or groove, Kurt is into being very specific and intentional with how you're shaping and playing tunes. I gained a big understanding of setting up sections, endings, intros, and a lot of that stuff from him. Kurt enjoys those things in a live setting. In the practice room, you might play eight bars up front, or you might play something free to set up the band. And often, when you're hearing live music or working bands, that stuff goes over your head, but it must be intentional and super specific. It's very possible that the band has

been thinking of how they're going to approach or set up a tune way ahead of time. Kurt is very clear and intentional. I learned a lot about song structure from him. In school you learn about playing rhythm changes, standard forms, and trading. But the live setting is a totally different beast. You must focus on different tempos and textures, playing different sized rooms, venues, and halls, and knowing what to bring and not to bring. Kurt's gig was a great and eye-opening experience.

MD: You mentioned "playing with intention," can you explain that a little further?

AM: When I talk to younger folks in master classes or after gigs, I talk a lot about what's called for and what's needed in the moment. That's intention. It's something that you gain through experience. You can be in the practice room wailing away like Elvin or Tony, but a lot of times that's not what's needed for the tune in the moment. Whether it's an original piece of music or

a standard, gaining the trust of your bandmates and the band leader is essential. There may be something said, or something written in the music, you must pay attention because playing in an ensemble is different from playing at a jam session. Honestly, you're not going to be playing like that all the time. Sometimes all you really need is a swell or a little stirring of the pot with brushes. You're playing to convey a specific emotion or idea versus bashing away to prove a point. Sure, that stuff all has its place, but playing with intention comes through experience. It takes a lot of experience playing background gigs and event gigs, in small, medium sized, and large halls. For example, clubs and big festivals each have their own breadth of how to convey a great performance. What works at a big festival may not necessarily work in a small room. Through experience you learn what's needed for the song, for the moment, for the room, and



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for the ensemble. That's what playing with intention is about, and there's no shortcut for learning that.

I see a lot of drummers on the internet, and someone needs to say this, but that's *not real life*. It's just showing a small portion of what playing drums is about. That portion is not real, because if the internet goes away, that all goes away, but the real musicians will still be working. When I'm on the road and doing master classes, I talk to folks and say 'Don't worry about that stuff. Just work on your craft, work on being a good person, being on time, learning music, and being professional. It may not lead to a record contract and big tours, but through those fundamentals you'll be able to sustain a career. Don't worry about comparing yourself to anybody, because everyone's journey is different and unique, everyone has a fingerprint, and everyone is literally one of a kind. It's really silly to compare yourself to anybody.'

MD: You mentioned coming up in the Haitian culture, musically what did you learn from your Haitian roots?

AM: I'm still learning a lot about my Haitian culture. I've learned different musical flavors, different rhythmic patterns, and knowing how music differs from region to region. In Haiti, the music from the northern part is different from the music from the southern part. African, Haitian, Cuban, Brazilian, and New Orleans music is all named differently, but it's all different variations of similar rhythms. For instance, in Haitian folkloric music we have a break called a "Kase," and I'm sure those breaks have different names in different folkloric music and cultures. Haiti has different kinds of drums and there are different claves, but it's all coming from the same place. Any folks that are interested should check out the Smithsonian's amazing field recordings to gain a better understanding of Haitian music. And it's always nice to support the Smithsonian. There are a lot of great drummers that come from Haiti like Andrew Cyrille and Obed Calvaire. Not only do we all have shared influences, but we all have a great connection to that music. It has taught me a lot, and it is *still* teaching me a lot.

To take the idea of the break (or Kase.) That happens in all sorts of folkloric music, and we'll sometimes do that in jazz at the end of a melody. I'm specifically thinking of a tune like "Witch Hunt" when Elvin plays that big crack. That happens everywhere in Haitian and other folkloric music, and sometimes that crack will create (or signal) a shift in the tune. Then everyone just shifts into a different tempo or cyclical pattern, it's incredible. You should check out a singer named Toto Bissainthe, she's a great vocalist that blended traditional folkloric music with contemporary lyrics. She used a lot of the folkloric rhythms including a dance rhythm called Yanvalou, which is in 12/8, but the rhythmic pattern actually starts on beat three. The accents are on three, four, and one, but there is a rest on beat two. Obed's new record *150 Million Gold Francs* is incredible and mixes a lot of Haitian rhythms. Godwin Louis is a Haitian saxophonist that is doing amazing things too.

MD: When you were starting, who were the drummers that grabbed your ear?

AM: Roy Haynes, he's one of the most unique drummers of all time. Roy was dealing all the time. He was always going 100 mph, even if he was playing a ballad. It's always tasteful. Specifically, the live trio record led by Alice Coltrane with Reggie Workman called *Transfiguration*, they're burning on that record. Elvin Jones, obviously all the Coltrane stuff. Max Roach, *Drums Unlimited* with "The Drum Also Waltzes," and the beautiful and total free expression stuff that he was doing with Abbey Lincoln. I'm a big fan of Billy Higgins and the stuff that he did with Lee Morgan. His groove and his cymbal sound were amazing. Art Blakey *Live at Birdland*, you can just look at the history of the players that played in the Jazz Messengers, the tree is so big and so continuous. You can start with any one record and figure out the branches from there.

The history of jazz is vast, but it's not *that* vast. If you figure that the first jazz was recorded around 1920, that makes jazz about 105 years old. You don't have to check out everything, but if you start with the monumental records and go from there. Then check out some of the guys that didn't get as much recognition, or have features written about them, and you are off to a great start. There are so many folks that have thorough and expansive discographies that no one really talks about.

MD: Speaking of under-recognized drummers, did Carl ever talk to you about Clarence Johnston.

AM: No, I haven't checked him out, but will do.

MD: He's one of the most swinging drummers EVER! And I know Carl likes him. He played (and recorded) with James Moody in the 50s, he's on some organist Freddie Roach records, and a Sweets Edison and Ben Webster record, called *Ben and Sweets*. He's one of those guys that no one ever talks about.

MD: Who are you checking out from the more recent generations?

AM: Brian Blade, every time I see him play, I'm amazed by the way he's able to bring out subtleties, bring out the fireworks, and everything in between. Marcus Gilmore, one of one! Marcus is on a lot of the recordings that are coming out today, and the stuff that he's playing is fresher than ever. His new record *Journey to the New, Live at the Village Vanguard* is absolutely amazing! Jeff "Tain" Watts, incredible sound, force, energy... a monster of a player and a great guy. I love his records like *Bar Talk*, *Detained*, and of course there's Wynton's *Black Codes*,

and Branford's *Live in Bloomington*. Tain is one of the pillars of the music community. Gerald Cleaver, check out his last two electronic records *Griots* and *Signs*. It's mind-bending stuff. He should be winning Grammys for those records. I also love Gerald on Craig Taborn's record *Light Made Lighter*. Any record that Nasheet Waits is on will be special, of course Jason Moran's trio, and the group Tar Baby. Jason Moran did a whole album based on the music of James Reese Europe called *From the Dancehall to the Battlefield*, they did a concert at a Carnegie Hall a year or two ago, and it was amazing.

I've been buying more music on Bandcamp, I urge people to avoid the streaming nonsense, it's not fair to the creators. We must support each other by buying, talking about, and posting about each other's newest projects and tours both here and abroad. Stuff like that goes a long way. I could name 50 drummers that I'm a fan of, and that wouldn't even scratch the surface, because I'm a fan of everybody that is out here, I'm rooting for everybody, there are so many great drummers around. You can start listening to any record, and just follow the musical branches of the tree and you'll discover some wonderful music.

MD: You mentioned earlier that you are interested in a lot of music outside of jazz, like what and who?

AM: Vocalists like Sam Cooke, Bill Withers, Ray Charles, and

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Nina Simone. During the pandemic someone hipped me to this great singer-songwriter named Adrienne Lenker from the band Big Thief. I'm a fan of Big Thief, but I'm a bigger fan of Adrienne Lenker. Her songwriting and guitar playing is riveting. There is

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something about her playing, her voice, and her lyrics that just connect with me. I like Grizzly Bear, Radiohead, I'm a big fan of Jimi Hendrix's *Band of Gypsies*, that's one of my all-time favorite records. Black Thought (from The Roots) has three EP's titled *Stream of Thought*, and his lyricism is out of this world. I'm into Flying Lotus, Aphex Twin, classical music like Bartok, Tchaikovsky, Segovia, and Hindemith... My tastes are very wide-ranging, I don't shun or hate on anything. I always give something at least two or three listens before I say yay or nay, and it's usually a yay because I'm such a big fan of all music.

MD: How have all your different musical tastes filtered into your musical vocabulary?

AM: I think you should have as many different tools in your toolbox as possible. I'm not saying you must know a million different grooves that you can pull out at random. But I think you need to have a general but solid foundation of various things in your toolbox. That never ending discovery of trying to learn or rediscover comes out in my playing just because it helps me express myself more truthfully. The biggest thing in music is that the learning never stops.

I just saw Herbie Hancock play, and he's in his late 80s and still dealing and still discovering. Having a wide range and a solid foundation of certain aspects of styles and genres is good to have under your belt. You never know when someone might say, "I don't know what type of groove or beat to put on this, let's go through some styles and see what works." If you don't have anything to offer, then you are in trouble. It's not to say that you must know *every musical style* but the more styles you're able to pull up, the more useful and versatile you are going to be. You need to deal with different styles, bands, ensembles, and textures. Only a VERY select few get to play with just one project, lead their thing, or just do one thing.

MD: Do you ever absorb so much music that creatively, you get a little jammed up?

AM: Definitely. If I feel like I'm in a rut musically, whether it's too many different gigs back-to-back or a long time on the road with the same music; and I really need to clear my head, I'll take like a couple days of not listening to anything. No background music, no checking out anything, just to cleanse my palette. A lot of times I'll just like go to my practice space and pick out a couple rudiments and just work on those two or three rudiments in various contexts.

MD: What are some of the recordings that you have done, that you would like to draw people's attention to?

AM: I've been playing with harpist Brandee Younger for the last four or five years and that has been great. I'm on her latest record is called *Gadabout Season*. We've been playing as a unit and the music is really developing, which is cool. I like that record because the recording process was calm, bassist Rahsaan Carter is a great recording engineer too, and there are some guests on it too.

MD: Vibraphonist Joel Ross is on that, and I wish Joel was on the whole record because Joel and Brandee sound fantastic together. The combination of harp and vibes is such a beautiful thing.

AM: Very true. There's a record that that I did with some friends in Denmark Simon Linnert and Richard Andersson, it was great because we played one show and then recorded the next day at Mill Factory NuVenue. We were just channeling, Simon said, "Let's just play open and free," that session was very meditative. I'm on a record with pianist Julian Shore called *Sub Rosa*, we've been playing as a unit for a while, and we've been able to play that music a lot live. We went to Japan and Korea, and we did a

In the last ten years I have developed a better understanding of music, and there's no way to shrink that experience. It comes from conversations, long train rides, and being the first one to show up and the last one to leave the club.



Photo by Lech Basel

little West Coast thing this this past July, and we're going to go to Europe in the Fall. I'm on Noah Preminger's *Ballads* record. I'm on Lucas Pina's record from 2021 called *Covers*. I did several Jeremy Pelt records, he's been a great mentor, I learned a lot from him about building a set. I'm on a few Ben Allison records with pianist Frank Kimbrough, and I played on a few tunes on the tribute record to Frank as well. Currently, I've got a trio with bassist Carmen Quill and Santiago Leibson. We're working out a bunch of new music and hopefully we will record it and put it out soon.

MD: What are you working on today, drum wise?

It's about connecting with the people on stage because every time we get to share music with anybody it's a gift and it's not something to be taken lightly.

AM: Lately, I've just been going to my space and just working on fundamentals. I pulled out *Stick Control* for the first time in a long time and I've been going through that. I'm separating my limbs and playing on different parts of the kit. My favorite thing to do is to dig deeper into singles, doubles, and single paradiddles. I can put on a metronome and literally do those around the kit for hours. There's been so much music that's been coming my way to learn and digest that I've found the need to work on some of the basic stuff again.

MD: What kind of drums and cymbals are you playing?

AM: On the road, for a backline kit, I'm a big fan of the Yamaha Maple Custom Absolutes that were made in Japan. Those are my favorite backline kits. In New York, I've been playing a Ludwig Classic Maple kit that I really like. I have a matching snare, but I'm a big fan of the Ludwig Acrolite snare, I love that sound. I also have a Ludwig brass and a Ludwig Copper snare drum; I love the sound of copper. I play a standard 18, 12, 14 bop kit, but in the not-too-distant future I want to get some bigger drums. I want to get a 24, 13, 16, 18 kit to have some bigger drums when I need them.

Cymbal wise, I've played Zildjian since my early days, so all my stuff is Zildjian. Lately, I've been using a 21" Flat prototype, I don't know if they will release it. I have some 15" K Constantinople light prototype hats. And I've been using either the 22" or the 21" Paper-Thin crashes. I'm also a big fan of the old A's. I know people really love the old K's, but I love the old A's. I have an old 50s A that I used to bring out, but it's cracked. I had had the guys at Good Hands Drum Shop (in New York) cut out the crack, but I don't take it out anymore because I don't want it to break, it just sounds so good on recordings and live. It's pretty thin, but it has a great wash. I like the newer stuff too. I have been experimenting with some 16" EFX crashes from Zildjian as high hats. I've been trying to find some of those Dry Complex Bill Stewart Rides and some other old K Cons because I like those too, but my setup is pretty simple, two rides, a crash, and hats. For sticks I use Vater Manhattan 7A's, I like the Vic Firth Heritage brushes, and T1 and T2 mallets. For heads, I've tried many combinations, but the combo that works best for me is Remo Powerstroke 3 on the bass drum, toms get a Remo Coated Ambassador on the batter side and Coated Diplomats on the bottom. On the maple drums that combination has a nice warm and full sound.

MD: You've been on the NY jazz scene for ten years or so, in that time, how has your playing evolved?

AM: Recently at a session a label head told me that I'm playing with more intent than ever. Early on, I didn't want to step on anyone's toes, I didn't want to overplay or be too loud. In the last ten years I have developed a better understanding of music, and there's no way to shrink that experience. It comes from conversations, long train rides, and being the first one to show up and the last one to leave the club. That understanding comes from thinking about and listening back to sets, making notes, and having conversations with musicians. You need to be certain that what you're delivering is making everything sound better. Sometimes bandleaders won't say anything, but you need to get some feedback at some point, so being able to talk to people within the band is good. Being open to constructive criticism is beneficial. Through playing with different people and ensembles, you get to a place where you can talk about the music. You want to have conversations both inside and outside of the music. Having conversations about the music is important.

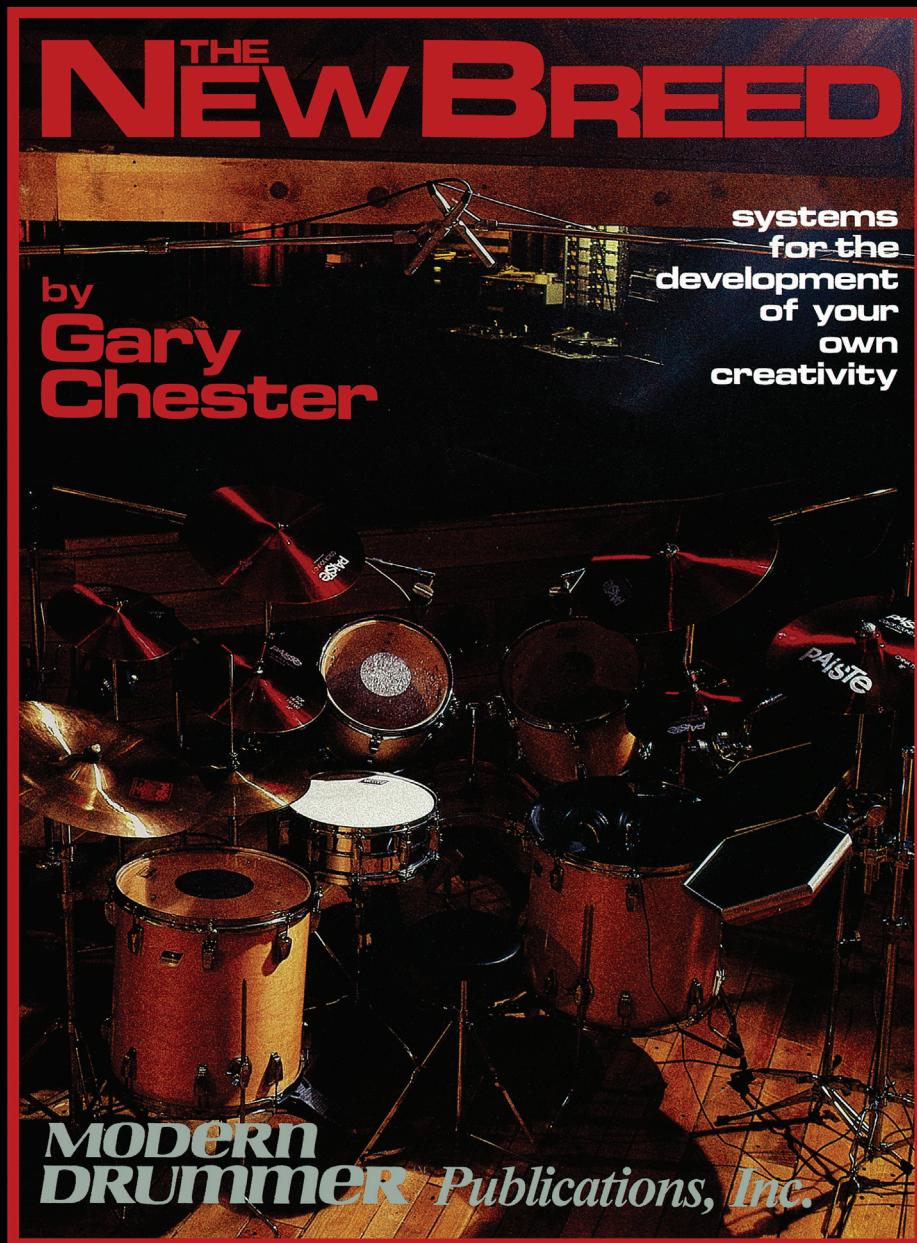
Obviously, there's some crazy multi-talented people that come out of the womb and can play anything with anybody. But for most of us every day common people (which most of us are,) development just takes time. Today, I am playing with more intent, and I feel much freer. It's all about connecting with the people in the room, however many or few. It's about connecting with the people on stage because every time we get to share music with anybody it's a gift and it's not something to be taken lightly. 🙏



Photo by Erin Patrice O'Brien

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Catching Up With Bowling For Soup's Gary Wiseman

After 30 years together, Bowling For Soup is going strong. Last year included an anniversary tour playing all the songs from *A Hangover You Don't Deserve* and several appearances on the Warped Tour. This year includes a new tour with Simple Plan, and an upcoming headlining gig at the O2 Wembley Arena in London. With the departure of guitarist Chris Burney, the band has also recently become a trio, but that hasn't stopped them from putting some new tunes in their live sets. Because of all this excitement, *Modern Drummer* was thrilled to catch up with Bowling For Soup's Gary Wiseman and get the lowdown on his brand new SJC kit.

Story and photos by Alex Kluft



MD: Let's talk about the new tour right now with Simple Plan, I'm sure you have a long history together.

GW: We've been friends with them for 20 years or so. We've had a great history with them. It's always been fun, but honestly Bowling For Soup is so excited to be on this tour, because we're having so much fun. They're treating us so great. They're just a class act. We've never supported anybody; it's probably been

to say bye to all your friends. You didn't know when you'd see each other or cross paths again. It's interesting how he's [Kevin Lyman] doing it now. Instead of a tour, it's a destination type of event. It makes it seem like a family reunion; we hadn't seen our friends in forever and now it's back to a familiar setting.

MD: You saw a lot of bands from the same era and the lineup was perfect.



20 years since we've done a support spot. On day two we were joking about doing more of this support stuff and it's a lot of fun. This tour's been a blast.

MD: Bowling For Soup just played Warped Tour Long Beach less than a month ago, and before that you were on Warped Washington D.C., and you will be doing Orlando. How does it feel to be playing Warped again?

GW: It was like a family reunion or summer camp. Bowling For Soup did seven Warped tours. The old school Warped Tour went from city to city at that time, everybody became close, and we made friends with a lot of bands. It was a grueling summer with shows every day. There were very few days off. It was a grueling tour, but a lot of fun. It was worth it but at the end, it was sad

GW: Kevin did a great job covering a lot of the bases. It wasn't just the heavy bands. He covered everything; it was a great lineup.

MD: You had Ska, Punk, Metal, Hip-Hop, Alternative Rock, and more.

GW: It was a great day for music fans; you got to see so many bands and genres.

MD: I noticed how many drum sets were lined up backstage between the Vans Right and Left Foot stages and Beatbox and Ghost stages.

GW: Did you get to check out some cool stuff back there?

MD: Definitely. I ran into a few drummer friends and saw some special kits back there.

GW: It's always chaotic back there.

MD: There were 15 bands on the right and left foot stages combined and then Ghost and Beatbox stages had another 18 bands.

GW: Trying to do quick changeovers is always a mess.

MD: Because the changeover time was however much time the band on the other stage would be playing for having a layout with side-by-side stages. I've been wanting to hear the song "Valentino."

GW: For a while, we had gotten into a rhythm of playing the same songs. This last year we did an album anniversary tour playing all the songs from *A Hangover You Don't Deserve*. We were playing songs we had never played live before, so we had to relearn the songs since we hadn't played them since recording, but we realized it's kinda fun doing songs people aren't expecting. I think you'll see more songs sneaking back into the set.

MD: With album-based tours, there's songs that were never performed live so they are always cool to hear. I saw your blue acrylic SJC kit earlier. Can you tell us about what you're using for this tour?

GW: It's brand new, the first time it was set up was the first night of this tour. I think it's awesome and sounds amazing. I never had acrylic drums before and always wondered about them. Our sound guy and I opened it up at the warehouse and slapped on a few heads to see what combinations we were gonna like. Right out of the box, these things sounded amazing. I think they look super cool and SJC did an amazing job customizing them with a logo embossed in there. I am super happy with this kit!

MD: Let's go back 30 years to the debut album. What would you like to reflect on?

GW: What a ride, I don't think Jaret [Reddick], Chris [Burney],

and I had any idea we would be 30 years into this thing. Time flies so fast. I don't remember how many years Rob [Felicetti] has been in the band. Right now, we're in this state of appreciation and amazement. Everything next is just icing on the cake.

MD: This year, the band became a trio after being a four piece since the beginning with Chris retiring. What's different about playing as a trio?

GW: It wasn't planned or something we saw coming. Unfortunately, it got to the point where he had some health stuff going on, touring was just hard on him, and he didn't feel like he wanted to keep touring. He wanted us to keep going, but we didn't know what we were going to do because it was happening so fast. It happened while we were about to go to play a show. We decided we'll do it as a three piece and figure the rest out after the show. We were thinking, "do we need someone to fill in the guitar spot?" We walked into the dressing room after playing as a three piece and decided we didn't need to get anybody. In those initial thoughts, we weren't thinking we needed to replace him or add somebody new to the band for shows. Jaret and Rob both worked very hard to fill the gaps and sound a little bit. Jaret's having to play some different stuff and Rob's playing different chords to make the sound bigger. I think it flows really well. We're comfortable with it. We knew we couldn't replace Chris. You just can't replace him, he's so iconic and has such a huge personality. Having someone take that spot wouldn't do him or the band any justice. What an amazing entertainer.

MD: Let's talk about the future of the band, it's been three years since the last album, and this current tour has been great.

GW: We're all in amazement right now. We're having our biggest shows ever, biggest ticket sales, we're on top of the world. We have live and cover records coming out. We are going to headline the O2 Wembley Arena in London. We've played there before, but this is the band's biggest headline show and early next year we're going to do a new record. These are exciting times for sure. 🐼



Gregg Bissonette, "Mars" from Gregg's album *Warning Will Robinson*

Transcription by Marc Atkinson

This month, I have the great honor of shining the transcription spotlight on a fantastic drummer and an even better human being: Gregg Bissonette. I've been incredibly fortunate to see Gregg perform live and to watch him teach a full room of inspired drummers at his summer camp. Whether he's playing with Los Lobos in an LA club, recording music interludes for the show *Friends*, touring with Ringo Starr, or mentoring the next generation, he does it all with brilliance, class, and unmatched positivity. He's truly a phenom—and one of the nicest, most humble guys you'll ever meet.

I'm thrilled to feature a song written by his brother Matt, who also plays bass and sings backup vocals. This

month's transcription is the opening track from Gregg's solo album *Warning Will Robinson*, titled "Mars." Not only does Gregg tear through this piece with blistering energy—he also sings lead vocals. This performance showcases his incredible versatility, power, and musicianship. The heavy metal groove, the tight hi-hat work, and the explosive solo all combine to make this track something special.

As you listen, pay attention to Gregg's over-the-bar phrasing, the wild right-hand/left-foot/left-hand/right-foot combinations (measures 98 and 100) with a nod to the great Vinnie Colaiuta, and of course, Gregg's vocals. This is a piece to study—and simply enjoy—for the sheer fun and brilliance of it.

MARS

played on "Trash Hats"

VERSE

CHORUS

27

31

35

38

41

VERSE

44

48

52

56

59

CHORUS

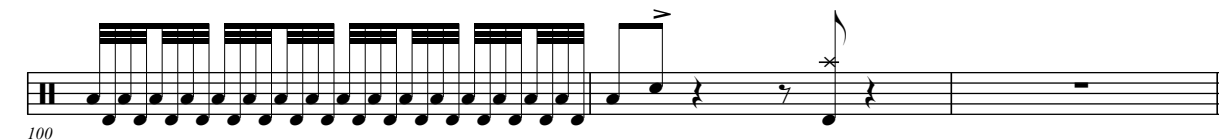
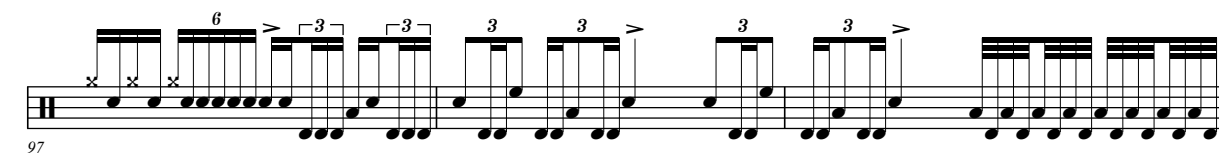
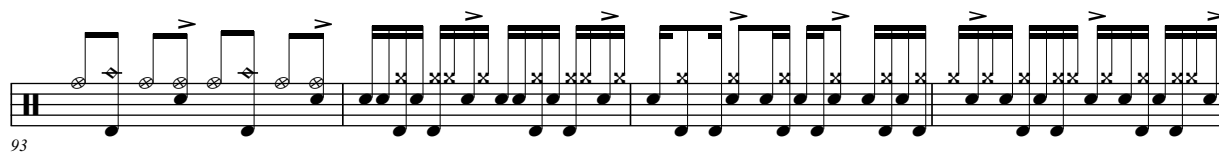
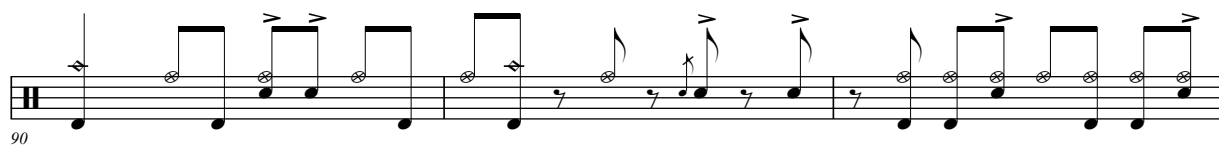
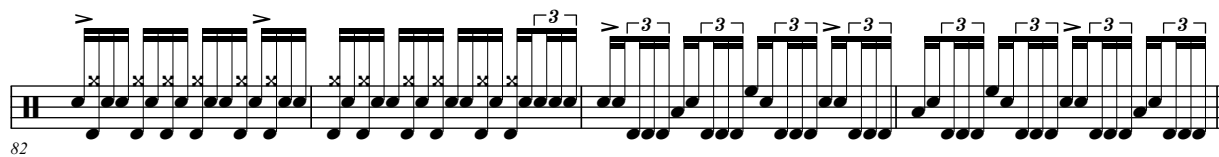
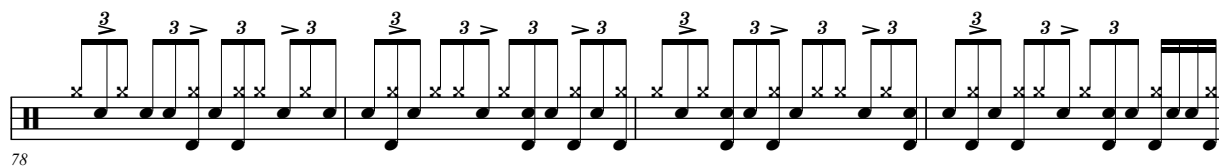
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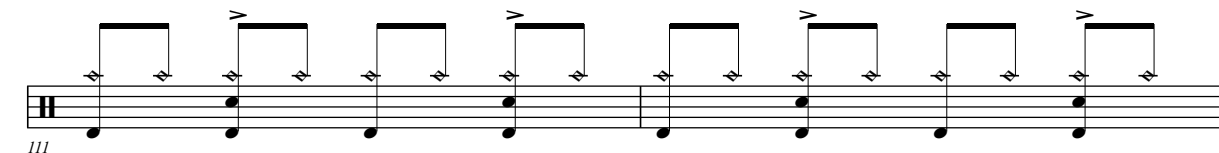
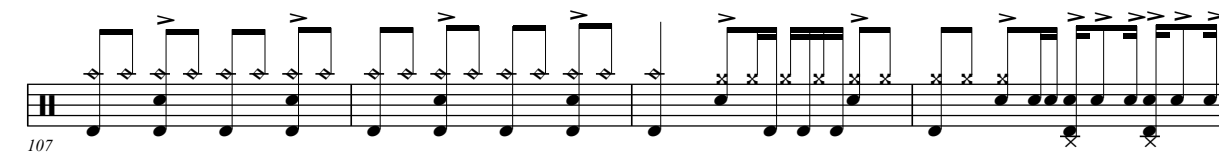
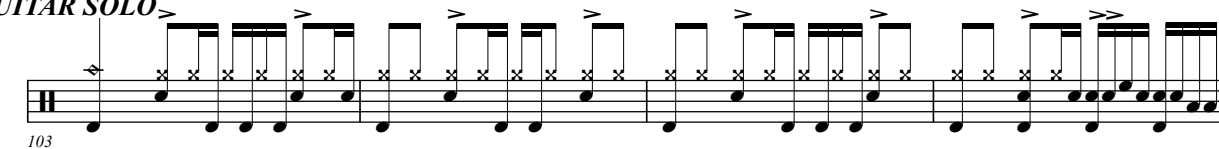
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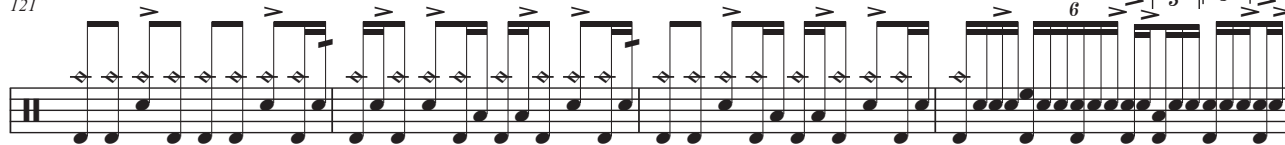
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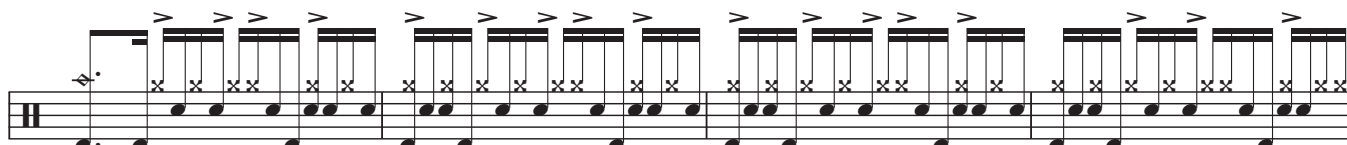
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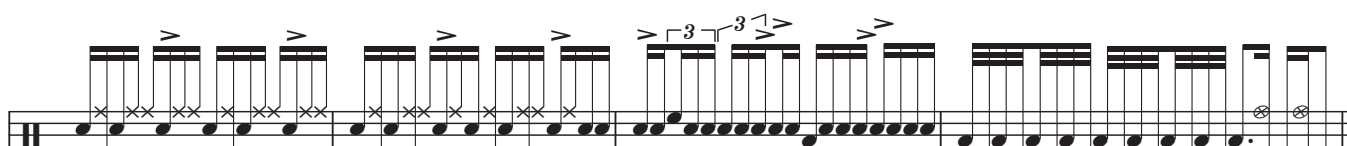
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Marc Atkinson, a dedicated musician, honed his craft under the guidance of the renowned Gary Chaffee. Now calling Las Vegas home, Marc is on the brink of unveiling his labor of love—a comprehensive transcription book that promises to captivate music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

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

The Martial Arts of Drumming

By Chris Lesso

The drum set covers a whole lot of physical space, more than most instruments. We must dance through it, like a painter's brushstrokes. A fascinating fact is that our sound isn't created by the tip of a stick hitting a drumhead or cymbal surface. It's actually created by how we move in between the notes. How you move is how you groove! The vibration comes from the strike, but our signature sound comes from how we choose to move in the gaps. Without space, there is no rhythm. Our sound is the result in a line of intention, idea, iteration, and impact. As the music happens, this martial arts like flow even happens during the rests. Fine tuning what we do in between the strikes becomes our voice defined. Like martial arts, think of your physical 'moves' when you drum as movements in and of themselves. Sweeps, jabs, circles, twists, all of it has meaning. Instead of simply hitting all the objects in front of you, feel how your body moves as you circle through the space your drums live. There are endless shapes to create, as we launch from sound to sound like a trampoline.

To the Japanese taiko drumming tribe KODO, drumming isn't just something they do, but a vocation. It's an all-encompassing lifestyle, something they choose and pursue. Taiko drumming isn't like the drum set, where all the sounds surround us over some pedals. This is extreme movement to rhythm, where each piece has its own language of movement. The taiko drums range from normal sizes to the massive. The O-Daiko, literally meaning 'big drum', is over 5 feet wide and shakes the earth. Very few people have the technique and stamina to summon its full power. When struck by a master, if you're anywhere in the room you'll feel the air move. Taiko drums come in many sizes, but all have a striking presence. The way they're played must be "all in," a full body mind, body, and spirit devotion. It sounds like drumming, but looks like a martial art. The aim is to form a deep connection between the drum and themselves through four taiko principles: Ki— energy, Kokyu—breathing, Kata— form, Kiai— spirit shout. Because the taiko drums demand so much of whomever faces them, they must be hyper aware and dedicated to all four disciplines to even play at entry level.

An artist friend of mine told me a story of how his teacher broke him out of the habit of using stiff jerky pen strokes, to thinking in wider arcs. Instead of taking pen to paper and practicing drawing normally, he had him dip a tennis ball in black ink and swirl it around the page. Something about holding the ball instead of the pen got him thinking more about the expressive arc of his strokes. He shifted from simply pointing with a pen, to more of a calligraphy mindset. As I imagine drawing with a ball instead of a pen, I find myself thinking more about flow. That tactile lesson he learned as a young art student stuck with him his entire life. Change the way you look at things, and the things you look at will change.

This is where the practice pad fails us. Other musicians practice on their actual instruments, but we're the only ones who practice on a one-dimensional pad and perform spread out on a full kit. Practice pads are great; I think of

them as going into the laboratory to work out my formulas and equations. But when I need to flow around the kit, I get into my martial arts mindset and refine how I own the space in front of me. I flow through the shapes needed to get from sound to sound effortlessly. Let's get our bodies moving in all the combos we'll be using for our rhythmic expression. What shapes are you making as you go? How does it feel in your body and balance? Taking command of how we flow through the zones of our kit comes to define our sound. Forget the objects in front of you. Focus only on how you sweep across them like an octopus glides through the water. Get your movements precise, and the flow takes care of itself.

Eurythmy, is a word with Greek roots, it means beautiful or harmonious rhythm. It also means 'music made visible'. The aim is pure dance-like expression, making sound visible through movement to invoke a new kind of language. Sound and movement merge as one. When music is translated into motion, it deeply affects our state. It's the alchemy of turning anger into determination, anxiety into excitement. Getting out of our heads and into the movement counteracts tension to calm the mind. It's therapeutic, productive, and just straight up fun! Eurythmy can be expressed in the way we move, but it's also found in design, whether it's architecture, theater, or art. It's anywhere that harmonizes balance and beauty through rhythm. Finding eurythmy gets us thinking past traditional one-dimensional techniques and reveals our true character in the moment.

It takes courage to open our hearts and show the world who we really are, etched in space for all to see. Watch this lesson to see How you move is how you groove.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ky-J-hRjwE> Need more FLOW in your drumming? Get your free flow drumming guide at chrislesso.net/FLOW 



Progressive Drumming Essentials: Implied Metric Modulation Madness

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!

IMPLIED METRIC MODULATION MADNESS

One of my favorite rhythmic tools is implied metric modulation. This trick can make music appear to change tempos dramatically. The modulation is implied because the tempo doesn't actually change. The bpm will stay the same, but the pattern will feel faster or slower by changing its subdivision.

People commonly hear music with a bass drum on beat 1 and backbeat on beats 2 and 4. Using different subdivisions, we can spread out the backbeat spacing to imply that time has slowed down or compress it to suggest a faster tempo. In these first examples, we're going to slow down an 8th-note rock groove by trading our 8th notes for dotted 8th notes, which are equivalent to three 16th notes.



Optional H.H.



If you have trouble making Exercise 2 feel solid, try counting 16th notes out loud ("1e&a 2e&a 3e&a"), and start with the ride cymbal only. When you feel comfortable with that pattern, slowly add the bass drum and snare.

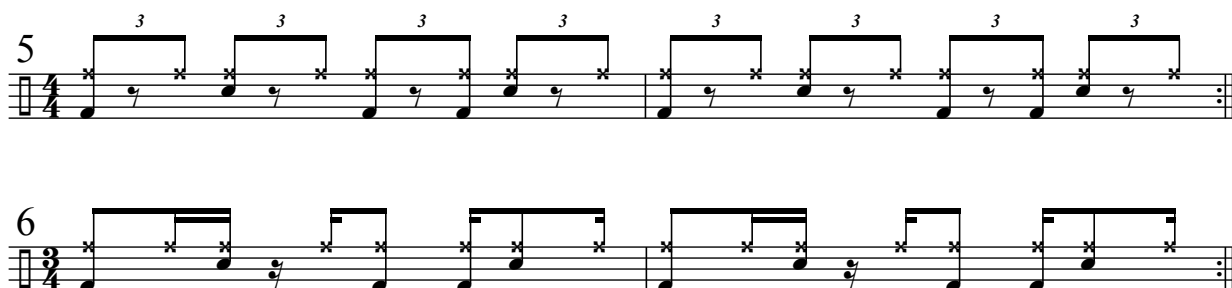
You may have noticed that your ride cymbal in Exercise 2 creates a four-over-three polyrhythm. Metric modulation is a great tool for exploring polyrythms, and we'll examine this application more at the end of this lesson.

Once you get the hang of it, try playing Exercises 1 and 2 back to back for eight bars each. If you play quarter notes with your hi-hat foot, it will reinforce the original pulse and can be beneficial if you're playing these ideas with other musicians. When I'm learning new modulations, anchoring time with my left foot helps me internalize the rhythms.

It gets interesting when we embellish this type of modulation. We can create the same effect of slowing down when modulating a 16th-note triplet groove into 16th notes.

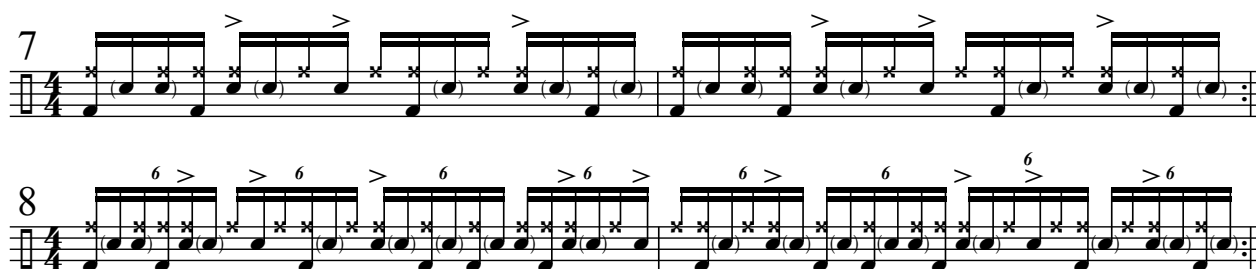


Now that we've experimented with a modulation that sounds like it's slowing down, we'll speed up an 8th-note-triplet-based shuffle groove into 16th notes.



Next, try a less ordinary pattern. Exercise 7 is a funky, syncopated groove with an irregular ride pattern. Applying this phrase within 16th-note triplets yields a hypnotic two-bar phrase in 4/4.

This modulated pattern could sound like its own triplet groove. It's a perfect example of how we can use modulation as a writing tool, and we might not have come up with this using any other concept.



THE POLYRHYTHMIC CONNECTION

I mentioned earlier that you can use implied metric modulation to create grooves based on polyrhythms. In Exercises 9–11, we'll go through the process of writing an implied metric modulation groove starting with a polyrhythm.

For Exercise 9, we're going to use a four-over-five polyrhythm. We'll space four notes evenly across a bar of 5/4 time by playing every fifth 16th note. Playing quarter notes with your hi-hat foot will accentuate the polyrhythm.



The next step is to fill in the spaces with the bass drum and ghost notes. I've phrased our ride cymbal to sound like a drunken shuffle by playing the first and fourth note in each of the five 16th-note groups.



Finally, we'll modulate this groove into 4/4 using quintuplets. This gives us a backbeat on beats 2 and 4 again. Both rhythmic variations of this beat create interesting shuffle-style grooves.



Let's create another beat that starts with a polyrhythm. This time we'll explore three over four. Example 12 spaces three notes evenly across a bar of 3/4 time by playing every fourth 8th-note triplet partial. Using a two-bar phrase, you can alternate with the kick and snare to make it sound like a groove.



Just like we did with Examples 9 and 10, let's fill in some of the space to make a more interesting beat.

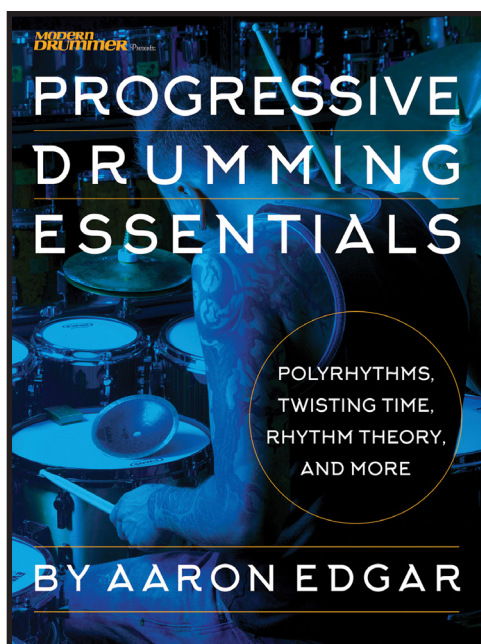


Let's create a more obscure-sounding seven-over-three polyrhythm by playing seven equally spaced notes on the hi-hat across a bar of 3/4. Adding alternating kick and snare notes to every second hi-hat creates a twisted version of a basic rock beat.



Make sure you try modulating a handful of your own grooves. Take a groove you play all the time, or transcribe a beat from one of your favorite bands and modulate it into something new. I often find that there's something inspiring hidden within a new subdivision.

Don't forget that you can also apply other rhythmic tools. Think about displacing the modulations, cutting pieces out, reversing sections, and reordering parts. You are limited only by your imagination.



Master Studies II: Control Studies with Fill-Ins

By Joe Morello

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

for (and with) his students, it is also filled with wisdom from the master Joe Morello. Join *Modern Drummer* as we explore Joe Morello's *Master Studies II*. This month we will build on our last few months of Triplet Control Studies with various accents by adding fill-ins.

Arrow Notation Key



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

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

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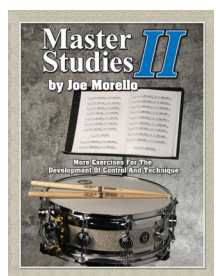
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The New Breed: A Couple More Melodies

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."

In previous months we have shown you Gary's 39 basic patterns, called Systems. The pages of reading material [printed this month] are more advanced melodies from previous months and are intended to be played with 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."



Sheet music for a drum solo, consisting of 13 staves of music. The notation is written in bass clef and includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings (e.g., *mf*, *f*, *ff*). The music is organized into measures, with some measures containing multiple notes and others containing rests. The final measure of the 13th staff ends with a double bar line.



THE 2025 NEIL PEART SPIRIT OF DRUMMING SCHOLARSHIP AWARD WINNER:

STEVEN MALEK

The Neil Peart Spirit of Drumming Scholarship, presented by *Modern Drummer*, is a tribute to the monumental legacy of Neil Peart, the legendary drummer of the iconic band Rush. Renowned for his technical precision, creative expression, profound lyrics, and long-lasting impact on the drumming community, Neil's influence transcends music. His work continues to inspire countless drummers, and artists around the world to explore new heights in their craft.

With the generous support of Neil's wife, Carrie Nuttall-Peart, and their daughter, Olivia, this scholarship embodies Neil's passion for music and education. It offers an unparalleled opportunity for an aspiring young drummer to elevate their skills and pursue their dreams by studying with Modern

Drummer's Director of Worldwide Education Rob Silverman who was featured on the cover of *Modern Drummer* in September of 2022. This award is an invitation to follow in Neil's footsteps, embracing the spirit of relentless practice, innovation, and artistic integrity that he exemplified throughout his career.

Joining in the tradition of past winner's **Maxx Rinkus** and **Aimee Peckham**, we now celebrate the new winner of the award: Ottawa, Ontario's **Steven Malek**. In the last year, Steven has had the opportunity to study with renowned drummer Rob Silverman and improve his drumming skills while pushing his talents to new heights. In speaking about the award, Steven states, "I will have amazing opportunities with more drummers to learn from, and gain experience that I wouldn't be able to from my current resources. To grow and share with one another is my dream, and to have the education and resources to back it up, will help me do so... I will push with every fiber of my being to always learn and always be a student every day. I am constantly learning new aspects of drumming, and pushing my boundaries regarding my knowledge and understanding, which will be forever a core part of my life."

Join us in celebrating Neil's legacy of musical discovery and excellence, Rob Silverman's commitment to educating the next generation, and Steven's continuing pledge to greatness. Let the Spirit of Drumming inspire us all to reach new rhythmic heights!

Are you a young drummer looking to take your talent to the next level? The Neil Peart Spirit of Drumming Scholarship could be your chance to do just that. This annual scholarship is dedicated to nurturing the next generation of drummers, encouraging them to push their boundaries and grow as both musicians and individuals. *Modern Drummer* will start accepting applications for the next Neil Peart Spirit of Drumming Scholarship Award on January 1, 2026. All submissions can be sent to <https://www.modrndrummer.com/neil-peart-spirit-of-drumming-scholarship/>





History of the Early 20th Century East Coast Drum Companies

By Tim Northup

When we think of popular vintage drum makers, most of us think of Ludwig, Slingerland, Leedy, and Gretsch. The mid-western cities of Chicago, Illinois, Elkhart and Indianapolis, Indiana were the original homes of Ludwig, Slingerland, and Leedy. C.G Conn acquired Ludwig & Ludwig in 1929, adding Leedy in the 1930s. This united the production in Elkhart, Indiana, but kept the names distinct. With Ludwig's corporate offices in Chicago, Conn merged the two brands into "Leedy & Ludwig" around 1950. Slingerland started in Chicago, IL, and stayed there from 1928 until 1959. They moved production to Niles, IL, from 1960 until 1986. In the 1990s Fred Gretsch bought the Slingerland brand, then sold it to Gibson in 1994, who sold it to Drum Workshop (DW) in 2019. We can see that over time, drum companies have changed significantly. They have been bought, sold, and moved to different cities.

In this article we are going to discuss some of the lesser-known early 20th Century drum makers and companies that were established on the East Coast, mainly in the cities of Boston and Worcester, MA, New York, NY, and Philadelphia, PA. Northup Drums Museum (NDM) has drums from several of these companies on display, and we will discuss them in this month's article.

Let's start with Boston, MA. There were several influential drum makers in Boston in the early 1900's. The **George B. Stone drum company** was a prominent Boston-based manufacturer and retailer of high-quality percussion instruments, operating from around 1890 until the late 1930s. It was known for its innovative designs, particularly the "Master-Model" snare drum, introduced around the early 1920s. These drums featured innovations like solid maple or aluminum shells and distinct hardware options such as a "Black De Luxe Finish" Stone's legacy continues through the influential teaching materials produced by its second-generation owner, George Lawrence Stone. NDM is fortunate to have a vintage early 1930's Master Model snare drum that you can come and play.

Harry A. Bower was a prominent American percussionist, teacher, author, and prolific inventor who manufactured a unique line of "Bower Snare Drums" in Boston from around 1918 to the mid-1920s. Drums produced by the **Harry Bower Drum Co.** were unusual for the time, the shells were made from a composite material called "Leatheroid." Leatheroid was made



by chemically treating cellulose, which was then wrapped in a nickel plated outside covering. The drums featured oversized hoops that served as both the flesh hoops for calfskin heads and counter hoops for tensioning, and a single-tension system that aimed for increased head resonance. His unique, patented snare system used a mounted frame to keep the snare wires tensioned, which could then be engaged or disengaged from the bottom head, similar in concept to the later Rogers Dyna-Sonic snare drums. Today, Bower drums are rare and considered fascinating examples of early 20th Century American drum innovation and are highly sought after by vintage drum collectors and historians. NDM has a very fine example of this snare drum dated May 10, 1920 on the interior label.

Walberg & Auge, founded in Worcester, MA, in 1903 by A.L. Auge and Bernard Walberg was a pioneering American percussion company, famous for inventing key modern drum set hardware components like the hi-hat stand, cowbell holder, and folding bass drum pedal, while also supplying hardware to major brands like Ludwig and Gretsch. They're known as a major, yet "unknown," force in American percussion history. Although they produced their own drums, their primary historical impact came from manufacturing key hardware components and accessories, including the first modern hi-hat stand for nearly every major American drum company. The company was sold to Granger Norwood in 1975 and ultimately dissolved in the late 1970s or early 1980s due to the "import-industry-boom." The company's history was nearly lost until 2014 when it was re-established as a not-for-profit public-benefit corporation for historical and educational purposes by Jeremy Esposito, who also sells modern W&A "Perfection" drums true to the original quality standards. NDM has many rare examples of early hardware and some drums from W&A.

New York City Drum Makers, **Rettberg & Lange Co.** was a prominent New York City-based musical instrument manufacturer, primarily known for producing high-quality



IMPERIAL INSTRUMENTALISTS, BOSTON, MASS.
USING BARRY COLLAPSIBLE OUTFIT

banjos under the brand names Orpheum and Paramount. The company also manufactured snare drums under the **Randl** name. The snare drums were very high quality, solid mahogany banjo style, their separate tension drums which were similar to the George Stone Master Model in tuning design with alternating lugs. NDM has a wonderful example of a Randl snare drum, and an advertisement dated June 7, 1919, showing the exact drum with Orpheum brand banjos.

Frank Wolf established his drum business in or around 1910, located in New York City, across the street from the famous Manny's Music store for a period before World War II. Wolf's shop was known for building high-quality drums and providing supplies to drummers. The most notable product was the "2-to-1" snare drum, a forward-thinking design for its time. These drums featured 12 tension lugs on the batter (top) side and only 6 lugs on the resonant (bottom) side.

The idea behind this unusual lug configuration was to tune the batter-side tighter and bottom head less tight, which helped focus the energy into the drum shell. This resulted in a drier, more defined sound compared to the sound of single-flanged rims that were common at the time. Due to their innovative design and scarcity, Frank Wolf drums are considered extremely rare and highly sought after by collectors. NDM has two examples of this unique drum, including one in the extremely rare "Sea Green" pearl finish.

Gretsch Drums, founded by German immigrant Friedrich Gretsch in Brooklyn, NY, in 1883, grew from a small shop making banjos, drums, and tambourines into a major American instrument maker known for innovations like multi-ply shells, and became famous for its unique sound. In the 1950's and 60's, famous jazz and be-bop drummers like Max Roach, Tony Williams, and Art Blakey became Gretsch artists, making them more popular than ever. The family-run business faced challenges, including a sale to Baldwin in the late 1960s and shifting production locations, but was bought back by the Gretsch family in 1984, returning focus to its classic "Great Gretsch Sound" with maple-gum shells and die-cast hoops. Today, Gretsch continues to be a family-owned company, known for both its high-end, US-made drums, and its more affordably priced lines manufactured overseas, all while maintaining its quality and unique sound.

James Rogers and the **Rogers Drum Co.** started crafting calfskin drumheads in Brewster's Station, New York in 1849. The business moved to Farmingdale, NJ and was eventually passed

to his grandson, Cleveland S. Rogers, who began manufacturing the first complete "Rogers" drums in the 1930s. Rogers used hardware from other manufacturers but their own quality heads. In 1955 Henry Grossman purchased the company and moved the operations to Covington, Ohio. This period is considered the "Golden Era" of Rogers and produced iconic lines like the Holiday series and the legendary Dynasonic snare drum, known for its unique "floating" snare rail system that improved sensitivity and clarity. They also pioneered the highly flexible "Swiv-o-matic" ball-and-socket mounting hardware, which influenced modern drum hardware.



The **Barry Drum Manufacturing Company** was founded in 1919 in Philadelphia, PA. Famous for William A. Barry's innovative, 1917 patent-pending collapsible bass drum that folded into a compact case for easy transport. This was a huge deal for gigging drummers. They also made high quality snare drums, often featuring cast aluminum shells, with some models designed to fit in the same case as the folding bass drum. The company struggled through the late 1920's and went out of business in the 1930's. NDM has a wonderful example of a complete, functioning Barry 14"x28" collapsible bass drum with a painted front head and the original hard vulcanized fibre case. We even have the matching 4"x14" aluminum snare drum to complete the outfit! Imagine being a gigging drummer in a city like Philadelphia, NY, or Boston in the 1920's, if you had this Barry drum outfit you could easily board a bus or a streetcar with your whole set in a couple small suitcases!

If you would like to learn more about early 20th Century east coast drum makers, see these drums in person, and even play them, plan your visit to the Northup Drums Museum in Oneonta, NY. Call 607-434-4769 www.northupdrums.com



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

The Fabulous Thunderbirds

The Jimmie Vaughan Years, Complete Studio Recordings 1978-1989
Mike Buck and Fran Christina drums
The Last Music Co.

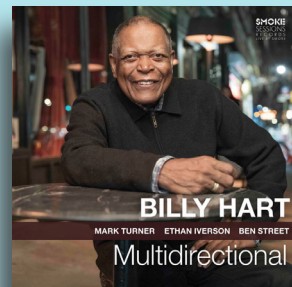


The eight albums that Jimmie Vaughan recorded with The Fabulous Thunderbirds for Takoma, Chrysalis, and Epic are all now collected on four CDs, and in this amazing new box set from The Last Music Co. The records *The Doc Pomus Recordings 1978*, *The Fabulous Thunderbirds (Girls Go Wild)*, *What's the Word?*, *Butt Rockin'*, *T-Bird Rhythm*, *Tuff Enuff*, *Hot Number*, and *Powerful Stuff* are all included here along with a 12 page hardcover book written and annotated by Bill Bentley. Included in the notes are long interviews with Thunderbird drummers Mike Buck and Fran Christina. These outstanding interviews detail the two drummer's backgrounds and their involvement in the Fabulous Thunderbirds. Buck played drums on the first two, and half of the third records, and Christina played on half of the third record and the rest of the recordings in this outstanding set of recordings. The 11 tunes from the band's first recordings that were produced by the legendary Doc Pomus and Joel Dorn are the real treasure in the set because they are getting their first ever official release. Nick Lowe, Dave Edmunds, and Denny Bruce produced the other recordings in the set. Drummers Mike Buck and Fran Christina give a clinic of groove, Texas shuffles, and poppin' backbeats. Bassists Keith Ferguson and Preston Hubbard lay down some hard swingin' basslines. Kim Wilson's singing and harmonica playing is soulful perfection, and Jimmie Vaughan's writing and guitar playing are masterful. Legendary pianist Chuck Leavell, the Roomful of Blues horn section, and the Memphis Horns also make guest appearances. For any drummers interested in groove, shuffles, and just good music, this is a welcome addition to your library.

accessible set of this collection. The groove is deep, the music is creative, and the interaction between the band is telepathic. On *Hidden Out!* bassist Junius Paul joins the trio of Parker and McCraven. The tune "Awaze" is the best tune of the set (and adds trumpeter Marquis Hill and saxophonist Josh Johnson with both playing some electronics as well.) Makaya McCraven's beat shifting and genre bending solo over a bass vamp on this tune is more than pure chops it's emotional expression. "News Feed" is an exciting performance that defies genre. *Techno Logic* features tuba player Theon Cross and cornetist Ben LaMar Gay (both also adding electronics) for a freer performance. *The People's Mixtape* combines McCraven, bassist Junius Paul, vibraphonist Joel Ross, modular synthesist Jeremiah Chiu, and trumpeter Marquis Hill for an enjoyable set. Ross stands out, and the modular synthesis adds a great deal to the music. McCraven adds additional production, overdubs (guitar, vibes, and electronics) and edits all the recordings, to bring the music together. For those who haven't been paying attention and like the musical approaches of Chris Dave, Nate Smith, Deantoni Parks, and/or Ches Smith. Makaya McCraven's music will be a welcome listen, and an enjoyable musical and drumming discovery.

Billy Hart

Multidirectional
Billy Hart drums
Smoke Sessions Records



There are fewer working bands in jazz today, but leading the pack is Billy Hart's Quartet with saxophonist Mark Turner, pianist Ethan Iverson, and bassist Ben Street. Hart had just completed this recording when we talked to him for last year's interview that appeared on the April 2025 cover. When these tunes first appeared on the quartet's studio recordings they were "newborn." However, when they appear on this live recording, they have all grown up. "Song for Balkis" has grown nicely and sounds different every time you hear it. The quartet's impressionistic version of "Giant Steps" follows the quartet's personal rendering and is very different from the usual versions of this classic. Hart paints with time beautifully on Mark Turner's "Sonnet for Stevie," this is the jewel of this fantastic record. Hart and Mark Gray's composition "Amethyst" sets a slowly smoldering fire that eventually explodes, then slowly dissipates. The closer, "Showdown" has Hart coaxing sounds from his set with mallets and propelling the music with a gentle backbeat. This is one of the great working bands in jazz, and there is no better way to hear a band that on a live record (or even better, at a live gig!)

Makaya McCraven

Off The Record
Makaya McCraven drums
International Anthem Records



Makaya McCraven has been making waves on the international jazz scene since 2007. He is a musician who thrives at combining pure improvisation and groove. *Off the Record* features two CD's that are comprised of four different musical settings and four different bands, all four are primarily live recordings. *PopUp Shop* is a band with bassist Benjamin Sheppard, guitarist Jeff Parker, and vibraphonist Justefan. In my opinion this is the most

RIX

Legacy, Vol. 1

Luther Rix drums
RPF Records, Royal Potato
Family productions

Drummer Luther Rix is a musical veteran with credits ranging from Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen to Bette Midler. His son Jano is one third of the Grammy award winning band The Wood Brothers. This is the duo's first recording. Both men sing, while Luther plays drums and Jano plays everything else. "This album celebrates the legacy, shared feel, groove, songs, and the love of music that he passed down to me," says Jano. The record starts out with Huey Smith's rollicking "Blow Wind Blow" made famous by Dr. John on the record *Gumbo*. The duo's organic and back woodsy tunes are pop oriented, six have vocals, and five are instrumental and loose. RIX's music has an innocence and a telepathy that only a father and son can create. "Down And Nylon" is a stripped-down live performance captured at Brooklyn's since shuttered Southpaw club with the men just playing drums and keys. "Oop" is a greasy, three-minute soul-funk instrumental, with Luther laying down some southern fried groove. "Melodica" is a fun duet of keyboards and percussion. "Lazy Love" grooves hard, "Sci-Fi Finale" wraps the proceedings with some cool dubbed-out drumming and ominous piano counterpoint, that welcomes the weird as the record spins to a close. The fact that RIX is released on vinyl seems very appropriate to its organic sound.



Mark Sherman

Bop Contest

Carl Allen drums
Miles High Records

Vibraphonist Mark Sherman has assembled a very good record. Lesser played tunes by Oliver Nelson ("111-44") and Cedar Walton ("Bremond's Blues" and "Martha's Prize") are a great place to start. A few very nice originals in "Love Always, Always Love" and "Bop Contest" are a great addition. And a couple of nice standards is always nice too ("My One and Only Love" and "Skylark.") So, the repertoire on *Bop Shop* is well and carefully chosen. The band is "pretty good" too! The legendary bassist Ron Carter is a steadying force in all the music he plays, pianist Donald Vega is always nice to hear on record, and special guest trumpeter Joe Magnarelli brings the fire. Carl Allen and Ron Carter always sound terrific together, and are always on the same musical page, and Sherman is a fantastic vibraphonist. So, the band is top shelf. It's nice to see a bit of a resurgence in the vibes, it is such an overlooked (yet beautiful sounding) instrument, and Sherman gets a great sound (and it's well recorded here.) The arrangement of "My One and Only Love" is a beautiful take on a beautiful song. Magnarelli and Allen sound good together on "Bop Contest" and "Love Always, Always Love," and Carl Allen's eight's on "Bop Contest" are nice. So, the performances on every tune are swingin' and enjoyable. Add to that, the nice repertoire, great band, good arrangements; And that all adds up to a very nice record.

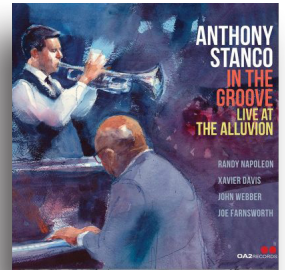


Anthony Stanco

In the Groove, Live at the Alluvion

Joe Farnsworth drums
OA2 Records

Trumpeter Anthony Stanco has been releasing several good records recently, but *Live at the Alluvion* is a great record. Drummer Joe Farnsworth is again at the helm of the rhythm section with pianist Xavier Davis, and bassist John Webber, and guitarist Randy Napoleon joining Stanco on the front line. The band comes out burning with "T. Sea," and the nice lope of "Say You're Mine," and "Hey Cute One." Farnsworth adds some nice snap and crackle on "Riptide," and a nice solo to bring us all back to the top. Farnsworth and Webber are amongst the best bass and drum teams around, their separate beats are truly felt as one. The crowd responds with electricity to the enticing "In the Groove," and the groove provided by Farnsworth and Webber keeps everything going. The rhythm section maneuvers through the constantly shifting "Tales" with ease. Farnsworth is featured on "Just a Moment," and he takes full advantage with several chorus' of drum fireworks. Through the recording, Stanco's trumpet lights the fire that engulfs the band and the audience. Jazz is always better in front of a live audience, and Anthony Stanco's outstanding new record is no different. Everyone is sitting comfortably *In the Groove*.



Lisa Hilton

Extended Daydream

Rudy Royston drums
Ruby Slippers Music

Pianist Lisa Hilton always has something a little different to say on each of her 31 records. On her last record, entitled *Lucky All Along*, she started to introduce her sense of impressionism within her music. She also acknowledged her love of (what is referred to as) "cool jazz" of Miles Davis, Chet Baker, and Stan Getz. With *Lucky All Along* Hilton started to creatively interpret modern "pop" music by Charlie Puth ("See You Again") and Taylor Swift ("Snow on the Beach.") On *Extended Daydream*, she continues her creative interpretation of modern pop music by offering a beautiful version of Billie Eilish's "Wildflower." Hilton has a way of inconspicuously reinventing a standard from any era, and her band willingly supports that vision. As on *Lucky All Along*, drummer Rudy Royston and bassist Luques Curtis are right next to Hilton all the way along, gently following Hilton's cues and supporting her with amazing taste. Hilton splits the solo space with trumpeter Ighmar Thomas and saxophonist JD Allen. All three soloists blend their approaches perfectly, and the rhythm section creates a cohesive impressionistic approach to the music. As always, Lisa Hilton's records surprise you, and *Extended Daydream* is no different. She is a talented bandleader with a strong concept, and a wonderful pianist with a beautiful touch.

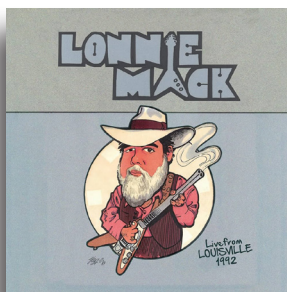


Lonnie Mack

Live in Louisville 1992

Jeff McAllister drums
Last Music Co.

If you could ask Jeff Beck, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Duane Allman, and Danny Gatton about the importance of guitarist Lonnie Mack, they would rave about him. So would Eric Clapton, Keith Richards, and Neil Young. Lonnie Mack was a highly influential and respected guitarist who dies in 2016. His gigs were incendiary, his bands were always bubbling with excitement, and he had some hits too! Check out “Memphis” and “Wham” both included in this hour-long set. Behind all this palpable electricity you NEEDED a rhythm section that could keep up and support, Mack’s rhythm section of keyboardist Denzil “Dumpy” Rice, bassist Bucky Lindsey, and Louisville drummer Jeff McAllister did that and much, much more! Their pocket is deep and greasy. This is supremely exciting music; you can almost feel the electric in the air on this live recording as the music jumps out of your speakers. Mack is in blazingly top form. But ironically, it is the rhythm section that provides just as much excitement and the guitar legend.



Brandon Sanders

Lasting Impression

Brandon Sanders drums
Savant Records

In days gone by, drummer Brandon Sanders would be referred to as an uptown drummer. He is a drummer that makes people smile, makes the music feel good, and is easy to play with. Absent are the drum pyrotechnics and calisthenics that drummers that make young drummers eyes glaze over, present is the swing that musicians thrive on, on the bandstand. Producer (and fellow drummer) Willie Jones III has set up Sanders for success by surrounding Sanders with strong voiced sidemen (and one side-woman in singer Jazzmeia Horn) for a swinging set of music. Bobby Hutcherson’s “8/4 Beat” gets a nice reading, and Sanders’ drumming pushes the band. Horn gives us a nice version of “Our Love is here to Stay” and Sanders is right there giving her exactly what she needs. Pianist Eric Scott Reed’s “Shadoboxing” gets a nice lope from the trio of Reed, bassist Eric Wheeler, and Sanders. Stevie Wonder’s “Until You Come Back to Me” is a jewel with Sanders’ patient groove and Horn’s soulful singing. This is very good feel-good record that will make any jazz lover smile.



Gregory Groover Jr.

Old Knew

Kendrick Scott drums
Criss Cross Jazz

With a name like Gregory Groover Jr. what do you expect from a musician? Groover is Berklee professor, tenor saxophonist, and the composer of this entire record (produced by saxophonist Walter Smith III.) And together they have created a killer record. His first record *Lovabye* focused on composition, *Old Knew* focuses on interaction, and (may I say) mission accomplished! The young band of vibraphonist Joel Ross, pianist Paul Cornish, bassist Harish Raghavan, and drummer Kendrick Scott interact as well as anybody! Groover and Smith couldn’t have created a better band for a 21st century exciting and interactive jazz record. Raghavan and Scott couldn’t be any more “together,” Cornish could give the soloists any “more” to work with, and Groover and Ross weave some magical solos throughout. Every tune strikes a different mood, meaning you never know what is coming around the corner. That element of surprise brings me back to some (of my favorite) late 60s Blue Note recordings. The groove on “Go for Broke” is slippery and funky, just listen to Kendrick Scott behind Groover. The vibe on “Spaces” is fun, as is Scott’s drumming. And just listen to how Kendrick Scott shapes “Sumner,” he is a master orchestrator. Kendrick Scott doesn’t have to solo to create and convey excitement, he is a supreme accompanist. The title track is a joyful ride. I also enjoy the fact that all the 11 tunes are relatively short, the band gets in, says what they want to say, and gets out. Kudos to producer Walter Smith II. This is an EXCELLENT record, and one of my biggest musical surprises of recent history.



Dayna Stephens

Monk'd

Eric McPherson drums
Contagious Music

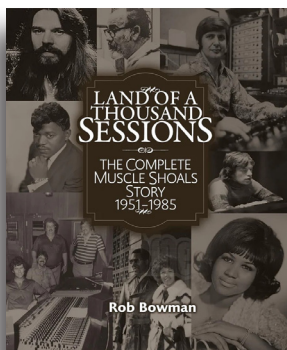
Who knew that saxophonist Dayna Stephens was also a killer bassist? Well, he is. On *Monk'd*, Stephens plays bass exclusively, and has assembled a set of the more obscure Thelonious Monk tunes for his quartet to get inside. Pianist Ethan Iverson avoids the obvious Monk-isms, while still exuding Monk’s playful spirit and slippery phrases. Tenor saxophonist Stephen Riley’s airy tone is spot-on-perfect for Monk’s music, and drummer Eric McPherson proves why he is one of the greatest drummers of this generation. McPherson’s burn hot on a low flame drumming is on perfect display here, just listen to his trading on “Humph.” While Stephens’ bass playing makes you wonder, how can one musician have this much talent? A musician that can play jazz this well on saxophone and bass is unprecedented. But back to the music... Monk tunes like “Brake’s Sake,” “Hornin’ In,” and “Ugly Beauty” don’t get played much, but they are beautiful compositions. The band’s shifting treatment of “Coming on the Hudson” is simply perfect, and McPherson’s modern version of “snap crackle” makes this entire record very enjoyable.



Land of a Thousand Sessions: The Complete Muscle Shoals Story 1951-1985

By Rob Bowman
Malaco Press

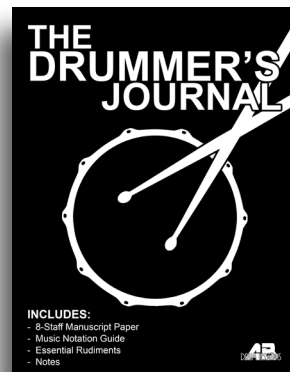
NEVER have I seen such a detailed and thorough account of a musical period in my life. To say that Rob Bowman's 731-page account of the music that was made at Fame, Quinvy, Music Mill, Joe Wilson Studios, and Muscle Shoals Studios is exhaustive would be an understatement. To say this book is complete doesn't even say it properly. Bowman's book is a truly in-depth treatment of the travails of the musicians, producers, and engineers that created some of the most important records in American music history. The music made at these studios crosses all styles: R&B, pop, rock, reggae, country, and even jazz. The book tells the story of the creators of this phenomena, James Joiner, Tom Stafford, and Rick Hall; and the artists that they attracted to record their hits including Aretha Franklin, Bob Seger, Wilson Pickett, Willie Nelson, The Rolling Stones, James Brown, and Herbie Mann. Included are the stories of the many session musicians including the legendary drummer Roger Hawkins, the great bassist David Hood, and eminent pianist-songwriter Spooner Oldham, that played on these records as well. Bowman's research and interviewing is exemplary, the pictures are fascinating, and the information the book provides is truly amazing. No stone was left unturned, and no one involved was omitted. This is a unique story that has finally been told correctly, I cannot praise this book enough! If you are interested in the history of American music, this is an essential read!



grooves, Angel has created a GREAT book. I love the order that he presents and the way he organizes his information, I love how this info is presented, and I even love what he has omitted. Sure, there are a very few minor changes that I would make if it were my book, but that's just personal preference. A section on syncopation, and a larger section of shuffles would be essential in "my book," but other than those, I can find nothing I would change about this book. For any beginner or intermediate student, or drum teacher, this is a great book. No need for skipping around, no more need for handwritten exercises, it's all here, in a well-organized and supremely sensible presentation, what more can I say.

The Drummer's Journal
By Angel Bartolotta
Self-Published, AB Drum Lessons

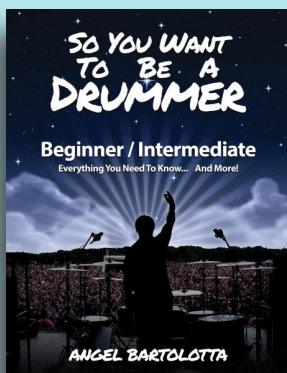
The Drummer's Journal is nothing "groundbreaking," but it is a wonderful teaching and learning companion. Angel Bartolotta has created a wonderful tool to assist in drum teaching and student learning. *The Drummer's Journal* is a 25-page journal notebook of blank staff. Each page is printed on the front and back giving you 50 blank pages to use. Most importantly, every page of the journal includes: a diagram of the drum set, notation examples, essential rudiments, a drum notation key (for notating the drum set,) a place to write the date of each entry, and a blank place for writing notes at the bottom of each page. This is an amazing idea and will help any beginning drum student. Every page in the *Drummer's Journal* is the same, would be a great tool to keep any student on track and organized. The only possible improvement that I would suggest would be printing a couple of measures of eighth, quarter, and sixteenth notes, on (possibly) every other page, to make writing grooves and beats simpler for the student. However, this is only a very minor nit-pick. This is a perfect companion to Angel's *So You Want To Be A Drummer* book, reviewed above, but it could be used with any student or teacher. In learning, organization is essential, and this journal will help keep any drummer organized.



So You Want To Be A Drummer, Beginner / Intermediate Everything You Need To Know... And More!

By Angel Bartolotta
Self-Published AB Drum Lessons

As well as being the Editor-in-Chief at Modern Drummer, I also teach drums (and have been for 30 years.) In that part of my life, I have seen MANY beginner and intermediate drum books. At Modern Drummer, we get sent a lot of drum books, and I go through each one page by page, and exercise by exercise. I can honestly say that this book is as close as a perfect beginning drum book as I have ever seen. In fact, if I was to write a beginner / intermediate drum book, I would write THIS book. From Angel's introductory and getting started chapters, to the sections on the rudiments, reading, rolls, time signatures, and



Scott Phillips' Creed Touring Kit

Photos by Jason Mehler



Drums: DW Jazz Series Kit with Gold Hardware: 8x10 Rack Tom, 9x12 Rack Tom, 16x16 Floor Tom, 18x18 Floor Tom, 18x22 Kick Drum, 6.5x14 Brass/Nickel Snare, (2) spare 6.5x14 Brass Snares (not pictured.)

Evans rumheads: Snare Batter- Heavyweight, Snare Reso - Hazy 300 w/ 20 strand Blaster snare wires, Toms Batter - G2 Clear, Toms Resonant - G1 Clear, Bass Drum Batter - EQ4, Kick Reso - Black Reso w/ Custom artwork.

Zildjian Cymbals: 22" A Custom Ping Ride, 6" Zil Bel (mounted over ride), 19" A Projection Crash, 18" A Projection Crash, 10" A Custom Splash, 18" A Custom Crash, 17" A Projection Crash, 20" Oriental Trash China, 14" A Custom Hi Hats.

DW Hardware: DW Rack System w/ all DW hardware and Boom Cymbal Arms, DW 9002 Double Pedal, Porter & Davies Bicycle Throne.

Electronics: Roland SPD-SX Drum Multi-Pad.

Sticks: Vic Firth 5B (heavy) Wood Tip.

Accessories: Cympad Cymbal Felts, Rock Locks, Black Lion Audio-PG-2R 120V Regulating Power Grid, NavePoint drawer (2) 20' Speakon cables.



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Billy Cobham - Billy Cobham Quartet

Brooks Wackerman - Avenged Sevenfold

Chad Sexton - 311

Charlie Benante - Pantera

Danny Carey - Tool

Danny Wagner - Greta Van Fleet

Jimmy Chamberlin - Smashing Pumpkins



Max Weinberg - Bruce Springsteen

Mickey "Cavs" Cavanagh - KGLW

Mike Portnoy - Winery Dogs

Mike Wengren - Disturbed

Mikkey Dee - Scorpions

Sarah Jones - Harry Styles

Zac Farro - Paramore

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